

# Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education  
References Committee

## **Inquiry into indigenous training and employment outcomes**

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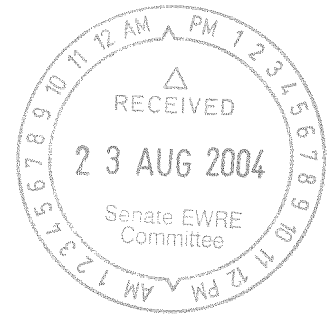
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**TAFE Directors Australia Submission to the  
Senate Inquiry into impediments to  
Indigenous employment, and measures to  
improve vocational training and employment  
outcomes for Indigenous people**



## **TDA Submission to Senate Inquiry into impediments to Indigenous employment, and measures to improve vocational training and employment outcomes for Indigenous people**

### **Background**

Representing Australia's publicly-funded vocational education and training providers, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) is committed to taking a leading role in Indigenous education and training.

Specifically, TAFE Directors Australia, through its Members, is committed to achieving the vision of ANTA's Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council's (AITAC) *Partners in a Learning Culture, Australia's National Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in vocational education and training: Blueprint for Implementation*:

*"A vocational education and training system which renews and shares an Indigenous learning culture with all Australians in a spirit of reconciliation, equity, justice, and community economic development and sustainability."*

The *Strategy* has four major objectives:

- ✓ Increasing involvement by Indigenous people at all levels of decision making.
- ✓ Achieving participation in VET for Indigenous people equal to those of the rest of the Australian community.
- ✓ Achieving increased culturally appropriate, and flexibly delivered training, including use of information technology, for Indigenous people.
- ✓ Developing closer links between VET outcomes for Indigenous people and industry and employment.

## Key Issues

TAFE Institutes and Colleges have had a particular and special role in regard to Indigenous students, especially given their regional locations and the types of courses and programs offered; and Institutes have a high proportion of Indigenous students relative to the percentage in the general population. Notwithstanding this, TDA is concerned that employment outcomes for Indigenous graduates are still generally poor, and that in many cases Indigenous students are marginalised from many pathways and opportunities.

TDA has identified key issues which bear on the ability of VET providers to effectively deliver programs to Indigenous people, including:

- ⇒ Programs which support self-determination for Indigenous people.
- ⇒ Issues of cultural identity (particularly, in SE Australia, loss of connection to culture).
- ⇒ Lack of sufficient and suitable funding and other resources.
- ⇒ Capacity-building for Indigenous people; for example:
  - positions in TAFE for both paid and volunteer Indigenous staff;
  - supported experience at management level for both staff and community elders; and
  - training for participation in key decision-making boards and committees.
- ⇒ The challenge of delivering meaningful programs to Indigenous people in remote areas; for example:
  - the major impact of the lack of infrastructure and resources (such as the lack of broadband access);
  - the lack of local industry and business to provide employment opportunities for successful apprentices and trainees, and
  - the need for appropriate programs of training for recreational purposes.
- ⇒ Issues around literacy and numeracy, and information and communications technology.
- ⇒ The need for appropriate support networks for Indigenous people, including
  - support services/counsellors;
  - encouragement and support for Indigenous students to go beyond the current “clustering” at the entry-level Certificate courses;
  - ‘culturally safe spaces’ (physical spaces in the VET institution set aside for exclusive use of Indigenous students);
  - mentoring;
  - childcare; and
  - direct and active links back into communities.
- ⇒ The necessity of cultural-awareness training for all provider (RTO) staff engaged in training Indigenous people, and all administrative staff; and, where relevant, business/industry managers, supervisors and staff.
- ⇒ The distinct differences between issues in rural/remote, and urban SE Australia, and the necessity for flexibility and sensitivity of approach to Indigenous communities.

## TDA Response to Terms of Reference for the Inquiry

- 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.*

Opportunities: CDEP is excellent in principle, and TDA supports the intent of the program.

There are several potential opportunities for Indigenous communities which a CDEP project could initiate. CDEP has the potential to:

- ✓ Support fledgling cottage industries and other self-sustaining initiatives which may lead to economic autonomy;
- ✓ Enhance Indigenous community development and infrastructure development/improvement;
- ✓ Enhance Indigenous community capacity-building;
- ✓ Break the cycles of welfare dependence and disengaged youth.

That is, CDEPs have the capacity to provide valuable opportunities for:

- experience of the workplace
  - CDEP projects may be the only available source of employment for many Indigenous people;
- pathways to education/employment or training opportunities;
- CDEP participants to combine their work with accredited training – this strategic use of work and training can significantly improve employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas;
- participants to attend on a regular basis with real-life outcomes for their communities;
- improved training needs assessment, planning and provision for Indigenous people;
- a sharing of resources in long-term projects, for example between CDEPs, TAFE Institutes, local government and business;
- income generating activity for Indigenous communities; particularly in remote areas, where employment opportunities may be limited
  - in some areas, for example, CDEP is used to generate income through such activities as arts and crafts, or glass manufacturing and design;
- valuable social forums within a work context, especially in the absence of other workplaces with Indigenous workers, providing a valuable opportunity to encourage and support individual and collective skills development. CDEPs are also valuable for partnerships and collaborative arrangements that facilitate program provision for Indigenous workers.

