

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous education funding arrangements

Submission no: 20

Received: 21/04/2005

Submitter: Terry Mackenroth MP
Acting Premier and Minister for Trade

Organisation: Queensland Government

Address: Executive Building
100 George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4002

Phone: 07 3224 4500

Fax: 07 3221 3631

Email: ThePremier@premiers.qld.gov.au



FAXED
18405



Queensland
Government

Please quote: MN74918/RW17/SocPol

Premier of Queensland
and Minister for Trade

15 APR 2005

Senator Trish Crossin
Chair
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Senator Crossin

I attach the Queensland Government's submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee's Inquiry into Indigenous education funding arrangements.

The Queensland Government is interested in participating further in consultation on this important issue. The Honourable Anna Bligh MP, Minister for Education and the Arts, is available to appear before the Commission if hearings are conducted in Brisbane. I also extend an invitation to the Committee to visit Queensland schools that have demonstrated success in Indigenous education. Further arrangements can be made through Minister Bligh's office on 3237 1000.

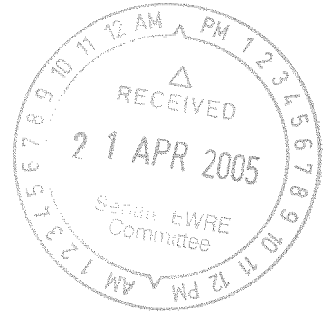
Yours sincerely

TERRY MACKENROTH MP
ACTING PREMIER AND
MINISTER FOR TRADE

Executive Building
100 George Street Brisbane
PO Box 185 Brisbane Albert Street
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3224 4500
Facsimile +61 7 3221 3631
Email ThePremier@premiers.qld.gov.au
Website www.thepremier.qld.gov.au



**Queensland
Government**



**INQUIRY INTO THE IMPLICATIONS OF FUNDING POLICY CHANGES
CONTAINED IN 2004 AMENDMENTS TO THE *INDIGENOUS EDUCATION
(TARGETED ASSISTANCE) ACT 2000***

By the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References
Committee

Submission from the Queensland Government

March 2005

Summary and Recommendations

The Queensland Government supports some of the changes in the new legislation but has concerns about excessive and unnecessary requirements for performance indicators, inadequate consultation and inequitable sharing of Commonwealth funds between state and non-state schools, and between jurisdictions (see in particular recommendation 3). The Queensland Government seeks greater and meaningful involvement in the evaluation of current programs and the development of future priorities (see recommendation 5).

The submission is based on information currently known to the Queensland Government as at 2 March 2005.

- R1 That the Australian Government offer all TAFE Queensland institutes and Agricultural Colleges the opportunity to become ITAS funded institutions.**
- R2 States and Territories should be given equal opportunity in applying for funds to implement strategic literacy initiatives.**
- R3 That the performance reporting required by the Australian Government should be on key outcome indicators only.**
- R4 That the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* be amended to provide parity of per capita funding between
 - a) Indigenous students at government schools and non-government schools, and**
 - b) Indigenous English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students and non-Indigenous ESL students.****
- R5 That Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) payments for students in all areas be indexed, so that services can be maintained.**
- R6 That as part of the Whole of School Intervention Strategy, the Australian Government provide funding for the training of Indigenous communities in the development of funding submissions.**
- R7 That the Australian Government include representatives of the states and other education providers in
 - a) the management of all evaluations of Indigenous education programs, and**
 - b) the development of options for the 2009-12 quadrennium.****

Introduction

This submission is made by the Queensland Government, reflecting its roles as a major provider of education and training services and also as a funder and regulator of non-state education and training services.

Queensland schools enrol 28 per cent of all Indigenous school students in Australia (second only to New South Wales). The table below shows Queensland's situation relative to other jurisdictions on select indicators.

