



New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies

The Representative Organisation of NSW Jewry

ועד הקהילה היהודית בנסו

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1 August 2005

LETTER TO SUPPORT TRANBY ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE COLLEGE RE PROPOSED SENATE BILL TO REDUCE FUNDING

The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies strongly objects to any reduction of funding to Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College and actually recommends an increase in funding.

In particular the Jewish Board of Deputies objects to the reduction and changes in funding to **Indigenous Community Controlled Training Providers** resulting from the proposed bills

Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Bill 2005

Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005

The Jewish Board of Deputies have had an ongoing relationship with Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College through a jointly managed Trust, the Rona Tranby Trust, which gives awards to Indigenous people to support oral history projects, and through the Friends of Tranby organization.



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Over the years we have come to realise what a unique and valuable institution Tranby College is. We have met many of the teachers and students at Tranby and through Tranby have had the opportunity to meet and work with Indigenous people.

Tranby Aboriginal College provides an irreplaceable service both to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society. Tranby has been operating since the 1950s, and many people have studied at or been connected to the college, including Kevin Cook, Rev Alf Clint (Anglican minister), Jack Beetson (recipient 2001 UN Unsung Hero Award), Isabel Flick OAM, Kevin Tory, Mick and Pat Dodson, Gary Foley, Terry O'Shane, Jo McGuinness, Paul Torzillo, Bob Maza, Chicka Dixon, Justice Robert Hope, Aiden Ridgeway, Linda Burnie, Hal Wootten QC, Judge Bob Bellar, Cleonie Quayle (recipient 2002 NSW Aboriginal Justice award), and many other well-known Australians.

Tranby has important historical significance and is held very dear in the hearts of many people.

Aboriginal culture has an inspiring tradition of knowledge and education. The methods used are unique and involve, emotional connection, practical experience, mentoring by Elders, particular group dynamics between students and teachers, a unique understanding and respect for 'Knowledge' and many other Aboriginal-specific teaching methods. Indigenous run Colleges like Tranby and the other colleges affected by the proposed bills, (The Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) in Alice Springs, Aboriginal Dance Theatre in Redfern and Tauondi Incorporated in Adelaide) give all Australians, and specifically Indigenous Australians a chance to work within this framework.

Tranby provides services that are not available in other, mainstream institutions.

Firstly, it provides a culturally appropriate education opportunity for Indigenous students from all over Australia. For cultural reasons and also due to the past trauma experienced by many Indigenous people, being at Tranby is often the first time that they have felt comfortable in an education institution. The self-esteem and confidence gained by actually learning and succeeding at a place like Tranby is priceless. It leads on to further study, employment, and often becomes an inspiration for the student's family and community to further their education. Each person, who succeeds at Tranby, has a ripple

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effect that influences a far greater number of people. Tranby's retention rates and level of qualification is consistently higher than mainstream educational alternatives for Indigenous students as shown from figures supplied by Tranby. Why threaten the viability of a college that is getting superior results in such a critical area as Indigenous education?

Secondly, Tranby acts as a community centre for Indigenous people. Students often say that they feel part of the Tranby family. Tranby provides a home away from home and is a place where communal activities, such as book launches, art exhibitions, cultural performances can take place. Aboriginal people need more of this sort of support not less.

Thirdly, Tranby acts as a meeting place for the Indigenous and non-indigenous community.

Through the extensive Friends of Tranby network, many well-known and well-motivated non-indigenous people are able to work together with Indigenous communities on a range of ideas and projects. Tranby is in a perfect position to facilitate these partnerships and over the years has built up networks that are irreplaceable. For example it is through Tranby that the Jewish Board of Deputies has been able to be involved in supporting the oral history projects of the Rona Tranby Trust. Since 1999 Tranby has offered an Advanced Diploma of Applied Aboriginal Studies for non-indigenous students. This gives an opportunity for people to learn about Australia's Indigenous culture in an Indigenous way.

In the words of one of our members, who graduated from this course in 2002:

" The Aboriginal way of teaching and learning, and being welcomed into the Tranby family, so generously, gave me an understanding of Aboriginal people and culture, that was only possible because of the type of place that Tranby is. I have used what I learnt at Tranby to get involved in all sorts of initiatives and projects with Indigenous communities, with benefits flowing both ways. I have studied at an Anglican private school (HSC-1976), UNSW (BSc), University of Sydney (qualifying masters in neurophysiology), and various private colleges such as the Shalom Institute and the School of Colour and Design and I have never experienced education as it was taught at Tranby. Tranby is unique and irreplaceable- a national treasure."

If the Bills are passed, they will:

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- Reduce funds available to Indigenous education by a net \$3.7 million over 2006-2008;
- Transfer \$10.9 million otherwise quarantined for the independent community-controlled providers into a common funding pool, to be administered by the States to be spent under the Skilling Australia's Workforce Bill 2005;
- Require the Indigenous organisations to compete for funds with all other registered training providers, indigenous or not, in a joint funding pool, with **no guaranteed criteria specifying indigenous staffing and support.**

For Tranby, these proposed changes to funding arrangements will threaten its existence as immediately as 2006.

In summary, Tranby Aboriginal College holds a unique and irreplaceable position amongst educational institutions. It provides education to Australia's Indigenous people in a culturally appropriate and supportive way. It has historical significance and is regarded by many as one of Sydney's treasures. It would be shameful and a great loss if Tranby is forced to close, due to lack of funds, precipitated by the proposed changes.

We therefore strongly object to the proposed changes in funding to Indigenous Community Controlled Training Providers, in particular Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative College, and recommend that more funding be provided for these valuable institutions, rather than less.