Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
The Australian National University

# Education, Training and Indigenous Futures

## CAEPR Policy Research: 1990–2007

Adrian M Fordham and RG (Jerry) Schwab

October 2007

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

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# Executive summary

## Background

In 2006, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*, which provides policy recommendations to improve Indigenous student outcomes over the current schools funding quadrennium and beyond. The policy focuses on five domains in which engagement is critical, namely:

- early childhood education
- school and community educational partnerships
- school leadership
- quality teaching
- pathways to training, employment and higher education.

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University (ANU) is a unique Indigenous economic and social policy research centre, with staff backgrounds in anthropology, demography, economics, geography, education, statistics and political science. It has produced numerous research reports that are relevant to Indigenous education and training.

The Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC), which supports MCEETYA, commissioned this review to provide in one document a summary of the Indigenous education and training information in over 100 CAEPR reports. It is a ready reference for practitioners, so that research can assist their practice, in a format that is convenient for readers who are not academics.

The focus on CAEPR's research is due to its distinctive multidisciplinary approach, such as demographics and labour economics, and its work being relatively untapped by the education community.

This report is a summary and analysis of existing research, following a scan of the entire research output of CAEPR since its inception in 1991, including work currently underway. The report includes summaries of 148 projects and an exploration of the implications of the research for education and training, linked to the five domains in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*. The project summaries contain links to the full research reports.

The intended audiences for this report are people working in education and training policy; school principals; Indigenous education staff and units; Indigenous units in universities and TAFE colleges; and Indigenous community leaders in education and training.

## Key findings

The report provides information which may be new to many people already working in Indigenous education and training, including information about changing Indigenous demographics, complexities of Indigenous governance, and the labour market for Indigenous people.

The report also provides information that confirms existing research and experience, which may be of particular interest for people new to Indigenous education and training. This includes information on Indigenous culture, teacher staffing, the benefits of employing Indigenous education workers and language barriers.

The report, as a research review, does not contain recommendations.

The findings have implications for policy and practice in the areas of facilities planning, curriculum, professional development, pedagogy, support services, family and community involvement in schools and training institutions, and pre-service.

### The changing demography of Indigenous Australia

- Over recent decades there has been a major change in the geographic distribution of the Indigenous population, towards the larger proportion of Indigenous people residing in urban areas—almost one-third in capital cities and some 45 per cent in regional Australia, with the remaining 25 per cent in remote and very remote areas.

- There has been a significant increase in self-identification as Indigenous, especially in cities.

- Some rural towns are becoming increasingly 'Indigenous', with large numbers of non-Indigenous Australians leaving, and high fertility rates among Indigenous resident women.

- Further marked changes in demographics are projected. These include younger people moving to regional centres and to a limited number of low socioeconomic neighbourhoods in capital cities, mainly seeking education, training and employment.

- The consequent likelihood of demographic 'hot spots' will place high demand on existing education and training provision.

## Culture, community and family life

- Family is central to every aspect of Indigenous social and economic life. The composition, structure and place of residence of an Indigenous family go well beyond the basic family unit of biological parents and children. Household composition can change daily in some households.

- Many Indigenous children are given a high level of personal autonomy—a factor which might affect parents' capacity to ensure school attendance.

- Cultural identification with a language group, kin or one's own 'country' continues to be high. Over 50 per cent of Indigenous Australians identify with a cultural grouping, and at least 11 per cent speak an Indigenous language at home.

## The health of Indigenous Australians

- Health status impacts on early child development, readiness for schooling, education participation and achievement and participation in the work force. Quality of health may also affect individual and community wellbeing and the capacity of Indigenous communities to develop strong governance structures.

- While Indigenous people were more likely to report being in poor or fair health than other Australians for each income group, there was no significant difference in self-reported health status between low- and high-income Indigenous families.

- Indigenous people were much less likely than non-Indigenous people to use health services, despite high levels of morbidity.

- Both malnutrition and alcohol abuse have been identified as high risk factors influencing Indigenous health.

- Broad-based alcohol education programs undertaken by schools or through community education programs need to be supported by targeted education and training.

## Domain 1: Early childhood education

- The participation of Indigenous three- to five-year-old children in early childhood education is less than for non-Indigenous children, and the extent of the disparity increases significantly with age.

- After controlling for a range of external factors, Indigenous four- to five-year-olds, are significantly less likely to participate than non-Indigenous children, suggesting the disparity is in part due to their Aboriginality.  For three-year-olds the situation is less clear.

- The presence of an Indigenous preschool worker in the area significantly increases preschool participation rates.

- Early childhood is a period of critical physical, emotional and social growth, but child care or early childhood education does not feature strongly in Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) to early 2007.

## Domain 2: Partnerships

- Indigenous people consider education an avenue towards employment, a means of developing the skills and knowledge to deal with the dominant culture, or one mechanism for ensuring the continuing vitality of Indigenous culture.

- Many Indigenous people appear more concerned about the relevance of education and training to what they are currently doing than gaining a qualification to assist some future employment aspiration.

- Governance structures need to recognise that Indigenous representation and leadership is based on kinship, geographical boundaries and the issue being dealt with.

- Indigenous representatives operate within a 'two-way' legitimacy environment— one way towards their members and the other towards external agencies.

- Indigenous people are being stretched as they serve on an ever-increasing number of governance structures.

- New governance arrangements need substantial levels of support (e.g. in planning, funding, administration and governance capacity) in the lead-up and early implementation phase.

- The capacity of government agencies and the private sector to participate in partnership arrangements needs addressing, through emphasis on increased understanding of how partnerships are developed, monitored and maintained.

- CAEPR has identified key 'enabling' factors for the development of effective community–agency partnerships.

## Domain 3: Leadership

- Understanding Indigenous family structures and responsibilities and the values Indigenous people attach to education is essential for school leadership.

- Schools and training bodies working with Indigenous students can benefit from recruiting Indigenous staff and developing the cultural sensitivity of staff, enabling them to modify their teaching strategies to suit Indigenous students.

- Educational leadership in Indigenous education requires the setting of long-term goals as change management can be slow.

- Encouraging Indigenous parents to become involved in the education of their children continues to be one of the greatest challenges.

## Domain 4: Quality teaching

- Teachers need to be authentic, that is, understand Indigenous culture as it relates to schooling, have a capacity to display culturally sensitive teaching behaviours, have an ability to hold positive expectations of Indigenous academic performance and build strong self-esteem in students.

- Teachers and students are required to operate in different worlds. Teachers are required to develop a strong understanding of Indigenous culture, social issues and local context so that they can meaningfully engage Indigenous students with learning. Indigenous students are required to adopt learning behaviours and study habits for which they often have no previous family experience or support to draw on.

- Indigenous students have difficulties in 'code-switching' between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English (SAE) and teachers need to have a strong appreciation of this.

- Primary schools with very high proportions of Indigenous students appeared most challenging for teachers.

- The recruitment of high quality teachers for schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students is a major challenge faced by principals.

- Indigenous staff are essential to student engagement in their functions as educators, translators, role models and bridges between home and classroom.

## Domain 5: Pathways

- Male Indigenous workers are concentrated in declining industries and low-growth occupations, and in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) employment. Female Indigenous workers tend to participate more in high growth industries (non-residential care services, childcare services and cleaning services) and a wider set of occupations.

- Part-time CDEP employment had a significant negative impact on young Indigenous people's job or career aspirations.

- A 'hybrid' labour market operates in remote Indigenous communities and, to a lesser extent, some rural communities, combining:
  - a market sector: the productive private sector of the local community
  - a state sector: the government provider of local services, including the welfare safety net and other government interventions
  - a customary economy: productive, culturally based activities that occur outside the market but deal with hunting, gathering, fishing and other traditional land and resource management activities.

- The Indigenous sector is a source of employment that may have its own training and organisational needs.

- The employment situation for Indigenous people may well continue to deteriorate through population growth, lack of competitive skills in emergent high-growth industries and locational disadvantage restricting mainstream employment growth.

- Completion of Year 10 appears to be the critical point with regard to lifetime employability, including full-time employment.

- Being arrested and placed in juvenile detention centres has a substantial effect on young Indigenous people completing secondary school.

- Indigenous Australians' participation in training and employment may be affected by them having different aspirations to non-Indigenous people on the benefits of completing Year 12, having a VET qualification and holding a university degree.

- Course and career aspirations are often influenced by a commitment to community, with enrolments in areas such as education, Aboriginal Studies and health seen as of benefit to the community rather than for solely individual benefit.

- Case studies among young Torres Strait Islanders show the importance of culturally inclusive support strategies and career counselling.

- Indigenous young people seeking jobs or already in jobs may experience some form of racial discrimination, for whatever reason. This suggests the importance of support strategies, promotion of Indigenous graduates to the business community, and ensuring work readiness skills include the capacity to work within a competitive work environment.

- 744 (69%) isolated communities were 50 kilometres or more from Year 12 secondary schooling.

- Indigenous higher education and TAFE students tend to commence their courses and gain post-school qualifications at an older age than non-Indigenous students.

- Undertaking regional labour market analyses is important. Such regional analyses need to take account of a wide range of demographic, labour market, socioeconomic and cultural characteristics, and have special regard to existing demand for employment, the generation of future employment opportunities and the supply of sufficiently skilled job seekers across industry and occupational groupings.

# Introduction

## Context

There are over 140,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ('Indigenous') school students in Australia, and some 68,000 in vocational education and training as well as 9,000 at university.

Their educational outcomes have improved in recent years. There have been increased enrolments in early education, vocational education and training and undergraduate and postgraduate education, and improved achievement in literacy, numeracy and retention to Year 12.

However, there is still a huge gap between the participation, retention and achievement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, despite considerable efforts by schools, training institutions and universities. A small proportion of Indigenous students are doing well by any standards, but their numbers are too low.

These educational outcomes limit the career choices and life chances of Indigenous people, with effects that flow on to their own children.

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) has therefore identified Indigenous education as a top priority. It has endorsed *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*, which provides policy recommendations to improve Indigenous student outcomes over the current schools funding quadrennium and beyond. These recommendations are grouped under five domains in which engagement is critical, namely:

- early childhood education
- school and community educational partnerships
- school leadership
- quality teaching
- pathways to training, employment and higher education.

*Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* emphasises the importance of considering evidence on what works to improve Indigenous educational outcomes. The Australian Education Systems Officials' Committee (AESOC), which supports MCEETYA, commissioned this review to enable practitioners to access research that may assist in making a difference in Indigenous education and training.

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) was established in 1990 under an agreement between the Australian National University (ANU) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In 1999, after review, CAEPR was established as an independent centre within the university. The centre's research is supported by funding from the ANU, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), and the Australia Research Council, and from industry partners including Reconciliation Australia, Rio Tinto, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, and the Northern Territory and Western Australian governments.

The centre's research focuses on both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians despite its name, which reflects an original contractual requirement and is retained owing to its established reputation.

CAEPR is a unique university-based Indigenous economic and social policy-focused research centre. CAEPR is staffed by a multidisciplinary social sciences team with a very broad range of academic backgrounds and experiences. Disciplines represented include anthropology, demography, economics, geography, education, statistics and political science. A substantial proportion of CAEPR's research is based on field work in Indigenous communities.

As a university-based research centre, CAEPR does not take any official view and all CAEPR research is independent scholarship. Therefore, when this report refers to CAEPR findings, this does not suggest that these findings are to be attributed to CAEPR itself, but rather such findings remain the responsibility of the researchers involved.

Since 1991, CAEPR has published close to 1,000 papers, books, monographs and research reports on economic, demographic, cultural, social and educational issues affecting Indigenous people across Australia. CAEPR's research publications are of a high standard and relevance to education systems. CAEPR also sponsors regular research seminars and specialist workshops on topics of policy and technical interest.

CAEPR researchers often make submissions to government and its agencies, as well as non-government organisations, providing evidence-based recommendations to policy makers, although many of these submissions do not enter the public domain.

CAEPR researchers have conducted research in and with a number of schools and occasionally in collaboration with national or individual state and territory departments of education. This is the first time, however, that CAEPR has worked closely with representatives of education systems across the nation.

## Aims of the report

The key aim of this report is to assist people working in Indigenous education and training to access the research findings of CAEPR, in a format that is convenient for readers who are not academics.

The intended audiences for this report are:
• Indigenous education policy staff in state and territory government agencies, Catholic and independent school systems and the Australian Government
• mainstream education policy staff, e.g. in planning units
• school principals
• specialist Indigenous education staff and units
• Indigenous units in universities and TAFE colleges
• Indigenous community leaders in education and training.

This report addresses two key questions:
• What has CAEPR produced that is relevant to Indigenous education policy and practice?
• What implications do the findings of this research have for Indigenous education policy and practice?

The report also provides a basis for greater collaboration between CAEPR and education systems in the future. This is consistent with CAEPR's mission, which includes 'informing and influencing policy formulation', with strategies such as 'providing significant research findings to Australian governments' and 'continuing to source research collaborations with state and federal government'.

The report is limited to research conducted by CAEPR researchers, research associates of CAEPR or researchers from other institutions who have participated in CAEPR-sponsored research activities (together referred generically throughout this report as CAEPR researchers). The focus on CAEPR's research is due to its distinctive multidisciplinary approach, such as demographics and labour economics, and it being relatively untapped by the education community.

## The method of preparing this report

This project was conducted by Dr Adrian Fordham, Visiting Fellow at CAEPR, with support from Dr RG (Jerry) Schwab, CAEPR Fellow. Assistance in reviewing CAEPR research was received from John Carty from the ANU Centre for Cross-Cultural Research; John Hughes from CAEPR provided editorial and graphical assistance in the final preparation of the report.

They were supported by a steering committee representing governments and the non-state schooling sector. The members of the steering committee were:

- Mr Chris Bain, Principal Policy Officer, Indigenous Education Unit, Indigenous Education and Strategic Implementation, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts (chair)
- Ms Marg Mibus, Principal Policy Officer/Commercial Consultant, Aboriginal Education & Employment Services, Aboriginal Access Centre, South Australian Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology
- Mr Bruce Roper, Manager Aboriginal Education, Aboriginal Education and Training, Participation and Achievement Standards Directorate, Western Australian Department of Education and Training
- Dr Barry Cameron, Director, Indigenous, Regional and other Disadvantaged Education Analysis, Strategic Analysis and Evaluation Group, Australian Department of Education, Science and Training
- Mr Les Mack, Coordinator – Perth Office, Aboriginal Independent Community Schools' Support Unit with the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, representing the Independent Schools Council of Australia.

The researchers prepared this report by

- scanning the entire research output of CAEPR since its inception in 1991, including work currently underway
- assessing the relevance of each research publication and project to Indigenous education and training, and whether it has been superceded by more recent work. This assessment was made against a conceptual framework consisting of the major issues identified by the researchers and the steering committee in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*. A further consideration was to ensure that, within the time available for the project, the full breadth of CAEPR research relevant to Indigenous education and training could be represented, rather than focusing in great detail on a limited part of the body of CAEPR research. In this way, a multidisciplinary approach to the task could be achieved. Finally, the Steering Committee, together with individual CAEPR researchers, checked that from their perspective the most relevant CAEPR research activities had been included
- developing a template for summarising each relevant project and then preparing a summary of 148 projects
- consulting, where possible, the authors of key research projects to verify the summary of their research, identify other relevant CAEPR publications and explore the implications of their research for education and training

- synthesising the summaries into sections on each of the five domains
- consulting the steering committee and then officers in the Indigenous education and training units of each government and the non-state schooling sectors on the draft report.

While the report benefited from the input of the steering committee and various reviewers, the responsibility for its content lies with CAEPR and its staff.

## The structure of this report

This report begins with three sections that have a broad relevance to education and training, namely *The changing demography of Indigenous Australia*; *Culture, community and family life*; and *The health of Indigenous Australians*.

The next five sections are structured to assist readers who are involved in implementing the recommendations of *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*. There is therefore a separate section on each of the five domains, with subsections on each of the key issues within each domain. This format is intended to assist readers who want to dip into the report to look for information on a particular topic that they are working on.

Finally, there is a section on *Future research*, indicating what to expect from CAEPR in the next couple of years and potential topics for future research.

The summaries of 148 relevant CAEPR research projects are in the appendices. Each appendix shows where the reader can find the full research publication to which it refers. Responsibility for the preparation of these summaries rests with the authors of this report rather than the researchers themselves, particularly in regard to drawing out possible educational implications from their work.

The online version of this report contains hotlinks from the main report to the appendices, and from the appendices to the full research publications where those links are available. This will assist readers who want to explore topics in more depth.

# Part 1: The context of Indigenous education in Australia

# The changing demography of Indigenous Australia

Planning for the adequate provision of education and training services and the development of effective pathways to employment for Indigenous Australians will be influenced by:

• the geographical distribution of the Indigenous population

• the age structure of the Indigenous population and future population trends

• particular features of the Indigenous population such as migration patterns and mobility.

## Issue: Distribution of Indigenous Australians

Of the estimated Indigenous population of 458,000 in 2001, almost one-third were resident in capital cities, with another 45 per cent living in regional Australia. The remaining 25 per cent lived in remote and very remote Australia. This represents a major change in geographic distribution[i] of the Indigenous population over the last three decades, with a much larger proportion now residing in urbanised regions.

**Fig. 1:** Remoteness areas of Australia (Australian Standard Geographical Classification)



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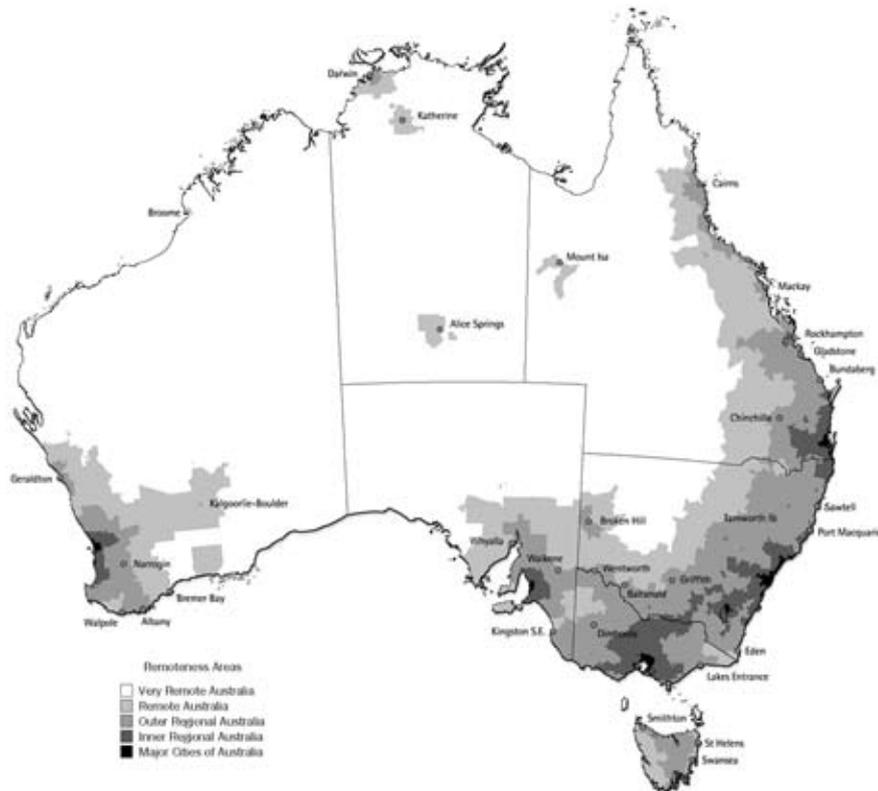
[i]     The key reference for this section of the report is Ref No. 132.

Most public attention is currently focused on Indigenous Australians' circumstances in remote Australia. Challenges, however, remain for the delivery of government services to those living in regional and metropolitan Australia, where there are particular concentrations along the eastern and south-eastern seaboard. Projected population changes and mobility patterns among Indigenous Australians will add to this need for public policy to focus attention on the more settled areas of Australia as well as remote regions.

## Issue: The younger age profile and future population growth

Indigenous Australians comprise a young population. Furthermore, the age profile of Indigenous Australia is much younger than non-Indigenous Australia, with high population growth among Indigenous Australians likely to continue. This will result in an increasing gap in the age profile of Indigenous Australians compared to non-Indigenous Australians, with the former being a youthful profile and the latter being a much older profile.

In the period 2001–2009, the Indigenous population is estimated to grow from 458,500 persons in 2001 to 528,600 persons by 2009, an increase of some 15 per cent. Projected demographic changes in the Indigenous population indicate that there will be:

- an increase of 6.7 per cent in infants (0–4 years), who will be entering preschool over the period
- an increase of 7.9 per cent for those of compulsory secondary school age (10–14 years)
- an increase of 29.4 per cent for those of post-compulsory school age, likely to continue to Year 12, enrol in training courses or directly seek employment (15–19 years)
- an increase of 24 per cent for those younger workers seeking employment (20–29 years).

There is projected to be a small decline of about 3 per cent in the 5–9 years age group over the 2001–2009 period.[1]

This is in marked contrast to the non-Indigenous Australian population, which is best characterised as an aging population, and will place additional pressures on existing educational infrastructure to adapt to increased numbers of Indigenous students at a time when governments may be focusing more on meeting the needs of an aging non-Indigenous population.

*State level growth.* In 2009, it is estimated that NSW will have the largest Indigenous population, growing from 134,900 to 153,000 (or 13.8%) and Queensland will experience the largest percentage increase, increasing from 125,900 to 148,100 (17.8%).

*Growth in capital cities.* The growth in Indigenous populations in capital cities is being driven in part by a greater propensity to self-identify as Indigenous, as well as being due to migration from other areas and natural fertility. This makes the development of targeted policies to respond to Indigenous population increases more complex, as education and training authorities disentangle the extent to which they are responding to the same young people who are now self-identifying as Indigenous, or to different Indigenous young people who either have moved into the capital cities or who are part of families who have previously been identified as Indigenous. This is not to say that in either case policy and program responses are not required, but that they may differ depending on the extent to which particular scenarios apply.

*Growth in remote regions.* The Indigenous population is projected to grow significantly in remote regions of Australia, due largely to higher fertility rates: for example, projections to 2016 indicate rapid growth in Cape York Peninsula (Qld)[2], west Arnhem Land and the Gulf country of the Northern Territory, with moderate growth in the East[3] and West Kimberley (WA)[4] and the Pilbara (WA)[5], and across the arid zone. Furthermore, smaller Indigenous townships in the tropical north are experiencing continued growth. In 2001, some 14 traditionally Indigenous towns were approaching or had exceeded 1,000 persons and were classified as Indigenous 'urban centres'. Education authorities face particular planning issues to meet such high levels of population growth and therefore increased student demand.[6]

## Issue: Mobility of Indigenous Australians

Within this overall growth in the younger Indigenous population, mobility patterns of Indigenous Australians will also influence how governments and educational authorities react to increased pressures on the delivery of education and training for an increasing Indigenous student population. CAEPR researchers[7] have shown that:

- it is the 15–24 age group, including those who have not yet left school, that tends to move into cities seeking education, training and employment, whereas older age groups tend to leave, seeking affordable housing

- there has been a significant flow of Indigenous people into major regional centres such as Broken Hill, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth (all NSW), Port Augusta (SA) and Kalgoorlie (WA), again with a major increase in younger adults

- with the exception of Sydney, Indigenous people tend to have high positive net migration into major metropolitan areas. Sydney had a negative net internal migration rate despite having a buoyant, international labour market, perhaps because of exceptionally high housing costs

- Indigenous Australians moving into capital cities tend to take up residency in those areas where there are already concentrations of Indigenous people and are generally localities of low socioeconomic status

- more rural towns are becoming increasingly 'Indigenous' towns due to large numbers of non-Indigenous Australians leaving the towns, and higher fertility rates among Indigenous resident women. The north western NSW towns of Wilcannia, Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett are examples

- in remote and rural areas, Indigenous people are less likely to migrate to regional centres or cities than non-Indigenous people, possibly due to greater connection to kin and country.

**Fig. 2:** Most common destination of Indigenous persons who migrate and percentage change in population over the period 1996–2001
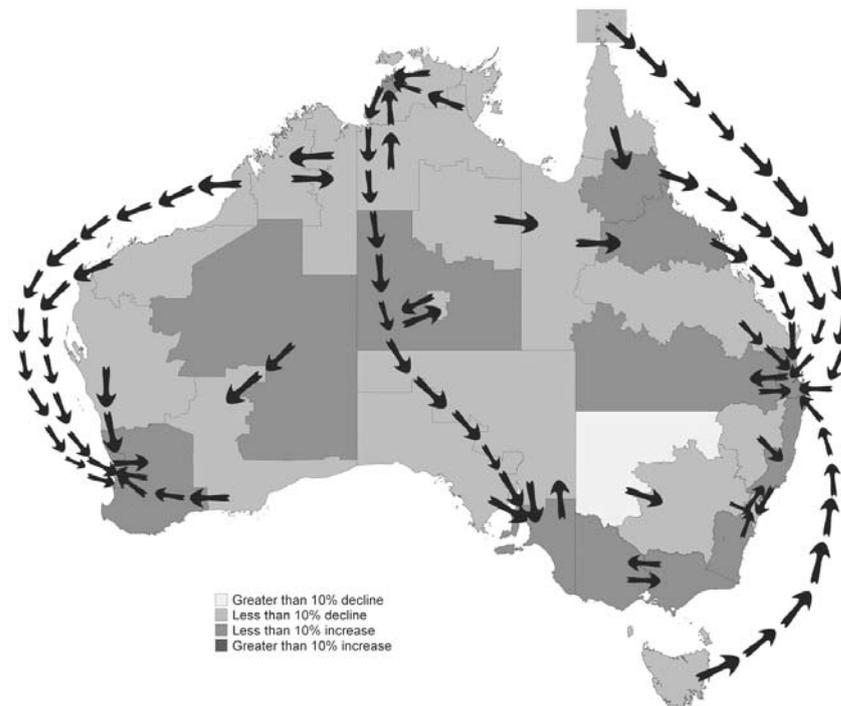


Indigenous policies currently being implemented by the Australian government, such as changes to CDEP, housing programs and land leasing arrangements, may well impact on the population flows of Indigenous Australia, particularly those presently living in remote regions. If such migration does occur, projected increases for towns such as Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin (all NT), Kununurra, Broome, Port Hedland (all WA) and Cairns (Qld) will accelerate at a greater rate than currently projected.[8]

## Temporary mobility

As well as more permanent or long-term migration, there is also a high degree of temporary mobility among Indigenous Australians, who move to a different locality to visit kin, to attend ceremonies and partake in other customary activities, to access services or to get away from social problems. Temporary mobility will be more difficult for educational authorities and individual schools to address, as it tends to occur spontaneously and often for a limited but indeterminate period.

*Circular mobility patterns* have been well documented, both quantitatively and through ethnographic studies. Temporary migration of this sort applies not only to remote and very remote regions, but also occurs between urban areas and rural hinterlands.[9]

CAEPR researchers have described a set of push and pull influences on Indigenous mobility which operate in different locations and create the above mobility patterns.[10]

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**Issue: Factors influencing Indigenous mobility**

From rural/remote locations to urban locations:

- Movement away from rural locations may be influenced by the following push factors: social tensions, no jobs, lack of services and alcohol prohibition.
- Movement into urban areas may be influenced by the following pull factors: family connections, education and training, employment prospects, social services and access to alcohol.

From urban locations to rural/remote locations:

- Movement away from urban localities may be influenced by the following push factors: eviction, social tensions, no suitable jobs, no housing and no urban commitment.
- Movement to rural/remote locations will be influenced by the following pull factors: traditional living, family connections, alcohol prohibited and home land.

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Overall, family and housing are the major reasons for moving location, whereas employment is far less a reason.[11] Yet even when Indigenous people leave localities of high unemployment, they tend not to move into areas of higher Indigenous employment opportunities but, as noted above, into areas of locational disadvantage.