	Indigenous school students, 2003 ¹	Remote Indigenous school students, 2003 ²	Indigenous Year 3 students below the reading benchmark, 2001 ³	Indigenous VET students, 2003 ⁴	Indigenous VET students in remote locations, 2003
New South Wales	29%	22%	20%	28%	6%
Victoria	5%	2%	7%	7%	0%
Queensland	28%	19%	28%	24%	20%
South Australia	6%	4%	8%	7%	5%
Western Australia	16%	27%	9%	16%	28%
Tasmania	4%	0%	1%	2%	0%
Northern Territory	11%	26%	27%	15%	41%
Australian Capital Territory	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
AUSTRALIA	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Within Queensland, the vast majority of Indigenous students are enrolled at state schools (87% or 32,038 in 2003, compared to 4,786 at non-state schools). In remote areas, state schools enrolled 93% of Indigenous students.

During 2004-05, the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment Act 2004* impacts on Queensland by providing funding⁵ for

- the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP): \$19M for state schools, \$3M for training providers and approx. \$13M for non-state schools
- the National Indigenous Education Literacy and Numeracy Scheme (NIELNS): \$0.4M for state schools
- Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme (IEDA): a share of \$33.5M nationally

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools Australia 2003*, cat. No. 4221.0, table 47.

² Derived from data supplied by DEST.

³ Derived from MCEETYA, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2001*, table 1 and Appendix 1, page 5. The interstate comparisons may be affected by variation in the numbers of students absent or withdrawn from testing.

⁴ National Centre for Vocational Education Research, *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Students and courses 2003*, table 5. This includes VET in schools students. The definition of remote is slightly different for the NCVER statistics.

⁵ Source: Commonwealth Budget 2004-05 Paper 3, Tables B2 & B3

- Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS): the Australian Government has yet to indicate the estimated expenditure in Queensland, but it is likely to be of the order of \$10 million.

The Queensland Government is committed to improving education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Its agencies are committed to working cooperatively with the Australian Government to achieve these aims, including ways to improve accountability.

The Queensland Government is willing to assist the Inquiry by providing evidence at hearings and by nominating schools for the Committee to visit.

Term of reference 1:

Proposed changes to the IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to:

- a) the new tutorial assistance arrangements and Whole of School Intervention strategy under IEDA, and***
- b) new strategic initiatives for Indigenous students in remote areas and the new flagship project for teaching literacy under IESIP.***

(a) Changes to tutorial arrangements

Schools

The Queensland Government welcomes the changes during the last quadrennium towards in-school tuition, which is more effective than at-home tuition in reaching those students in greatest need.

The Australian Government will allocate funding based on the number of Indigenous students who did not meet the benchmarks in the Years 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy tests. This initially appeared to overlook the needs of students in early years of schooling, when intervention can be most effective. The more recent announcement by Minister Nelson advising that education providers will have flexibility in how they use these funds is heartening. The Provider Guidelines now state that students who are at risk of not meeting the relevant literacy and numeracy curriculum outcomes levels for their age are also eligible.

TAFE

The Queensland Government has major concerns around the withdrawal of Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) funding for Indigenous students enrolled in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes.

The Indigenous Education Program Guidelines state that *“ITAS will be made available for eligible students studying university award level courses and Australian Quality Framework (AQF) accredited VET courses at ITAS funded institutions”*.

At the time of writing, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) have verbally confirmed that TAFE Queensland institutes and Agricultural Colleges will not be eligible for ITAS as they are not ITAS funded institutions and further advised that there are only two ITAS funded institutions in Australia. It is not clear

what process was used to determine these two ITAS funded institutions. The Queensland Government is not aware of any opportunity for Queensland TAFE and equivalent institutions to apply to be classed as ITAS funded institutions.

If TAFE Queensland institutes or Agricultural Colleges are not defined as ITAS funded institutions, VET will be the only sector not eligible for ITAS. This situation is inequitable and is not supported by the Queensland Government. Indigenous young people, a large proportion of whom take up Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) accredited VET, will be denied access to tutorial assistance. It is recognised that VET is a popular pathway for significant numbers of Indigenous people and, even with present levels of tutorial assistance, completion rates are below that of the broader population. Any diminution of ITAS funding will affect the achievement rates of Indigenous TAFE and Agricultural College students as they will not receive the necessary tutorial support required to be retained, complete, and pass their studies. Also, this will flow on to affect the participation and achievement rates in future years as potential Indigenous students will perceive the lack of tutorial support as a barrier to completing their studies. Rather than reducing tutorial assistance, the Australian Government should be supporting an increase for the TAFE sector.