## Challenges:

- TDA believes that CDEP is not a good substitute for industry- or business-based on-the-job training, which is such an integral part of the delivery for the VET sector overall.
- CDEP has been operating since the late 1970s, yet it is not clear that there has been a significant improvement in employment outcomes for Indigenous people:
  - unfortunately, it is difficult to determine the exact impact of CDEP on long-term, meaningful employment, as the ABS defines participation in CDEP itself as 'employment'.
- Genuine and sustained employment outcomes can also be dependent on regional factors.
  - A regional Victorian Institute, for instance, reports that the long-term employment outcomes of the Indigenous people within the region are minimal, due to a number of factors - including downturns in local industries. Potential opportunities exist for employment in eco-tourism and related businesses, but there is a need for skills development in areas such as business development, tour guiding and retailing for this to be successful.

There are perceptions of gaps occurring between CDEP's program objectives and actual outcomes.

While it is difficult to validate outcomes from CDEP on the data available, there are perceptions that:

- CDEP projects have not always evolved from community values, aspirations or process and are therefore:
  - not 'owned' by the Indigenous communities; and
  - have not reflected individual participants' own cultural and personal values and goals.
- Some CDEP programs appear to have been driven from pressures to achieve 'employment creation' outcomes, rather than supported in achieving sustainable outcomes (by means of a community development framework, for example).
- In some instances the program is perceived to erode the higher level aspirations of Indigenous people who participate. For example:
  - in some communities the CDEP is viewed by young people as the main career pathway open to them, and they perceive 'success' as obtaining a place in the CDEP;
  - once involved in CDEP, the options to find alternative education, training or employment opportunities are minimal and generally not pursued, leading to extended employment in CDEP;
  - if participants' expectations have been raised, but not fulfilled, disenchantment and 'burn out' can quickly ensue.

The CDEP, whilst providing some valuable engagement for participants, is not a strong contributor to positive education and long-term employment outcomes. Deficiencies include:

*Employment outcomes:*

- It is not clear that the program is meeting its objectives in regard to supporting local communities and developing viable economic businesses:
  - participants are provided with dole salaries, and community organisations with administrative and operational funding, but there is no real effort in many cases towards community capacity-building (eg community management skills development, training in decision-making, administration or leadership).
- CDEP can mask a higher rate of real unemployment within an Indigenous community, as it is included in ABS statistics as 'employment'.

*Lack of real pathways*

- Education and training - which could create or improve pathways to further training and meaningful long-term work, both for the participants and the communities involved - is not generally reflected in CDEP priorities and budgets; it is important that CDEP projects are in a position to provide leadership to participants to assist them to access appropriate training or education opportunities
- Meaningful outcomes from training in terms of employment or the establishment of Indigenous enterprises is often hampered by a lack of enterprise development expertise within CDEP's, or the lack of capacity to leverage this support from other appropriate agencies (eg Business Enterprise Centres). For example:
  - an Indigenous tourism program delivered in regional Western Australia was very successful in terms of the number of participants and the completion rates from training. Participants were motivated at the time of training to develop their own Indigenous tourism venture. However, without appropriate business development support to initiate and guide it, the enterprise did not become a reality.
- CDEP projects have generally not linked pre-employment training and vocational educational and training, to participants' employment prospects and outcomes with enterprise development and ownership as CDEPs' primary focus. In effect, CDEP participants have been limited in their access to the new apprenticeship system and marginal in access to national vocational education and training systems and developments.

*Lack of Community Development Frameworks*

- Models used to deliver programs by non-Indigenous trainers may not be culturally relevant. TAFE's experience suggests that all training provided to all Indigenous people needs to acknowledge the role of Indigenous culture and community. These issues need to be recognised in both the delivery and content of the program.
- TDA supports the view of the Victorian report *Community Development Training and Koori Communities*, which concluded that:
  - community-based frameworks for project development are particularly appropriate for Indigenous communities;

- there is a significant potential for accredited community development training to recognise current skills and initiatives, and support further skills acquisition and community development;
  - community development training frameworks could support CDEP programs in:
    - ~ developing programs reflecting the interests and aspirations of the local community;
    - ~ incorporating culturally appropriate leadership and support models for managers and mentors;
    - ~ establishing personal support and training plans relevant to the needs of individual participants.
- TDA recommends that, to best meet CDEP's stated objectives, CDEP projects should be taking the initiative to incorporate a community development framework for CDEP programs. For example:
- the organisation 'Koori Women Mean Business' has recently negotiated with Swinburne University of Technology delivery of training in Frontline Management. The organisation also requested the inclusion of Community Development competencies, as these reflect the community orientation of their practice. This will enable participants to graduate with dual qualifications in each discipline.

#### Partnerships - Part of the Solution

- The development of effective local partnerships is an important component of a potential solution to many of these issues; for example:
- the development of active partnerships between Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), CDEPs, local/regional employer groups and industry, local councils, Group Training organisations, regional economic development forums, and so on;
  - increased willingness by business and industry to commit to taking the steps required to generate genuine change in Indigenous employment.
- Strong partnerships between TAFE Institutes, CDEPs and other local stakeholders has shown the potential to develop the kind of effective linkages which frequently appear to be missing from the current 'mix'. TAFE Institutes have demonstrated the capacity and expertise to work with local/regional projects towards developing sustained employment outcomes.
- While CDEPs know their communities and their requirements well, they currently have only minimal training budgets with which to achieve these goals.



- 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.*

### Challenges:

#### ➤ Current funding models

In summary, current funding models are essentially designed to meet broad VET systems and targets. However, this fails to take account of the need for cultural appropriateness, flexibility and the frequent high support requirements of Indigenous program delivery.