## Issue: Discrete Indigenous communities

A feature of Indigenous Australia is the large number of discrete Indigenous communities spread across the continent. These are communities located in an area bounded by physical or 'legal' boundaries and inhabited predominantly by Indigenous people. In 2006, there were some 1,187 discrete Indigenous communities, of which 1,008 were located in very remote areas, with the large majority (767) of very remote communities comprising a usual population of less than 50 persons. Of the remaining discrete Indigenous communities, 104 were located in remote areas, 71 in regional areas and four in major cities. While most communities were quite small, there were 36 communities with a usual resident population of 500 or more persons.[12]

**Fig. 3:** Location and reported usual population of discrete Indigenous communities, 2006
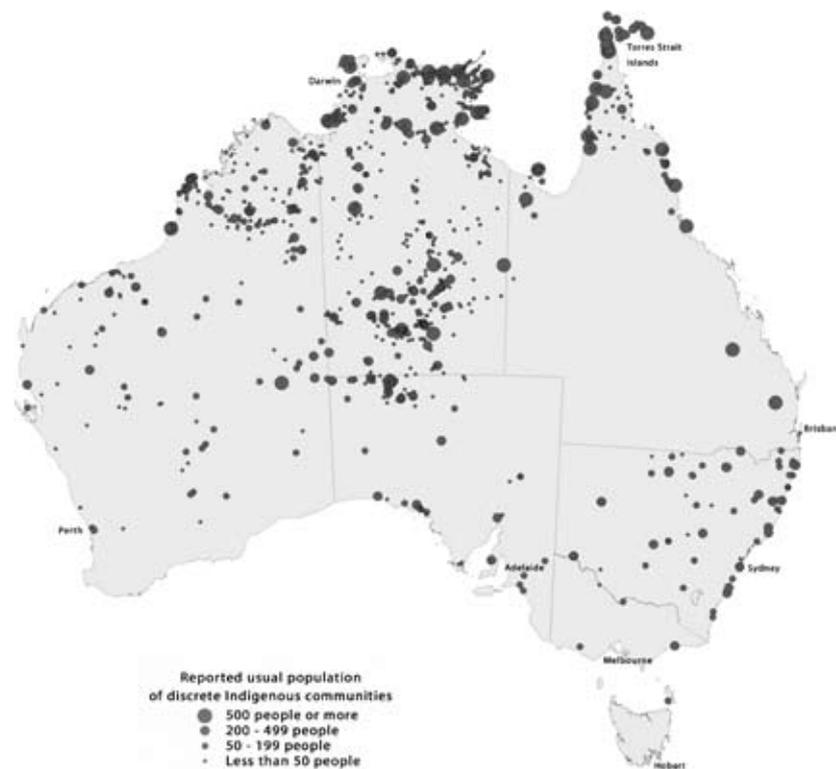


While there has been a small decrease since 2001 in the number of discrete Indigenous communities spread across Australia, the size and remoteness of many communities continue to present policy, program and service delivery challenges to all Australian governments.[13]

## Summary: A case of increased demand

In summary, with such marked projected changes occurring in the distribution and movement of Indigenous young people, agencies responsible for the delivery of education and training services will experience greater demands on existing school curricula, training courses, support services and facilities. The continuing relocation of Indigenous young people to particular regional centres and to a limited number of low socioeconomic neighbourhoods in capital cities will create demographic 'hot spots', and place added demand on existing education and training provision. That is, while the numbers may appear small, their impact may be quite significant due to their concentration within specific localities.

There are distinct differences in the demographic trends of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. As such, they result in quite different policy settings in which to address immediate and future directions for the education, training and higher education of Indigenous Australians. These themes are taken up in following sections of the report.

# Culture, community and family life

Attitudes of Indigenous parents/carers and decisions taken by Indigenous young people about participation in education, training and employment are embedded within the culture, community and family life of Indigenous Australians. In addition, Indigenous leadership and governance can influence school community relationships and the extent to which effective partnerships may be developed.

This section of the report examines several important aspects of Indigenous culture, community and family life to set the scene for analysing CAEPR's research contribution to understanding contemporary Indigenous educational issues outlined in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*. The cultural aspects of Indigenous life most critical to understanding Indigenous Australians' engagement in education, training and higher education are:

- parents, family and household composition
- characteristics of cultural identity and its maintenance
- tensions and stress within Indigenous communities
- governance and leadership within Indigenous communities
- diversity in culture.

Information presented in this section of the report draws on ethnographic studies, statistical analyses of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Surveys (NATSISS) and meta-analyses of existing literature.[ii]

## Issue: Parents, family and household composition

CAEPR researchers have undertaken extensive ethnographic and demographic research, which provides a detailed picture of the dynamics of families and households in Indigenous communities, including those in urban areas. These studies have occurred in towns and cities as diverse as Kuranda (Qld), Newcastle (NSW), western Sydney (NSW), Yuendumu (NT) and Port Lincoln (SA).

This research has identified unique characteristics of Indigenous family life which potentially may influence child rearing practices, the readiness of young children to commence schooling and the ongoing support for children during the primary and secondary years. Such influential characteristics include family composition, mobility between households and parenting responsibilities.

### Family membership

'Family' is central to every aspect of Indigenous social and economic life, although the concept of family for Indigenous communities is much broader than the definition of family generally employed by educators and educational policy makers.

The composition, structure and place of residency of an Indigenous family go well beyond the basic family unit of biological parents and children. The extended family is prominent in Indigenous life, and includes kin not related by blood-line. Furthermore, Indigenous households tend to be much larger than non-Indigenous households.[14] This prominence of the extended family and larger households applies to remote, regional and urban families and households, although to a somewhat lesser extent in urban areas.

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ii    Key CAEPR papers for this Part are to be found at Reference Nos. 15, 57, 58, 84, 90, 101, 115, 123, 148.

## Mobility between households

Mobility is another characteristic of Indigenous households which applies across urban, regional and remote regions. CAEPR research shows that:

- household composition can change daily in some households
- children stay in other households with or without their parents and siblings, and the flow is unpredictable.[15]

Within each Indigenous household in these studies there appears to be a core of family members who remain in the household for a considerable time, giving overall stability, social cohesion, mutual support, and long-term economic viability to the household.

## Parenting responsibilities and the strength of family

The family and extended family provide a highly supportive network for the social distribution of parenting responsibilities and shared child care, operating within and across extended family households, even involving non-relatives.[16] This network of extended family also provides economic support which is critical to the wellbeing of families and children. However the CAEPR researchers point out that some families are not characterised by strong social cohesion and provide limited child care. In these households, where both parents may be absent, children may receive erratic care and experience severe economic pressures.

Commitment to family and extended family is extremely strong in Indigenous communities and applies across large distances, rather than only applying to those family members living in close proximity. As discussed below, underpinning this strong commitment is the obligation for sharing resources.

# Issue: Indigenous culture—four principles underpinning social interactions

Social relations and social interaction between Indigenous people and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are guided by a complex set of cultural principles. These principles relate to notions of sharing, personal autonomy, caring for culture and country, and shame. The manner in which Indigenous people interact with western institutions such as schooling will be in part influenced by these four principles.

## Sharing

CAEPR researchers have shown that sharing is a culturally grounded process that takes account of the breadth of Indigenous kinship, the nature of generosity and the basis of social and cultural identity. Sharing, which underpins much Indigenous social interaction, involves:

- sharing among extended and flexible Indigenous kinship networks, whereby Indigenous people have not only rights but obligations towards all individuals they define as kin
- sharing of shelter, food, cash and other resources. As a result, commitment to family and community is a very strong determinant of Indigenous behaviour and decision-making
- balancing the demands made on resources and the extent to which they are shared, recognising that refusal to share has social not just material implications. Refusal may lead to exclusion from family.[17]

## Personal autonomy

Social interactions are defined not only in terms of kinship but also personal autonomy, with a strong sense of individuality and self-reliance. Within this social dynamic CAEPR research has identified important changes that are taking place. For example, with increased access to the cash economy:

- Indigenous people are increasingly able to assert their independence from others, including men from responsibilities towards their domestic units

- younger men can be more independent from older ones, leading to greater value being placed on goods and services bought from the mainstream economy and less on those originating essentially in the Indigenous domain

- the high level of personal autonomy given to children extends to them being able to 'demand' money and have responsibility for choosing how to use it, leading to increased disengagement of parents from direct responsibilities for the care and nurturing of their children.[18]

However, the impact of such changes is lessened by the continuing role of kinship obligations operating in urban, rural and remote communities.

Related to personal autonomy are behavioural characteristics which are easily misinterpreted in western culture as being aggressive. For example, body stance, tone and volume of language, and what westerners might interpret as undue hassling or humbugging typify Indigenous behaviours when discussing issues and resolving conflict. Such strategies can be noisy and appear highly aggressive. Alternatively, strategies can be employed which are quite the opposite. For example, not actively participating, withdrawing from discussions or simply 'going quiet', may be incorrectly perceived as acquiescence or even agreement. These types of strategies have particular implications for teachers when interacting with Indigenous students.

## Taking responsibility: caring for country and culture

A theme coming through some CAEPR research on Indigenous culture is the idea that Indigenous people see themselves as caretakers responsible for their 'country' and their culture. As that research points out, more recently Indigenous people have seen themselves as caretakers, ensuring that western institutions established in their communities do not assume authority over their lives, their communities or their country.

## Shame

A fourth cultural theme which pervades Indigenous communities is the complex notion of shame. This relates to feelings of embarrassment, shyness and respect felt by Indigenous people in the presence of others with whom they do not feel comfortable. It also applies to topics not seen to be legitimately discussed in a particular forum or context, and operates within and between Indigenous communities.[19,20] This cultural theme also has particular relevance to Indigenous interactions with western institutions and agencies, such as in the context of joint governance arrangements.

# Issue: Cultural identification and maintenance

With the changing demography of Indigenous Australians, including a general movement to more settled areas of Australia, the issue arises as to whether cultural identity among Indigenous Australians is being maintained.

The CAEPR demographic research reported in the earlier section suggests that there has been a significant increase in self-identification, especially in capital cities. The extent to which Indigenous culture was being maintained has been analysed by CAEPR researchers through the 2002 NATSISS, particularly in regard to cultural and homeland identification, Indigenous language maintenance and participation in cultural activities.[21]

Cultural identification with a language group, kin or one's own country continues to be high.[iii] In 2002:

- some 54 per cent of Indigenous Australians identified with a cultural grouping
- the large majority (85%) of those living in remote localities recognised or identified with homelands/traditional country, as did 63 per cent of those Indigenous people living in non-remote areas of Australia
- there is still significant use of Indigenous languages as the main language spoken in the home, with about 11 per cent of the Indigenous population indicating this.[iv] However the research notes that this may not be sufficient to ensure continued transmission of Indigenous languages into the future
- participation in cultural activities continues to be strong among remote (87%) and non-remote (61%) Indigenous Australians, with participation most common at funeral ceremonies and cultural festivals (e.g. art, crafts, music and dance).

## Issue: Tensions and stress within Indigenous communities

Pre-contact Indigenous social groupings tended to be much smaller than is now the case, where much of life occurred in small fluid groups of 20 or so individuals.[22] Groupings above that size tended to develop tensions, leading to some individuals moving either temporarily or permanently elsewhere. The reality is, however, that Indigenous people now generally live in townships, provincial centres and capital cities.

Another source of tension has arisen from historical movements of Indigenous people following government intervention or other historical events. This has resulted in communities in regions comprising 'traditional peoples' and 'historical peoples'. For example, CAEPR researchers examined the dynamics of Indigenous representation within far western Queensland (centring around Mt Isa), which is characterised by Indigenous populations of diverse origins, and intense and often virulent politicking about identity, especially legitimate rights to speak for land and resource developments.[23] More recently, this type of tension is being played out in the Australian Government's proposed leasing arrangements for Indigenous townships in the Northern Territory.

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iii    The NATSISS item refers to tribal grouping, clan or language group. There is considerable overlap in the use of these terms. Clan is more focused on group identification with land tracts and country and tribes generally refer to all of those identified with a particular Indigenous language variety. Many Indigenous people now use the term clan to describe various sets of kin who share common identities based on social relatedness and connection to smaller or larger areas of 'country'. Kin and kinship is a grouping based on the degree and type of relatedness between Aboriginal persons.

iv    If Creole is included as an Indigenous language spoken at home then the percentage would be higher.

Family and community wellbeing is fundamental to the development of healthy, socially adjusted and productive individuals. In those family and community situations where there are tensions and high stress levels, there are likely to be high levels of dysfunction. From an educational perspective, this is likely to lead to reduced social and cognitive development and a resultant lack of school readiness among young children, and overall reduced participation in education and training among older children, adolescents and young adults. For this reason, it is important to examine the extent to which Indigenous Australians experience personal stress or live in communities where there are problems that may negatively impact on their sense of wellbeing.

## Personal stressors

There is a wide range of *'stressors'* which may influence Indigenous family and community wellbeing:

- health issues, including mental illness, accident, death of a family member or close friend, or serious disability
- relationship breakdown, employment problems and 'risky' behaviour (alcohol- or drug-related activities, witness to violence, abuse or violent crime, trouble with police or a gambling problem)
- imprisonment, overcrowding at home, pressure to fulfil cultural responsibilities, and discrimination or racism.[24]

Some 82 per cent of Indigenous people responding to the 2002 NATSISS reported that they or their family or close friend had experienced at least one of the above personal stressors during the previous 12 months, and some experienced more than one stressful event during the year. It is, however, unclear the extent to which individuals themselves actually experienced stress as a result of the event.

Indigenous people were about one-and-a-half times more likely than non-Indigenous people to report experiencing at least one such stressor, using data for non-Indigenous people being derived from the General Social Survey.[v]

## Neighbourhood and community problems

In addition to these personal stressors, Indigenous people may also be subject to significant levels of neighbourhood and community problems. Almost 75 per cent identified at least one neighbourhood/community problem present, with more than 20 per cent reporting *each* of the following problems having occurred in the 12 months prior to the 2002 NATSISS:

- theft (43%)
- alcohol (34%)
- damage to property (33%)
- illegal drugs (32%)
- problems involving youth (32%)
- family violence (21%)
- assault (20%).

For both personal stressors and neighbourhood/community problems, the frequency reported was generally higher for those living in remote areas than for those living in non-remote areas. In addition to the above issues, the frequency of overcrowding and neighbourhood conflicts reported in remote areas was substantial (42% and 31% respectively).

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v    The CAEPR critique of this NATSISS information also points to difficulties of interpretation, especially when comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous levels of reported stressors experienced. The non-Indigenous proportion reporting at least one stressor may be an overestimate due to the nature of the GSS question asked.

Finally, the Stolen Generation continues to be significant for many Indigenous people. 38 per cent of Indigenous people aged 15 years or more reported that they and/ or at least one of their relatives had been taken from their family, and the research suggests that this may be an underestimate.

# Issue: Governance in Indigenous communities

Governance in Indigenous communities is complex and is quite unlike typical governance structures within non-Indigenous Australia, especially in regard to leadership and representational responsibilities. These in turn influence the extent to which Indigenous governance structures and processes have legitimacy among Indigenous communities, particularly where such structures and processes interact with non-Indigenous organisations and government agencies.

Governance in Indigenous communities across urban, rural and remote Australia is a priority CAEPR research theme—on the grounds that unless effective governance structures and processes are established, then little progress can be made in overcoming social and economic disadvantage among Indigenous Australians.[25] For educational authorities, understanding Indigenous community governance increases opportunities for:

- improving school–community engagement and thereby improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students
- developing strong partnerships between schools, training providers, potential employers and Indigenous organisations and thereby improving regional economic and social development.

## Leadership and representation in Indigenous communities

The CAEPR research identifies two important aspects of Indigenous governance—leadership and representation—where greater understanding may be required by government agencies when developing partnerships with Indigenous communities. Indigenous representation and leadership is not based on western democratic notions but on a quite different set of criteria:

- kinship
- geographical boundaries and associated considerations
- the issue being dealt with.

Increasingly, particular Indigenous people, due to their leadership position, kinship or skills and knowledge of government services, hold various and differing governance responsibilities across the community. CAEPR researchers report, that with increasing government program interventions, Indigenous people are being stretched beyond their limits as they serve on an ever-increasing number of governance structures, yet it is these individuals who have most influence.[26]

## Elders: The allocation of authority

Elders are those Indigenous people who have the authority to speak for the community or group under traditional law and custom and, in the case of traditional owners, to speak for country. 'Elders' have become the individuals with whom governments, agencies and resource developers consult on Indigenous matters, and the notion of 'elder' has in part been developed out of such interactions.

Age and ritual status are the main attributes that define authority, although there is considerable diversity in the way in which authority to speak for a group is understood and exercised across Indigenous Australia.[27] As CAEPR researchers note, such diversity has arisen due to the many systems of traditional law and custom, including the variation arising from differential interaction with non-Indigenous people. For example:

- With the Yolngu people of north eastern Arnhem Land (NT), a very hierarchical society, birth order is the main principle determining rank. The first born in a sibling set and generally the oldest male member in a grouping have the ultimate decision-making power.

- The Wik people of Cape York (Qld), who are more egalitarian, also look to the senior man or woman to be spokesperson.

- In contrast, the western desert Pintupi and north-central desert Warlpiri people, also highly egalitarian, still pay deference to older men because of their superior knowledge but do not have formal 'governing bodies' of elders for the wider affairs of the community. In their case, authority tends to be contextual and is primarily defined through relations of kinship.

This research also points out that:

- authority in one domain may not transfer to authority in another domain, and the authority itself may be tenuous in some contexts, particularly as it interacts with the principles of Indigenous personal autonomy and self-reliance

- in many contemporary Indigenous societies, the authority of those who claim to be 'elders', and the principles under which such a judgment can be made, are matters of considerable dispute, often occurring along lines of kinship.

As a result, when consulting Indigenous communities, school principals and educational agencies need to be well aware of the complexities involved in identifying 'elders' who hold responsibility and can speak on behalf of that community. Otherwise they may only obtain the views and agreement of a limited number of family or kinship groupings within the community or region.

## A matter of legitimacy and effectiveness

The creation of governance structures involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous representation must be seen by the Indigenous community to have legitimacy if they are to be effective. From an Indigenous perspective, they are required to operate within a set of Indigenous values, shared beliefs and agreed rules. At the same time, the Indigenous representatives must maintain legitimacy in their actions and decisions in the view of the non-Indigenous government agencies with whom they are involved. That is, Indigenous representatives operate within a 'two-way' legitimacy environment—one way towards their members and the other towards the external agencies.[28]

Importantly, CAEPR research concludes that Indigenous governance arrangements are not static but can adapt to work productively with government agencies, including educational authorities, under joint governance arrangements.

## The governance environment of Indigenous communities

In general, there are often many Indigenous organisations, government agencies and non-government organisations operating within each Indigenous community delivering a wide range of services. These services include health, legal, childcare, recreational, aged care, cultural, employment and training services. There may be:

- overlapping responsibilities as well as overlapping Indigenous membership of Indigenous governing boards
- overlapping activities undertaken by Indigenous organisations and Australian and state or territory government agencies which lead to 'territorial' disputes and frustrate collaboration and coordination.[29]

Understanding the 'governance environment' is critical to the implementation of government programs and services.[30] CAEPR researchers have identified key 'enabling' factors which are necessary for the development of sound community governance and effective community–agency partnerships, as outlined below.[31,32]

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**Guidance for government agencies when developing partnerships with Indigenous communities for service delivery**

*Getting to know the community before the agency begins its work.* This includes recognising that discrete communities do not exist in social or cultural isolation, but are enmeshed in wider communities of identity and regional networks, and consist of residents with different cultural and historical ties as well as different and distinct familial affiliations.

*Understanding governance of Indigenous communities.* This includes recognising that Indigenous relationships and systems of representation may not be based on western models and that different governance arrangements may apply to different issues.

*Working with legitimate Indigenous leaders, who are the key to strong community governance.* This includes not only identifying the properly authorised Indigenous leaders, but being able to work alongside them in a manner consistent with their ways of doing business through consensus, negotiation and consultation with community members. It also involves recognising the multiple pressures that they experience as Indigenous leaders.

*Communicating the same concepts.* This includes spending time and resources explaining the meaning of government agency concepts and trying to develop an understanding of Indigenous concepts that reflect an Indigenous view of the issue at hand. It also indicates the need for capacity building in relation to *both* Indigenous organisations and government agencies.

*Understanding the rules for communication and interaction.* This includes being aware of the differing styles of communication and interaction employed by Indigenous peoples. Awareness of, for example, indirect techniques to indicate disagreement, multiple meanings of words and less direct styles of communicating may assist this understanding.

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These enabling factors are described in the context of school and the community in the section of the report dealing with the negotiation of educational partnership agreements.

# Summary: Diversity in culture

This overview of several significant aspects of Indigenous culture, family and community life highlights the cultural differences that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Furthermore, differences exist among Indigenous peoples across Australia in respect of cultural practices, values and needs. For example, significant differences exist between Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal peoples which may not be understood by non-Indigenous Australians.[33] Islanders have their own particular body of traditional and contemporary songs, dances, art, musical instruments and set of creation myths, though some of the latter are also linked to those associated with the coastal area of Papua New Guinea.[34]

Substantial diversity may also exist within an Indigenous community. In the case of Maningrida (NT), apart from the language of the traditional owners there are an additional 27 other language groups residing as 'guests' of the traditional owners. In fact, the traditional owners represent only about 15 per cent of the Indigenous population in Maningrida, leading to potential tension with those who have migrated into the town.[35]

These two examples highlight the need for policy makers and those responsible for program implementation to be sensitive to such diversity.

CAEPR's detailed analysis of Indigenous culture and society through space and time demonstrates the complexity, diversity and changes which have occurred since Indigenous migration to the Australian continent.[36] Such complexity and diversity of Indigenous culture affects the:

- provision of educational services and facilities
- development of teacher preparation and in-service courses for teachers and other staff working in educational institutions with significant numbers of Indigenous students
- implementation of appropriate curricula, pedagogy and assessment procedures
- engagement of parents/carers and the community in the education of their children and students.

Taken together, these differences add to the challenges of how best educational authorities and individual schools, training providers and tertiary institutions can address the educational aspirations and needs of Indigenous students and adults.

# The health of Indigenous Australians

The health of Indigenous Australians has been considered a key social indicator of the overall wellbeing of Indigenous communities in much CAEPR demographic research.

Health status impacts on all aspects of Indigenous life: on early child development, readiness for schooling, education participation and achievement and participation in the work force. Quality of health may also affect individual and community wellbeing and the capacity of communities to develop strong governance structures. It is therefore not surprising that assessing the quality of health of Indigenous people has been a central part of CAEPR's analyses of regional development opportunities and limitations. CAEPR research[vi] on health has focused on:

- health as a key social indicator of community wellbeing and capacity on which to build sound economic development
- expenditure on Indigenous health
- nutrition and alcohol abuse as critical influences on Indigenous health.

Later sections of the report deal with the links between education and health and the education and training of health workers.

## Issue: Health as a social indicator

CAEPR's detailed regional analyses of the Pilbara (WA)[37], the Thamarrurr area (NT)[38], the Kimberley (WA)[39] and the Katherine area (NT)[40], and an analysis of the overall NSW Indigenous population all highlight the significant health problems faced by Indigenous people and the difficulties for government agencies in addressing those problems.

For example, in regard to morbidity and mortality rates in NSW:

- three year average Indigenous infant mortality rates for 2000–02 are almost twice the non-Indigenous rate (9.5 compared to 5.0 per thousand live births)
- the birthweights of Indigenous babies are almost twice as likely to be low (under 2500 g) compared to non-Indigenous birthweights (11.4% compared to 6.2%)
- Indigenous hospital separation rates are 50 per cent higher than non-Indigenous rates, although generally in line with the Indigenous share of population
- the indirect standardised death rate for Indigenous persons is almost twice that of non-Indigenous persons (9.9 compared to 5.6 per thousand)
- a much lower life expectancy at birth of 65 years for Indigenous females, and 60 years for Indigenous males over the period 1996–2001, compared to 83 and 77 years respectively for all Australians.[41]

Regional analyses present an even more negative picture of Indigenous health compared to non-Indigenous health. To cite one example: the average age of death in the Thamarrurr region (NT) was 46 years and in the East Kimberley it was 47 years.

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[vi]    Key CAEPR references for this section of the Report are Ref Nos. 30, 51, 95 and 145.

These comprehensive regional analyses include detailed information about hospitalisation rates, types of illness and chronic diseases, growth indices and nutritional information and highlight:

- the ongoing backlogs in achieving adequate environmental health infrastructure
- the difficulties of achieving better nutritional status in the Indigenous population due to high food costs, low incomes and availability of fruit and vegetables
- the continuing debilitating effects and social disruption caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

CAEPR researchers also point to the onset of high morbidity rates at an early age—typically commencing in young adulthood and rising progressively throughout the prime working years. The economic impact is substantial due to reduced stable employment prospects, shorter working life and loss of income. Taking NSW again as an example, if the NSW Indigenous population had shared the same mortality profile as the general population in 2001, then CAEPR research estimates the NSW Indigenous population would have received an additional $397 million in income over their collective lifetime.[42]

Even in the case of the small population of the Thamarrurr region (NT), premature mortality results in lost income of $1.3 million for the working-age population across their lifetime.[43]

Finally, an analysis of the 1994 NATSIS demonstrates that having a long-term health problem has a significant negative relationship with Indigenous employment outcomes for males, reducing the chances of employment by 7.3 per cent. While this effect might not be as large as expected, it is potentially very important for older Indigenous Australians who have particularly poor health.[44]

## Issue: Expenditure on Indigenous health by individuals

CAEPR researchers found a substantial proportion of Indigenous people reporting their health as 'poor' or 'fair', being about 25 per cent depending on data source.[45]

An important research issue is the extent to which increasing Indigenous income is likely to lead to improved health status. Little relationship was found between the two while Indigenous people were more likely to report being in poor or fair health than other Australians for each income group, there was no significant difference in self-reported health status between low- and high-income Indigenous families.

This result contrasts with the non-Indigenous population where perceived health status was positively related to income.

This CAEPR research also found that:

- there was no relationship between per capita health expenditure and income for Indigenous Australians
- health expenditure on non-hospitalisation was significantly less for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians
- Indigenous people were much less likely than non-Indigenous people to use health services despite high levels of morbidity.[46]

Acknowledging the difficulties associated with this type of research, much more detailed research is required to tease out relationships between these health-related variables: per capita health expenditure, likelihood of accessing health services, income levels and health status. Of particular importance is an analysis which examines cultural influences and level of health education on health service utilisation.

## Issue: Two areas of targeted research—nutrition and alcohol abuse

Both malnutrition and alcohol abuse have been identified as high risk factors influencing Indigenous health. CAEPR researchers have undertaken several targeted studies of both, as well as including nutrition and alcohol abuse as important but secondary aspects of other research.

### Indigenous nutrition as a priority issue

Poor diet and malnutrition are strongly related to a wide range of health problems such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. As has been well documented, malnutrition is a critical issue for many Indigenous people—one study reported 20 per cent of Indigenous children in the Top End (NT) were malnourished, and other effects of malnutrition have been reported in CAEPR research papers.[47]

Against this background, CAEPR researchers developed a strategic framework for examining the structural factors that impede better nutrition among remote Indigenous communities, where most food access is through community stores. The importance of well developed nutritional strategies is shown by the high level of need in such communities:

- Over a 10-year period in one NT community, an average of 44 per cent of children under 5 years were classified as 'not growing well', markedly in excess of the proportion recorded for all children in Australia (around 3%).
- During the 1990s, diet-related diseases accounted for 13.5 per cent of hospitalisations across three NT communities, including diabetes mellitus, intestinal infectious diseases, nutritional deficiencies and heart disease.

In both examples, the communities were quite close to a large service centre.[48]

This nutritional strategy identified impediments to a good diet such as food supply, food acquisition and food consumption, and emphasised the need to integrate health initiatives with overall community and regional development.