Recommendation:

R1 That the Australian Government offer all TAFE Queensland institutes and Agricultural Colleges the opportunity to become ITAS funded institutions.

(b) The new strategic initiatives for Indigenous students in remote areas and the flagship project on the teaching of literacy

The Australian Government National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy is continuing into the current quadrennium. In the past there have been a number of programs funded in each jurisdiction under this program. The Australian Government has indicated an allocation of \$30 million over four years for this strategy, which includes \$14 million for the flagship project, *Scaffolding Literacy*, \$6 million-\$8 million for the *Dare to Lead* program and \$4 million-\$5 million for the *What Works* program. In the last quadrennium, Queensland received approximately \$3 million under this program.

The Australian Government is planning the large investment in the *Scaffolding Literacy* program as it contends that this project has had successful pilots in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia. In Queensland, one non-state school participated in the pilot.

Of the \$14 million for the *Scaffolding Literacy* project, \$8 million⁶ is being directed to the Northern Territory. As yet there is no planned allocation to Queensland.

The remaining allocation of \$6 million is to be shared among jurisdictions. While this funding is welcome, there needs to be realistic expectations of what it can achieve. As the evaluation report stated, *Scaffolding Literacy* 'requires intensive professional development and extensive support and assistance for teachers to implement the

⁶ Minister Nelson media release, \$14 Million to Improve Indigenous Student Literacy, 5 April 2004, IND2

program for their students⁷. If the program is worthwhile, then each jurisdiction should receive a similar allocation, in proportion to its numbers of Indigenous students in the target group.

Also to date there has only been very limited information, other than the ACER evaluation, available to educational providers about the successes and intricacies of the program. This leaves a limited capacity for educational systems to make informed decisions about the overall effectiveness of the program.

The Queensland Government is currently assessing whether the program is viable for Queensland state schools. However, given the Australian Government's large commitment to this one program, it is doubtful that meaningful funding will be forthcoming from the Australian Government for other initiatives that support the improvement of literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students. Only \$3 million - \$6 million remains of the \$30 million allocation for the literacy and numeracy strategy. Further to this, funding allocations for literacy would appear not to correspond with levels of educational need.

The emphasis being placed on one literacy program seems to imply that the Australian Government does not recognise that there could be a number of effective literacy programs that can be utilised by teachers within the classroom. Nor does it recognise that the quality of the teaching is pivotal. It appears that Queensland will not be able to access funds to support strategic literacy initiatives targeted towards Indigenous students.

Recommendation:

R2 States and Territories should be given equal opportunity in applying for funds to implement strategic literacy initiatives.

Term of reference 2:

The likely educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's new Indigenous-specific funding measures, with reference to:

- a) ***the Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs, and***
- b) ***the Government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for Indigenous students, as stated in the 10-point national agenda for schooling announced in November 2003.***

(a) Indigenous Youth Leadership and Youth Mobility Programs

The legislation implements⁸ \$11 million nationally over four years for the Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme that will provide 250 boarding school and university scholarships and structured study tours for Indigenous students from remote areas. The legislation also implements \$19.5 million nationally for a new Indigenous Youth Mobility Program. The program will assist young Indigenous people who, with the

⁷ ACER, *Evaluation of the University of Canberra Programme for Advanced Literacy Development Scaffolding Literacy Programme with Indigenous Children in School*, 2002, p.35.

⁸ Minister Nelson media release 7 December 2004, MIN 1022/04

support of their communities, choose to relocate to capital cities or major provincial centres to take up employment and training opportunities.

Leadership programs have been run in Queensland for some time, including

- the youth leadership program at Holloways Beach, outside Cairns
- the Young Indigenous Leaders Forum (Office of Youth Affairs), linked to the Premier's Business Reconciliation Awards.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Aspiration Program (AITAP) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Aspirations Pathways Program (AICAPP) also operated for some time but have been discontinued, due to a reorientation towards more generic leadership programs at the time, and fixed project funding from the Commonwealth respectively.