#### Current funding models:

- Are not appropriate; effective service delivery of VET to Indigenous groups can be more expensive to deliver because:
  - some Indigenous students can be uncomfortable with institutionalised settings, and establishing suitable alternative modes of delivery can be costly;
  - establishing and maintaining genuine and respectful relationships, including involving local elders in the course planning, takes time;
  - all materials need to be culturally appropriate, which may require complete re-development;
  - each new group may require the design of appropriate delivery and assessment strategies.
- Do not accommodate the way in which Indigenous cultural studies often comprise key foundation and employability skills. For example:
  - cultural understanding often provides students with essential learning, confidence, self-respect and wellbeing. TAFE Institutes report that they have consistently experienced Indigenous students progressing from studies in Indigenous arts and cultural practices, for example, to the broad range of vocational education and training programs.
- Do not adequately address the difficulties of delivery - including issues around the health, attendance and existing skills of Indigenous students. In particular, the level of support needed for students in lower level courses, especially young people, is not able to be met by the current arrangements. For instance:
  - there is considerable evidence that tutors and mentors supporting Indigenous students significantly improve outcomes;
  - however, trained and suitable tutors and mentors are generally difficult to access and fund (particularly in regional and remote areas); and some guidelines restrict access
    - ~ eg ATAS tutors are not available during the day;
    - ~ the Scheme will change in 2005, and at this point it does not appear there will be any provision for TAFE students.
- Which aim to provide choice, through stimulating provider competition by a system of contestable funding, have not proved effective.
  - There are strong perceptions that in many cases this has, in fact, created confusion among Indigenous communities, accentuated family factions and community division

- and poorly duplicated training provision. Our experience is that, whenever and wherever another provider fails, TAFE is left to restore learner confidence and community trust.
- In some jurisdictions, the State Training Authority has withdrawn funding for Certificate 1/pre-Apprenticeship training.

In addition:

- TDA would support further specific and applied research (through ANTA, NCVER or other appropriate research capacity) into Indigenous pedagogy as an effective means of delivery and student participation, with the aim of enhancing provision for Indigenous students.
  - One such pedagogy is where both delivery and assessment are undertaken at an holistic level, and is generally reported to be extremely effective.
- While TDA acknowledges the critical importance of Indigenous people participating in training in areas where employment opportunities exist, it needs to be borne in mind that in preparing Indigenous people for employment opportunities, support needs to be given to both:
  - the employee (such as mentoring, financial assistance to purchase materials, etc.); and
  - the employer (cross-cultural awareness training, access to advice regarding best methods to support Indigenous employees, and so on).
- It would be better to place an emphasis on strategically growing and resourcing successes.
  - Although financial resources have been provided to many Indigenous organisations and mainstream VET providers to support Indigenous delivery, the resources have often been dispersed and targeted towards specific programs and services, rather than taking an holistic coordinated approach.
- TDA considers that the support requirements for Indigenous students may best be funded through a partnership- and project-based model, to ensure that limited resources are used effectively and integrated with program delivery strategies.
  - TAFE's experience has been that the most successful outcomes have been through partnership models of Indigenous and non-Indigenous providers working collaboratively and long-term, and having clear protocols and agreements in place regarding financial and management arrangements.
- TDA considers that it is vital that there be more partnering of community organisations with their local Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to identify and meet the requirements for employment outcomes.
  - CDEP funding is not always aligned to appropriate projects; and
  - Stronger partnerships between TAFE Institutes and community members would assist communities to better appreciate the constraints most RTOs are placed under.
- Generally, programs and services for equity target groups depend upon a healthy and thriving RTO, which works in partnership with its region and is responsive in serving its region's needs and demands. If TAFE Institutes are not funded for growth in provision, and are thereby limited in their ability to respond to their region's needs, Indigenous

communities' choices and learning opportunities can be more significantly affected than any others.

- Initiatives to engage more Indigenous people in training and employment need to commence at school age.
  - It is vital that both schools and TAFE Institutes are adequately resourced to deal with the acquisition of foundation skills for Indigenous students, and to encourage further education and training.
  - Schools and TAFE must explore new and different ways of engaging Indigenous young people and of providing the opportunity to acquire the foundation skills upon which further education and training can be built. Traditional models of schooling have generally failed to provide appropriate learning environments, suited to Indigenous ways of learning, and have not always successfully encouraged attitudes that value education and training.
    - ~ Alternative models, such as the Midwest Football Academy in WA, are encouraging engagement, and experiencing increased success in terms of retention and completion of post compulsory school years. The Academy is a partnership between school and TAFE, providing a combined program of school curriculum and TAFE programs that are designed to interest and excite participants through the vehicle of football. Delivery occurs at school, in the Academy and at TAFE. In this instance, football provides the context for delivery of education and training and the encouragement for participation by students. However, alternative models such as this must be adequately funded in order to provide the type and level of support required, and the flexibility of delivery that brings success.
  - Clear pathways from schools to TAFE Institutes, based upon a partnership model, are another critical factor.

#### ➤ Additional issues in rural and remote Australia

It is clear that better recognition is required of the difficulties of rural/remote delivery, particularly in regard to inadequate infrastructure development for training and employment opportunities, or identifying potential needs.