### Addressing alcohol abuse

While about one-third of Indigenous people do not consume alcohol, CAEPR researchers cite a wide range of statistics about those who do, including:

- of 62 per cent of Indigenous people who do drink, about two-thirds report harmful levels of consumption
- average consumption among Indigenous people in the Kimberley (WA) was between 15 and 17 standard drinks on drinking days
- in Queensland, almost two-thirds of Indigenous men were engaged in heavy regular, very heavy regular or binge drinking in five communities surveyed
- based on surveys, in Sydney (NSW), between 29 and 44 per cent of drinkers consumed more than 7 drinks in a session

- binge drinking is the major distinguishing feature of Indigenous drinking styles in both remote and rural regions. Even within cities binge drinking may occur—an Adelaide survey of urban health service clients reported 53 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females had 'heavy daily use' or 'binge drinking'.

CAEPR reviewed the nature and direction of alcohol policy as it relates to Indigenous Australians.[49] Of particular importance is its analysis of the cultural and social barriers to Indigenous drinkers giving up alcohol, and the potential roles of doctors and nurses and other health care workers in intervening in excessive alcohol consumption. Further work needs to be done in understanding how best these health professionals can optimise their roles.

In response to excessive alcohol consumption, CAEPR researched options to address this critical health issue and, at the request of the Indigenous community of Alice Springs (NT), developed a comprehensive strategy for reducing the high levels of alcohol consumption.[50] This strategy was extremely wide-ranging and targeted high risk consumption practices and high risk sales practices, as well as including several aspects relevant to education and training providers. It pointed out that broad-based alcohol education programs undertaken by schools or through community education programs need to be supported by targeted education and training, including:

- the use of a combination of education, negotiation and sanctions to inculcate a culture of responsible serving by liquor outlets
- mandatory training in the area of Patron Care/Responsible Server programs to be undertaken by licensees
- suitable police training, including relevant legislation, in licensing work.

Finally, and at a similar practical level, CAEPR staff researched and developed a manual for addressing excessive alcohol consumption for use in urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities. Known as *The Grog Book*, this manual is designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those who work with them.[51]

## Issue: The management of health services in remote communities

With the Australian government's recent policy initiatives in health for remote communities, it is relevant to consider briefly some CAEPR research on the management of health services in a remote Indigenous community of the Northern Territory.[52] This research highlighted the importance of developing strong governance models underpinned by programs designed to strengthen the capacity of community members to serve on management boards. Such capacity building itself needs to be directed towards effective health care delivery, and at the same time be linked to Indigenous law and culture. Nevertheless, as the research emphasises, this does not necessarily require Indigenous people to be the sole managers of the health care service, but rather requires that the right people hold the right responsibilities, within the context of community authority structures and community relationships. As this research concludes a culturally appropriate health service can be established, with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together in a mutually respectful system that takes account of cultural priorities and finds a way to train the right people in the right way for a sustainable future.

## Summary: Influence of social and health issues on educational success and school operations

CAEPR research on demographic change, health and housing, and tensions which exist within Indigenous communities has been outlined in Part 1 of this report. That research highlights the extent to which there are a broad range of external factors which are likely to affect Indigenous learning, parent engagement in the education of their children and the development of strong school–community partnerships. They are also likely to shape to some extent the nature of educational partnerships agreements between schools and their communities.

For example:

- Overcrowding due to shortages in housing and the frequent visits of extended family members makes home study very difficult for students.
- Student learning will also be affected in family situations where there is domestic stress and neighbourhood or community conflict or social problems.
- Health and generally low levels of nutrition continue to reduce student readiness for learning; reduce concentration when at school; and create expectations in some communities that schools provide breakfast programs.
- High levels of temporary mobility among Indigenous people do not lead to a stable learning environment.

**The links between health and education and the education and training of health workers are explored in Domain 5.**

# Part 2: Five domains critical to the educational engagement of Indigenous Australians

# Early childhood education

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### *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*

#### Domain 1: Early childhood education

Early childhood is acknowledged as a period of critical physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth.

High quality education programs in the early years have been shown to have a profound effect on children's development, influencing their ability to learn, their acquisition of pre-literacy and numeracy skills and their capacity to regulate emotions. They ease the transition to primary school and have a direct and positive impact on future educational, employment and health outcomes.

Culturally appropriate provision encourages preschool attendance and contributes to literacy and numeracy acquisition.

Recommendations:

Universal access to high quality early childhood education services for Indigenous children aged 0–5 is an essential precondition of 'school readiness' and successful participation in primary school education. Enactment will require a national collaborative approach with cross-portfolio responses at the national, state and territory level.

Ministers commit to make progress towards:

- providing all Indigenous children with access to two years of high quality early childhood education prior to participation in the first year of formal schooling
- developing and fully implementing by 2012 educational programs for Indigenous children that respect and value Indigenous cultures, languages (including Aboriginal English) and contexts, explicitly teach Standard Australian English and prepare children for schooling.

There is an urgent need to provide opportunities for Indigenous parents and caregivers to develop skills to support their children's literacy acquisition and enhance their capacity to become active participants in their children's education.

(Summary only – see *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* for details)

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# Domain 1: Early childhood education

- *Access to quality programs*
- *Culturally appropriate provision*
- *Teaching of pre-literacy and numeracy*
- *Parental capacity to support literacy acquisition and participation in child's education*

CAEPR's case studies of Indigenous communities have demonstrated the need for developing strategies to increase Indigenous participation in pre-schooling and thereby increase school readiness of Indigenous young children as they are about to enter primary education.[53] The complexity of family arrangements that provides a network of economic and social support for families has already been noted in the section of the report dealing with *Culture, community and family life.* However, it is the types of potential or actual threats to the wellbeing of young children identified in these case studies that suggest the need for ensuring adequate provision of child care and preschools to help promote cognitive and social development in the early years:

- the excessive burdens placed on aged carers of children
- the growing number of young families with inexperienced parents
- the high proportion of sole parents
- absence of fathers to help in the socialisation of the children
- children receiving very limited care.

CAEPR researchers have drawn upon both qualitative and quantitative analyses in exploring participation in early childhood education among Indigenous young children.[vii]

## Issue: Access to quality programs

CAEPR has developed population projections for Indigenous 0–4 year olds, analysed participation rates in early childhood education and examined factors which influence participation in preschool education.

### The demography of young Indigenous children

Nationally, the number of Indigenous children aged 0–4 years is projected to increase slightly from a base of some 60,000 in 2001 to about 65,000 by 2009. While this represents an absolute increase in numbers of young children in the age range, when compared to the age composition of the overall Indigenous population this would represent a slight proportional reduction over the period, with most growth in the Indigenous population projected to come from the 15–30 years age group.[54]

CAEPR developed projections at the regional level for several remote regions and these illustrate the continued population growth for young children in the coming years in remote Australia. For example, using 2006 as the base, the projected annual growth rate for 0–4 year olds in the Broome and Derby West Kimberley region (WA) is about 2 per cent and in the Pilbara (WA) about 1.5 per cent. Not only will this growth in population numbers continue to place pressure on childcare and preschool facilities, its flow-on effects into the early childhood years of primary education, where growth in remote regions is also projected to be significant, will present additional planning issues for the provision of adequate service delivery.

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[vii]    Key references for *Domain 1* are Ref Nos. 26 & 117.

## Indigenous participation in early childhood education

CAEPR has examined participation in early childhood education across the 3–5 years age range.[55] Using 2001 Census information, this research found that for each of the years, Indigenous participation in either preschools or infants/primary schools was less than the participation of non-Indigenous young children:

- for 3-year-olds, 20 per cent of Indigenous children compared to 24 per cent of non-Indigenous children were attending a preschool or infants/primary school
- for 4-year-olds, 53 per cent of Indigenous children compared to 62 per cent of non-Indigenous children were attending preschool or infants/primary school
- for 5-year-olds, 84 per cent of Indigenous compared to 92 per cent of non-Indigenous children were attending preschool or infants/primary school.

While participation in early childhood education for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous young children increased with age, the extent of the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation increased with age—from almost parity among 3-year-olds (1.04) up to a (dis-) parity index of 1.97 for 5-year-olds, with an overall (dis-) parity index of 1.38 for the 4–5 years age group. That is, the ratio of Indigenous to non-Indigenous Australians who were not attending any school increased from 1.04 at age 3 to 1.26 for those aged 4 years and then to 1.97 for those aged 5 years.

## Participation in preschool education

The above participation rates refer to participation of 3- to 5-year-olds in early childhood education and include attendance at either a preschool or infants/primary school. The following analyses focus on participation of 3- to 5-year-olds in preschool education.

### Geographical differences—remoteness

Young children aged 3–5 years old living in very remote areas were significantly less likely to attend a preschool than those living in other areas of Australia, with those living in major cities only slightly more likely to attend preschools than those living in regional or remote localities.

Across all remoteness categories, Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds were less likely to attend a preschool than non-Indigenous children:

- in very remote Australia, 32 per cent compared to 44 per cent for non-Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds;
- in remote areas, 40 per cent compared to 48 per cent for non-Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds;
- in outer regional areas, 42 per cent compared to 47 per cent for non-Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds
- in inner regional areas, 44 per cent compared to 48 per cent for non-Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds
- in major cities, 45 per cent compared to 50 per cent for non-Indigenous 3- to 5-year-olds.

### State and territory differences

There were significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous preschool participation rates for 3- to 5-year-olds across states and territories. For example:

- NT had the lowest attendance for the Indigenous population being 29 per cent, being 60 per cent that of the non-Indigenous age group (50%).
- Tasmanian participation rates were low for both populations, with 33 per cent of the Indigenous age group attending preschool and 34 per cent of the non-Indigenous age group of 3- to 5-year-olds.

- Victorian participation rates were mid-range for the Indigenous population (39.1%) and towards the higher end for the non-Indigenous population (48.7%).
- Queensland (40%), ACT and WA (44%) Indigenous participation rates were slightly less than non-Indigenous participation rates (44%, 48% and 50% respectively).
- NSW (46%) and SA (48%) had the highest Indigenous participation rates, but also slightly less than non-Indigenous participation rates (54% and 50% respectively).

### *Influences upon preschool participation*

CAEPR explored the extent to which these differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation rates in preschool education may be due to cultural factors, or whether the differences are due to external factors such as location of residence, family income levels or educational attainment levels of family members.[56] This research found that, after controlling for a range of external factors:

- 3-year-old Indigenous children had a significantly greater probability of participating in preschool education than non-Indigenous 3-year-olds[viii]
- for 4- and 5-year-old Indigenous children, their probability of participating in preschool education was significantly less than for non-Indigenous 4- or 5-year-olds.

In regard to 4- and 5-year-olds, the impact of living in remote locations and living in families with low income and less education on attending preschool was greater for Indigenous young children compared to non-Indigenous young children suggesting that there are influences operating that relate to the Indigenous background of young children which also negatively influence preschool attendance.

## Issue: Culturally appropriate provision

CAEPR researchers have analysed the effects of employing Indigenous preschool workers in preschools, as well as examining the types of early childhood services felt most relevant to Indigenous families and communities. Both are indicative of a culturally appropriate provision.

### Preschool workers

CAEPR research concluded that the presence of an Indigenous preschool worker in the area where an Indigenous child lives significantly increases attendance. However this analysis found that only 31 per cent of Indigenous preschool students lived in an area where an Indigenous preschool worker was employed.

The importance of this statistic is that it demonstrates that the large majority of Indigenous preschool students do not have an Indigenous preschool worker in their preschool to help create a more culturally sensitive learning environment. Yet preschool represents their first contact with the formal educational system.

There were also several slight differences in other characteristics of preschool workers experienced by Indigenous young children. Indigenous young children were slightly more likely to experience younger, less qualified preschool workers who had more recently arrived in the area than non-Indigenous preschool students.

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[viii] This may reflect a difference in the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents answered the Census, with the former categorising child care as preschool or treating 'once-off' or highly irregular attendance as 'attending preschool'.

## Strategies for Indigenous preschool education

CAEPR researchers reviewed the research associated with child development, school readiness and parenting skills in order to develop strategies for early childhood education relevant to Indigenous communities.[57] This review confirmed that early childhood growth and development are critical for health and learning pathways of older children, youth and adults. Furthermore, this review emphasised that in communities that have suffered disadvantage, and experience poverty and high levels of social stress, the learning and developmental pathways are particularly fragile.

In advising Indigenous communities, this research identified the following priorities that could be adopted at a regional level and which, if taken together, could provide an integrated strategy to prepare young children for entry into primary school:

- the establishment of a teaching and research program for early childhood education that is culturally appropriate for Indigenous communities and directly addresses early childhood development, school readiness and parental support
- provision of community-controlled preschool and day care services which could also serve as a site for researching and developing early childhood teaching programs
- the development of training pathways from secondary school through to further education and training in the fields of preschool workers and teachers
- the introduction of a Parent Education and Parent Support Program that assists parents develop the necessary skills and knowledge about antenatal health, nutrition and child development.[58]

CAEPR research has also suggested that there could be benefits from providing early childhood and family support officers in remote communities who can assist young mothers in receiving a more coordinated set of family support services. Such trained support officers could facilitate effective linkages between mothers and service agencies and assist in parenting educational and literacy programs.

## Providing child care and early childhood education through Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)

Of the 244 Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) signed between Indigenous communities and the Australian Government by June 2007, some 10 SRAs explicitly included child care or early childhood education provision.[59] These agreements often had a focus on family wellbeing as well as early childhood development and included:

- provision of a safe facility for child care
- training courses and activities for women in the community related to early childhood health and nutrition, child care, parenting skills for young mothers, domestic violence and general leadership skills to promote family wellbeing
- training of local Indigenous people to become preschool teaching aides or childcare workers
- establishment of a dedicated Indigenous Family Day Care provider service with the local regional Family Day Care Service
- expansion of mobile preschools to operate in a greater number of Indigenous communities
- working with mainstream preschools to promote greater cultural inclusiveness, including employment of Indigenous childcare workers and a culturally appropriate curriculum.

With early childhood education and care such a high priority in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*, this CAEPR analysis of SRAs may have been expected to identify a greater number of SRAs that included reference to early childhood education, especially when several of the above SRAs included this priority alongside several other priorities. As is discussed in the section dealing with Domain 2, this may reflect attention being paid to higher order priorities such as 'youth at risk' or the health and wellbeing of communities. Alternatively, it may result from a feeling of adequacy of existing service provision, coupled with the role of the extended family in providing child care for Indigenous young children.

## Issue: Teaching of pre-literacy and numeracy and parental support for skill acquisition

CAEPR researchers have not undertaken research directed at the extent of pre-literacy teaching in Australian preschools or parental support for English literacy skill acquisition in the early years. However, CAEPR research identified that a priority concern of schools was the school readiness of many Indigenous students, especially in regard to literacy. As a result, these schools were directing any available special assistance to those students in the first three years of primary schooling. Where primary schools had co-located preschools, this was seen as a clear advantage in ensuring a smoother transition from pre-school into the literacy programs being taught in the primary school. CAEPR analyses of adult literacy levels also suggest that literacy levels in remote communities are low, limiting the extent to which parental support can be provided.[60]

## Summary: The importance of early childhood education for Indigenous children

The complexity of family arrangements and low educational attainment levels of parents/carers, when combined with the types of potential or actual threats to the wellbeing of significant numbers of young Indigenous children identified by CAEPR research, justify the priority being accorded to the early childhood education of young Indigenous children. Increasing the participation rates of Indigenous young children in preschools may not be straightforward as the reasons for their lower participation levels compared to non-Indigenous young children are not clear but do seem to relate, at least in part, to their 'Aboriginality' (rather than simply the usual socioeconomic background indicators of their parents/carers).

The SRAs dealing with early childhood education and child care provide an excellent opportunity to provide, through evaluation and monitoring, insights into how best to address the challenge of increasing Indigenous participation rates. Such evaluation and monitoring would also enable an assessment of the value of early childhood education in the development of pre-literacy, numeracy and social skills to facilitate an easier transition into primary schooling, especially in the more remote areas of Australia where most of these SRAs are located.

# School and community educational partnerships

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*Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*

### Domain 2: School and community educational partnerships

The development of genuine partnership, based on the principles of cross-cultural respect between the school and the Indigenous community, remains the primary platform to productive, stimulating and responsive highly effective schools servicing Indigenous students.

Determining the educational provision that will maximise educational outcomes for Indigenous students of each community or sub-community group of Indigenous people can only be achieved through teachers, schools and education systems working in an environment of trust, respect and equality with these Indigenous community and family groups.

Subject to the consent of the parties, a formal agreement should be negotiated between the local school and the local community that clearly articulates, for example, arrangements relating to community participation in school governance, expectations of student attendance and performance, and curriculum focus.

Recommendations:

Formalised partnerships between schools and communities provide the opportunity to maximise the attendance, engagement and achievement of Indigenous students.

Ministers commit to:

- phase in by 2010 agreements between schools with significant Indigenous student cohorts and local Indigenous communities, which:
  - are expressed in plain language
  - enable broad community engagement in the selection of the school principal and teaching staff
  - enable community input into all school planning and decision-making processes
  - establish agreement on school goals and policies relating to matters such as attendance and academic achievement
  - provide greater flexibility in the development and adaptation of curricula, while maintaining high educational standards
  - provide flexibility in the operation of the school and use of resources
  - are referred to Indigenous education consultative bodies for information
  - are sustainable over time, irrespective of change of principal, and re-negotiated to suit changing demands.

- provide, in liaison with Indigenous education consultative bodies, appropriately structured leadership training for community members to enhance their capacity to assume educational leadership roles in their communities
- ensure that schools, in partnership with parents/caregivers, deliver personalised learning to all Indigenous students that includes targets against key learning outcomes and incorporates family involvement strategies.

(Summary only – see *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* for details)

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# Domain 2: School and community educational partnerships

- *Complexity and diversity of communities*
- *Cross-cultural relationship between school and community*
- *Cross-cultural understanding of purposes and value of education*
- *Use and negotiation of educational partnership agreements between schools and communities*
- *Educational partnership agreements and Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)*

The importance of school community partnerships in Indigenous education has been well recognised over the last 30 years. It was highlighted in CAEPR's 1995 review of 20 years of policy recommendations for Indigenous education, with priorities accorded to increased Indigenous representation and participation in Indigenous education; more effective communication between educational authorities and Indigenous communities; increased involvement in educational program and resourcing decisions; and implementation of strategies to encourage parental support for their children's learning.[61]

*Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* identifies the above five themes as underpinning the implementation of school and community educational partnerships in schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students.[ix]

The first of these themes, *complexity and diversity* of Indigenous communities has been addressed in Part 1 of this report. Those aspects considered most relevant to school–community partnerships were:

- family and household composition
- mobility
- specific cultural features of caring, sharing and personal autonomy
- stress and conflict within Indigenous families and communities
- governance in Indigenous communities.

## Cross-cultural relationship between school and community

Understanding the complexity and diversity of Indigenous Australia is of itself an insufficient basis for establishing strong school community engagement. CAEPR research on Indigenous governance points to the importance of acknowledging that the relationship between school and community is influenced by the institutional settings in which both operate, and that adaptations are required by both 'institutions' if effective working relationships are to be attained. In practice, this means that:

- authority structures, forms of communication, administrative procedures and accountability requirements that are an accepted part of a school's operations may have limited relevance to, or be inconsistent with, the authority structures, administrative procedures, forms of communication, and accountability requirements embedded within the local Indigenous community
- this contrasts to a non-Indigenous community operating on a daily basis within an institutional framework similar to that of their local school.

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ix  Key CAEPR references for *Domain 2* are Ref Nos. 55, 57, 59, 60, 101, 112, 116 and 121.

The educational implication is that a new form of relationship needs to develop between the school and the local Indigenous community if an enduring educational partnership is to be achieved. CAEPR research indicates that Indigenous communities are generally willing to work with government agencies to create new ways of 'doing business' to meet contemporary needs.

As is noted later in this report, there is some evidence that government agencies are having difficulty in adapting their mainstream operational requirements to create cross-cultural working relationships and desired outcomes.

# Cross-cultural understanding of purposes and value of education

CAEPR research has gathered information on the purpose and value placed on education and training by Indigenous Australians in several of its ethnographic studies as well as through analysis of the early 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey. This research indicates the diverse values attached to education by Indigenous people.

At a general level, Indigenous people in the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey indicated satisfaction with their children's schooling. Some 85 per cent of Indigenous people with children attending primary or secondary schools indicated that they were happy with their child's schooling. However, CAEPR has drawn attention to the inconsistencies of this finding with other research and review findings, and called for a more detailed examination of Indigenous parental attitudes to education. Unfortunately, the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey did not seek information about Indigenous parents' current attitudes to schooling, which remains a priority area for further research.[62]

## Issue: Emphasis on learning directly relevant to the world in which Indigenous people live

CAEPR's research on Indigenous perceptions of the purposes of education identified five possible outcomes valued by Indigenous Australians:
- developing basic English literacy and numeracy skills
- a means for gaining employment, especially in the mainstream job market
- providing an opportunity to develop the necessary skills to deal with the non-Indigenous agencies, services and culture
- ensuring the continuity of their own culture in more contemporary times
- improving the wellbeing of the community.

### Developing basic English literacy and numeracy skills

The priority attached to learning the basic skills of English literacy and numeracy is evident in remote, regional and urban localities.[63] Literacy itself is seen to be important for a variety of purposes, as identified in a series of community consultations in the Katherine region (NT):
- as necessary for living in today's world
- opening up opportunities for meaningful work
- helping people maintain health for themselves and their family
- being crucial for Indigenous self-determination and community development.[64]

## As a means of gaining employment

Education and training are seen as vital to securing jobs. For many 'at risk' Indigenous young people, curriculum relevance and the value attached to education and training is defined in terms of getting a job, not as a stage along a path towards some future educational goal. This was the case in studies undertaken in the Torres Strait Islander communities, the Kuranda (Qld) and Yuendumu (NT) communities and in secondary schools in Cairns (Qld), Kempsey (NSW) and Broome (WA). It is also evident in some of the Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) that have been signed between Indigenous communities and the Australian Government (see a later section of this report).

This has two significant implications for those involved in training provision:

• Indigenous people appear less concerned about 'accreditation' and the actual gaining of a qualification, but see education and training in terms of its direct relevance to what they are actually doing, not some future employment aspiration.[65]

• If continuous and extensive training does not result in employment opportunities in the private sector or mainstream public sector, 'training fatigue' sets in and people become disillusioned.[66]

CAEPR's analysis of the value attached to higher education by Indigenous students demonstrates the complexity of Indigenous students operating across two cultures:

• Indigenous students may not value higher education solely in terms of the 'western' notions of higher education as being both an economic investment for improved employment prospects and a social investment through the gaining of a qualification that will open social gateways.

• Rather, Indigenous students are faced with a trade-off between valuing higher education in terms of maximising individual economic benefits (through course choice) and certain community costs such as being able to return to their community with a set of skills to benefit the community (e.g. by choosing education or health courses for which economic returns are less).[67]

## As a means of dealing with the non-Indigenous world

Studies of remote communities such as Maningrida (NT), or in small discrete communities such as homeland communities, suggest that from an Indigenous perspective, the purpose of education for Indigenous Australians living in these communities is also very much concerned with the ability for Indigenous young people to be able to operate effectively in the non-Indigenous world.[68] For them educational competence is defined in terms of understanding the cultural and bureaucratic logic of the non-Indigenous world, which is necessary for negotiating with government and business.

At a more practical level, the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills is seen in these remote communities as providing the means to negotiate with government and to look after and protect their lands from non-Indigenous Australians.[69]

## As a means of ensuring cultural maintenance

A quite different purpose of education has been raised during some of the CAEPR research—education as a vehicle for cultural maintenance. This is most evident in remote schooling where there is often a desire for the inclusion of Indigenous culture, knowledge and technologies in the school curriculum. It was also a value commented on by Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) in some, but not all, primary schools

with significant Indigenous enrolments. Cultural maintenance often involved cultural activities such as art and bushcraft, as well as storytelling by elders or other members of the local Indigenous community.[70] The development of a cultural space within a school for both community parents and students was another strategy. However, not all community members saw cultural maintenance as one of the responsibilities of the school, but rather one held by the community itself.[71]

Bringing these ideas together, the development of Ranger and Junior Ranger Programs for working 'on country' in areas such as sea and land management is based on a dualistic purpose of education: to provide employment opportunities and to help maintain cultural links to country.

### As a means of community development

Finally, the value attached to education and training for community participation, development and wellbeing is seen in an early scoping exercise for a Community Partnership Agreement in Mutitjulu (NT). The Mutitjulu community identified the delivery of education and training as a core issue if the continuing deterioration of the wellbeing of individuals, families and the community as a whole was to be averted.[72] The value attached to this community purpose of education and training is evident across much of the CAEPR governance research and a substantial number of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) between Indigenous communities and the Australian Government.

## Issue: Getting the balance between developing social capital and human capital

From quite a different and theoretical perspective, several CAEPR studies have examined the related issues of:

- a potential overemphasis on the development of social capital[x] among Indigenous communities
- the implications for children and young adults of being excluded from the mainstream economy in preference to continuing to live in a predominantly Indigenous way of life.

In the first, there is a warning not to overemphasise the importance of social capital within Indigenous communities, as it may have several drawbacks when it comes to interacting with the mainstream economy. For while it strengthens social cohesion, through social controls, being a source of family support and securing network-mediated benefits beyond the immediate family, it may have negative consequences. An overemphasis on the development of social capital may:

- result in exclusion of outsiders (including external agencies responsible for service delivery)
- limit the opportunities for seeking education and employment
- result in a downward levelling of norms such that expectations are reduced and lower standards set by both teachers and Indigenous students.[73]

The development of Indigenous community schools, closely articulating with mainstream training and employment opportunities, is one strategy to get the balance right between social capital and human capital development.[74]

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[x]   Social capital is a rather ambiguous term but typically refers to the benefits which flow from membership in networks and other social structures, such as social cohesion and family support. It contrasts to human capital which refers to the acquisition of skills and knowledge and leads to increased employment prospects and income.

The second, in a similar vein, challenges the assumption that participation in mainstream education and particularly the labour market economy will lead to assimilatory outcomes. Rather, these CAEPR researchers argue that not participating in the mainstream economy may actively undermine Indigenous families' own capacity to maintain essential cultural aspects of Indigenous wellbeing.[75]

The value of these CAEPR research papers is in their recognition of the need to get the right balance between social and human capital development within Indigenous communities. Education and training can play multiple roles in helping achieve this balance. At an individual level, education can increase skill levels and thereby increase employability. It can also assist the development of social skills. At a community level, education can be capacity building, leading not only to increased overall economic development but a strengthening of the social fabric of the community through, for example, improved health care and governance structures.

# Use and negotiation of educational partnership agreements between schools and communities

*Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* identifies two levels at which educational partnership arrangements can apply:

- between schools with significant numbers of Indigenous enrolments and their communities
- between schools, training providers, key agencies, business and Indigenous communities and organisations.

As educational partnership agreements are being proposed only for those schools with significant (as yet undefined) Indigenous enrolments, many of these partnership agreements are likely to be in regional and remote areas. In these circumstances, the complexity and diversity of Indigenous communities reported above, the various Indigenous values attached to education and training, and the ability of the school and other agencies to develop effective community relationships, will influence the negotiation and use of educational partnership agreements at either level.

## Issue: The influence of parents, family composition and households

The CAEPR research which documents the high value Indigenous parents/carers place on literacy and numeracy skills is a good start towards negotiating educational partnership agreements in this priority area. Similarly the value parents/carers place on training directed towards a job is another starting point at the secondary school level.

The proposed school and community educational partnership does not specify who represents the school community, but rather, keeps the issue of representation open to local circumstances. However, the proposal does give primary emphasis to the partnership being one between the school and parents/caregivers.