The Queensland Government considers relocation strategies to be useful for some students, provided that there is a good relationship between the boarding school and the home community.

This has been highlighted recently by negotiations between several large boarding schools in northern Queensland and the Torres Strait Island Regional Education Council (TSIREC), on behalf of all students from the Torres Strait islands. A Memorandum of Understanding with each provider will incorporate an agreed level of expectations for all boarding schools that are housing students from those affected communities, including the additional support services to be provided to students while at the facilities.

The Queensland Government has supported relocation for many years through state grants to student hostels. It has been the only state to provide grants to school-term non-government hostels. The Australian Government's new program appears to be modelled on this Queensland program.

In addition, the Queensland Government has recently opened student residential facilities at Spinifex State College (Mt Isa) and Western Cape College – Weipa. Unfortunately, these services are not eligible to receive funding under the new legislation, because the Australian Government's program is restricted to non-government providers.

In order to access appropriate secondary education and training opportunities, the majority of the Indigenous students in Cape York have to leave their communities and live away from home. While some attend Weipa or Cooktown State Schools, many enrol in boarding schools at a range of locations across Queensland.

Unfortunately there is a very high level of attrition of Indigenous students electing the boarding school option, with available data indicating that for the period 1997-2003 boarding school attrition rates for aboriginal students living in Cape York Indigenous communities averaged 97%.

Schools in the Cape have started to work collectively to implement a range of strategies to support their students in transitioning to, and remaining in, boarding schools. In particular, they have pooled Australian and Queensland Government resources to establish a team of Transition Support Officers to work with individual students, their families and their boarding schools to address the range of transition issues faced by the students.

The Bypassing Strategy also enables all students outside of Weipa and Cooktown to attend boarding schools to complete their secondary schooling.

The Australian and Queensland Governments are jointly funding a transition project for Indigenous students at boarding schools in Townsville and elsewhere.

(b) *Accelerated educational outcomes for Indigenous students*

The Queensland Government shares the Commonwealth's objective of accelerating educational outcomes, but is aware of the practical difficulties of achieving sustainable change in a large number of diverse schools and communities, especially given the connections between education and other portfolios, such as health and housing. We need high aspirations but also realistic expectations.

Partners for Success is the key strategy for the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Indigenous peoples in Queensland state schools⁹. Initially trialled in 38 schools in 2000, mainly in rural and remote locations, the strategy has now been reinvigorated and extended to include all state schools in Queensland. The priority areas for action in 2003–2005 are attendance, retention and completion, literacy attainment, and workforce and leadership in Indigenous culture. Statewide stretch targets have been set in each of the priority areas.

Strategies include

- five Learning Engagement Centres (LECs), located in Brisbane, Nambour, Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton
- the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA), a statewide staff college focusing on developing, trialling and implementing professional development and training under the *Partners for Success* framework
- extension of the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) to additional sites and a wider range of participants, with an emphasis on identified areas of education such as middle and senior schooling. This involves working closely with the Queensland Department of Employment and Training (DET) to extend RATEP beyond teacher education to include other industries and career pathways
- review of the impact of flexible human resource arrangements in identified schools under *Partners for Success*, with a view to negotiating continued innovation in other identified schools
- expansion of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Career Development* strategy to recruit, retain and develop Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at all levels and locations of Education Queensland
- the establishment of a department-wide network providing information, support and career planning for Indigenous employees of Education Queensland
- review of how best to use supplementary funding sources to both support and reward schools as they move towards the attainment of targets
- seven Centres of Excellence in Indigenous Education, which receive \$20,000 per year to enable them to document and share their effective practices with other schools through a range of activities such as mentoring, workshops,

⁹ Education Queensland (2003), *Partners for Success Action Plan 2003–2005, Executive Summary*, available at <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atsi/success/pdfs/exec-summ-03.pdf>.