- A number of issues work against the cost-effectiveness of training in remote areas:
  - long distances must be travelled;
  - extra staff time is taken up by travel;
  - cost/availability of accommodation in communities;
  - limited numbers and/or irregular attendance at training;
  - training frequently needs to be underpinned by literacy/numeracy training;
  - employment prospects are very limited and it can be difficult to motivate potential students and employers with a view to occupational outcomes.
- While the current Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP) assistance provides a loading for Indigenous people in remote areas to access education and training, this is often only marginally related to real costs (as listed above). Consistency between State/Territory jurisdictions on the definitions to establish the 'isolated' rate of funding would also be an advantage.

→ While not a direct funding issue, transport, telephone and broadband/internet access are also significant potential barriers for Indigenous students in terms of successful delivery; and particularly for those from rural and remote areas. In many cases, an inability to obtain a Driver's Licence is a significant barrier to access to education; this is often associated with penalties for traffic infringements and non-payment of fines.

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.*

#### Opportunities:

- ✓ Particularly when training is delivered and interpreted in a culturally inclusive way, CBT can have particular relevance for Indigenous people; especially for those who lack formal qualifications and who may be reluctant to participate in a curriculum-based education.
  - CBT could also be seen as consistent with hands-on, tactile, visual learning – i.e. what some researchers believe to be preferred learning styles for some Indigenous people;
  - Delivery to indigenous people in the workforce who do not have a qualification, generally works well with CBT models.
  - Methods of delivering and assessing CBT can be adapted to the specific needs of Indigenous communities. For example:
    - ~ initiatives by one TAFE Institute in areas such as community-based drug and alcohol casework training have established the potential to achieve higher completion rates than non-Indigenous campus-based training. This program has also demonstrated the potential of accredited training to document approaches to practice within Indigenous communities. This contributes to ongoing training, and informs the understandings of the wider community.

#### Challenges:

- The implementation of CBT has been much slower to stabilise with some Indigenous communities because there have been very few life skills, which related to new technology skills, for them to draw on.
  - Exposure to a greater variety of skills and technology (including equipment and machinery) on a consistent basis can overcome this challenge.
- However, competency based skill training is still difficult for many Indigenous participants due to other issues; for example:
  - low literacy or numeracy levels;
  - lack of access to specialist equipment or service delivery; or
  - lack of access to computers.

- Many employers have difficulty with creating the appropriate support environment required for Indigenous students. Regional Victorian Institutes report that lack of vocational opportunities and cultural understanding from local business and services (both ways) has led to feedback from Koori students that they are expected to fit into the “white value system”. However, training is generally successful if:
  - the organisation has budgeted for trainees, and career pathways are then available for graduates; and
  - the course is work-based, with appropriate mentoring and support.
- Some Indigenous people have expressed frustration at the non-recognition of their current skills (either from workplace or non-accredited course participation).
  - RTOs need to ensure that trainers offer Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC) as a matter of course.
  - However, this may need to be implemented more flexibly and sensitively, and reflected in national policy settings for RCC.
- Teaching and assessing cultural skills, knowledge and attributes and other employability and generic skills pose challenges:
  - for example, in the context of cultural ownership and learner self-determination, an Indigenous Course Co-ordinator might undertake teacher/trainer selection, with a community members as part of the selection panel;
  - in the delivery of any CBT, trainers/assessors should be required to have participated in cross-cultural awareness training;
  - there is also a clearly identified need for more Indigenous educators
    - ~ for example, Indigenous trainers qualified in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

### *Training Packages*

While CBT models have generally been effective, Training Packages have also created a new set of issues:

- The learning needs and aspirations of individual Indigenous persons do not necessarily fit those of employers and industry:
  - Training Packages tend to be developed by and for industry, and are premised on education and training delivered and assessed in industry;
  - many remote areas are frequently lacking in industry;
  - consideration also needs to be given to cultural understanding; generic skills development; frequent low levels of literacy and numeracy, etc.;
  - it is vital that training for achievement be beneficial to the students and this must be linked to employment opportunity at the least, and ideally to long-term meaningful employment.

*“The VET system and training packages assume that the ideal outcome of VET is a job in ‘mainstream’ private industry. From this flows the view that mainstream private industry, especially its employers, should determine the competencies which VET providers will ‘deliver’, including to Indigenous clients... it just doesn’t happen that way; nor is it going to.*

*[one identified issue was] ...the lack of concern the review found with Indigenous issues among industry training advisory bodies which do not*

*already include significant areas of the Indigenous 'economy' within their industries<sup>1</sup>."*

- Existing Training Packages can therefore be limited in their provision for multi-purpose, entry-level skills development.
  - ~ One possible exception is the new training package in Indigenous Governance, developed by AITAC, which could present an opportunity to link learning and VET to community capacity building, self-determination and long-term employment outcomes;
  - ~ As part of implementing *Partners in a Learning Culture, Australia's National Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in vocational education and training: Blueprint for Implementation*, ANTA has commissioned projects to:
    - improve the cultural appropriateness; and
    - build the capacity of targeted organisations to improve the participation of, and outcomes for, Indigenous students
  
- Literacy and numeracy levels are still a major factor in the lack of completion of the training. Whilst CBT models can deliver a variety of VET skills necessary for employment, there is a need for additional support (and perhaps extended course times) in areas such as ICT literacy, and basic numeracy and literacy:
  - in particular, programs to improve reading skills are crucial, and appropriate training materials need to be developed;
  - some states do have specially designed curriculum for basic literacy and numeracy skills training for Indigenous students;
  - success in training and work outcomes will also be dependant on the assessment of basic skills and strategies to support students as they develop their vocational competencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Boughton, B & Duman, D (2003) Beyond Equity?: Indigenous people's rights and the national VET system. NCVET, p. 9-10.