Based on CAEPR research, the implications of the introduction of educational partnerships between the school and community are threefold, especially when the agreements are more likely to involve Indigenous students and their parents/carers living in remote or regional localities:

- determining who might be the most appropriate person to be a *'signatory'* on an agreement regarding the education of a student will not be straightforward, as several people may be responsible for and assist in the development of the student

- maintaining up-to-date agreements for all members of the school community will be made that much more difficult by the high degree of mobility of Indigenous families as they move into or out of a community

- responsibility for monitoring student behaviour such as school attendance and assisting with learning will be made all that more difficult by the high mobility of young people between households within a community.

The relationship that exists between adults and children in Indigenous communities also has implications for the maintenance of school community educational partnership agreements. As several of the above CAEPR case studies found both socially and individually, children are considered to be 'boss for themselves' and adults tend not to infringe on that assumption in many communities, including urban communities.

As a result, the amount of leverage that might be expected from parents on their children to meet 'obligations' entered into through an agreement may not be sufficient to ensure that the obligations are met.

The capacity of parents/carers to 'negotiate' educational partnership agreements will be determined by their existing levels of literacy and understanding of educational decision-making processes. CAEPR studies have found that:

- Adult literacy levels among many Indigenous Australians, particularly those in areas where schools are likely to have significant numbers of Indigenous enrolments, could best be described as 'functional literacy'. This might not be sufficiently extensive to enable effective negotiating with the school.

- Western concepts and words do not always translate into Indigenous world views and languages, leading to misinterpretation of documents such as the proposed educational partnership agreements template.[76]

Finally, there are a considerable number of Indigenous adults whose historical experiences with schooling and institutions were such that they could not attend a school meeting—it was too distressing/stressful an experience, reminding them of their own childhood experiences of 'western schooling'.[77] Gaining their involvement in such formal processes as agreements may be difficult.

## Issue: School leadership in negotiating educational partnership arrangements

While there has been no direct CAEPR research on the roles of principals as school leaders in negotiating educational partnership agreements or other forms of agreements, several studies have gathered information about the successful engagement of parents in the school. CAEPR research has also identified the importance of establishing strategies to improve cross-cultural understanding between staff and the local community, thus facilitating improved communication and mutual understanding of educational purposes and processes.

For example, following the ending of the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) scheme, the level of parental engagement with primary schools decreased, leading principals in some primary schools to develop new approaches to involving Indigenous parents in school affairs—such as in an advisory capacity or with direct involvement in decision making. These principals continued with parent committees in several ways: similar to their previous ASSPA committee, in a much more strengthened form, or as a 'sounding board' associated with the operation of the Homework Centre, where one still existed. Their roles related to:

- advising on school spending priorities and developing agreed targets

- advising on culturally relevant curricula and facilities
- helping to operate the Homework Centre
- assisting with the development of a Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI) and other funding submissions.[78]

In a study of secondary schooling, parent and community engagement was engendered through strong promotion of the school within the community and strategies to increase cross-cultural understanding among staff.[79]

The amount of time (and hence resources) spent by these principals in strengthening school–community involvement was substantial and ongoing. It could be reasonably expected that an even greater amount of time than is currently required to strengthen school–community involvement will be required to establish suitable school–community governance structures on which to develop and maintain effective school and community educational partnership agreements.

Enabling factors to assist government agencies such as schools to promote effective community–agency partnerships have been identified by CAEPR. These highlight the importance of schools:

- getting to know the community before they begin the process of partnership development
- helping the community build its capacity to contribute to the partnership, in terms of understanding educational policies, educational programs and school procedures
- recognising the importance of existing Indigenous authority structures such as leadership and legitimacy of representation
- understanding the rules of communication and interaction which operate within Indigenous society, recognising that Indigenous communication is generally less direct than westernised communication and is strongly based on maintaining respectful relationships
- being willing to be creative in developing the most appropriate and mutually beneficial model of partnership, which takes account of the needs of both institutions.[80]

CAEPR researchers have also identified the importance of recognising the rich oral tradition of Indigenous peoples, the need to spend more time in developing ideas and spending time with communities in their own space and, in turn, creating a 'comfortable' space for Indigenous adults within the school.[81] Furthermore, CAEPR research points out the ability of Indigenous people to adopt 'multiple scripts', depending on the audience. This further emphasises the need for school leaders and other staff to spend time discussing issues to develop effective discourse. Taking these findings into account would seem important for schools when developing educational partnership agreements.

## Issue: Capacity building of the parent community and school staff as a priority

CAEPR governance research has identified that priority needs to be given to building the capacity of government agencies to work jointly with Indigenous communities, just as that research has also highlighted a similar need among Indigenous organisations.[82] These findings point to a priority being placed on capacity building of **both** schools and their communities if effective educational partnership agreements are to be developed and maintained.

As already noted, Indigenous parent/carer community members may need increased skills in negotiating educational partnership agreements regarding their children's education, including increased understanding of educational resources and delivery arrangements which may be subject to negotiation and accountability responsibilities.

A similar priority for capacity building applies to school principals and their staff. They may require professional development opportunities to increase their understandings of Indigenous cultural values, traditions and priorities and how partnerships with Indigenous communities are developed, monitored and maintained.

Bringing both these priorities together and recognising the critical importance of establishing new forms of school and community relationships suggests the value of capacity building directed towards the development of innovative school community models of governance and involving all school and community members, as much as being directed to the skills of individual community members or individual school staff.

## Issue: Learning communities as educational partnerships in practice

The development of a 'learning community' represents an example of an educational partnership between a school and its community. The basis of this partnership is an acknowledgment that all members of a community can be actively involved in learning through the various stages of their lives, and that learning is not restricted to the formal years of primary, secondary and tertiary education. The task for educational authorities is to develop an approach to education for a local community that encompasses all its learning needs.

CAEPR policy research on Indigenous learning communities has proposed a model of an Indigenous learning community which encompasses the social, cultural and educational needs of the local Indigenous community.[83–85] In doing so it also provides the opportunity for integrated service delivery across education, training, health and other government and community agencies—often referred to as 'full-service schools'.

For such a learning community, as well as catering for school-age students, educational programs would also:
• cater for early childhood and for parents and other adults—offering lifelong learning
• operate within a culturally safe and nurturing environment.

Essential to maintaining an effective educational partnership underpinning a learning community model of education is the development of governance, leadership and management that adequately provides a sense of strong involvement for the community, with mechanisms to support and build the capacity of Indigenous people to participate effectively.

CAEPR's review of existing international and Australian examples of learning communities indicates:
• overall positive outcomes in terms of increased student participation, academic performance and retention
• improved student social behaviour
• increased parental and community involvement in the school.

Such a model has been proposed by CAEPR research as applicable not only to remote and rural settings, but also to urban areas, including capital cities, where there are concentrations of Indigenous families.

A small number of SRAs illustrate communities and schools working together to develop the notion of a learning community. For example:

• teaching of financial literacy and Information Communication Technology skills to parents, which also provides them with the basis for supporting their children's learning

• establishment of nutritional breakfast and lunch programs for schools which involve teaching parents healthy food preparation skills and possibly growing healthy foods

• introduction of childcare facilities together with parenting skills programs as part of early childhood education.

## Issue: Broadening educational partnerships to include pathways development

Governance issues, as identified by CAEPR research, become particularly important at the level of developing partnerships between schools, training providers, key agencies, business and Indigenous communities and organisations in local support networks as envisaged in *Domain 5 – Pathways to training, employment and higher education*.

In the case of comprehensive partnerships, which involve a wide range of key stakeholders and are designed to develop strong pathways from schooling through training and higher education to successful employment outcomes, identifying the most appropriate form of Indigenous governance structure with which to enter into a partnership is not straightforward.

Through CAEPR governance research, several models of Indigenous governance have been identified. One of these, known as a *Community Action Group*[86], has been trialled in Western Australia, and might be applicable to school–community educational partnerships or to more comprehensive partnership models in a localised region. Community Action Groups are local representative structures whose membership is drawn from all Indigenous family groupings in the community.

Other models could also be considered such as *Community Working Parties* which have been playing a central role in the Murdi Paki (NSW) COAG Trial, and are the primary mechanism for representation and consultation at the community level. These *Community Working Parties* can comprise a wide representation, including representatives of local Indigenous organisations, Indigenous representatives of key government agencies, elders or specific community members with particular interests or expertise.

While these models may be a reasonable approach with more discrete communities in small regional towns and centres, the transient nature of an Indigenous urban population, combined with the sheer size of the population in an urban area such as a capital city, and associated family and kin diversity, may limit the extent to which they can be developed as coordinating points for consultation and negotiation.

Overall, the CAEPR research suggests that no one model is appropriate for all situations. Nevertheless, for the successful development of partnerships further governance research is required on the most effective forms of joint governance arrangements between Indigenous communities, government agencies and other key stakeholders.

## Issue: Capacity development as a priority for Indigenous organisations and government agencies in education and employment pathways development

Arising from this research on governance, there are two elements that need to be highlighted if progress is to be made in establishing effective partnerships among key stakeholders to achieve effective pathways to employment and potentially to regional development:

- improving the capacity of Indigenous organisations to participate in the proposed educational partnerships, including increased understandings of education policies and sectoral arrangements, resources and delivery arrangements and accountability responsibilities

- improving the capacity of government agencies and the private sector to participate in partnership arrangements.[87] Already the complexity of Indigenous representation and leadership has been noted, with its implications for greater understanding being required by government agencies. Not only is emphasis required on increased understanding of how partnerships are developed, monitored and maintained between a government agency and a local Indigenous community, such a priority also applies to a government agency's capacity to work with other government agencies within the partnership.

These two issues are similar to the two issues identified above at the school–community level regarding effective educational partnership agreements.

To date, CAEPR governance research has concluded that:

- The delivery and funding of capacity development for Indigenous governance remains ad hoc, poorly coordinated, poorly funded and poorly monitored[88]

- Capacity development must be sustained rather than being seen as a short-term requirement. The timeframes are lengthy if lasting change in the capabilities of individuals, groups and organisations is to occur

- For this reason, new governance arrangements need substantial levels of support (in planning, funding, administration and governance capacity) in the lead-up and early implementation phase.

These findings apply to both Indigenous organisations and government agencies and warrant consideration in any proposals to develop partnership arrangements. This is especially the case where partnerships with Indigenous organisations involve government agencies with differing responsibilities, such as agencies responsible for health, employment, education and training, and representing different levels of government.

# Educational partnership agreements and SRAs

Shared Responsibility Agreements and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trials have similarities to the proposed educational partnership arrangements leading to partnerships between schools, training providers, business, key government agencies and Indigenous communities and organisations.

# Issue: Implementation of Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)

As at June 2007, Indigenous communities had entered into 244 SRAs with the Australian Government, including several multiple agreements, since their inception in 2005.[xi] Of these, the greatest number occurred in Western Australia (65), followed by Northern Territory (49), New South Wales (46), Queensland (40) and South Australia (31). Few had been signed in Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT. Preliminary CAEPR research on the publicly available schedules at ‹www.indigenous.gov.au/sra.html› found that most SRAs involved more than one government agency and frequently involved different levels of government, as well as Indigenous organisations. Non-government (non-Indigenous) organisations were involved to a lesser extent.[89]

Generally SRAs had a broad community focus or were targeted at youth or youth 'at risk'. A relatively small proportion of SRAs had a primary focus on very young children of preschool or early primary school age.

There were just over 50 SRAs which included an educational focus as a primary aim, although up to 40 per cent of SRAs identified educational participation, school attendance and improved educational outcomes as issues in their community. SRAs aimed to strengthen education and training participation, attendance and outcomes used a variety of strategies:

- direct involvement with the school curriculum by developing alternative delivery strategies, including use of art and media, to better cater for the natural interests of Indigenous students
- the provision of additional support or resources such as Indigenous Education Workers and Homework Centres
- increasing access to education through School of the Air, the construction of facilities or scholarships
- developing pathways through secondary school towards employment opportunities, resulting in increased retention though Years 10–12. Such strategies included increased career information, linking schools with employers and VET in schools types of programs and mentoring
- developing alternative curriculum activities or other incentives associated with the school to promote school attendance, including 'bush camps', bike maintenance courses, and breakfast and lunch programs
- improving sporting and recreational activities for young people in the community, thereby increasing their sense of wellbeing and motivation to attend school
- introducing activities or facilities such as community motor transport, a swimming pool, community store or a motor bike track and training course on the condition that students attend school, and using school attendance as a performance indicator.

Rather than directly involving areas of school responsibility such as the formal curriculum and pedagogy, many of the SRAs focused on the latter three forms of strategic intervention.

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[xi] Note that the publicly available schedules only allow a high-level analysis of the SRAs, which limits the extent to which target groups and priority outcomes can be accurately determined. Nevertheless, sufficient details are provided to give a fairly good indication of expected outcomes, strategies and target groups.

In addition, many SRAs included less formal training activities to support their major purpose: for example, installation and maintenance skills for community members as part of airconditioning projects, lifesaving skills for pool attendants, and driving skills and licences associated with the purchase of a vehicle.

A CAEPR review of the earlier SRAs suggested possible difficulties with the scheme regarding:

- the obligation for a particular behaviour not being functionally linked to the benefit provided
- SRAs being a rather blunt instrument with no cultural precedent for Indigenous leadership to enforce compliance in most Indigenous communities
- SRAs being regarded as a substitute in which to engage the community in their own cultural change on a daily basis, but without the involvement of skilled development workers.[90]

At this stage there has been no comprehensive evaluation of SRAs, although an overall review of the SRA approach is planned for 2008–09 and reviews of individual SRAs have commenced. Outcomes from these reviews will be a valuable source of information for education authorities in developing strategies relevant to Indigenous education.

The wide range of activities developed to encourage continuing school participation under SRAs raises several issues for the development of school and community educational partnership agreements:

- schools do not appear to play a significant role in many SRAs, and there is potential for confusion at the community and even agency level as to the relative purposes of SRAs and school and community educational partnership agreements, and potential for overlap
- priority is accorded to youth and youth at risk and increased school retention and pathways development in many SRAs. There appears little direct emphasis in SRAs on curriculum strategies in schools to improve the basic skills of literacy and numeracy for younger students
- the extent to which schools and their communities have established a governance relationship in educationally related SRAs is unclear but, apart from several SRAs, they do not appear to have done so
- there appears limited focus on the school as an educational institution and the development of best practice among staff for the education of Indigenous students
- in a significant number of SRAs, the 'educational' links between the activity and increased school attendance or participation appears tenuous.

Overall, the successful implementation of many SRAs requires cross-agency involvement in addressing Indigenous education, training and employment priorities. This will necessitate integrated program delivery designed to improve health, housing and justice and reduce levels of substance abuse and criminal activity among school-age young people, a point made in the earlier CAEPR review.

Importantly, on the ground evaluations of SRAs would provide a valuable resource to assist in identifying best practice strategies for introducing educational agreements.

## Issue: Lessons learnt from the Council of Australian Governments' approach to Indigenous affairs

COAG agreed in early 2002 to trial a new approach to the delivery of services to eight Indigenous communities, based on a whole-of-government cooperative approach. The aim was to improve social and economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians living in those communities through:

- government departments and agencies working together at national, state or territory and local levels and in a coordinated manner across respective portfolio responsibilities
- Indigenous communities and governments working together in partnership, sharing responsibility for achieving social and economic outcomes for the community.

CAEPR research warns of undue optimism in the COAG arrangements speedily addressing Indigenous socioeconomic disadvantage, a point made by a more senior departmental secretary during discussions with the researchers. Changes need to develop progressively over time and involve changing the culture of public administration and possibly the governance of Indigenous communities.[91]

CAEPR researchers reviewed the findings of the 2006 evaluations of the COAG trial sites and identified three priorities for action:

- improving the capacity of government agencies to operate within a partnership arrangement with Indigenous communities, which required, in some cases, a cultural shift among staff and the development of realistic expectations of what might be achieved
- a need for clear, agreed policy frameworks and simplification of program and funding arrangements
- building community governance and capacity at local and regional level, as this will be the foundation stone on which effective partnerships and programs can be built.[92]

These are the same priorities for action which CAEPR governance research suggests for the effective implementation of school and community educational partnership arrangements.

The most recent analysis by CAEPR researchers on the outcomes of the whole-of-government approach further supports these findings and points to several 'institutional' failings on the part of government agencies in implementing cross-agency policies and programs. The research also found that there appears to be a shift in the extent to which culture is taken into account by government agencies, with policy and program solutions increasingly seeking to quarantine culture to one side. It concluded that the primary mode of departmental interaction with community organisations is one of managerial governance that focuses on compliance and grant acquittal.

This is in contrast to CAEPR research findings on governance that there are now well documented examples of Indigenous groups and organisations using their cultural values, institutions and social relationships to positively support their collective efforts to rebuild their governing arrangements and in doing so provide a powerful mechanism for accountability and effectiveness.[93]

# Summary: Creating effective educational partnership agreements

The broad cultural, social and structural underpinnings of effective educational partnerships described in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* are supported by CAEPR research. The research highlights the importance of building new forms of relationships between school and community that are based on recognising the complexity and diversity of Indigenous communities, cross-cultural understanding of the purpose and value of education, and a willingness to adapt existing management strategies to new forms of governance. The research also suggests that the establishment of partnership arrangements will not be straightforward. It will require building the skills of both the community and the school and, where other agencies are involved, overcoming institutional barriers to interagency cooperation.

# School leadership

## Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008

### Domain 3: School leadership

The need for strong, proactive and informed leadership at the school level is fundamental to establishing and maintaining a culture of learning that is inclusive of Indigenous students and enables their engagement and successful participation. This culture will not emerge unless there is a shared commitment by all staff, engendered by school level leadership.

Leadership in Indigenous education is the readiness to challenge educators and Indigenous students and communities about the pursuit of better outcomes for Indigenous children in schools.… Indigenous leadership in education is about Indigenous people in schools leading to ensure not only the pursuit of improved outcomes for Indigenous children but also that Indigenous identity is acknowledged and affirmed in schools through Indigenous studies programs and culturally responsive learning pedagogy.

Recent research shows that positive change occurs when a school generates a culture and philosophy that will acknowledge and affirm Indigenous identity of students in the school and permeate this through instructional and learning programs that are designed to challenge, develop and embrace this positive sense of Indigenous identity. Strong, proactive and informed leadership in Indigenous education is required to generate such a culture and philosophy.

Recommendations:

Strong, proactive and informed leadership at the school level is fundamental to establishing and maintaining a culture of learning that is inclusive of Indigenous students and enables their engagement and successful participation.

Ministers commit to:

- include learning outcomes for Indigenous students as a key part of the accountability framework
- provide by 2008 accredited school leadership programs that focus on developing in school leaders the knowledge and skills to improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students
- provide opportunities for Indigenous teachers to develop the skills to become successful school principals and to take up other leadership positions within schools.

(Summary only – see *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* for details)

# Domain 3: School leadership

- *Responsiveness to social and cultural context of students*

- *Indigenous identity—how to challenge, develop and engage*

- *Engagement with parents and community*

- *School and community culture of high educational expectations*

- *Accountability for outcomes*

- *Promotion of Indigenous leadership in education*

CAEPR researchers have undertaken two research studies at the school level which provide insights into the qualities of effective leadership in Indigenous education. One explored the role of principals in using resources at the primary school level in 14 schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students, of which 10 were involved in more extensive study.[94] The other focused on case studies of three secondary schools where principals played a prominent role in retaining Indigenous students 'at risk' of leaving school prior to the completion of Year 12.[95] While CAEPR school-based research is quite limited, the findings from these studies provide a good basis for discussing some of the educational implications flowing from the School Leadership and Quality Teaching Domains in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*.[xii]

## Issue: Responsiveness to social and cultural context of students

The three secondary school case studies identified a clearly articulated vision for addressing the needs of Indigenous students, especially those at risk of leaving school early. Fundamental to achieving this vision was a respect for Indigenous culture, with the research finding that, for example:

- open displays of Indigenous art were not construed as simply being symbolic but rather a signal that Indigenous culture was a valued and respected part of the school as an educational institution

- an understanding of Indigenous family structures and responsibilities was an essential ingredient to relating in a culturally sensitive manner to Indigenous students

- an understanding by staff of the validity of Indigenous languages seemed crucial even where there was a focus on learning Standard Australian English.

A similar set of characteristics was evident among the primary school principals who had significant numbers of Indigenous enrolments in their schools. As in the case of the secondary schools, art and cultural displays were quite common. These principals also demonstrated a very clear understanding of the social, health and economic conditions faced by Indigenous families and the impact that had on Indigenous student behaviour and learning. They were perceptive of the diversity among Indigenous students and their families, especially in regard to transient students or students from town camps.[96] They were also generally sensitive to the history of some Indigenous families and the continuing effects of the Stolen Generation on parental/carer engagement with western institutions.

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[xii] The main references for Domain 3 are Ref No. 47 and Ref No. 109.

CAEPR research has identified other aspects of Indigenous culture about which school leaders need to be aware, such as the different sets of values Indigenous people attach to education.[97,98] Another aspect which applies to remote schools is the notion of ownership and the extent to which Indigenous people accept that particular school resources are school-owned rather than shared between school and community, just as Indigenous resources are shared among kin (see Part 1 *Culture, Community and Family Life* on Indigenous sharing).[99]

In summary, this breadth of cultural and social understanding by principals and other school leaders seems a necessary precursor to the development of effective strategies to address low levels of parental engagement in their children's education or in student engagement in learning.

## Issue: Indigenous identity—how to challenge, develop and engage

For each of the educational leaders of the above three secondary schools, their vision for Indigenous students was locally based, context-specific and drew upon the opportunities and resources in the local community. This also appeared the case for those primary school principals who excelled in their role.

### Capacity to seek resources

A capacity to seek out resources to address educational, social, health and economic difficulties faced by Indigenous students is a hallmark of successful leadership. This was true of schools located in remote areas as well as schools in metropolitan and regional localities. For example:

- creating partnerships between the school and tertiary institutions for action research and development activities to address Indigenous health, domestic violence or boys' behavioural and learning difficulties
- seeking funding from non-traditional sources such as sports and recreational government agencies or non-government organisations to construct shade facilities
- gaining support and assistance from voluntary organisations to provide breakfast and lunch programs to reduce malnutrition.

Related to this was their capacity to use funds flexibly, and possibly more so than formally allowed by departmental program guidelines.

Three points identified by the research need to be made in regard to use of program and external funds. Firstly, seeking (and gaining) such funding is time consuming, which is added to with increasing accountability requirements. Secondly, the implementation stage may be resource heavy or may be disrupted to the point where it can no longer be implemented. Thirdly, benefits from seed funding may be short-lived, creating additional challenges for the school and its leadership.

### Capacity to develop a strong, creative and culturally sensitive staff

Schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students are less attractive to staff for several reasons—often being located in remote regions or, in the case of metropolitan schools, being located in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage. As a result, recruitment of experienced staff is difficult and staff turnover can be high. These were issues raised during the primary school study and which make the development

of a strong, creative and culturally sensitive staff all that more difficult. Yet it was this capacity to develop a staff which was culturally sensitive to the education of Indigenous students and who could modify teaching strategies accordingly that CAEPR researchers found to be a hallmark of a school environment conducive to learning. Strategies used by principals included:

• teacher induction programs such as visiting town camps and meeting with elders
• staff meetings with permanent items dealing with Indigenous issues and presented by Indigenous Education Workers.

It is important to note that success appeared dependent on a continuous whole-school approach, which can be onerous upon the principals and may result in particular teachers being found to be unsuitable for teaching Indigenous students. Such teachers may find it difficult to understand cultural values and behaviours of Indigenous students or feel unable to generate high educational aspirations among Indigenous students. In discussions with both principals and teachers, this was identified to be the case (more details in the section dealing with *Domain 4 – Quality teaching*).

## A culturally relevant curriculum

Cultural appropriateness of school curricula was a topic where opinions varied widely across primary schools. To what extent was consideration given to creating a culturally inclusive curriculum in schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students? Of the 10 primary schools visited, most had included Indigenous culture in some way in their school's operation. For example:

• the involvement of elders with cultural activities in the Homework Centre
• the development of a cultural garden by the (former) ASSPA committee, creating a spiritual 'connectedness' among all present and past Indigenous students attending the school
• the development of a well-resourced Indigenous culture room for use by all teachers and with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous access, enabling its grounding within the school's curriculum
• establishment of a cultural centre and 'space' for Indigenous mothers, especially those more transient who generally find it difficult to link with the school
• attempts, largely unsuccessful, to organise a junior ranger program involving community elders to take education into the bush.[100]

However, the impression gained was that in most cases, with such a great emphasis placed on the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills, there was no strong or regular strand of Indigenous culture running through the curriculum. Several principals argued that inclusion of Indigenous culture met the departmental curriculum frameworks, but no special or additional attention was given to it within their school.

# Issue: Engagement with parents and community

The role of principals in engaging parents and the community in education of young people has already been addressed in Domain 2 in terms of negotiating school and community educational partnership agreements. Arising from this CAEPR research, several additional points need to be made.

## Parents and carers as a resource

Principals agreed that an important challenge for them was harnessing the opportunities parents provided as a valuable resource for supporting their children's learning in the home. Parents provided an important source of support to the school through involvement on school curriculum advisory committees, on school governance structures such as school boards, and in fundraising. They were also a potential resource for teachers by assisting in classrooms in areas in which they had particular expertise, such as arts and storytelling. For these reasons, principals created opportunities for parental involvement in the school:

- assisting in the Homework Centre
- offering IT courses to build up parents' IT literacy skills
- encouraging participation at sports events
- holding cultural events.

## The fragility of maintaining effective Indigenous parent school engagement

According to principals, the fragility of maintaining a strong Indigenous parent engagement with the school was evidenced following the discontinuation of the Australian Government's ASSPA program and its replacement by the Parent School Partnerships Initiatives (PSPI) program:

- Some Indigenous communities had perceived the ending of the ASSPA program as evidence of the government's lack of interest in Indigenous education.
- Failing to attract PSPI funding for a submission was also seen by some Indigenous groups as an indication of a failure to appreciate their willingness to be involved in the running of the school.[101]
- The loss of the brokering function of ASSPA committees in the light of the school having to deal with distinct 'clans' had been lost—for example, in facilitating Indigenous involvement in arts and cultural activities.

However, as noted in the section dealing with Domain 2, principals have set in place alternative forms of school–community engagement that are working and beginning to redress the disruption and, in some instances, actually improve parental involvement in the school. Nevertheless this remains one of the greatest challenges of school leadership—encouraging Indigenous parents to become involved in the education of their children.

## Promotion of the school to the community

One of the important qualities of educational leaders is their capacity to promote their school or college to the local community. This was found to be the case in the study of secondary schools where principals were active in:

- building up the schools' reputation as providing a strong curriculum and learning culture
- establishing consultative mechanisms that engaged all elements of the community to ensure relevant informed educational goals
- developing pathways out into the community for generating employment opportunities.

Similarly in the case of the primary school study, strategies identified to promote the school's reputation in the community included a strong sports program and specialist expertise in developing information communication technology skills among its Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

## Issue: School and community culture of high educational expectations

Creating a climate of high educational expectations among Indigenous students presents one of the most difficult challenges for educational leaders. Yet this was a common feature of the three secondary school case studies. Each of the schools recognised and celebrated individual success. Whether that success was as simple as maintaining regular attendance, selling a painting or being honoured with an invitation to open a national conference, the school worked hard to find opportunities for students to experience success.

As in the case of the above secondary schools, primary schools also developed strategies to celebrate success and encourage performance—such as through sport, arts and media studies, where Indigenous students display a high level of natural expertise.

However, as principals and teachers indicated, creating a climate of high educational expectations is not easy to achieve due to the expectations among not only the parent and student body, but also among some teachers. One primary school had an in-service program concentrating on what it termed 'authentic' teaching, where teacher authenticity was viewed very much in terms of teachers raising their own expectations of Indigenous student academic performance.