Learning and Development program delivery, online communication, school and community visits and modelling

- a High Achiever Principals Network to foster leadership and innovation in Indigenous Education. The network consists of up to ten principals. Funds are made available to allow these principals to spend up to one day a fortnight helping fellow principals and teachers through schemes such as work shadowing, mentoring, workshops and teleconferencing
- the development and use of School Indigenous Education Profiles to identify schools demonstrating success in the priority areas
- a Partners for Success Implementation Network, which informs the implementation of the *Partners for Success Action Plan 2003–2005*. The Network is made up of representatives from school principals, High Achieving Principals, LECs, IETA and executive directors (schools).

In 2003, the Queensland Government commissioned a review of Indigenous education by its Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal. The Government has endorsed all nine recommendations in the Committee's report¹⁰, which include

- 'challenge the systemic mindset that tolerates or accepts the continuation of underperformance in Indigenous education by asserting the rights of Indigenous people to a quality education'
- an Accountabilities Matrix throughout the Education Queensland structure, so that Indigenous education outcomes in state schools are clearly the responsibility of all relevant officers
- a review of the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP), in order to significantly increase the number of quality Indigenous teachers.

All Queensland state schools now have targets to bridge the gap in performance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and their principals must account to their supervisors for their achievement against these targets.

The Queensland Government accepts the principles stated by Minister Nelson¹¹ to achieve accelerated learning outcomes, namely

- focusing effort on areas of greatest disadvantage
- directing resources to programs that demonstrably achieve improvements in educational outcomes
- leveraging mainstream resources.

The *What Works* materials are highly regarded in schools. They are consistent with the Queensland Government's *Partners for Success* initiative.

The Queensland Government also has a focus on identifying what works and extending it to other locations. It is in the process of allocating some of its IESIP funds to action research projects in those schools that achieved the greatest gains in learning by Indigenous students. The results of these projects will be shared with other schools.

In the negotiations on agreements for the last quadrennium, and again in negotiations on the new quadrennium, the Australian Government has sought targets that would halve the difference in educational outcomes between Indigenous and

¹⁰ Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal (2004), *Report on Indigenous Education*. Department of Education and the Arts, Queensland — <http://education.qld.gov.au/publication/production/reports/pdfs/Indigenousreport.pdf>

¹¹ Brendan Nelson, *Taking Schools to the Next Level*, 13 November 2003

other students within four years. These targets are unrealistic and do not motivate education providers and families to succeed. The Queensland Government hopes that the Commonwealth will be more realistic in negotiating targets in agreements for the new quadrennium. It is desirable to have reasonable stretch targets for the state, with flexibility to allow local input to local targets, as occurs in Queensland.

Given the range and intensity of Queensland intervention strategies, it is important the State and Commonwealth investments complement each other. This requires strong collaboration between governments, which is addressed later under Term of Reference 5.

Term of reference 3:

The accountability requirements applying to funding agreements made under IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to:

- a) ***the new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes, and***
- b) ***the new financial reporting arrangements.***

Educational accountability

A number of new requirements have been placed on school systems, to

- provide data on different geographical regions (S.11E(2)). The Commonwealth has indicated the intention to require data at remote, rural/provincial and metropolitan levels
- report on actions taken in response to directions from the Commonwealth Minister where performance targets are not being met (S.11E)
- participate in evaluations and data validation exercises (S.11G)
- provide an annual *Indigenous Education Statement*, commencing in 2006. Minister Nelson has announced his intention to make this a condition of funding under the parallel *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*
- report on literacy and numeracy results for each quartile. DEST has sought to insert this in the IESIP agreements
- provide performance data on IEDA programs.

These are in addition to the extensive reporting requirements introduced at the start of the 2001-04 quadrennium.

These requirements include an excessive number of performance indicators, which diverts attention from the key indicators. Performance indicators should be used to reinforce priorities, but this is not possible with over 350 performance measures required. This issue has been identified by the Australian Government's own evaluation.

'An important issue is how much performance information is needed for accountability. Two progress reports and a performance report in the first year was too onerous for providers and gave more information to State/Territory offices than they were able to follow up. It may be more appropriate to

approach the program as a set of risks; paying closer attention to the larger projects with larger funding.' *National Evaluation of National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS), 2003, p.102*

The Queensland Government's view is that jurisdictions should be held accountable for results, defined in terms of achieving outcomes or delivering outputs, rather than for their own expenditure or inputs¹².