- 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.*

#### Opportunities:

- ✓ Training aims to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to gain:
  - the knowledge and skills necessary to gain employment;
  - a sense of empowerment;
  - the confidence to pursue further learning; and
  - improved opportunities and choices to live fulfilling lives.
- ✓ Indigenous enrolments constituted 3.5% of the total 2002 VET enrolments nationally.
  - in 2002 77.3% of Indigenous VET students gained an AQTF qualification (compared to 70.3% of the total VET student population);
  - although these outcomes are still skewed to lower qualifications, participation rates in Certificate III level (or equivalent) courses rose, from 2.4% in 2001 to 3.0% in 2002.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ The VET system does have the capacity for the development of accredited courses to meet the specific needs of Indigenous students (provided they do not duplicate a Training Package). For example:
  - Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Territory Education in the NT has developed community delivery methodologies for health course in Aged Care and Food Support Services;
  - Swinburne University and Ngwala Willumbong, an Indigenous drug and alcohol support agency, have developed a successful partnership, training Indigenous caseworkers from communities across Victoria in one or more drug and alcohol occupational qualification(s).
- ✓ The Certificate IV in Training and Assessment package offers potential to increase the number of Indigenous trainers in the VET system.
- ✓ Current arrangements in TAFE NSW, for example, are achieving relatively good results in regard to Indigenous people in terms of:
  - both access and participation; and
  - in supporting appropriate and responsive local program provision in Institutes.

*“The range of employment for which these programs prepare (Indigenous) people include tourism, community management, legal studies, beef cattle programs, family and community services, dance and health ... There are also innovative programs in Indigenous maritime resources management, native title, Indigenous development studies and Indigenous governance.” (Boughton & Durnan, p. 10)*

- ✓ The provision of Commonwealth IESIP funding to providers of accredited training can assist with the development of strategies and programs to support Indigenous people in

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<sup>2</sup> ANTA Annual Report Volume 3 *Report on the Key Performance Measures for the Australian Vocational Education and Training System*, 2002

- training, such as cross-cultural awareness training for teachers;
  - provision of targeted student support; and
  - access to resources to support training.
- ✓ The Wurreker Strategy (the Koorie Community and TAFE in Victoria in Equal Partnership) is the key Victorian strategy aimed in improving participation, outcomes and employment opportunities for Indigenous people in training. The strategy (developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated and the Victorian Government) promotes the importance of involving Indigenous people in decision making processes (through the Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group network).
- Victorian TAFE Institutes are also required to develop a Wurreker Implementation Plan that details strategies to meet the objectives of Wurreker. The monitoring processes for each Victorian Institute's Wurreker Plan include active consultation with all regional LAECGs. The development of a regional training plan by Wurreker Brokers is informed by consultation with Indigenous communities.

### Challenges:

ACER's (2004) *The Case for change*, discusses Indigenous employment and concludes:

*"It is important to recognise the complexity of employment provision within Indigenous communities and recognise that there is no simple solution to Indigenous peoples' disadvantage. Education alone, while of inherent value, is unlikely to be successful in alleviating that disadvantage."* (p 33)

Initiatives to engage more Indigenous people in training will only be beneficial where the Indigenous community have input to, and determine the implementation strategies for, these initiatives. Communities themselves need to be actively involved in the negotiation of training to suit their own requirements; meaningful employment must be the goal.

At the same time these government initiatives are only as effective, and of benefit to the community, as the organisation delivering these programs. That is, unless the contracted delivery organisation adheres to the intended guidelines or outcomes, the initiative will appear to be a failure and therefore considered to be a waste of invested time and money.

- For many Indigenous students, the passage between education and the first job is crucial.
  - In many areas, there appears to be a significant gap between the skill set of many students and the available jobs.
  - It is important that government initiatives look to assist in bridging the transition from education to employment through individual support and guidance.
- TDA recommends that governments also give greater attention to foundation, or pre-vocational, training for Indigenous students. This strategy, along with associated support mechanisms such as counselling and mentoring, has clearly demonstrated significant potential to improve educational and training outcomes (and therefore employment outcomes) for Indigenous students. Pre-vocational training programs should focus on building the student's capacity and self-confidence, and could include programs dealing with areas such as:
  - literacy and numeracy bridging;