## Issue: Accountability for outcomes

External factors operate which challenge principals in their efforts to develop high educational expectations among students. At the primary level, one of the most commonly mentioned external factors was literacy and numeracy benchmark testing:

- In remote communities, performance levels are extremely low and staff urged consideration being given to more fine-grained performance improvement measures so that both students and teachers could still use this public measure of educational performance to chart progress and create a better performance climate.
- In a metropolitan school, both prior to and after benchmark testing, the staffroom climate was anything but conducive to creating an expectation of strong educational performance from Indigenous students, with staff being extremely concerned about the language requirements of the numeracy tests.

The educational implications are fairly clear. While the current emphasis remains on literacy and numeracy benchmark testing, and this is not to deny its importance, it seems it will be extremely difficult for principals to create high educational expectations among a substantial number of Indigenous students.

## Issue: Promotion of Indigenous leadership in education

### Recruitment of Indigenous staff

Recruitment of Indigenous staff was a feature of most schools in both studies and provided another avenue for promoting an Indigenous identity in the school. However, there are distinct limitations on this as the main strategy, at least in the short term, due to the small numbers of fully qualified Indigenous teachers.

While there were Indigenous secondary teachers employed in the three case study secondary schools, very few were employed in the 10 case study primary schools, although two primary schools employed Indigenous trainee teachers enrolled in the Remote Area Teacher Education Program in Queensland. Rather, Indigenous Education Workers were generally employed at the primary level (as well as the secondary level). However there was general agreement that Indigenous staff provided important role models for students and helped stamp an Indigenous identity on western schooling.

## Summary: Educational leadership as a matter of endurance and long-term goals

The CAEPR research demonstrated that educational leadership in Indigenous education requires the setting of long-term goals and a capacity to 'last the distance'. To cite one example of lasting the distance, at an urban primary school with significant numbers of Indigenous students, as well as other students from low socioeconomic family backgrounds, the principal achieved the goal of strong parental engagement, broader community acceptance that the school offered quality education and a learning environment that supported student achievement. The time taken was of the order of five to six years of concerted effort. The acquisition and targeted use of additional staffing and other resources was necessary and a continuous program of school improvement was implemented following this initial period.

Educational leaders in remote communities are presented with additional challenges which cannot be ignored. These are similar to those felt by other service providers and which have been documented by CAEPR research.[102] For example, they are often living as a minority in remote locations, which can have personal and professionally profound implications for sustaining efficient and effective service delivery—in this case, education. Often they live in a confined area, are acutely aware of lack of access to facilities and activities which typify most other locations, experience housing maintenance difficulties and may feel like being in a 'fishbowl' with limited social interaction. These personal issues, combined with limited professional interaction, the need to support often inexperienced staff, and high maintenance requirements of school facilities and equipment place additional stresses on these school principals, not normally experienced by other school principals. Strategies to support such principals and help them maintain their roles as educational leaders are an important research and development priority.

# Quality teaching

## Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008

### Domain 4: Quality teaching

Quality teaching is recognised as a hallmark of success. The primary role of quality teaching is to enhance the learning environment of classrooms with pedagogical practice that fundamentally engages students in learning.

Important dimensions of the 'quality learning environment'… include explicit quality criteria; engagement; social support; high expectations; student self-regulation; and student self-direction.

Quality teaching is integral to overall school improvement: teacher development and school development must be closely linked. Schools need to measure how well they are engaging Indigenous students in classrooms and parents/caregivers in the life of the school. School leaders and teachers need to develop their skills in collecting, analysing, interpreting and using student performance information (data and assessment literacy) in support of evidence-based approaches to improvement. Teachers need to see assessment data as saying something about them, what they are doing and what they need to do.

Recommendations:

Quality teaching in primary and secondary schools is essential to improving outcomes for Indigenous students while fostering in them a strong sense of identity as successful learners and as Indigenous Australians.

Ministers commit to:

provide by 2010 pre-service and in-service professional learning accredited by teaching accreditation authorities to:

- ensure that school leaders and teachers have the cultural understandings to significantly improve outcomes for Indigenous students
- enable teachers to adopt pedagogical approaches that result in high levels of academic expectation and achievement by Indigenous students across all learning areas
- provide support to develop data and assessment literacy in school leaders and teachers to support evidence-based improvement planning
- develop strategies to attract and retain high quality teachers, especially in regional and remote communities with high Indigenous student enrolments.

(Summary only – see *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* for details)

# Domain 4: Quality teaching

- *Significance of curriculum*

- *Cultural understanding*

- *Adoption of pedagogies to develop high expectations and outcomes*

- *Explicit teaching of English literacy and Standard Australian English*

- *Attracting and retaining high quality teachers for classes with Indigenous students, especially in remote areas*

CAEPR researchers have undertaken two research studies at the school level and these have already been discussed at *Domain 3 – School leadership*. Both studies also gathered information about teaching and the curriculum taught. As previously noted, one study focused on resource utilisation at the primary school level in 14 schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students, and included more in-depth analyses in 10 of these schools.[103] The other focused on case studies of three secondary schools where strategies had been developed for retaining Indigenous students 'at risk' of leaving school prior to the completion of Year 12.[104]

There are several additional CAEPR studies which are also relevant to aspects of *Domain 4 – Quality teaching* such as literacy practices for students and adults living in very remote Indigenous communities for whom Standard Australian English is very much a second language. However, quality teaching of Indigenous students has not been a major area of CAEPR research and the findings from the above studies must be seen within the context of the overall teacher quality research from other sources.[xiii]

## Issue: Significance of curriculum

Ensuring that what is being taught has 'significance' to Indigenous students is not easy for schools to achieve when there may be quite diverse views among Indigenous communities about the overall purposes of education.[105] As discussed in the section of the report dealing with Domain 2, CAEPR researchers have identified the main aims of what Indigenous Australians might see as the principal purpose of education. These can be summarised as follows. Education may be perceived as:

- an avenue for employment through the development of basic and employment-related skills
- a means of developing the skills and knowledge to deal with the dominant culture
- one of the mechanisms for ensuring the continuing vitality of the Indigenous culture and of Indigenous communities.[106]

This represents a rather 'high level' challenge for creating a significant curriculum as it asks the question: to what extent is a school able to address such a diverse set of educational aims and make learning more meaningful to students?

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[xiii] The main references for *Domain 4* are Ref Nos 47 and Ref No. 109 as well as Ref No. 77.

## Significance at the secondary school level

Developing 'significance' for secondary school-age Indigenous students, particularly those 'at risk' of leaving school early, has focused on meaningful learning embedded within contexts such as arts, media, cultural activities and 'living on country'. For example, the use of new technologies that enable Indigenous students to work with photographs, video and sound has been identified in CAEPR school-based research, both at secondary and primary school levels. These avenues also provide opportunities for literacy and other basic skill acquisition.

The benefits of using the arts and media for motivating Indigenous school-age students who have left school early or are irregular attendees are also evident in a substantial number of the Shared Responsibility Agreements that have been developed for addressing boredom and its associated tendencies towards petty crime and substance abuse.[107]

Indirect benefits of focusing on arts and media areas are achieved through significant Indigenous role models, often in the local community, but also across Australia.

Several other contexts for developing a significant pedagogy, drawing upon connections with prior knowledge and the identities of students, included:

- mentoring in land management and native title activities, leading to knowledge and skill acquisition and a strengthening of connection to country;[108] and
- situating learning outside formal schooling so that alternative pedagogies can be explored that fit the prevailing culture of very remote communities and are aligned with particular stages of cultural and social development of Indigenous young people.[109]

Learning within a vocational training context and the development of business enterprise skills were also successful strategies for engaging at risk students. For these students, significance was defined within the local employment context.

## Significance at the primary school level

At the primary school level, significance could be quite challenging. How best to create meaningful learning among a class of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was a difficulty raised by some primary teachers, with its reliance on such a high degree of multiskilling on the part of the teachers. While recognising the need for facilitating multiple ways of knowing as suggested in the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*, these teachers felt inadequately prepared.

Strategies to meaningfully engage Indigenous primary students included:

- an Indigenous culture resource room, with resource materials relevant to Indigenous students but used by all teachers with all their students
- some limited use of elders and other Indigenous community members to assist with aspects of the curriculum, especially in the arts and for storytelling.

# Issue: Cultural understanding among teachers

Teaching authenticity was a term used by one senior primary school staff member to describe a key requisite for quality teaching and an important staff development need among primary (and secondary) school staff. This referred to a teacher's understanding of Indigenous culture as it relates to schooling, a capacity to display culturally sensitive teaching behaviours and an ability to hold positive expectations of Indigenous academic performance.

To cite one example, this senior teacher had introduced a staff in-service program to help teachers understand issues such as 'shaming' and 'personal autonomy' and how these Indigenous characteristics influence Indigenous student behaviour and the meanings attached to such behaviour.[xiv] At the same time, Indigenous students were being taught how these types of behaviour were perceived by non-Indigenous people, especially teachers. In this way an overall school behaviour modification program was being introduced to the benefit of both teachers and students.

The need for a similar two-way approach was evident in one of the secondary school case studies. While the study acknowledged that developing cross-cultural understanding was generally done well, the bridging of cultural divides was a continuing challenge. There remained some non-Indigenous teachers and students who did not understand the complexities faced by Indigenous students as they attempt to engage in learning in a foreign context.

As the study puts it bluntly, these small groups of teachers and non-Indigenous students saw Indigenous students simply as lazy, uninterested and responsible for their own problems.

In brief, there are particular Indigenous cultural and social aspects of Indigenous life that seem necessary to be included in teacher preparation and in-service courses if greater cross-cultural understanding is to be achieved. Furthermore, these relate not only to the complexity and diversity of Indigenous culture, but also to the many social and historical issues and problems faced by Indigenous students. As the CAEPR research identifies, social issues such as student responsibilities for caring for other family members, lack of nutrition and the early onset of health problems affect Indigenous students' capacity to engage in learning, and this applies not only to remote Indigenous communities but also to many of those living in urban localities.

## Issue: Adoption of pedagogies to develop high expectations and outcomes

Central to developing high expectations is a strong emphasis on building self-esteem among Indigenous students. This was clearly a factor in one of the secondary school case studies, where pedagogy was underpinned by the provision of the maximum possible level of support. For example, in a pathways program, students remained as a cohort across Years 8–10 with the same teacher as a means of developing a strong sense of security and mutual support, particularly important among students who have had a history of 'discomfort' with their schooling. However these students did hold anxieties about the 'senior secondary years', which highlights the continuing need for support among such 'at risk' students' even after considerable school success.

Another strategy used by the same secondary school was to develop its own arts curriculum for 'at risk' students who were unlikely to succeed in the state's formal art curriculum. These students were able to develop their art skills and sell their art through a local arts business enterprise. Again, building self-esteem and the development of a strong sense of achievement was evident.

The links between cross-cultural understanding and strategies to improve self-esteem and promote high levels of expectation are readily recognisable. However, across the primary school case studies, there was considerable diversity in the extent to which schools appeared to be able to address an issue such as actively developing high expectations among its staff and Indigenous student body.

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xiv   See Part 1 of this report *Culture, Community and Family Life* which describes 'shaming' and 'personal autonomy' in the context of Indigenous culture.

Those primary schools with very high proportions of Indigenous students appeared most challenging for teachers. The reasons for this need further investigation. It may be useful to examine whether some notion of 'critical mass' applies beyond which some schools or individual staff find it difficult to cope, having regard to existing curriculum requirements and organisational constraints. Schools serving communities where many families do not hold high expectations for their children, where family support is not available and where students commence school with reduced social and literacy skills may require additional resources to those received under current resourcing arrangements, even where such resources already include supplementary funding. Generally, these schools reported the greatest difficulty in engaging students in learning and reported high levels of student misbehaviour and irregular attendance.

## Issue: Explicit teaching of English literacy and Standard Australian English (SAE)

CAEPR has not undertaken research into the explicit teaching of English literacy to Indigenous students across Australian primary or secondary schools. However, there are several findings from the study of primary schooling and from ethnographic research studies in very remote Indigenous communities which warrant consideration in any discussions on this aspect of *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*.

At a general level, some primary school teachers and senior staff who were teaching significant numbers of Indigenous students commented that:

- insufficient attention was often paid to the difficulties experienced by Indigenous students in 'code-switching' between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English (SAE) and, for those where dialects were the family home-based language, this was all the more difficult—such as on a Monday after a weekend of not communicating in SAE

- curriculum materials provided a particular challenge so that older students with low reading ages could be given reading materials with older themes that better suited their interests

- by attaching such a high resource allocation priority to early intervention, there may be insufficient resources for sustaining improvement into upper primary years. This is especially the case where many Indigenous students receive limited assistance or encouragement from home. Not only does this highlight the importance of adequate teacher aide resources being available for upper primary schooling, but some teacher aides would possibly benefit from more training in literacy enhancement so that they can assist students in the attainment of higher literacy levels not only in the early years but equally as important at the upper primary years to ease students' transition to secondary schooling.

While some or all of these comments may not apply generally, they do indicate the types of difficulties faced by some primary schools in the teaching of SAE to significant numbers of Indigenous students. Unfortunately, a limitation of this CAEPR research was that it did not have the opportunity to identify in any depth the more successful strategies being employed by schools to address these concerns.[110]

As mentioned, CAEPR researchers have studied literacy acquisition among children and adults in very remote Indigenous communities.

One CAEPR research study[111] provided a detailed ethnographic analysis of literacy practices within a remote Indigenous community. This study emphasised that literacy practices have been shaped by situation and context across the generations and cannot be understood simply in terms of a school-based pedagogy designed to develop technical competence. That is, success in developing literacy skills in a remote community was seen as a gradual process which needed to be embedded within the life experiences of the person.

The research concluded from this detailed analysis of literacy development that:

- for those of school-age, schooling in remote communities needs to be more flexible in adapting to the learning needs of these students and, in the case of literacy, be embedded within the local experiences of the students

- advantage can be taken of community centres, youth centres and the juvenile justice system as ways of situating literacy learning in learning contexts which are relevant to everyday experiences of Indigenous adolescents

- for adults, the challenge is to create opportunities for literacy learning through mentoring so that literacy learning is an ongoing informal part of their lives.

Another CAEPR ethnographic study of literacy practices in a remote community identified five types of everyday literacy practices: functional literacy, home literacy, work literacy, study literacy and Christian literacy.[112]

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**Some examples of everyday literacy practices in a very remote Indigenous community**

*Functional literacy*

Filling in Centrelink and bank forms, money transactions, reading speedometers, signing names, reading signs, notices and posters

*Home literacy*

Reading magazines and newspapers, writing cards to family, using calculators, drawing and copying words with children, reading stories to children

*Work literacy*

Reading tasks related to administrative aspects of work practices, such as filling in forms, reading payslips and sorting mail

Job-specific tasks such as teacher aides helping children with reading and writing or health workers using proformas to record patient details

*Study literacy*

Reading study papers or books, writing stories

*Christian literacy*

Singing in vernacular or English using songbooks/hymnals, reading simplified Bible stories

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For both school-age children and adults living in very remote communities therefore, there appears a need to move outside westernised formal education and training processes, recognise the different forms of literacy on which to build skills in SAE and take advantage of alternative learning environments, including more collaborative approaches, which fit their community's own culture and relate in a meaningful way to their life experiences.

## Issue: Attracting and retaining high quality teachers for classes with Indigenous students, especially in remote areas

The recruitment of high quality teachers for schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students is a major challenge faced by principals[113]. While this is most evident among the small, very remote schools where it was claimed there was often little competition among applicants for teaching positions and even for principal positions, a lack of competition for teacher positions may also apply to primary schools in large town centres. For urban schools, the issue was more the quality of the applicants rather than a general lack of applicants. Either way, slightly more than half the principals in this small sample of 14 primary schools with significant numbers of Indigenous enrolments indicated that they had been placed in the position of accepting teachers who they considered less than satisfactory. Comments frequently made were that:

- Newly recruited teachers were generally inexperienced and often considered to be ill-prepared for the realities of teaching in schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students. They tended to have had insufficient teacher preparation in Indigenous education, including cultural awareness and understanding of Indigenous family and social relationships and behaviour.

- There were no specific programs identified that assisted newly arrived teachers to develop an understanding of the social and family issues that surrounded Indigenous students in the school and how best to deal with the consequences of those family background factors. However several schools did have in place 'orientation' strategies such as newly arrived teachers being taken to visit a town camp.

The secondary school case studies demonstrated the importance of Indigenous staff—both teachers and Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs). As that study concluded, Indigenous staff are essential to student engagement in their functions as educators, translators, role models and bridges between home and classroom.[114]

Possibly due to an acknowledgment of the reduced likelihood of actually recruiting well qualified Indigenous primary school teachers, the recruitment of Indigenous teachers was not seen as a priority issue for principals. For them the issue was recruiting at least a quality teacher.

Indigenous teacher aides or IEWs were generally viewed by principals as critical to the effective running of their school, especially in regard to assisting in literacy programs, promoting cultural inclusivity within curricula, community and family liaison, behaviour management and creating cultural awareness among other staff. However, the primary school study raised several important issues that need to be addressed if the potential contribution of this resource is to be realised:

- improved recruitment practices, improved access to training programs and in-service programs to raise the quality of IEWs, as well as improved employment conditions

- limited availability of skilled IEWs in remote locations, where their need as 'cultural bridges' is so necessary

- perceived limitations on the usefulness of IEWS by some teachers, possibly due at least to some extent to cultural misunderstanding

- a suggested audit of training undertaken by Indigenous teacher aides to provide the necessary basis for a more structured approach to improving the skills of the large numbers of Indigenous teacher aides involved in Indigenous education. However the extent to which Indigenous teacher aides would seek more formal training is limited by family commitments.

Furthermore, and as was noted in another piece of CAEPR research related to the Kuju CDEP scheme in Port Lincoln (SA), schools and training providers have a critical role in developing the capacity of Indigenous staff (such as IEWs) and Indigenous parent volunteers to work within a non-Indigenous work environment.[115]

Comments made about the personal challenges faced by school principals in remote community schools in the previous section on *School leadership* are also relevant to teachers.[116] Teachers in remote locations often live in a confined area and may face housing difficulties, lack access to facilities and activities which typify most other locations, and have limited social interaction. These personal issues, combined with limited professional interaction, affect the quality of teaching and often lead to transience among the remote teaching staff. Strategies to support teachers in remote areas and help them maintain their roles as educators are an important research and development priority.

## Issue: Meeting the needs of all Indigenous students

The current priority given to basic skills development for Indigenous students and general problems associated with many Indigenous students was raised by some schools as directing resources away from other Indigenous students:

- In the case of one of the secondary schools, there was view that the 'kids in the middle' miss out and themselves become more vulnerable without a continued level of support.

- For a primary school, the priority allocation of resources to those most in need of basic literacy assistance was of concern as it resulted in little opportunity for those Indigenous students who were achieving to actually shine and achieve their potential (and thereby also increase the level to which other Indigenous students might aspire). However, in one of the schools a 'gifted and talented' program directed at Indigenous students was being introduced.[117]

A second issue that requires further research is the impact of 'successful' Indigenous students leaving their local school and going to another school, generally in a major city centre, with a stronger academic reputation. This was raised in both the primary and secondary school studies. While it may benefit the student who moves, it is unclear as to whether it will act as a motivator for those remaining to also seek entrance to similar more academic schools or alternatively increase their sense of educational failure and reduce their own levels of academic aspirations.

# Summary: The challenges facing teachers and students in quality teaching

Quality teaching has many aspects, and when applied to Indigenous education it becomes even more complex. As the CAEPR research has shown, and as limited as it is in respect of quality teaching, the issue of significance of the 'what' and 'how' of teaching Indigenous students is a challenge for both teachers and students alike. Both are required to operate in different worlds. Teachers are required to develop a strong understanding of Indigenous culture, social issues and local context so that they can meaningfully engage Indigenous students with learning. Significant numbers of Indigenous students are required to adopt learning behaviours and study habits for which they often have no previous family experience or support to draw upon.

The CAEPR research identified well thought out strategies that some secondary and primary schools have set in place to address these twin needs. Their common feature is that quality teaching is dependent on creating an environment of mutual learning, where both teachers and students grow in cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity.

# Pathways to training, employment and higher education

*Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*

**Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education**

Assisting young people to make successful transitions is a high priority for governments across Australia. There are a complex range of activities and measures to support youth through pathways from compulsory to post-compulsory secondary education, school to work, school to further or higher education, unemployment to further education and work, and from within the juvenile justice system.

The vital importance of providing high quality, culturally appropriate intervention strategies that address academic self concept, motivation and career advice for Indigenous students is strongly underlined by recent research. The over-representation, compared to the general population, of Indigenous youth in rural and remote regions where employment opportunities are limited, and the breadth of existing mainstream pathways initiatives, make it imperative that strategies be developed that aim specifically to improve transitions for Indigenous students.

Focus on the capacities and potential of Indigenous students is required to avoid them being inappropriately channelled into the most convenient or lowest entry options, such as Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) or preparatory VET courses. Many Indigenous students would benefit from higher level VET courses or tertiary education but do not feel capable enough or the possibility has not entered their horizons. There is a role for universities to collaborate more closely with schools and TAFE colleges to raise Indigenous students' confidence and perceptions of the relevance and attainability of higher education.

Ongoing tracking, monitoring and supporting of Indigenous students through post-school apprenticeships, traineeships and TAFE courses and university is essential to improving retention rates in post-schooling studies and employment, which are significantly lower than those for non-Indigenous students.

Recommendations:
Supplementary measures supporting Indigenous students through pathways into training, employment and higher education are pivotal to improving post-school transitions and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage.

Ministers commit to:

- expand partnerships between secondary schools, higher education institutions and Indigenous communities to develop strategies to attract, retain and successfully graduate Indigenous students across a broad spectrum of higher education courses; and

- seek advice from Indigenous education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee and other strategic stakeholders on effective strategies and implementation arrangements to ensure that Indigenous communities and students are encouraged to engage successfully in higher education.

(Summary only – see *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* for details)

# Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

- *The challenge for pathways to training, employment and higher education*

- *Student aspirations and key transition points*

- *Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education*

- *Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education*

- *Culturally inclusive support strategies, culturally appropriate work readiness strategies, career counsellors and mentors*

- *Influence of CDEP on young people*

- *Adult return to education and/or training*

- *Pathways and strategies for remote locations*

- *Education and training content in native title, Indigenous land use and heritage agreements*

CAEPR has undertaken extensive qualitative and quantitative research of the pathways taken by Indigenous people as they move from compulsory schooling to further education and training, enter higher education or seek employment in the labour market.[xv] This research has focused on many of the issues identified in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008,* and its findings are pertinent to urban, rural and remote Indigenous communities. The research has also analysed in detail the different types of labour markets operating in urban, rural and remote localities across Australia. A feature of the CAEPR research is therefore the links it is able to draw between patterns of Indigenous employment and Indigenous participation in education and training.

## The challenge for pathways to training, employment and higher education

To provide a context for examining pathways to training, employment and higher education, this first section deals with two challenges which face education and training authorities responsible for developing effective pathways leading to Indigenous employment. These are:

- the existing levels of labour market participation among Indigenous people

- the projected number of jobs required to be filled by skilled Indigenous people in the near future to approach parity with non-Indigenous Australians.

Both challenges are set against the backdrop of substantial projected population increases for the Indigenous population across Australia, which have already been outlined in Part 1 of this report dealing with *The changing demography of Indigenous Australians*.

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[xv] Key CAEPR references for Domain 5 include Ref Nos. 18, 20, 24, 25, 27, 28, 33, 35, 45, 63, 64, 68, 70, 82, 100, 112.

## Issue: The labour market and Indigenous Australia

CAEPR research on the labour markets with which Indigenous Australians interact has concentrated at two levels:

- at the national level, using Census information
- at regional levels, undertaking detailed analyses of Census information and Australian, state and territory government administrative data as well as employing more qualitative data collecting techniques.

At this stage, regional analyses have mainly involved remote areas such as the Pilbara, East and West Kimberley (all WA) and rural areas of Western NSW and the Murray–Darling Basin.

Following the release of 2006 Census information, it is intended that detailed analyses of labour markets operating in urban areas, including supply and demand factors, will be undertaken. To date, only high level analyses of urban labour markets have been undertaken by CAEPR, or more localised research focusing on CDEP projects that have been situated in urban areas and the extent to which they interact with mainstream labour markets in those localities.

### Indigenous participation in the labour market

Indigenous employment and labour force participation rates are well below that of non-Indigenous Australians. At the time of the 2001 Census, the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians was 20 per cent compared to 7 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians.[118] However when CDEP participants were treated as being 'unemployed', then the unemployment rate was estimated at about 43 per cent, and this is projected to rise to 50 per cent by 2011.[119]

Furthermore there are marked regional differences, especially when CDEP participation is not treated as 'mainstream' employment. In 2001 and excluding CDEP, unemployment rates ranged from 31 per cent in major cities through to about 38 per cent in regional Australia, 46 per cent in remote areas and 75 per cent in very remote areas.[120]

As already noted in the section of the report dealing with *The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia*, Indigenous people moving to capital cities tend to move into suburbs where there is already considerable socioeconomic disadvantage. Within these suburbs, Indigenous people are likely to continue to experience disadvantage, and possibly to a greater degree than non-Indigenous residents. This is exemplified in terms of the unemployment rates of Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of high unemployment Sydney neighbourhoods. For 2001:

- Campbelltown: the Indigenous unemployment rate was 47.9 per cent compared to 35.0 per cent for non-Indigenous persons in the labour force.
- Waterloo: the Indigenous unemployment rate was 41.8 per cent compared to 23.0 per cent for non-Indigenous persons in the labour force.
- Blacktown Bidwell: the Indigenous unemployment rate was 55.4 per cent compared to 21.5 per cent for non-Indigenous persons in the labour force.
- Fairfield: the Indigenous unemployment rate was 28.7 per cent compared to 16.2 per cent for non-Indigenous persons in the labour force.
- Macquarie Fields: the Indigenous unemployment rate was 32.7 per cent compared to 13.5 per cent for non-Indigenous persons in the labour force.[121]

Of particular concern is a low Indigenous labour force participation rate combined with a relatively low level of employment for young Indigenous Australians leading to a discouraged worker effect in operation.[122] CAEPR research identified this 'discouraged worker' effect from 1994 labour force data and again found evidence for it in the 2001 Census. This is despite a sustained period of employment growth in the Australian economy between 1991 and 2001. The more detailed analysis of the 1994 information showed that in the Indigenous population of 15 years old and over:

- some 16 per cent of unemployed Indigenous males and 29 per cent of unemployed Indigenous females wanted to work, but were discouraged from actively seeking work due to lack of job opportunities or for personal reasons. These proportions are 3–4 times higher than for the non-Indigenous unemployed

- a higher proportion of young Indigenous males aged 15–24 years wanted to work but were not seeking work compared to Indigenous males aged 25–44 years and those aged 45–64 years. For Indigenous females, there was less difference across ages.

This study also found that among secondary and post-secondary students there were significant numbers who would prefer to be working but were discouraged from doing so. These youth are more likely to become alienated from the educational process and value less the purposes of education—unless they can be convinced that in fact it does provide a window of employment opportunity.

CAEPR labour market studies also indicate that disparities between working age Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians established by the age of 25 years tend to continue throughout working life.

## The types of labour markets, industries and occupations in which Indigenous workers participate

CAEPR research has examined the extent to which there is segregation in the labour market, that is, the extent to which the types of industries and occupations in which Indigenous Australians work differ from those of non-Indigenous workers.

### Indigenous employment and type of industry

At the national level in 2001, the public sector provided most employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians, with 43 per cent of those employed working in Australian, state or territory, or local government services, including many in CDEP employment. This compared to 17 per cent for the Australian population as a whole working in the government sector. In contrast, this meant that 57 per cent of Indigenous workers were employed in the private sector compared to 83 per cent of non-Indigenous workers.

The types of industries in which Indigenous Australians were employed differed according to gender. Whereas government administration (including CDEP) was common to both Indigenous males and females, Indigenous males also tended towards the manufacturing and construction industries, whereas females were more likely to take up jobs in education, health and community services and retail trade.[123]

From this research it appears that, at the national level, the degree of industrial segregation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in the public sector is high, and much more than that in the private sector. This is largely due to the high concentration of Indigenous CDEP employment in the government sector.