Additionally, indicators, which have a complex or unknown connection with student outcomes, should not be included. For example, reporting on the numbers of Indigenous staff by geographic areas raise debate about the desired direction of 'improvement'. Connections between the Indigenous status of staff and the outcomes for Indigenous students are likely to be mediated by a complex set of factors, including the qualifications/skills of the staff, the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, and the Indigenous community. These complexities cannot be accounted for by mere numerical indicators, and point to the need for further research-based inquiry, rather than indicators based on simplistic assumptions.

The COAG report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: key indicators 2003* identified a number of headline indicators across portfolios (such as literacy and numeracy results), supported by strategic change indicators (such as attendance). Their approach is much more strategic and reasoned than the proliferation of indicators proposed by DEST.

The Queensland Government supports the use of the COAG-endorsed performance indicators and is using them as the basis for developing the Partnerships Queensland Performance Framework. Queensland Government agencies will be required to use these indicators to report on whole-of-government efforts to achieve equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland.

The draft *Indigenous Education Performance Monitoring and Reporting Framework Standard Suite of Performance Indicators for the 2005-2008 quadrennium* does not reduce the data required by the Australian Government. In fact, the amount of reporting has increased with the introduction of reporting by quartiles and by geo-location. The number of individual performance measures required in the framework numbers over 350, some of which are of limited value. For instance, the framework includes data inputs such as

- percentage (with numbers) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (where applicable) who are members of advisory, reference or management committees or groups that deal specifically with Indigenous issues at the:
 - (a) State level
 - (b) Regional, district or diocesan level
- average number of hours of professional learning undertaken over the reporting year by Indigenous teachers and support staff.
Percentage of Indigenous teachers and support staff involved in professional learning over the reporting year.
...one to three pages of information on the type of professional learning activities undertaken by Indigenous teachers and support staff.
...half a page [on] the support structures or mechanisms that have been put in place within the organisation to assist the professional learning of Indigenous teachers and support staff.

The collection of this level of detail is excessive and it produces more data than the Australian Government would most likely have the ability to use.

¹² Queensland Treasury, *Negotiating Specific Purpose Payments — A Guide for Queensland Government Agencies*.

The new geographic data may be useful in assessing the effectiveness of Indigenous education programs in different parts of each State and Territory. This data should be required only for key outcome indicators, such as literacy and numeracy. The Australian Government's proposals mandate geographic data for literacy and numeracy, but also for employees. Moreover, the legislation and draft Agreement allow the Australian Government to add further requirements later, if it so wishes.

These concerns are shared by other States and Territories. At the May 2004 meeting of the Australian Education System Officials Committee (AESOC), members indicated their concern in relation to the totality of data required and its usefulness, particularly when the amount of data collected for accountability was considered in proportion to the dollars received. The load placed on small Indigenous community schools, least able to provide sophisticated data, was also of concern.

The Australian Government is introducing greater reporting requirements designed to ensure that the State and Territories will not reduce their current commitments to Indigenous education. These cover both the *Indigenous Education Act* and the *Schools Assistance Act*. Under the Indigenous Education Act, the intent has not changed but the Australian Government has introduced greater specificity around the requirements.

Under the *Schools Assistance Act*, the Australian Government has introduced the Indigenous Education Statement. The statement's purpose is 'to ensure that Indigenous education is accorded a mainstream education priority'¹³.

The annual reports of the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts demonstrate the department's commitment to Indigenous education. Consequently, an Indigenous Education Statement for the purpose stated by the Australian Government is duplicating mechanisms already in place at the State level and publicly accessible.

The Australian Government has also indicated¹⁴ its intention to require performance reports and performance indicators for a number of the funding programs, including the parent participation program. While accountability is desirable, it is important that the indicators used align with the indicators for IESIP wherever feasible, and that the effort required to produce the data is in proportion to the size of the grant.

Recommendation:

R3 That the performance reporting required by the Australian Government should be on key outcome indicators only.