- ICT literacy, and familiarisation with other relevant technology;
  - cultural awareness.
- CDEPs are a principal source of Indigenous employment. However:
- there is no strong link between education and employment in some communities; and
  - such employment may act as a disincentive to education.
- For some, the answer is learning, and learning to learn. Peter Honey et. al., in programs provided for Indigenous communities, have suggested that, in focussing on learning, Institutes and Colleges:
- *“make learning to learn one of the fundamental goals of education and training and reduce the excessive (imposed) focus on knowledge and skills that can quickly become obsolete;*
  - *encourage and support the self management of learning. For example, allowing learners to set their own goals and to choose how and when to learn to meet needs identified by themselves rather than by others.”<sup>3</sup>*
- There is a significant issue with the lack of clear, systemic articulated pathways between the TAFE and higher education sectors; for instance,
- in Victoria there are a significant number of Indigenous people who access certificate or Diploma level training in education and health. They are discouraged from continuing due to the lack of articulation pathways into higher education. The ability to undertake health and education courses within one’s own community is also a significant factor for Indigenous people when deciding to access courses. As a result, more training providers now deliver courses off-campus. This allows Indigenous people, particularly mature aged women, to continue to meet family obligations while accessing training.
- In addition, there is a vital role for industry (including industry representative groups and employer bodies) in ensuring that genuine employment opportunities exist for Indigenous people.
- There is a significant lack of focus on this area by business and industry as a whole; more emphasis needs to be placed on targeted employment programs (such as traineeships and apprenticeships) which include pathways to ongoing, meaningful careers
- all Australia’s large corporations or small industries should provide traineeships, cadetships or employment opportunities for Indigenous people
    - ~ targeted employment programs for Indigenous people with modified selection criteria may be one answer;
    - ~ the utilisation of Indigenous mentors is another approach TDA recommends is worth considering in industry;
    - ~ wage subsidies are one way to break the cycle that many Indigenous people are trapped in; employers will retain good workers once they have demonstrated their capability.

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<sup>3</sup> Attwood, M, Boydell, T, Burgoyne, J, Clutterbuck, D, Cunningham, I, Garratt, B, Honey, P, Mayo, A, Megginson, D, Mumford, A, Pearn, M, Pedler, M, Wood, R (2004) A Declaration on Learning – Version 2, at PeterHoney.com, p.2.

- Alternative funding models are required for working with remote and isolated communities, as managers need to invest additional time to evolve ideas and work with communities.
  - In remote and isolated areas, TAFE Institutes have found that training needs to be paced to the individual's needs and abilities and it therefore may take longer to achieve outcomes. TAFE managers may need to work over a period of time with the leaders of these communities to develop a learning partnership.
  
- Despite the success of various strategies designed to encourage Indigenous people to participate in training and skill trades, significant systemic barriers remain. Examples from a cross-section of state/territories illustrate some of the issues:
  - In Victoria, despite the success of various Wurreker strategies on-going challenges include:
    - ~ low levels of education attainment, which can discourage Indigenous people from participating in training and can make retention an issue;
    - ~ it is not yet clear whether the proposed changes to Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme for 2005 onwards will impact on the ability of Indigenous people engaged in training to access tutorial support. The current document relates to support for year 10, 11, 12 students and university students, not TAFE students;
    - ~ generational family unemployment results in some Indigenous students requiring significant support to establish processes to access training;
    - ~ lack of financial assistance is a concern, as many Indigenous students are mature-aged and returning to training
      - as a result, the level of financial assistance available (noting ABSTUDY is income tested) is a major factor when decisions are taken on accessing training and related education;
    - ~ prejudices amongst employers (perceived or real) can deter Indigenous people from accessing training and skilled training;
    - ~ Indigenous people often feel reluctant to pursue training, believing there are no resulting employment outcomes in the wider community.
  - In the NT, there has been some achievement in assisting Indigenous people on remote communities to acquire a higher level of skills in recent years
    - ~ however, as there continues to be an issue of limited employment opportunities on communities, training does not necessarily lead to viable employment opportunities.
  - In NSW, despite the overall improvement in participation and level of award figures, a large proportion of TAFE NSW enrolments are still in Statement of Attainment courses in the Access and General Education program areas.

- (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.*

#### Opportunities:

Partnerships between CDEPs and appropriately motivated and skilled RTOs that implement Indigenous-appropriate delivery models have the potential to develop a comprehensive strategy for skills development and recognition in all aspects of the organisations' activities.

Partnerships between Indigenous organisations and Registered Training Organisations have the potential to:

- ✓ maximise the role of the Indigenous organisation on the development and delivery of training;
- ✓ develop the understanding and skills of the training provider in delivering training to Indigenous people;
- ✓ assist the Indigenous organisation increase autonomy in directly providing training.

#### Challenges:

However, in any partnerships between CDEPs and RTOs there is need for:

- Transparent timelines/consultation frameworks
  - agreement on protocols for dealing with any impediments to communication.
- Accommodation of family and culture:
  - many of the current governmental models for engaging industry and community-based partnerships have an unnecessarily limited view of the employment conditions for Indigenous people
  - ~ inevitably, this constrains both their effectiveness and their potential.
- Developing close partnerships between training and employers and employment organisations (partnerships with local councils, for example) requires commitment and resources; for instance:
  - employers need to develop an understanding of cultural and community issues relevant to Indigenous workers;
  - companies need to have a strong commitment to social justice values and a willingness to pursue them;
  - whilst targeted employment programs in the public service/sector are valuable, it is crucial that private industry also is engaged to increase the employment rates of Indigenous workers
  - in addition, it should be borne in mind that many areas in Australia with a high percentage population of Indigenous people coincide with a comparatively low representation of industry and employers. Training in these areas therefore needs to focus on community capacity and the creation of Indigenous enterprise.

- Regional development agencies are therefore significant partners in nurturing and developing these business opportunities, including by
    - ~ participating in the brain-storming/business identification process and
    - ~ providing suitable business coaches/mentors once the business is being established.
  - TAFE's experience is that mentors within the workplace are essential to the success of an Indigenous worker.
    - ~ Difficulty in adapting to the workplace culture is often a significant barrier for many Indigenous workers.
- To illustrate some of these issues, four case-studies from a variety of state/territories and situations follow.