Regional area analyses such as in the Pilbara (WA) and West Kimberley (WA) confirmed these industry profiles and indicated significant industry segregation compared to the non-Indigenous work force, which tended to be employed across a much wider range of industries. Of particular note was that in those regions where economic growth is greatest due to the mining boom, Indigenous workers tended to be well under-represented in the mining sector and tourism, even though they were the top employing industries.[124]

In contrast, the level of industrial segregation in the Murray–Darling Basin was slightly lower than the national average.[125] Even in this case, Indigenous people tended to be under-represented in the two major industries of the basin—agriculture and retailing.

### Indigenous employment and type of occupation

The national and regional analyses found a significant degree of occupational segregation: Indigenous males and females tended to have relatively low-skilled occupations compared to non-Indigenous males and females. In the case of males, occupational segregation was more evident than for females:

- Indigenous males were mainly employed as labourers (31%), tradesmen and related workers (17%) and as intermediate production and transport workers (16%).

- Non-Indigenous males were mainly employed as tradesmen and related workers (20%), professionals (16%) and as managers and administrators, associate professionals and intermediate production and transport workers (all at about 12% each).[126]

Regional analyses provide the opportunity for more fine-grained analyses, as indicated by the following CAEPR analysis of the situation in the Murray–Darling Basin.[127]

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### The Murray–Darling Basin

As a statistical measure of **occupational segregation**, 41 per cent of Indigenous workers in the Murray–Darling Basin would have to change their broad occupation group in order to achieve a distribution equivalent to that of non-Indigenous workers. This represents double the degree of occupational segregation in the basin compared to the 20 per cent recorded for Indigenous Australians as a whole. Indigenous people tend to be under-represented in professions, managerial positions and the trades.

A more detailed examination indicates **the skills divide** between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Though certain major occupations in the basin (cleaners, farm hands, sales assistants and truck drivers) are common to both populations:

- non-Indigenous workers are registered nurses and secondary school teachers, whereas Indigenous workers are nursing assistants and education aides

- labouring occupations do not appear in the non-Indigenous top 20 occupations.

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To sum up, Indigenous male employment growth is depressed by being concentrated in declining low-growth industries as well as in low-growth occupations. This is less the case for female Indigenous workers, who tend to also participate in high-growth industries (residential non-care services, childcare services and cleaning services) as well as in a wider set of occupations.

### Labour markets in remote areas

In considering the types of labour markets relevant to Indigenous Australians, apart from the mainstream labour markets, CAEPR researchers have distinguished a 'hybrid' labour market, based on three sectors of the local economy typical of remote Indigenous communities and, to a lesser extent, some rural communities:

- the market sector, which is the productive private sector of the local community
- the state sector, which is the government provider of local services, including the welfare safety net and other government interventions
- the customary economy, which is made up of productive, culturally based activities that occur outside the market but which deal with hunting, gathering, fishing and other traditional land and resource management activities.[128]

For many Indigenous people, meaningful and productive 'employment' can occur within each of these sectors of the hybrid economy, each with its own education and training requirements and 'career' opportunities. Furthermore, Indigenous people may be actively involved in several sectors of the hybrid economy at any time.

### The Indigenous sector as a source of employment

CAEPR research has also stressed the importance of the 'Indigenous sector', comprising the many Indigenous organisations funded by the government or from private resources, as a potential labour market. It has been a growing source of employment among Indigenous people, providing a culturally appropriate working environment for Indigenous people not inclined to work within more mainstream employment. As one CAEPR researcher noted, Indigenous people felt more vulnerable in many of the mainstream employment options, either due to less developed skills or issues of racism, social isolation and competitive interactions with unfamiliar people. These people tended towards working within the Indigenous sector where they felt most comfortable.[129]

The value of recognising the Indigenous sector as an identifiable and qualitatively different, yet legitimate, source of employment is that by doing so one acknowledges that the Indigenous sector may have its own set of training and organisational needs which may (or may not) be catered for by existing training provisions. In addition, it highlights that employment in Indigenous organisations sits within government policy settings which, if changed, may have flow-on effects for the employment of the Indigenous work force.

### Self-employment among Indigenous workers

There are a small but significant number of self-employed Indigenous people who tend to cluster in the trades and less entrepreneurial industries. However, Indigenous Australians of working age are still three times less likely than non-Indigenous Australians to be self-employed.[130] They tend to be much younger and therefore less experienced than non-Indigenous self-employed. They have generally spent less time at school, are less likely to have a formal qualification and experience exclusion from financial sources necessary to establish small businesses. Overall, they also tend not to employ other workers and hence not to be a major source of employment that could have a substantial impact on Indigenous employment rates. However, there may be some excellent niche markets drawing on customary lifestyles and traditions, especially in remote areas where mainstream labour markets are quite restricted—for example, in the areas of ecotourism and cultural lifestyle experiences.[131,132]

CAEPR researchers have evaluated successful Indigenous small businesses in urban areas to identify those key characteristics which lead to business success, as well as any underlying tensions which may arise when operating in a 'western' business environment. Taking into account the relatively inexperienced and youthful nature of Indigenous self-employed, if they are to survive in small business and become successful then there is a need for mentoring and support strategies to be developed that are an extension to training programs, especially support that will assist young Indigenous people:

• when faced with racism and difficulty in accessing finance while establishing their small businesses

• in handling cultural tensions that can arise between traditional Indigenous values and practices and those characterising more successful business entrepreneurs.[133]

## Issue: The challenge of developing skills to match employment opportunities

Currently low employment rates among Indigenous Australians, and especially young Indigenous adults, present major challenges to those responsible for developing education, training and employment policies.

The magnitude of the challenge is evident in the number of additional jobs required to be filled by Indigenous people if policies of practical reconciliation are to be achieved.

Using 2001 as a baseline, CAEPR estimates that:

• an additional 33,900 jobs will be required by the year 2011 just to maintain the rate of Indigenous employment at 2001 levels

• to achieve equality of labour market outcomes with non-Indigenous Australians, an additional 101,100 jobs will be required.[134]

CAEPR research has produced regional estimates[135] of the projected numbers of jobs required to be created and filled by Indigenous Australians, and in each case the magnitude of the task is great if employment parity with non-Indigenous Australia is to be approached. In some regions, this remains the case if only to maintain current mainstream employment levels.

The prospects are not encouraging and the consequences even less so. One CAEPR paper concludes that there is a distinct prospect that in the coming decade, the employment situation for Indigenous people will continue to deteriorate due to population growth, lack of competitive skills in emergent high-growth industries, and locational disadvantage restricting mainstream employment growth. The effects of continuing unemployment on social exclusion will lead to further deterioration of the social conditions of Indigenous people, with high unemployment being, for example, correlated with higher arrest rates and lower levels of social capital and civic engagement.[136]

For education and training authorities and providers, the challenge is to develop the skill levels of Indigenous young people and those of working age to be sufficiently competitive in the current mainstream employment market and also to be competitive in emerging high-growth industries.

A recurring theme of the CAEPR regional analyses, as well as high level national analyse, is that unless Indigenous skill levels are increased, there will continue to be a mismatch between employment demand and supply, to the detriment of the Indigenous working age population.

These analyses point to low school attendance rates, low literacy and numeracy skills, low retention rates to Year 12, and low participation in vocational education and training beyond Certificate Level III courses as crucial issues affecting the employment prospects of the Indigenous work force. Yet as later sections of this report point out, CAEPR research has also identified significant levels of discrimination in the workplace which may continue to limit the employment prospects of Indigenous people despite improved skill levels.

From an economic perspective, CAEPR has estimated the costs to government of Indigenous people not achieving equality in labour market outcomes. Using 2011 labour force projections, CAEPR researchers estimate that for government:

- the potential reduction in welfare payments if equality was achieved would be in the order of $450 million and the potential increase in taxation revenues would be some $290 million

- if all those who wanted work, even those discouraged workers not registered as being part of the labour force, were counted, the cost to government would be even greater at $472 million in potential reduction in welfare payments and up to $345 million in increased tax revenue. [137]

Issues of access to and participation in schooling and vocational education and training, as well as higher education, will also be considered in later sections of this report. The following *Student aspirations and key transition points* section considers the critical issue of what motivates Indigenous young people to continue with post-compulsory education and training rather than directly entering the labour market or even withdrawing from the labour force.

# Student aspirations and key transition points

We begin with the question: *what benefits might young people expect by taking up further education and training or by directly entering employment?* The second part of this section takes a step back and considers the actual career aspirations of Indigenous young people, as well as their aspirations for further education and training. These two issues are linked and provide the basis for actual choices made by young people after they leave compulsory schooling.

## Issue: The benefits of education for young Indigenous people

When investigating reasons underlying post-compulsory schooling pathways taken by young Indigenous people, CAEPR research has focused on economic, social and cultural determinants and benefits, as well as general issues of access to education, training and the labour market. For example, CAEPR research has:

- examined the economic benefits of education for Indigenous people, especially in regard to being employed and expected lifetime incomes, and compared these benefits to non-Indigenous people

- identified the social benefits of education, particularly those related to health and social cohesion

- built up our knowledge of how formal education can be adapted and assist in maintenance of cultural practices.

By identifying the benefits young Indigenous people might expect from post-compulsory education, we are better placed to understand what motivates young Indigenous people to actually take up post-compulsory education or enter directly into the labour market.

## The economic benefits of education

The economic returns for Indigenous people investing in education are significant, and higher than that attained by non-Indigenous people. CAEPR research has shown that, based on the 2001 Census:

- Indigenous males with post-secondary qualifications had, depending on the remoteness of locality, between 18 per cent and 23 per cent more likelihood of being employed than those Indigenous people without a post-secondary qualification. Similar high returns were obtained for Indigenous females.

- For those Indigenous males who had completed Year 12, the returns were in the range of 24 per cent to 30 per cent increased probability of being employed, again dependent on locality; for Indigenous females the returns were even higher. Completion of Year 10 also significantly increased the likelihood being employed, though to a lesser extent.[138]

More recent CAEPR research has examined in greater detail the economic benefits of Indigenous Australians going to high school,[139] gaining VET qualifications[140] and gaining a university degree.[141] The research looks at the economic benefits of education in terms of predicted lifetime employment and income. This more detailed research found that:

- completion of Year 12 has a smaller effect on predicted lifetime employment and income for those living in remote areas compared to those living in non-remote Australia

- completion of Year 10 appears the critical point with regard to lifetime employability of students, including full-time employment. While there are gains to be made by completing Year 12, these are not as great as might be expected, particularly for remote locations

- attaining VET qualifications for those who have not completed Year 12 provides them with a much greater likelihood of being employed during their life than those who do not have a VET qualification or Year 12

- the benefits of completing Year 12, having a VET qualification and holding a university degree appear to be greater for Indigenous than for non-Indigenous Australians.

The benefits of completing Year 12 or having a VET qualification differed across regions of Australia, and these differences were quite large. For example, a VET qualification could increase the probability of employment by 50 per cent or more in some regions and provide little or no benefit in other regions. Significant differences existed even between adjacent regions.

To give an indication of the regional effects of completing Year 12, the employment ratios for those males completing Year 12 compared to those males not completing Year 12 are mapped by the former ATSIC regions.

**Fig. 4:** Distribution of employment ratios by ATSIC Region – Indigenous males (Year 12 versus no Year 12)
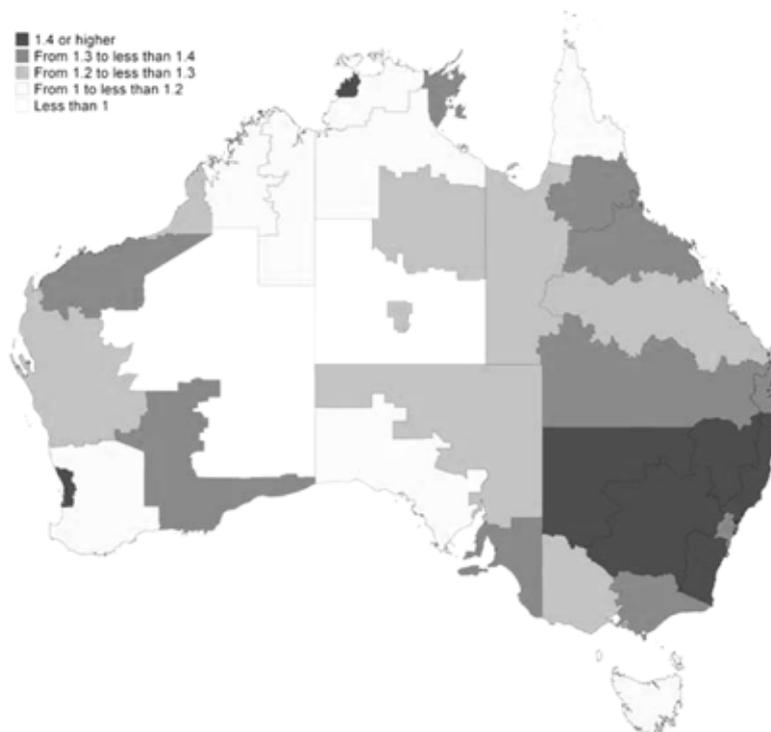


Mapping the employment benefits of completing Year 12 for Indigenous females and the increased employment probabilities from attaining a VET qualification for both Indigenous males and females demonstrate, a similar diversity across regions which is not immediately explainable. This suggests the need for further research to determine the underlying factors influencing such regional differences, some of which has already been undertaken by CAEPR in respect of regions such as the Pilbara (WA), East and West Kimberley (WA) and the Murray–Darling Basin (NSW).

### Implications for pathways to training, employment and higher education

The above studies highlight the importance of improving educational outcomes if the economic disadvantage of Indigenous people is to be addressed. In doing so, it confirms the priority accorded in the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* to helping students make a successful transition from compulsory to post-compulsory schooling.

*Importance of completing Year 10.* The benefit to young Indigenous people of completing Year 10 in terms of increasing their prospects of gaining employment, especially full-time employment, is significant. Development of policies and practices to increase Year 10 participation levels is therefore a top priority for educational authorities.

*Multiple pathways.* The findings regarding the economic benefits of completing a VET qualification emphasise the need for multiple pathways to be provided. Gaining a VET qualification may, for some students, provide better economic outcomes than completing Year 12, and thus be a better incentive for continuing in education and training than remaining in secondary schooling.

*Development of partnerships.* The variation in predicted economic benefits of education between regions of Australia points to the need for developing localised solutions for addressing low educational participation rates. The idea of partnerships being developed between schools and the community can underpin the development of local strategies to develop multiple pathways and improve successful transition.

In this case, the partnership needs to take account of the local labour market and include the school, community and, in at least some capacity, other education and training providers and potential employers, possibly within an overall planning framework of regional or local development.

When considering the local labour market in remote areas, the notion of the hybrid economy described earlier provides additional opportunities for developing suitable curriculum and outcome options as part of such partnership agreements.

*Better information on economic benefits*. The large variation of predicted economic benefits of education between regions also points to the need for providing information to young Indigenous people about the benefits of further education and training beyond compulsory schooling. For those students located in regions where there appear to be no significant economic benefits in remaining at school, as evidenced by others in the locality, then they are less likely to continue with their education. Career advisors could have a special role to play in these regions in helping students understand the benefits of continuing in education or entering some form of training.

These themes are further developed in later sections of this report.

## The social benefits of education, particularly those related to health and social cohesion

As has been well documented already, CAEPR research confirms:
- the overall lower quality of health among both younger and older Indigenous Australians compared to the non-Indigenous population
- the level of specific health issues such as chronic disease, unhealthy weight, low exercise and smoking.

The research also identifies significant state and territory differences in reporting of health problems and disabilities. Furthermore, Indigenous Australians who did not complete high school are more likely to report poor quality health and specific health related issues.[142]

The relationship between health and education is difficult to disentangle:
- education may lead directly or indirectly to improved health
- the two may be associated because of a third underlying factor
- good health may lead to higher educational levels.

Nevertheless, CAEPR research suggests that there is sufficient empirical evidence to support at least some positive influence of education on improved health status among Indigenous people.[143] There is a definite need to undertake further survey research to establish the extent to which such educational effects directly or indirectly influence Indigenous health.

Direct benefits can be gained through increasing a person's knowledge about health issues, how to access health information and how to use that information effectively to deal with health problems or to limit the extent to which potential problems may arise. This suggests:
- specific interventions within the school curriculum for school-age children and adolescents as well as providing opportunities for adult and community health education
- including Indigenous health within teacher and teacher aide training programs
- ensuring acceptance of health remedies through maintenance of cultural identity by recognising the importance of both western medicine and traditional medicinal practices.

At the most basic level, health education requires improving literacy levels, especially among those remote communities where literacy levels are extremely low.

Less direct benefits might accrue through improved employment and income prospects leading to an improved quality of life, with its associated health benefits.

CAEPR evaluations of CDEP projects located in urban areas have identified significant social benefits for not only the individual but also family members and the community.[144,145] While it is not possible to partial out the relative effects of training and employment components, it is not unreasonable to argue that the social benefits gained are not solely the result of CDEP income, but also the result of training, and particularly training within a practical and on-the-job situation.

## The cultural benefits of education, particularly maintenance of cultural practices

Ensuring that education is meaningful to Indigenous students is a major factor in increasing school attendance and continued participation in post-school participation. About 30 per cent of Indigenous early school leavers left school because they 'did not like school'.[146] As a result, CAEPR has examined approaches to education that may make school more relevant to young Indigenous students. One focus is on the potential cultural benefits of education.

At the primary school level, the importance of cultural activities has been noted, especially in terms of positive identity formation and affirmation of cultural roots.[147] Schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students have incorporated Indigenous community participation in educational programs and school cultural and customary-based activities, both for students and for parents. Principals described benefits flowing from such programs but, at the same time, identified difficulties in encouraging elders to take the lead in the promotion of Indigenous culture within their schools—a point elaborated elsewhere in this report.

CAEPR has undertaken extensive research on the customary economy which, as noted above, is made up of productive, culturally based activities that occur outside the labour market but which deal with hunting, gathering, fishing and other land and resource management activities. Education and training have a particular role to play in the promotion of a viable customary economy. For example, education and training can deliver the following cultural benefits:

- the maintenance of traditional Indigenous arts and craft through assisting in the development of economically viable business enterprises[148]
- 'return to country' through ranger programs and, in the case of primary and junior secondary schools, junior ranger programs. These have an emphasis on land and sea management and are able to integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge with 'western ecological' knowledge[149]
- inclusion of Indigenous knowledge and language within the curriculum.[150]

## Issue: Educational and career aspirations of young Indigenous people

### The aspirations of young Indigenous people

Indigenous young people and their communities value education and training, especially education as a means of gaining literacy and numeracy skills and training linked to employment, and see this as an investment in their future. This is true of communities as distinct as western Sydney (NSW),[151] Kuranda (Qld),[152] Maningrida (NT)[153] and the Torres Strait Islands (Qld).[154]

Family, community, school and the local economy play an important role in shaping educational and career goals of young Indigenous people. As an example, CAEPR researchers studied the careers and aspirations of Torres Strait Islander young people over a four-year period:

- Young people had short-term goals and these were generally met. Goals were set according to expected levels of enjoyment and interest and as a means of gaining prerequisite experience for another job or further training. For many, goals were quite flexible and young people changed as opportunities arose.[155]

- Young males preferred training courses and apprenticeships in trade areas such as landscaping, motor mechanics and carpentry; whereas young females were more likely to seek formal study and wanted to work in health, education and child care. This reflected the nature of the regional economy and value placed on TAFE as an educational provider, as well as more traditional gender differences.[156]

- Young people tended to move between the private (commercial fishing), state (local council services, often through CDEP or government agencies) and the customary economies, each with their own educational and training requirements. For these young Indigenous people, notions of 'career' may acquire different meanings in remote localities than are held by non-Indigenous people generally, or even by Indigenous young people in more settled areas.[157]

- The most informative career information came from employed family members, employers and school and TAFE teachers, but overall there appeared to be a shortage of career information as distinct from information about jobs and training. This highlights the importance of developing new strategies for presenting career information to young people in remote areas.[158]

- At the same time, this CAEPR research found family commitments can be a significant barrier to full-time employment or continuing with further education and training. This applies particularly to females. The research suggests the need for greater assistance in training and job search from government agencies when Torres Strait Islander people are in their late 20s or early 30s, and family commitments are likely to be less, in order to engender solid job and career aspirations.[159]

Career and life aspirations in the three communities of Kuranda (Qld), Yuendumu (NT) and the Torres Strait Islands were influenced largely by family commitments, the existing labour market, training linked to increasing mainstream job prospects and the existence of CDEP. Of these, both the nature of training and the effects of CDEP could have quite negative effects:

- Training not linked to a job was seen as a waste, 'training fatigue' set in and people became disillusioned.

- Similarly, part-time CDEP employment had a significant negative impact on young people's job or career aspirations, a point picked up later in this report.[160]

The aspirations Indigenous Australians hold in respect of education, with their emphasis on increasing employment prospects in the short term, will affect their participation in training. Training courses, especially those that are attempting to act as a bridging course leading towards further training, will need to be mindful of the more immediate applicability of course outcomes rather than be reliant on the bridging courses being seen as the first step towards a future qualification.

Furthermore, other CAEPR research[161,162] indicates that Indigenous young people entering training or higher education courses are less concerned about 'accreditation' and the actual gaining of a qualification, but see the value of further education and training in terms of its direct relevance to what they are actually doing, not some future employment aspiration. The western idea that views education mainly in terms of an economic investment for future gain does not fit comfortably with this Indigenous view.

Finally, course and hence career aspirations are often influenced by a commitment to community, with enrolments in areas such as education, Aboriginal Studies and health often seen as of benefit to the community rather than for solely individual benefit.

*Implications for pathways to training, employment and higher education*

The short-term nature of education, training and employment goals and the extent to which young Torres Strait Islanders, as well as other Indigenous young people, change their goals challenge existing notions of what constitutes career planning. It also calls for a more flexible approach to education and training provision.

The very notion of 'career' in remote communities will be defined more widely as it needs to take account of the way in which young people in these localities interact with their local economy. They often move between the private (commercial fishing), state (local council services, often through CDEP or government agencies) and the customary economies, each with their own educational and training requirements.

Overall, case studies such as the Torres Strait Islander study highlight the important role of education and training in helping young Indigenous people formulate short and long-term career goals, and providing them with the necessary skills to achieve those goals, within a culturally sensitive understanding of family and community commitments. Family and community commitments identified in these case studies include:
- caring for elderly or ill parents and siblings and participating in customary activities
- for female youth where teenage pregnancy is not uncommon, often the need to care for young children.

Flexibility in approach by education and training providers is therefore required to take account of family commitments and, where necessary, re-entry into the work force or further study when family commitments are less onerous.

At the national level, CAEPR studied the labour market participation pathways to employment for Indigenous Australians and found a similar 'churning' effect as was found with Torres Strait Islanders.[163] Indigenous youth often did not hold stable forms of employment, but tended to move between full-time employment, part-time employment, CDEP employment and unemployment. This suggests the need for improved career counselling and the development of intervention strategies to support school leavers in their early years post-school and on entering the work force. Such intervention strategies may require greater coordinated action by education and employment services than is now the case.

This need is further emphasised by the large numbers of Indigenous youth who are unemployed and often no longer looking for work.

# Access to post-compulsory schooling, training, employment and higher education

Developing successful pathways through schooling, training and further education to employment is reliant on:
- gaining access to education and training and higher education
- gaining access to employment opportunities.

Access to schools, training and higher education institutions is one of the most important factors, if not the most important factor, explaining educational participation rates of young Indigenous adults.[164] This is in contrast to local labour markets, which appear to have little influence on educational participation. The first part of this section deals with access to education.

## Issue: Access to education and training

Access to secondary and post-secondary education is readily available along the south-eastern seaboard of the country as well as in capital cities. However, with just over a quarter of Indigenous Australians living in remote areas, and likely to continue so in the near future, this provides additional challenges to jurisdictions in their delivery of educational services. In 1999, there were 80,000 people living in 1,055 discrete Indigenous communities isolated from service centres in remote Australia, with the large majority being in very remote areas. Overall, some 60 per cent of people living in discrete communities were living in communities of less than 500, with 830 communities having less than 50 people.[165]

CAEPR's analysis of access to secondary schooling, TAFE and higher education for those living in remote regions showed that:

- 76 per cent of discrete communities (in 1999) had no secondary school catering for Year 12 students within 50 kilometres (the comparative figure for primary schooling was 26 per cent of discrete communities), with greatest access difficulties being in the far north and central areas of Australia.

- There appeared (in 2001) to be a fairly well developed network of training providers that could be accessed by young people in regional and remote Australia. This existing network could provide a solid basis on which to build increased participation in the vocational education and training sector, although as will be noted later, much of this was at the time in prevocational and Certificate I and II courses.

- There was limited access to higher education in remote regions as shown by the large proportions of higher education students having moved (in 2001) from remote and very remote areas to regional centres or major cities. Nevertheless there was some access to higher education courses, at least short courses, through distance education in those areas.[166]

While the above findings are derived from CAEPR studies of previous Census and other information, CAEPR's preliminary analyses of the 2006 ABS *Community Housing and Infrastructure Needs Survey* show similar high levels of difficulty in school-aged young people being able to access primary and particularly secondary education. For example, in 2006:

- 744 (69%) isolated communities were 50 kilometres or more from Year 12 secondary schooling.

- Of these, 428 were in the NT, 169 in WA and 98 in Queensland.[167]

Increased access to secondary education through to Year 12 for all Indigenous young people continues to be a priority, and this is occurring with, for example, the recent offering of Year 12 at the Maningrida Community Education Centre (NT).

CAEPR research highlights the challenge of providing access to higher level Certificate courses in remote locations as well as a more comprehensive strategy by higher education institutions in delivering distance education at a time when greater emphasis is being placed on privately funded university enrolments. Yet access

by itself is not the solution to improving pathways to employment and overcoming socioeconomic disadvantage. As later sections dealing with CAEPR research point out: access relates to access to quality courses and those which are relevant to local labour market conditions.

For those moving residence to access further education, tertiary institutions will need to continue to place a priority on Indigenous counselling and support programs. This is all the more necessary for Indigenous students for whom familial and social networks play such a strong role in their lives and from which they are separated.

Increased access to education through the internet is one strategy that could be explored. However, internet us by Indigenous people is far less than by non-Indigenous people—less than one in five Indigenous persons compared to three in five non-Indigenous persons accessed the internet in the home in 2001, and it was rarely accessed in remote locations where it potentially could provide increased access to further education.[168] Increased internet access could be provided by existing education and other government agencies, as well as community facilities as part of an overall strategy to promote a 'learning community' within the locality.[169]

## Issue: Access to employment – job search activity and job readiness

An essential component of any pathway to employment is job search activity. The success of job search activity will be dependent on:

- the availability of jobs
- the required skills for gaining the job
- job search skills and the amount of job search activity.

This section of the Domain 5 report deals with the critical issue of job search activity and the types of skills required for being successful.

CAEPR research on job search activity has found a high reliance on family and friends by Indigenous job seekers, which limits the types of jobs likely to be sought—Indigenous social networks are more likely themselves to be characterised by Indigenous people whar are either unemployed or employed in low level and vulnerable occupations. Apart from limiting exposure to the full range of possible employment opportunities, reliance on such sources will more probably reduce job and career aspirations of Indigenous youth.[170]

Through career education and training providers, schools have an opportunity to assist Indigenous young people in developing strong job search skills, especially those early school leavers who wish to directly enter the work force. CAEPR research has shown the importance to Indigenous job seekers of:

- courses to improve skills associated with writing job applications and direct job seekers to the most relevant sources of job vacancy information, that is, external advertisements
- the development of interpersonal skills involved in directly contacting prospective employers.