¹³ DEST, *Learning Together: Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity — Australian Government Funding for Schools for the 2005–08 Quadrennium, Discussion Paper*, April 2004.

¹⁴ DEST, *Indigenous Education Programmes Provider Guidelines 2005–2008*, January 2005.

Term of reference 4:

The effect of the proposed funding measures on current state and other systemic Indigenous programs, and future implications for the operation of ASSPA committees.

The Queensland Government has a number of concerns about the new funding arrangements and their effect on Indigenous education programs, as follows.

1. The funding differential between Indigenous students in state and non-state schools. There seems to be no basis for why a student in a non-state school should receive up to 3.75 times¹⁵ the amount of supplementary recurrent assistance (SRA) as their counterpart in a state school. This seems inconsistent with the Australian Government's constitutional responsibility for Indigenous affairs, which applies equally to all Indigenous children. In April 2004, MCEETYA agreed that the Australian Government should fund Indigenous students at government schools at the same per capita rates as provided to their counterparts in non-government schools, but the Commonwealth did not accept this.
2. Non-indexation of the IESIP – Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) allocation for students in metropolitan schools. In Queensland, this is estimated to reduce the grant to the state school sector by \$0.8 million and the non-state sector by \$0.1 million during the quadrennium.
3. The funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) services is considerably lower for Indigenous students than it is for other ESL students. The English as a Second Language — Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ESL-ILSS) program, funded under this legislation, will pay \$3,356 per student in 2005. The English as a Second Language — New Arrivals program (ESL – NA), however, will pay \$4,854 per student in 2005. There is no rationale for Indigenous students receiving 30 per cent less than their non-Indigenous counterparts.
4. Restrictions to the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) — see comments under term of reference 1(a).
5. The Scaffolding Program will provide useful additional funds, but the quantum is insufficient — see comments under term of reference 1(b).

Recommendations:

- R4 That the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* be amended to provide parity of per capita funding between**
- a) Indigenous students at government schools and non-government schools, and
 - b) Indigenous English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students and non-Indigenous ESL students.
- R5 That Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) payments for students in all areas be indexed, so that services can be maintained.**

¹⁵ Indigenous students in a junior secondary metropolitan school will attract \$447.80 per year if in a government school, \$1,679.27 if in a non-government school. Source: DEST discussion paper, April 2004.

Future implications for ASSPA committees

There were approximately 905 Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program (ASSPA) committees in Queensland at the end of 2004.

The new legislation replaces ASSPA funding with the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI), which allocates funds through a competitive submission-based process, rather than the previous per-capita basis. There may be changes in the activities funded and the amount provided to each school, but this is not clear in the Australian Government's documentation to date.

A significant implication is likely to be a considerable reduction in the number of school communities receiving funding for parent involvement, particularly given that the Commonwealth is targeting at least half the funds to schools in remote locations¹⁶. There is a risk that some of these will be the communities in greatest need, as the new requirement to make submissions creates a Catch-22 situation, in which those communities in greatest need are least likely to have the organisational skills to prepare successful submissions.

Where schools do not attract PSPI funding, it is likely that in most cases their ASSPA committee will disband. School communities will have the option of continuing their ASSPA committee without funds or by drawing on other school funds, but this is not expected to occur in most cases.

The phasing out of ASSPA committees at the same time as the abolition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) has created a perception among many Indigenous people that they are being disenfranchised.

The Australian Government appears to favour greater Indigenous involvement through mainstream consultative processes in schools. The *DEST Provider Guidelines 2005–2008* state

'Parents of Indigenous students who have been involved with ASSPA Committees may continue their participation in education decision-making in partnership with schools through a range of ways, including their current committee structure, or another committee with Indigenous community and school membership set up to advise on a whole of school strategy to improve the education of Indigenous students and to oversee the implementation of the projects funded under the Parent School Partnerships Initiative.

School Boards or Councils that have appropriate Indigenous community membership also provide a suitable way of involving Indigenous communities.'