#### *Partnership Case-Study 1:*

With recent developments in competency-based training, all initiatives in organisational process and vocational development can be linked to accredited training. One Victorian Institute has seen a significant increase in the Indigenous community participating in accredited training. This community have shown a preference for the partnership model of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people being involved in the delivery of courses.

This approach is particularly helpful for Indigenous communities, where barriers to formal education and other factors have de-valued formal recognition of skills and resulted in significant disadvantage in accessing formal education and training.

The Institute has undertaken a range of partnership arrangements with Indigenous organisations. Key features of these partnerships have been:

- key roles for the Indigenous organisations and individuals in decision-making procedures;
- development of content and delivery approaches that reflect the interests and community needs of Indigenous people;
- delivery of the Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training to Indigenous practitioners, and involvement of Indigenous Co-trainers.

1) These components have contributed to a successful training partnership between the Institute and Ngwala Willumbong, an Indigenous drug and alcohol support agency. This partnership has resulted in the graduation of 88 caseworkers with one or more drug and alcohol occupational qualifications, from communities across Victoria. These workers were previously unqualified, whilst working in funded client support positions.

2) Another partnership with the Aboriginal Housing Office (NSW), for instance, has progressed to the delivery of customised training directly by AHO trainers, with accreditation provided by the Institute.

3) The Institute has also had considerable success in the delivery of Certificates in Learning Pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that imbeds a very strong applied vocational focus, constructed from competencies from a variety training packages. However, the

vocational program sits within a supporting philosophy and framework which is imperative for attracting and maintaining students within the program. Central to the delivery of the program is the formation of the Community Advocates and Learning Partners (CALP) that consists of Indigenous Elders and non-Indigenous mentors and education providers who support and guide the program providers and course participants throughout the delivery of the program. Numbers in this program have been growing as word of mouth from the participants encourages others to enrol.

The above curriculum is flexible, culturally appropriate, and contains competencies that align specifically to the Victorian Certificate in Applied Learning (VCAL) enabling younger students to achieve a Senior Secondary School Certificate. This opportunity is highly valued by the young participants who come to TAFE with educational backgrounds characterised by disrupted education, low levels of literacy and numeracy and negative attitudes to learning.

This program also places a strong emphasis on Managed Individual Pathways that lead onto employment, apprenticeship programs or further training.

#### *Partnership Case-Study 2:*

A strategy is in very early development in TAFE SA to implement case management for Indigenous students to ensure that a pathway between study and into employment is fully supported. It is expected that the trial would indicate the need for specific support for Indigenous students for a range of programs, and would be able to be funded through specific indigenous programs/strategies. Examples of pilot programs being implemented include:

1) One campus is attempting to develop an enterprise, with Indigenous Art and Craft being produced using contemporary media. Currently, the program is being primarily pursued by women. This project is commencing as a training program, with a view to establishing it as an enterprise.

2) A fisheries pilot project near Ceduna in SA aims to improve employment and further education and training prospects for the local community. Eighty per cent of flathead exported to the eastern seaboard come from the fishery; and since this activity appears to be very sustainable, the companies involved have indicated they would like to establish a pool of local people who are able to be employed regularly, both offshore and onshore. This project will provide either a direct link into full-time or part-time employment opportunities, and link to further education (i.e. through TAFE SA) currently available in the region. It is anticipated that, as part of the pilot, a total of 15 people (four Indigenous people, six youth, and five mature age people) will undertake training with eight or more achieving employment outcomes.

### *Partnership Case-Study 3:*

Since 2000 there have been significant developments in the theory and practice of VET Training Packages and qualifications that are appropriate to Indigenous Health in the Northern Territory. Some of these qualifications will contribute to contemporary demands and initiatives by Indigenous people, enabling them to exercise their right to choices for health care. Competency based qualifications (and associated learning) has created a transformation that was decisive. The change has provided a pathway for learners of all ages to become confident and competent to participate in community development.

The strategy to encourage opportunities for Indigenous people in the field of health with community-based training, has been supported by Health and Education Ministers and Government departments. It has been welcomed by Indigenous people across Northern Territory, as they are able to gain education and training within their home community that may not normally be available, and are also able to measure their own progress in gaining the appropriate skills and knowledge.

Indigenous people have gained a level of expertise in culture and language that supports the learning process with VET qualifications. The 'both-ways' approach allows students and apprentices to explore difficult concepts, in order to reach their goals as an educated graduate, and to assist in community development. Community-based education in remote areas provides learners with confidence to explore ways for an improved health status and lifestyle.

### *Partnership Case-Study 4:*

Over the years a NSW Institute's Aboriginal Education Unit has developed a successful partnership with Tharawal LALC and the CDEP, in the provision of relevant and culturally-appropriate VET programs. The Institute has recognised and embraced the value of combining community projects and Indigenous VET programs, and contributes to the partnership's added bonus of creating social knowledge for sustainable employment.

The aim of the painting and decorating program at Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council is to assist Indigenous job seekers to gain skills for employment and provide information on further training.

Various sections across the Institute have assisted and maintained the successful partnership with the CDEP and provided a focal point for the development and delivery of flexibly delivered modules. The various course provisions have improved students' perceptions of post-schooling education. Students see the off-campus provision as supportive and inviting, and providing a sense of workplace reality. This supportive environment, along with the cultural appropriateness, allows a venue for students to showcase real meaningful work, rather than working only in the classroom setting.

A Painting and Decorating project is one example of how the community are gaining skills and enhancing community facilities as part of an innovative program. The success of the program is evident across the Tharawal community - offices, accommodation facilities and storerooms.