Both are important components of job search and work readiness courses and are more likely to lead to permanent employment.[171]

These CAEPR studies raise the issue of the extent to which well honed job search skills of themselves are an advantage, without ensuring the job readiness of the Indigenous job seeker.

The extensive body of CAEPR labour market research indicates that job readiness requires not only work-related skills, but also the capacity of an Indigenous person to work within a mainstream work environment. It is not surprising that Indigenous people may prefer to work back in their community or in an Indigenous organisation. But this option may not be possible or sustainable. There are several implications that flow from an analysis of this research:

- There is a need to include 'work readiness courses' as an essential part of training courses so that mainstream work environments can be more 'comfortable' for Indigenous workers.

- Secondary schools are another avenue for increasing work readiness skills among Indigenous youth, especially for those most likely to directly enter the workforce from schooling.

- It is also important for educational and training institutions to work with employer groups in creative ways so that potential employers are able to assist Indigenous job seekers fit more readily within their work environment, which may involve re-examining the cultural appropriateness of particular work practices, an overall improved cross-cultural understanding of issues affecting Indigenous employment, and the introduction of work mentoring practices.

An issue picked up again later in the report is CAEPR research identifying the potential for significant racial discrimination in the workplace.[172] Inclusion of strategies to deal with racial discrimination in the workplace would seem a necessary component of work readiness courses; however, some caution is necessary regarding the impact of job search courses and job readiness courses if one piece of CAEPR research is indicative of what happens on the ground. While being an exploratory paper, it nevertheless concludes that employment growth cannot be solely derived from increased skill development and job search skills for adults. Rather, greater policy and research emphasis needs to be placed on the interplay of culture and Indigenous decision making in regard to Indigenous job aspirations, choice of jobs and commitments to kin and 'country'. It is insufficient to consider Indigenous employment problems only in typical economic terms of maximising income generation.[173]

# Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education

CAEPR research has placed considerable emphasis on identifying the key determinants of Indigenous educational outcomes, especially regarding participation in post-compulsory schooling. Although improvements in educational participation have been made, CAEPR research noted that in terms of educational disadvantage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have poorer educational outcomes than the Indigenous populations of Canada and New Zealand.

## Issue: Mapping the distribution of Indigenous educational participation

There are large regional differences in the level of educational participation of Indigenous adolescents compared to the participation of non-Indigenous adolescents, as is evident from the following map of regional Australia, compiled from the 2001 Census.[174]

**Fig. 5:** Education participation rates for indigenous young people aged 15–19 years, 2001
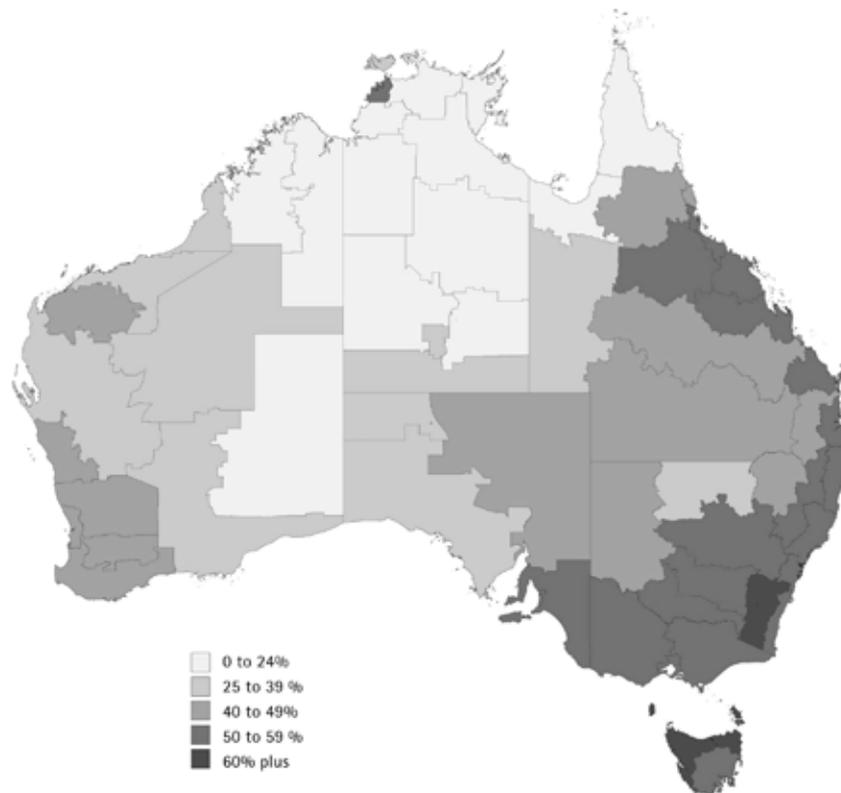


Highest education participation rates for Indigenous adolescents are in the metropolitan and urban regions, especially on the eastern coast of Australia. Indigenous adolescents are least likely to attend educational institutions in northern Australia (especially the Kimberley (WA), Cape York Peninsula (Qld) and most of the Northern Territory). South-west Western Australia, despite being relatively urban, did not achieve a 50 per cent educational participation rate for Indigenous adolescents. Clearly educational participation generally reflects access to educational services although, as is discussed later in this section of the report, sociocultural factors play a significant role in determining educational participation.

Access for Indigenous young adults to secondary schooling and higher education infrastructure and their continued participation in education and training is critical for both the individual and their community. Not only will this lead to increased skill levels and labour market competitiveness, it may also lead to an increased feeling of self-worth among individual young people and increased social cohesion within communities.

## Issue: Participation in secondary schooling

The detailed regional analyses undertaken by CAEPR emphasise the reality on the ground of the above mapping of educational participation. For example, in the Pilbara (WA) and focusing on secondary schooling:

- enrolments start to fall away rapidly in all regions of the Pilbara as the secondary years progress, especially beyond 15 years of age
- in 2004, of those enrolled, the proportion attending school is itself low, at about 63 per cent of those enrolled in Years 8–10, with attendance rates ranging between 43 per cent and 75 per cent across the four schools providing secondary education

- in 2004, only 45 Indigenous students were enrolled in Year 12. Apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 ranged from 48 per cent to 22 per cent across the four schools providing secondary education.[175]

Such participation rates typify, and in some instances are far better than, those rates identified from analyses of school participation and attendance undertaken by CAEPR in the Kimberley (WA)[176,177] and Thamarrurr (NT)[178] regions of remote Australia, as well as other regions.

There are some regional responses being made to such low participation rates through, for example, 'pathways to employment programs' which are designed to prepare students to compete for employment, apprenticeships, traineeships or tertiary entrance after leaving school by targeting students with the capacity for further education and providing them with a range of intensive support structures including:

- trained mentors
- access to after school hours support and resource centre/library for study
- a comprehensive leadership/study skill program from Year 8 to Year 12
- a full-time program coordinator
- family and home support
- industry support
- access to a tertiary motivational program.

Later sections of this report address in more detail strategies for improving pathways to training, employment and higher education. However:

- for early school leavers, the most common reason cited for leaving school before completing Year 12 was simply that they did not like school—it was not to get a job or to get into a TAFE course, although these were also cited as reasons[179]
- many of the issues that relate to Indigenous secondary education participation in remote and rural areas, including leaving school early, also apply to Indigenous young people's educational participation in urban settings.

CAEPR has undertaken some work in more settled areas of Australia which provides insight into specific interventions schools can make to improve educational participation, especially among those most 'at risk' of early school leaving.

These interventions recognise that the transition from primary schooling to secondary schooling is critical in the lives of many Indigenous students: moving from a child-centred pedagogy to a subject-focused pedagogy. Too often it would seem that apparently well behaved and educationally oriented Year 6 Indigenous students exhibit significant behavioural problems on entering secondary schools.[180]

One successful approach was to target the engagement of male Indigenous secondary students through a Peer Reading program with feeder primary schools so that there is continuity during the transitions. Other approaches have focused on the secondary school engaging with the cultural identity of the student, reinforcing the self-worth of Indigenous students and developing professional development programs to facilitate cross-cultural understanding between staff and students. Examples of cultural centres within the school and engagement of male Indigenous staff were also evident.[181]

However the significance of this transitional issue cannot be underestimated.

Drawing on several secondary school case studies, as well as lessons learnt from evaluations of CDEP projects, the development of pathways for Indigenous students at risk of leaving school early benefit from considering the following issues:

- leadership and a clearly articulated vision for addressing the needs of Indigenous students. Such a vision will be local and context-specific, derived from careful analysis of both the particular local needs of students and communities and a realistic assessment of what resources and opportunities are available to meet those needs

- a committed and creative staff who are adequately supported and who have a well developed cross-cultural understanding of the types of issues faced by Indigenous youth

- curriculum relevance in terms of life skills and a practically based pathway to employment that necessitates close integration of curriculum offerings with local opportunities, targeted career counselling and community consultation

- addressing the issue of low levels of literacy and numeracy which, after being a high priority in early primary school years, is in danger of dropping back to a point where Indigenous youth do not have sufficient literacy skills to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships, with the increasing trend towards more theoretical underpinnings for these courses

- Indigenous staff facilitating connections between Indigenous students and what is often, at least initially, a foreign and unfamiliar institution. They play the role of educator, translator, role model and bridge between home and classroom

- visibly and continually promoting respect for Indigenous culture

- promoting a strong sense of community engagement.

## Issue: Family and social environmental determinants of educational participation

CAEPR studies highlight the importance of family, social and cultural influences upon educational participation and attainment.[182] These studies also demonstrate that to achieve significant improvement in Indigenous educational participation and attainment, far greater interagency coordination is required than has been the case in the past, and possibly has been envisaged through the COAG trials.

### Education participation and being arrested

The effect of young people being arrested and placed in juvenile detention centres on secondary school completion is substantial.[183] It disrupts secondary school attendance and places these young people in an environment where motivation to continue with their studies is likely to be minimal, especially if the immediate social environment does not value education. The likelihood of secondary schooling being completed is significantly reduced. Yet if these students can finish secondary education, then the influence of having been arrested does not affect their likelihood of attaining a post-school qualification, and hence does not affect their future employment prospects.

CAEPR's analysis of SRAs shows that Indigenous communities are well aware of the need to reduce juvenile disruptive misbehaviour and interaction with the justice system. A significant number of SRAs are directed towards the funding of diversionary activities and providing alternative school curriculum activities such as bush camping.

While the juvenile justice system provides educational programs, these may not be sufficient to motivate students in continuing education. It is therefore critical that policies be developed which reduce contact with the juvenile justice system; and where this is unavoidable:

- special facilities be developed which focus on extensive counselling with the view to continued educational participation and the provision of secondary education suited to the needs of these students
- effective transition arrangements from detention centres to continued secondary education, training or employment-based training opportunities be introduced. This will almost certainly involve mentoring and ongoing support strategies.

If, as other CAEPR research shows, a significant proportion of young people leave school because they don't like schooling, schools can play an important role in reducing such high levels of school alienation, with its consequent non-attendance and increased chances of boredom and low level criminal activity.[184] This can be achieved by schools focusing on appropriate social behaviours and developing curricula relevant to the educational and cultural needs of 'at risk' Indigenous youth. At the same time, training providers can play a role in the continuing professional development of police, increasing their understanding of cross-cultural issues and how best to address Indigenous youth misbehaviour.

## Educational participation and quality of housing

Low quality housing and overcrowding characterise many home learning environments for Indigenous students, and this applies not only in more remote areas but also in regional and urban localities. The impact of poor housing conditions on educational participation and attainment provides an excellent example of the priority which needs to be accorded to joint government agency action, in association with Indigenous communities and their organisations, in addressing pressing welfare issues.

The expectations held by teachers regarding homework, independent study and research, as well as ongoing parental support in the pursuit of 'academic excellence' are less likely to occur in such situations. In addition, Indigenous teenagers often hold substantial caring responsibilities which further disrupt learning opportunities in the home. While housing issues are being addressed, educational authorities can provide:

- additional learning spaces and after-school learning facilities for Indigenous students, such as has been the case with Homework Centres, including internet services
- ongoing professional development of the teaching force to understand better the family living conditions of many Indigenous students and how that influences student learning and behaviour—especially newly recruited teachers who will be teaching Indigenous students and who have generally had little preparation, being reliant solely on a quick induction or 'on-the-job' learning from experience.

## Educational participation and family members

Two other family or household related factors repeatedly occur in CAEPR studies as important influences on educational participation, the first a positive and the second a negative influence:

- other members in the household with qualifications or attending school
- other members in the household who have been arrested.

The first highlights the importance of adult models for encouraging continued participation in education and the role such adults play in developing strong career aspirations. Where such family models are absent, special attempts need to be made to promote the benefits of education for future employment and lifelong income at the local or regional level. The extent to which 'national' models can play such a role requires further research, but appears questionable in light of such a significant influence of the immediate social environment.

The second factor—other household members having been arrested—makes it all the more important to minimise the degree of contact with the justice system for juveniles thereby breaking the cycle.

The third area for intervention is the continued emphasis on the need to improve the English language capacity of Indigenous adults so that they can participate in continuing education and gain post-school qualifications. Already this is being addressed by jurisdictions through inclusion in training courses. Possibly this needs expansion through alternative delivery strategies aimed at those currently not interested in further education—but who, given the opportunity, may do so and thus be better prepared to take up opportunities in any newly developed labour markets.

## Educational participation, culture and history

As CAEPR research points out, after controlling for many of these socioeconomic factors, Indigenous students still leave school at a rate that is greater than other students. This may be explained by factors associated with Indigenous culture and history. The research emphasises the importance of particular cultural and historical experiences in shaping attitudes of both students and their parents to schooling and hence attendance: dispossession, forced extinguishment of languages and cultural practices, racism, discrimination and forced assimilation. Despite public policy shifts, the research considers that there remains a powerful legacy of history and continuing conflicts in cultural assumptions about child rearing and autonomy.

To sum up, the factors associated with the historical and cultural experiences of being Indigenous—parental discomfort with schools and strong notions of shame and fear of failure by school children—all interact in such a way as to reduce the chances of Indigenous youth attending school (which also applies to participation in primary school education).[185]

# Issue: An overview of participation in post-secondary schooling

CAEPR research has analysed the levels of Indigenous participation in vocational education and training and in higher education in terms of the Australian Government's policy of 'practical reconciliation'.

Over the 1986–2001 period, there was a continued trend for higher levels of TAFE enrolments among Indigenous Australians compared to other Australians—due to regional accessibility, vocational focus and flexibility in its modular approach, entry via employment programs and programs such as CDEP.

Relative to non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous participation in higher education had not improved. That is, after controlling for age, while there was a significant increase in Indigenous participation over the 1986–2001 period, the increase was much less than for non-Indigenous participation in higher education.[186]

For Indigenous Australians of working age, the degree of inequality in educational attainment compared to non-Indigenous Australians increases with qualification level. That is, Indigenous people tend to have fewer higher qualifications relative to their non-Indigenous counterparts than they do more basic vocational qualifications. Between 1991 and 2001, there was, however, a small but significant narrowing of the gap for almost all educational levels.

Nevertheless, the equity or parity ratios remain at 0.4 or less for undergraduate diplomas, bachelor degrees and postgraduate diplomas and degrees. That is, the proportion of the Indigenous working-age population with higher education qualifications was 40 per cent or less that of the non-Indigenous working-age population across the range of higher education qualifications.

This CAEPR research points out that the educational attainment levels (that is, post-school qualifications) of the Indigenous work force must reach parity with the non-Indigenous work force if they are to compete effectively when seeking employment. Absolute improvement in terms of raw numbers will not necessarily be sufficient to fill available jobs, especially those associated with higher level occupations and where competition is greatest.

## Issue: Participation in vocational education and training

Large numbers of the Indigenous working-age population attend training. For example, in the 12 months prior to the 2002 NATSISS survey:

- 34 per cent of males and 27 per cent of females living in non-remote regions attended a training course
- about 23 per cent of males and 17 per cent of females living in remote regions attended a training course

Furthermore, training was seen as highly beneficial. More than 80 per cent indicated that they had used their training for work or to help get a job.[187]

However, much of the training undertaken was related to basic vocational training, comprising bridging, enabling and lower level certificate courses rather than specialist trade certificates and more advanced certificate courses.[188] Increases in absolute numbers of TAFE enrolments probably reflect as much the growing youth and young adult Indigenous population than increased access to or desire to participate in the vocational education and training sector by Indigenous young people.

Regional analyses undertaken by CAEPR provide better insight into what is actually occurring 'on the ground' and the extent to which the VET sector is able to match expected labour demand. A summary of the VET situation in the Pilbara (WA) is set out below.[189]

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## VET participation in the Pilbara

- Participation in VET was high at 39 per cent of the Indigenous population aged 10–64 years, with VET participation peaking at 72 per cent for the 15–19 years age group and 50 per cent or more for those aged between 20–29 years.

- However, the study found that Indigenous VET enrolments were concentrated in Certificate level I and II courses, while non-Indigenous enrolments were far more likely to be in Certificate levels III and IV.

- In addition, there were proportionately more Indigenous enrolments in short miscellaneous enabling courses with no formal certification attached.

While such an outcome may appear encouraging and is likely to meet the labour demand from the mining interests in the Pilbara, it does have severe limitations in that it will only direct the Indigenous work force into low skilled jobs that become available in that industry.

One of the challenges identified in this regional analysis is how educational authorities and training providers can address the lack of basic skills so that the youth can participate in higher level courses, especially when these youth readily acknowledge their skill deficits.

A second challenge is that, against the background of an expanding Indigenous working-age population in the Pilbara, additional jobs will need to be generated in both the mainstream and customary economy. These in turn will require skilled Indigenous workers who, on the basis of current education and training participation rates, may not be forthcoming.

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## Lessons learnt from CDEP evaluations

The extensive CAEPR research on the CDEP scheme, even though the scope of the scheme has now been reduced, has implications for the delivery of training.[190] CDEP evaluations across urban, regional and remote settings found that:

- Existing low skill levels in literacy and numeracy of Indigenous Australians place a severe limitation on the delivery of training. Requiring training in literacy skills as well as the area of interest such as a trade or hospitality, perhaps through an initial enabling or pre-vocational course, extends the overall course duration, and reduces the chances of completing accredited higher level training courses. CAEPR research on labour market programs has shown that the longer training courses are less likely to be completed than short courses.[191]

- Balancing training programs that are oriented towards mainstream further training and employment, while enabling participants to better maintain a lifestyle that acknowledges and incorporates their cultural responsibilities, requires flexibility in service delivery.

- Indigenous participants were less concerned about 'accreditation' and the actual gaining of a qualification, but see training in terms of its direct relevance to what they are actually doing, not some future employment aspiration.

- Providing culturally appropriate support strategies to assist Indigenous students develop the more subtle skills of interacting with a formal training institution would improve their chances of course completion.

- The CDEP role in 'directing' participants into training programs has been quite an effective pathway to training but is largely lost in much of Australia under the CDEP policy changes. The extent to which the Australian Government's Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP) scheme can fill this void will be important to evaluate in terms of pathways to employment for this group of Indigenous people.

### VET participation in remote areas

The emphasis on access to training in very remote areas continues to be a priority, as does ensuring link between training offered and the uses to which it can be put. New employment opportunities are emerging in the areas of wildlife, land and sea management to complement existing arts and craft industries and tourism industries. The success of these new industries, which combine elements of the market economy and the traditional or customary economy, will largely be dependent on the responsiveness by education and training providers to their training needs.

Related to this is the importance of training actually delivering skills which are also relevant to general community life and which will help maintain a community's sense of wellbeing. That is, training provides important community benefits as well as economic benefits centred on the individual.

The overall complexity of delivering relevant and flexible training in such a way that it promotes increased participation in VET courses, especially at higher levels than is now the case, is evident when reviewing the reform agenda of the 1990s for vocational education and training in Australia.[192]

## Issue: Participation in higher education

In a detailed study of 1996 Indigenous course enrolments in higher education, CAEPR researchers noted significant differences when compared to enrolments by non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students were more likely than non-Indigenous students to be enrolled in one of the newer universities, enrolled in one- or two-year diplomas, enabling or non-award courses and in disciplines such as education, the arts (particularly Aboriginal Studies), health and business studies. While more recent data indicate greater numbers of Indigenous students enrolled in graduate and postgraduate studies courses, the point remains that in terms of parity, at least as at 2001, Indigenous students had not progressed.

This body of research identified a range of social and cultural factors which play a significant role in Indigenous higher education participation, which include:
- the necessary skills, competencies, general understanding about the higher education sector and the confidence to effectively participate in or 'navigate through' higher education not being as well developed among Indigenous students as among non-Indigenous students
- Indigenous students not holding the necessary values and strong expectations of success based on the 'western' notions of education as both an economic investment and the gaining of a qualification as some form of social capital
- a commitment to community influencing choice of study, with enrolments in areas such as education, Aboriginal Studies and health often seen as of benefit to the community rather than for individual gain.[193]

Furthermore, Indigenous adolescents were more mobile in respect of enrolling in university education compared to enrolling in TAFE, possibly due to the lower accessibility to university education in their areas of usual residence.[194]

Several interventions to ensure continued increases in Indigenous participation in higher education suggested by this CAEPR research include:

- recognising the level of support required by Indigenous students, especially in the early periods of their studies and for those who have had to move away from their community

- modifications to course structures to encourage greater participation by providing increased flexibility through a modular approach, with opportunities for block study programs at both graduate and postgraduate levels. This could involve intensive study and field-based research, enabling continued involvement with their own communities and in areas of value to both the student and the community

- developing stronger pathways between TAFE, other training providers and secondary education and universities to promote Indigenous enrolments in other disciplines such as science and environmental studies, information communication technology, and engineering and accounting, where future demand and community benefit may be high.

## Issue: Improving articulation between VET and higher education in key areas

CAEPR analysed the graduation patterns from both the VET and higher education sectors for health[195], with a particular focus on the articulation between the two sectors, as Indigenous health is a priority concern in addressing the social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians. This CAEPR research raised important education and training policy and planning issues.

Given the diversity of training in the VET and higher education sectors, this research suggested there would be significant value in mapping the occupational category 'health worker' in the Indigenous context as a mechanism to identify gaps in education and training. Having identified such gaps, there would be benefit in strengthening inter-sectoral relationships between government agencies at national or state and territory levels to develop a national strategy for Indigenous health worker education and training.

Such a national strategy may include targeted recruiting of Indigenous young people to undertake studies in health sub-fields relevant to specific Indigenous health problems (e.g. dentistry, nutrition, health counselling and podiatry). It may also target male students so that the high level of health care required by Indigenous males can be addressed in a culturally appropriate way.

One of the deficiencies identified in this research was the level of courses in which students were graduating in each sector, with enrolments mainly concentrated in the certificate levels in VET and in diploma levels in higher education. This has flow-on effects for the extent to which Indigenous health workers can be employed in managerial positions responsible for developing Indigenous health policies and programs.

With Indigenous health still being a priority some nine years after this research was completed, it would be valuable to evaluate to what extent the above issues have been addressed. Furthermore, such detailed research examining the articulation between the VET and higher education sectors could equally be undertaken in the field of education, an area which, similar to health, employs significant numbers of Indigenous people and which could benefit from work force planning and targeted training.[196]

### Health care – a case study

Complementing this national analysis of health care worker education, a CAEPR researcher has examined the training needs on the ground in a remote Indigenous community where health care remains a critical issue.[197] Factors affecting Indigenous health worker training identified by medical staff were:

- high turnover of staff, no corporate memory and a perpetual reinvention of systems
- community wanting on-site training only
- most Indigenous health workers do not have sufficient English language, literacy and numeracy to meet the requirements of the national competency standards
- no commitment by the health service to a consistent training system that fits into a coordinated community plan.

This analysis highlights the importance of adult literacy skills in the readiness of Indigenous students to take up health worker studies in the first place. However this adds another step in an articulated pathway to developing Indigenous professional and para-professional health workers. As this research pointed out, such programs as Workplace English Language and Literacy needed to be much more intense to develop the necessary literacy skills among prospective students before the motivation waned.

The analysis also highlights the important role of the community in ensuring an effective health service, and for the management of the health service to be integrated within overall community planning and governance, a point made in Part 1 of this report *The Health of Indigenous Australians*. This adds a further aspect of the importance of articulation, not only across the two sectors of post-school education but also between the specialised training of health care workers and the capacity building for the Indigenous community to accept managerial responsibilities for health care services.

# Culturally inclusive support strategies and culturally appropriate work readiness strategies – career counsellors and mentors

Respect for Indigenous culture underpins effective pathways through schooling into training and employment for Indigenous students. CAEPR researchers have identified support strategies that have been used in schools, by training providers and by employers to assist Indigenous students and those entering the work force. These studies have identified both the strengths and potential limitations of such culturally inclusive support strategies, but overall highlight the importance of them if Indigenous young people are to participate fully in mainstream employment.

## Issue: Culturally inclusive support strategies and career counselling

One CAEPR study[198] of what works in secondary schooling for 'at risk' Indigenous students concluded that the successful engagement of these students is dependent on the extent to which the institutions, programs and staff visibly and continually display and promote respect for Indigenous culture. That is, culturally inclusive support strategies comprise the overall educational experience rather than being seen as the responsibility of a particular staff member or curriculum area.

Within this holistic culturally supportive learning environment, CAEPR research identified specific inclusive support strategies such as:

- creating a class grouping of 'at risk' Indigenous students at Year 7 that is maintained throughout junior secondary schooling—thus developing a sense of security and continuity for students who have in all probability had a history of irregular primary school attendance and social disruption
- the use of Indigenous home–school and even school–school liaison staff to assist in reconciling issues between the school, Indigenous students and their families or, in some cases, between the students and school staff
- the employment of an Indigenous career counsellor who can be particularly sensitive to the subtle factors involved in developing notions of 'career' for Indigenous young people and the types of hurdles they may need to overcome
- active participation of elders in validating student efforts to achieve skills and knowledge
- the establishment of an Indigenous community education centre as part of the school for use by students and their local community, and which provides a visible sign of support for learning.

Case studies among young Torres Strait Islanders described earlier in the report are also instructive about the importance of culturally inclusive support strategies and career counselling. As was noted, the short-term, flexible nature of career goals among young Torres Strait Islanders requires the development of career counselling strategies that may be quite different to those usually provided to young people seeking employment within a mainstream labour market.

Torres Strait Islanders are also unique in that such a large proportion seek employment on the mainland. In 2001, only 15.5 per cent of Torres Strait Islanders resided in the Torres Strait region.[199] Career counselling for those intending to seek employment on the mainland is difficult as it may promote further migration, yet it cannot be ignored. Accurate information about job and training opportunities, particularly in mainland Queensland, is vital if these young people are to be successful in entering that labour market, which in turn will be of benefit to family networks.

## Issue: Cultural sensitivities in training and in the workplace

A second aspect of career counselling is in regard to cultural sensitivities in the workplace so that Indigenous young people can adjust more readily to a variety of workplaces that are inclusive of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers and supervisors.

In the case of the Torres Strait, Community Councils can take a lead role in promoting cultural sensitivity among non-Indigenous employers of Islander people. These employers have the potential to play significant mentoring and training roles for Islander young people, although the transient nature of many of these employers is a limitation. A greater difficulty arises for those Islanders seeking employment on the Australian mainland, where employers are less likely to differentiate Islanders from Aboriginal Australians.

CAEPR's evaluations of regional and urban-based CDEP projects highlight important sociocultural, educational and training issues which alternative pathway strategies, such as the *Structured Training and Employment Projects* scheme, may need to address now that the CDEP scheme no longer operates in these localities. Issues raised by these evaluations are also relevant to secondary education and TAFE in terms of the types of support strategies required for Indigenous students.