ASSPA committees have empowered a generation of Indigenous parents. While it is desirable to have Indigenous parents as part of the school Parents and Citizens (P&C) or Parents and Friends (P&F) Association, a transition arrangement to a new mainstream approach — say over a year — would have been more desirable.

There is a risk that Indigenous families in metropolitan and regional schools will have little voice in school affairs, as their children form a small minority of students at most of these schools. It is important that DEST ensure that they are not overlooked in

¹⁶ DEST, *Learning Together: Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity — Australian Government Funding for Schools for the 2005–08 Quadrennium, Discussion Paper*, April 2004.

PSPI funding, as 22 per cent of Indigenous students in Queensland attend metropolitan schools and another 58 per cent attend regional schools.

Education Queensland has created a number of mechanisms to support Indigenous families' involvement in their children's schools, including metropolitan and regional schools through its strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, *Partners for Success*. However, this would be much more effective if it were done in partnership with the Australian Government, particularly in the context of Parent School Partnerships Initiatives.

Given the risk of the demise of many ASSPA Committees, it will be important that all schools with Indigenous students receive financial support to build the capacity of Indigenous parents and communities generally, and specifically, to provide training in the development of funding submissions.

Recommendation:

R6 That as part of the Whole of School Intervention Strategy, the Australian Government provide funding for the training of Indigenous communities in the development of funding submissions.

Term of reference 5:

The extent of consultation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, schools and parents, especially ASSPA committees, about policies and details of changes to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000.

There has been no meaningful consultation with jurisdictions on the policy and program changes.

Consultation with the State Government, schools and parents was brief, omitted some key groups and appeared to be mainly providing information on Australian Government policies that were already determined. This undermines the partnership that is needed to improve Indigenous education. This partnership is important because the funds under this legislation are intended to supplement State and other Commonwealth funds, and also because the ideas and commitment of those responsible for implementing education programs are essential for success.

Queensland, together with other States and Territories, sought to negotiate with the Commonwealth through MCEETYA on this legislation and the companion States Grants legislation. In July 2003, MCEETYA agreed that the Australian Government would convene a Working Group to set a timetable and commence negotiations. However, the Australian Government did not enter into meaningful discussions at its meetings and the States' views were not reflected in the subsequent Commonwealth proposals.

In early 2004, the Australian Government released a discussion paper *Australian Government Indigenous-specific funding for the 2005-08 Quadrennium*, inviting feedback by 28 May 2004. However, the Australian Government announced its policies for Indigenous education for the next quadrennium on 5 April 2004, before the end of the consultation period.

A draft of the *Indigenous Education Performance Monitoring and Reporting Framework Standard Suite of Performance Indicators for the 2005-2008 quadrennium* was provided for comment in late August 2004.

Where the Queensland Government has raised issues, this has been met with a justification of the Australian Government's position. Although the Australian Government has accommodated some suggested changes by the States and Territories on unrealistic performance measures and the need for flexibility on the provision of in-class tuition, there has been little movement on the Australian Government position on any major issue since the initial announcement in April 2004.

The Australian Government has not consulted the MCEETYA Indigenous Education, Employment, Training and Youth (IEETY) Taskforce nor the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) in each jurisdiction.

Consultation was also flawed in the early stages of evaluation studies commissioned by the Australian Government. The DEST website states that the following reports informed the changes.

- *National Evaluation of National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS)*. The process used was to engage an external consultant, reporting to a steering committee of Commonwealth officers and consulting with an Indigenous Reference Group. While case studies were conducted in the States, there was no school system representation on the steering committee.
- *Review of the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Program*. The process included release of discussion papers and meetings with State Indigenous education units during 2002. Again, the States and other education providers had no part in the governance of the process.

The Australian Government's lack of effective consultation is inconsistent with the *National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians*¹⁷, agreed to by COAG at its 25 June 2004 meeting. These principles include 'committing to cooperative approaches on policy and service delivery between agencies, at all levels of government'.

Recommendation:

- R7 That the Australian Government include representatives of the states and other education providers in**
- c) the management of all evaluations of Indigenous education programs, and**
 - d) the development of options for the 2009-12 quadrennium.**

¹⁷ Available at http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/250604/attachments_b.pdf