Participants are visibly enthused by their skills. Graduates of the program have gained apprenticeships and others have re-entered the work force.

Tharawal is located in a rural region with few employment opportunities. Success has been achieved through the link to industry, which is negotiated and monitored by the teacher and the CDEP Co-ordinator.

## Conclusion

### CDEP:

In summary, TDA's view is that, while CDEP has significant potential to contribute to on Indigenous employment outcomes, deficiencies in the current approach indicate that there appears to be a need for some reform, as overall the program appears to lack:

- positive long-term employment outcomes for many participants;
  - real pathways into further education and training opportunities.
- ✓ A re-focus of CDEP is required towards genuine long-term employment opportunities for participants; as well towards the development of community-based enterprises in areas where local business or industry is limited or not present.
  - ✓ In particular, TDA recommends that a major goal of CDEPs should be the development of strong partnerships between the CDEP, TAFE Institutes and other RTOs, and local industry and business (including industry representative groups and employer bodies and regional development forums).
  - ✓ CDEP programs need a greater emphasis on, and adequate funding for, education and training to support and develop skills acquired through work placements.
  - ✓ There is also a vital role for industry and business in ensuring genuine employment opportunities exist for Indigenous people; not simply in willingness to take on Indigenous employees and providing suitable support mechanisms (such as workplace mentors, cultural awareness training for non-Indigenous staff), but also in a greater emphasis on targeted employment programs (such as traineeships and apprenticeships).
  - ✓ TDA also recommends a re-focus in CDEP programs on incorporating a community development framework into projects; the Indigenous community itself often best knows its people and its requirements.

### Funding and Delivery of VET:

- ✓ Current funding models are essentially designed to meet mainstream VET systems and targets, but this fails to take account of the need for cultural appropriateness, flexibility the frequent high support requirements of Indigenous program delivery, or sufficiently resource more remote delivery.
- ✓ TDA recommends exploration of a partnership- and project-based model of funding, to ensure that limited resources are used effectively and integrated with program delivery strategies.
- ✓ TDA recommends that the current funding system be reviewed with the intent of establishing agreed bench-marks for adequate resourcing of VET delivery for Indigenous students, including:
  - incorporation of consistent and sufficient funding regimes for delivery in rural and remote Australia, including small class sizes, travel and accommodation, and increased staffing costs;
  - incorporation of tutors and mentors for Indigenous students;
  - where appropriate, incorporation of Indigenous cultural studies in VET delivery;
  - where necessary, addressing foundational and employability skills needs of Indigenous students – including literacy, numeracy and ICT literacy;
  - and development and implementation of a national strategy which will ensure equity of access to quality telecommunication services for regional and remote Australians.
- ✓ TDA also recommends further specific and applied research into Indigenous pedagogy as an effective means of delivery and student participation, with the aim of enhancing provision for Indigenous students.

### Effectiveness of CBT:

- ✓ Particularly when delivered and interpreted in a culturally inclusive way, CBT can have particular relevance for Indigenous students.
- ✓ However, literacy and numeracy levels are still a major factor in the lack of completion of training, and there is a need for additional support (and perhaps extended course times) in areas such as ICT literacy, and basic literacy and numeracy.
- ✓ In the delivery of CBT, it is essential that trainers/assessors have participated in cross-cultural awareness training; there is also a clear need for more Indigenous trainers (holding at least Certificate IV in Training and Assessment).
- ✓ Many employers have difficulty in creating the appropriate support environment required for Indigenous students. However, training is generally successful if the business has budgeted for trainees, and career pathways are then available for graduates; and the course is work-based, with appropriate mentoring and support. Consideration needs to be given to the level of support/training required for employers, including appropriate funding, to ensure that these conditions can be met.



### Effectiveness of initiatives on Indigenous training:

- ✓ Initiatives to engage more Indigenous people in training will only be beneficial where the Indigenous community have input to, and determine the implementation strategies for, these initiatives. Communities themselves need to be actively involved in the negotiation of training to suit their own requirements.
- ✓ TDA recommends that government initiatives look to assist in bridging the transition from education to employment through individual support and guidance for Indigenous students.
- ✓ Clear, consistent, articulated pathways between the school, VET and university sectors are an essential ingredient in improving training, educational and work outcomes for Indigenous students.
- ✓ There is also a significant role for business and industry in placing greater emphasis on targeted employment programs (such as traineeships and apprenticeships) which include pathways to ongoing, meaningful careers.
- ✓ TDA also recommend that governments give greater attention to foundation, or pre-vocational training (which could include cultural awareness where appropriate) for Indigenous students. This strategy, along with associated support mechanisms (including counselling and mentoring) has clearly demonstrated significant potential to improve educational and training outcomes (and therefore employment outcomes) for Indigenous students.

### Models for partnerships:

- ✓ TDA recommends the development of strong partnerships between the Indigenous community, Indigenous organisations such as CDEPs, TAFE Institutes and other RTOs, local Councils, government agencies and local industry and business (including industry representative groups and employer bodies and regional development forums). An integrated whole-of-government, whole-of-region approach is required.

Our experience suggested that partnerships between CDEPs and appropriately motivated and skilled RTOs implementing Indigenous-appropriate delivery models have the potential to develop a comprehensive strategy for skills development and recognition for both individuals and the region.

- ✓ Developing close partnerships between training and employers and employment organisations requires both commitment and resources.