The evaluations identified culturally related factors critical to success in training and in finding and retaining mainstream jobs for CDEP participants.[200] These critical factors were:

- the development of a work culture that took account of Indigenous family and cultural commitments. The more successful CDEP schemes developed a delicate balance between creating a CDEP work culture that was comfortable to Indigenous workers and providing work activities which made people employable. In contrast, other CDEP schemes which had created employment within the participants' comfort zones, without regard to longer term mainstream employment goals, were likely to create difficulties for participants when they were moving into unsubsidised mainstream employment

- the creation of a training culture that was comfortable to participants and took account of Indigenous family and cultural commitments and where cultural and social values were supported. This reduced the chance of 'training fatigue' setting in and training not being completed. As in the case of the above work culture, this too required a balance to ensure a high standard of competence was developed

- the provision of training backup, monitoring and mentoring during training, either 'on-site' or in more formal situations. This also reduced the chance of 'training fatigue' setting in and training not being completed

- a strong emphasis on case management through mentoring and support, even after graduation from CDEP into private sector employment, to ensure viable career pathways beyond CDEP.

## Issue: Discrimination when job seeking and in the workplace

The CDEP evaluations identified a significant level of racial discrimination felt by Indigenous jobseekers. The possibility of racial discrimination was also raised in the Torres Strait Islander case studies and was highlighted in other CAEPR research on successful Indigenous business entrepreneurs. Furthermore, CAEPR analyses of labour market participation across Australia support these findings.[201] This CAEPR research points out that the degree of such discrimination may be quite high and that it may act in quite subtle ways, as well as direct racial discrimination in terms of 'skin colour'. For example, discrimination may act through the quality of education received, work readiness and job seeking skills being assumed rather than being sufficiently developed, community perceptions of the quality of qualifications gained and misinterpretation of behaviours. Other CAEPR research has identified such perceptions as unreliability in the workplace being mentioned by employers as a reason for non-employment, which may be based on limited experiences or very indirect evidence.

Overall there is solid evidence that those Indigenous young people seeking jobs or already in jobs may experience some form of racial discrimination, for whatever reason. As was found in the above studies, this suggests the importance of:

- support strategies, including mentoring and case management, as part of the continuing pathway to long-term employment

- active promotion among the business community of the high quality of Indigenous school, TAFE and higher education graduates

- ensuring work readiness skills include capacity to work within a more competitive work environment while maintaining the necessary balance with cultural and social values.

# Influence of CDEP on young people

The role of CDEP as a pathway to mainstream employment for Indigenous young people has been questioned by CAEPR research over the last decade. These concerns have grown out of statistical analyses of Census and NATSISS information and from 'on the ground' case studies of Indigenous communities.[202]

## Issue: The effects of youth participation in CDEP

Detailed analysis of participation of Indigenous youth in the labour market up to and including the 2001 Census has shown that:

- the age profile of CDEP scheme participants tended to have a much more even age distribution than that for mainstream employment, and Indigenous youth were much more likely to be employed in the CDEP scheme than in the mainstream labour market
- Indigenous youth just entering the work force were much less likely to be employed in the private sector than non-Indigenous youth
- Indigenous people with post-secondary qualifications were less likely to be in CDEP and much more likely to be in mainstream employment.

These findings raised concerns about the younger group of Indigenous people directly entering CDEP schemes rather than completing secondary education or possibly entering TAFE. These Indigenous youth were likely to have insufficient skills to use CDEP as a pathway to mainstream employment, without CDEP investing a lot of resources in training this largely unskilled work force. Even by gaining skills through CDEP, failure to complete Year 12 education and preferably undertake some form of post-school qualification was likely to send the 'wrong' signals to a prospective employer within a highly competitive labour market. The extent to which young people have been able to use CDEP as a pathway to unsubsidised mainstream employment has been very much dependent on the capacity of the CDEP scheme itself to develop the necessary pathways.

As the CAEPR researchers point out, while the presence of a CDEP scheme is likely to reduce social exclusion among Indigenous people by increasing opportunities to participate in the labour market, it may adversely affect the motivation for Indigenous youth to continue with secondary studies by presenting an 'easy' option for prematurely exiting the education system. This short-term gain of access to a CDEP job will be offset, in the intermediate term, by reduced lifelong employment and income prospects (as other CAEPR research has shown).

The high level of underemployment within the CDEP scheme further points to the need for completion of at least secondary schooling to access mainstream employment where underemployment is less prevalent for Indigenous people.[203] However, this will require not only completing secondary schooling, but also gaining skills relevant to labour market demand in order to gain ongoing employment.

Several CAEPR case studies[204] have raised concerns about the role of CDEP for Indigenous youth:

- There was community concern for the intergenerational reliance on welfare and the related problems facing youth in the transition from school to work.
- Parents wanted the young people to be able to complete secondary school and enter into the labour market so they might develop employment skills in local businesses, establish a career path, and gain a higher income.

- Part-time CDEP tended not to provide meaningful work or the possibility of skills training, and therefore did not increase the likelihood of full-time employment, especially in mainstream employment.

Yet there are positive examples of the role CDEP can play in providing employment to Indigenous youth. The following section of this report provides a good example of how the CDEP scheme supports a ranger program in Maningrida (NT) which provides training, 'on-the-job' training and work experience, leading to meaningful employment. Similarly, in the Torres Strait Islander case studies, young people were generally positive when provided opportunities for full-time CDEP participation which included apprenticeship training and traineeships, believing this would improve their chances of full-time mainstream employment.

However, if CDEP or *Structured Training and Employment Projects* are to be effective pathways to mainstream employment, these schemes themselves will need to articulate closely with the local labour markets or, where little or no labour market demand exists, help promote new business enterprises for young people.

# Adult return to education and training

CAEPR research on adults returning to education and training has focused largely on three issues:
- the age of Indigenous people when they commence their tertiary studies and gain a post-school qualification
- the need for capacity building to improve community governance structures and processes, including adult literacy skills
- adult training needs in areas such as financial literacy and access to financial services.

## Issue: Returning to study at an older age

Indigenous higher education and TAFE students tend to commence their courses and gain post-school qualifications at an older age than non-Indigenous students.[205] This holds true at all levels of further education except for certificate level vocational education and training. As a result, Indigenous tertiary students are likely to have had quite different life experiences to many non-Indigenous students, not only due to their schooling and cultural backgrounds, but also their post-school experiences. For example:
- In the case of Indigenous female students, caring for family and child-bearing are much more common than for non-Indigenous female students. This is most evident among those who did not complete Year 12 but later commenced tertiary education. CAEPR research estimates that, on average, Indigenous females who had not completed Year 12 spent 10 years not studying before commencing post-secondary studies, compared to four years for non-Indigenous females.
- For Indigenous male students, post-school experiences typically include working within their community on CDEP projects, working in mainstream employment or being involved in customary activities. Often they will move between each activity. More information is nevertheless required to clearly establish post-school life experiences of male tertiary students and their potential impact on future study.
- Older Indigenous tertiary students are also more likely to have a disability or a significant long-term health condition. They are less likely to have completed Year 12 schooling and therefore have less developed literacy, numeracy and study skills when commencing their tertiary studies.

As in the case also of younger Indigenous tertiary students, older Indigenous tertiary students have particular support requirements when undertaking further studies, with significant numbers being away from family and social support networks. Therefore, the establishment of Indigenous community support centres within tertiary institutions, which commonly occurs, goes some way towards alleviating this lack of social network.

Health services and childcare provision would seem particularly important for older Indigenous higher education and TAFE students due to their increased probability of having significant health problems or having childcare responsibilities. With fewer older Indigenous students having completed Year 12, and the often found length of delay in commencing degree or diploma courses, educational support services such as adult literacy courses oriented towards tertiary study, study areas and resources and academic advice on course selection and progress are vital.

Finally, tertiary institutions operate on an expected level of student understanding about the processes of tertiary education. However, such understanding cannot be assumed in the case of Indigenous students.

## Issue: Capacity building for Indigenous communities

Capacity building to improve community governance structures and processes is a priority identified in the CAEPR research project, with Reconciliation Australia, on Indigenous governance. A key to capacity building, it is argued, is increasing the literacy levels of Indigenous community members. As is well documented elsewhere, literacy levels are generally extremely low among many in the adult Indigenous population, yet it has been claimed that:

- Year 7 level literacy and numeracy is necessary for operating in everyday life in wider Australia
- Year 10 literacy level literacy and numeracy is necessary for working in management positions in the Indigenous sector.[206]

### Increasing the literacy levels of Indigenous community members

While CAEPR has not undertaken research on literacy acquisition in the wider Australian Indigenous population, it has researched literacy acquisition among Indigenous adults in three remote regions of Australia.[207–209] In doing so it has found that:

- there is a general belief that not all community members need to have literacy skills, especially at a level cited above. Rather, there is reliance on 'literacy brokers' within these communities
- Indigenous literacy for most adults is grounded in everyday experience
- the need for functional literacy is high, enabling community members to deal with government agencies such as Centrelink, the police and the justice system. What comprises functional literacy may only require very low level competence.

This research suggests, in the case of at least remote communities, the need to develop strategies to encourage everyday literacy practices, including support for:

- the creation and storage of culturally relevant literacy materials and finding a means to ensure that such materials are made more accessible in remote communities
- the literacy brokerage role of those with higher level literacy skills in the community. In addition, there is a need to support and raise awareness of the role of family and community in the acquisition of literacy

- families where at least one of the older members is literate in English to ensure those skills are passed on to other family members. This involves building on what the adults and children already know, and developing strategies for literacy development that may involve adults and children learning together
- engaging mothers and young women so that health and early childhood issues can be addressed through literacy programs.

Adult education courses for Indigenous adults can provide effective training in English language, literacy and numeracy, as well as a foundation for capacity development for community life. In addition, they can promote lifelong learning and provide vocational training for local community work—both paid and unpaid. These CAEPR researchers suggest:

- customising training packages so that they reflect the real contexts of English language, literacy and numeracy use in remote communities
- customising training packages to allow for training and assessment tailored to specific local Indigenous needs and contexts, and/or assessment by local Indigenous assessors working in tandem with registered training organisations
- providing for community-based adult educators who are not tied to accredited competency-based training courses, and who can provide targeted English language literacy and numeracy support.

The extent to which such strategies should be applied in more urban settings has not been researched by CAEPR. Rather these findings need to be set within the overall research findings dealing with adult Indigenous literacy.

## Issue: Adult training needs in areas such as financial literacy and access to financial services

An important determinant of interacting successfully with the market economy on an everyday day basis is a set of basic financial literacy skills.[210] At a more strategic level, either for regional development or the establishment of small business enterprises, much more well developed financial skills, understanding of banking and financial services, and actual access to capital are needed.

CAEPR has, over quite a few years, researched financial literacy and access to financial services among Indigenous people and organisations, especially those in more remote areas of Australia.

This research found that, as well as very low financial literacy skills among the Indigenous population in large remote towns such as Alice Springs (NT) or in small remote communities, the low level of basic literacy and numeracy skills of many among the adult population and overall lack of confidence and experience in dealing with the financial sector will make effective delivery of adult education in areas such as financial literacy difficult.

Development of financial literacy programs will require close collaboration between the financial services sector, training providers and peak Indigenous organisations in defining exactly what constitutes financial literacy as required for contemporary Indigenous people.[211] For example, specific modules may need to be developed to address the multiple purposes for which financial literacy is required, ranging from everyday transactions, through larger purchasing requirements to the establishment of small business enterprises as opportunities occur.

While the emphasis needs to be on the development of financial literacy skills to enable successful interaction with banking and other financial services, CAEPR researchers see advantages in the financial services sector coming to a better cross-cultural understanding of the use of money within an Indigenous community.

In developing suitable financial literacy modules and delivery strategies, two points from the research need to be made beforehand:

- there will remain a small proportion of the adult population who will have such low literacy and numeracy levels that they will not be able to successfully interact with the banking sector using its current electronic servicing approaches
- due to the low levels of literacy and numeracy, any strategy will need to be sustained over the intermediate or long term rather than the delivery of short financial literacy courses with little or no follow-up.

Strategies for delivering financial literacy training to remote communities have been identified in this research and in some cases are being developed, with options such as:

- establishment of mobile training services to increase financial literacy skills. Such services can be used both within town camps and also among desert communities[212]
- an expansion of the role of existing educational providers within an overall notion of the development of a 'learning community' as a critical aspect of capacity building within the local Indigenous community. The extent to which extension of internet services, even with associated 'online' training, would be useful is likely to be quite limited due to lack of IT experience among adults. Again, some form of IT training and assistance would be required within a community learning strategy directed at improving financial literacy skills, especially in regard to electronic banking. Mobile training services may also be required to support such learning centre initiatives, at least in the establishment phase.

CAEPR research has identified a major impediment for Indigenous entrepreneurs wishing to establish small businesses—their ability to access financial capital.[213]

There is clear evidence of discrimination by financial companies for Indigenous business entrepreneurs seeking commercial financial capital to start up businesses. This suggests the benefit of training opportunities targeted towards strategies to assist Indigenous people interact with the finance sector, as well as the finance sector itself being educated about the successful development of Indigenous small business enterprises.

Another related area identified by CAEPR research is that of the commercial legal framework in which small business must operate.[214] There are significant educational needs among both Indigenous consumers and Indigenous operated businesses in terms of the legal underpinnings of fair trading. For example, the Trade Practices Act and the obligations it places on businesses are poorly understood. Those Indigenous consumers living in remote areas are more likely to have low literacy and numeracy skills and thus be more vulnerable to commercial exploitation. At the same time, Indigenous operated businesses may unwittingly flout the Trade Practices Act.

Not only is this relevant to adults who wish to establish small businesses, it is also relevant to secondary school education as part of general consumer education or equivalent courses.

# Pathways and strategies for remote locations

CAEPR research on pathways and strategies for remote locations has concentrated on policy analysis, program review and the development of innovative service delivery. The research is relevant to sustainable development options applicable to the hybrid economy of remote regions such as Indigenous arts and crafts, land and wildlife management, and tourism. The research is also relevant to those remote regions experiencing 'economic boom' times due to the mining industry.

The research has addressed the employment pathways for adults who have already left education, early school leavers and those most at risk of leaving school early.

## Issue: Attempts to increase school attendance and completion of secondary schooling

With the resourcing of outstation or homeland education being re-examined by educational authorities, an exploratory CAEPR paper provides an interesting insight into one approach to the delivery of Indigenous education to remote communities.[215] It is a model of mobile servicing, very much founded on the principle of the 'Aboriginalisation of education', and aimed at increasing the participation of school-age children and youth in schooling by decentralising the classroom and making education mobile and responsive to community dynamics, this is an attempt to ensure that education remains an accessible and integrated element in community life.

The extent to which this mobile service delivery model is successful is yet to be tested. While early indications were that attendance in schooling had improved, the logistics of trying to maintain such a mobile delivery of education in the bush are great and require substantial resources.

Some secondary schools in remote areas have developed strategies to encourage 'at risk' students to remain at school by developing vocationally oriented courses or integrating TAFE courses within their curricula. Importantly, to be successful the courses have needed to align with future employment options. CAEPR has reviewed several approaches that have focused on the service industries of tourism, hospitality, the arts, community health and aged care to identify features that increase the chances of students completing secondary education.[216,217] This work identified the following features that are important, and which are applicable in both remote and more urban situations:

- promotion of respect for Indigenous culture
- a key role for Indigenous staff
- leadership with a clearly articulated vision for addressing the needs of Indigenous students
- community engagement of both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities
- blurring the distinction between 'learning' and 'work'
- perceived curriculum relevance to local opportunities
- opportunities for the development of flexible pathways either as part of schooling or outside formal schooling.

The importance of secondary school curricula incorporating the arts and media is evidenced by a significant number of SRAs that have been developed by Indigenous communities in consultation with education authorities and other agencies.  These

SRAs involve youth participation in art, technology and media as a means of overcoming youth boredom and tendencies towards disruptive behaviour. Some SRAs also provide an opportunity for the development of business enterprises and hence may be an effective pathway for future employment.

## Issue: The development of ranger and junior ranger programs

Ranger programs are becoming an important pathway towards meaningful employment in remote Australia, and the Australian Government has recognised this importance through recent funding decisions. These programs tend to be closely connected to the goals and aspirations of the local Indigenous community, including the creation of meaningful and sustainable employment within a culturally relevant context. They relate to land, sea and wildlife management and bring together traditional ecological knowledge and contemporary, science-based knowledge. A summary of the ranger programs in Northern Australia follows.[218]

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### Ranger programs in the Top End

- In 2006, there were 35 Indigenous ranger groups coordinated by the Northern Land Council (NT) that provided work for 400 men and women, covering weed control and eradication, fire management, sustainable harvesting of wildlife and plant materials and the protection of sacred sites.

- Ranger groups provide an important and formalised structure for the transfer of traditional knowledge from old to young.

- Ranger programs can develop into commercial enterprises and be a source of continuing employment.

- These ranger groups have the potential to be successfully adapted for young Indigenous people and be a pathway to employment in remote Australia.

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CAEPR has researched the operation of one of the more successful adult ranger programs in the Top End, identifying educational and training strategies that are being developed in order to address a wide range of skills that are required if benefits are to accrue for the individual participants and the community as a whole.[219]

This research has identified a need to evaluate current courses being undertaken by rangers across all programs in remote Australia and to develop a more integrated approach to the training of rangers, while maintaining a focus on individual cultural contexts.

A second issue is the way in which ranger activity fits within the local hybrid economy of remote communities and the important role it can play in regional development. CAEPR has explored this 'fit', particularly in regard to sustainable wildlife management with the view to establishing a commercially viable wildlife harvesting industry.[220]

CAEPR has also reviewed the potential application of adult ranger programs to the creation of junior ranger programs as a means of re-engaging early school leavers or those at risk of leaving school early.[221] In doing so, it has examined the applicability of aspects of the Junior Canadian Ranger (JCR) Program, which in 2005 involved over 3,000 Junior Rangers and was coordinated by the Canadian Department of Defence, with a target of 3,900 by 2008.

Important features of the JCR Program are that it:

- encompasses and helps maintain traditional culture and practices, teaches practical ranger skills and develops personal skills such as leadership and parenting skills
- has a well developed pedagogy, is activity-based and includes a vocational orientation, increasing employment opportunities. The program also has a community focus with program outcomes being of value to the community.

The introduction of junior ranger programs associated with secondary education as a means of re-engaging early school leavers or those at risk of leaving school early would not involve merely a watering down of adult ranger program training requirements. Curricula would need to be developed for those Indigenous youth who may not have been sufficiently motivated already to participate in adult ranger programs and/or complete the necessary training.

Just as the courses would be challenging for prospective junior rangers, they would also challenge secondary schooling to respond in a way in which they may not be well equipped:

- designing curricula and adopting teaching strategies which are grounded in cultural contexts
- working collaboratively with adult ranger programs and local Indigenous organisations
- possibly incorporating the expertise of other educational institutions.

This is largely uncharted curriculum territory and would require close monitoring to ensure the best possible outcomes for the students, local community and their 'country'.

In summary, a more complete understanding of the nature of the local economy and associated labour markets which operate in remote Australia presents additional opportunities for the engagement, or re-engagement, of Indigenous youth in education and training.[222] To take advantage of these opportunities will require training providers (and schools through VET in Schools programs, for example) to develop training programs and packages that:

- bring together skills necessary to underpin enterprises such as an arts industry, a wildlife harvesting industry or a coastal surveillance service
- facilitate the continuing development of customary skills as an essential part of a student's learning.

This calls for quite different forms of training delivery and closer collaboration of education and training institutions with local Indigenous organisations.

Furthermore, to support such developments, targeting of specific training may be required for Indigenous governing boards, senior staff of Indigenous organisations and general staff employed by those organisations. Of these it appears from CAEPR research that the first two groups are less well catered for and, in fact, may not be aware of their training needs.[223] However, without effective Indigenous governance and administrative practices, local enterprise development will be limited.

# Education and training content in native title, Indigenous land use and heritage agreements

Research by CAEPR on native title, Indigenous land use and heritage agreements has traced the history and development of the agreements since the early 1990s through to the present. In a review of mineral development agreements negotiated by Indigenous communities in the early 1990s, the extent to which training and employment provisions were included in agreements ranged widely—from none, to fairly well articulated provisions leading to some employment options.[224] Overall, the research showed that many Indigenous people clearly see mining operations on their land as a significant opportunity to open up new pathways to employment, training and community development. However, their views may be contested by other Indigenous people.

Indigenous land use agreements (ILUAs) have been used as devices to maximise employment and training opportunities, particularly around large mining leases such as:

- Century Mine (Qld)
- several in the Pilbara operated by Rio Tinto and BHP (WA)
- the Argyle mine in the Kimberley (WA)
- the Western Cape Communities Coexistence Agreement, which is between Rio Tinto and the three Cape York communities, including Aurukun (Qld).

CAEPR research identifies several avenues through which the provision of education and training is dealt with in these agreements. In some cases:

- governments have accepted responsibility to deliver services such as education and training to local Indigenous communities on behalf of mining companies as their contribution to the negotiation of the agreements
- mining industries have developed education and training provision for the local Indigenous communities to increase their skill levels so that they have increased employment opportunities in the industry
- through royalties paid to Land Councils, access to education and training is made available to local Indigenous communities.

Before examining these various types of agreements, it is useful to consider some CAEPR research findings on the local context in which such agreements operate and its impact on potential benefits.

## Issue: Structural factors which influence the potential benefits of agreements

There are structural factors which influence the capacity of Indigenous people to benefit from ILUAs:

- existing low levels of human capital—low educational levels of attainment, especially literacy and numeracy skills
- poor health, as evidenced by reduced life expectancy and high morbidity rates
- serious alcohol and drug abuse, affecting immediate performance and, in the case of alcohol leading to the loss of driving licences and not being able to work on the mine

- use of soft drugs such as marihuana, where residues stay in the body for a long time and are likely to be detected by random drug testing to maintain the rigorous safety requirements on mine sites.[225]

There are also cultural factors such as ceremonial obligations which may impact on expected work practices and the extent to which the work environment is a 'comfortable' space.

Furthermore, there may be adverse outcomes for those who do not gain employment. That is, ILUAs may have a differential impact on Indigenous people in the region. While employment may be very positive for those who get jobs, there is a whole group of other people who find the mine highly invasive, destroying their country, bringing a whole lot of outsiders into their country who they can't control, and who are not necessarily receiving any benefits.

## Issue: The role of governments in delivering services as part of agreements

The extent to which governments can accept responsibility for delivering services as part of agreements appears quite limited. Where state or territory governments accept such responsibilities, Indigenous communities are generally reliant on other 'arms' of government (e.g. educational authorities) to implement undertakings, which those agencies may not see as priorities from their service delivery perspective, leading to a potential breakdown of expected education and training provision. The CAEPR research suggests that it may be hard to leverage resources out of government agencies, as those agencies have not historically supported the communities in human capital growth, rather arguing that resources should be taken out of the royalties or money flowing from the agreements or be covered by the agreement itself.

Furthermore, CAEPR research has pointed out that, in contrast to industry, government agencies have tended not to adopt such a business-oriented approach to education and training provision and have generally tended to be less responsive to emerging needs.

Interestingly, a recent SRA between the Australian Government and a local East Kimberley (WA) community includes Australian Government funding for the formal education and training of community members through tertiary scholarships, HECS fees, traineeships and boarding school fees. This funding is to be matched by community trust funds derived from the regional ILUA.

Under this option, mining companies themselves do not have any responsibility for education and training, although they represent a new labour market for the region.[226] The following section considers ILUAs where this is not the case.

## Issue: Education and training programs provided by mining companies

Agreements can, and sometimes do, provide a well developed program of education and training leading towards increased employment opportunities. For example, in the case of one Queensland ILUA that was reached, it:
- contained extensive provisions in relation to employment and training, designed in particular to extend the range of opportunities available to Indigenous people
- contained an employment preference for members of the traditional community and introduced an affirmative action policy in regard to the provision of employment opportunities for women

- included specific undertakings about provision of apprenticeships (two a year until a total of eight are provided, with this level to be maintained thereafter), and about college or university bursaries
- included undertakings to establish training programs and promotion processes designed to ensure that employees have the opportunity to attain all positions at the mining operation, including senior management positions.[227]

In the case of an ILUA in the Pilbara (WA), training, work ready and pre-employment programs have been established to increase Indigenous participation. These programs address:

- capacity building: education initiatives, scholarships, pre-employment training, fitness-for-work programs, and health, alcohol and drug programs
- training and direct employment: traineeships, apprenticeships, earthworks, clerical training, and direct employment strategies
- improving retention: support strategies to assist in holding on to workers once employed, including cross-cultural training across the work force
- business development: to develop viable business enterprises.[228]

These are two examples, but continuing research is required to evaluate the potential for companies such as mining companies to develop education and training programs that not only apply to the interests of the company but also have wider application for community development and the establishment of business enterprises.[229]

In this regard a recent CAEPR study of mining agreements in the Pilbara (WA), the southern Gulf of Carpentaria (Qld) and Kakadu National Park (NT) found that:

- nearly all training programs identified in the study were strongly oriented towards mining-specific employment. The majority of mining positions occupied by local Indigenous stakeholders appear to be based on low or 'entry-level' skill and literacy/numeracy (such as shovel operators, truck drivers)
- heritage work, environmental resource management, archaeological consultancy and cultural advocacy are an increasingly important part of negotiations, and therefore potential employment, in areas where mining is occurring, although often training in these areas is not offered by the mining sector.[230]

In summary, while mining agreements offer opportunities, through the development of training programs, for increasing literacy and numeracy skills and developing competencies in a wide variety of potential employment areas (such as heritage, land and sea management, tourism) this is not occurring to a significant level. Rather, skills being developed tend to address immediate employment needs of the mining industry and are not pathways to sustainable employment for a region as a whole. This will become increasingly critical as the future employment needs of the mining industry become reduced due to technological change.

## Issue: Education and training programs developed by Land Councils and local communities

The third avenue identified above is exemplified by the request to CAEPR from the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) to develop options for Indigenous education and training approaches it could undertake in four remote communities, using royalties from mining activity in the Tanami region (NT). WETT is administered by the Central Land Council.[231]

The advantage of this approach was that it enabled a more 'holistic' strategy for addressing the disadvantage experienced by the Warlpiri communities rather than identifying a range of unconnected solutions to a highly complex and related set of educational, economic and social issues. The proposed strategy included the establishment of the:

- Warlpiri Early Childhood Centre which would provide early childhood courses and child health and other services such as a preschool and day care facility. Central to the proposed centre would be the development and training of local community members as an avenue of employment

- Warlpiri Parent Education and Parent Support Program, educating parents about antenatal health, nutrition and child development

- Warlpiri Youth New Media Project, to address the disaffection and disengagement of Indigenous young people in the communities through local media projects, which generate confidence, self-discipline and skills that are transferable to other areas of life and work

- Warlpiri Training through Enterprise Program, building a set of community assets based on the Good Food Kitchen concept in each of the four Warlpiri communities, and requiring training in areas such as construction, food preparation and service, office management and small business operation

- a Warlpiri Learning Community hub, linking people with services, information and IT resources, and where community and adult education courses and activities could be offered.

While the strategy is ambitious, it reinforces the view that the effective delivery of remote community education is a joint and coordinated venture between Indigenous organisations such as the WETT Advisory Committee, on behalf of the Central Lands Council, and government (and possibly non-government) agencies.

## Issue: Overview of ILUAs as a source of employment, business development and community development

Due to projected increases in the size of the working-age population, setting job targets within ILUAs may have a significant but still limited impact on adult employment rates. Furthermore, the mining industry itself is increasingly becoming more computerised and less reliant on labour and may not be a major source of employment in the future.

As well as addressing existing low skill levels and poor health, this suggests that attention be paid to:

- developing other employment opportunities if parity with non-Indigenous employment rates is to be approached

- increased coordination between government agencies, industry and communities in the identification and delivery of education and training to address existing shortfalls and take advantage of emergent employment opportunities

- the inclusion within ILUAs of training and other forms of assistance directed towards employment, business and community development in the region.

# Summary: Effective local partnerships between schools, key agencies, business, Indigenous communities and community organisations

There are seven key messages arising from the CAEPR research on pathways to training, employment and higher education.

Demographic pressures will result in expanding numbers of Indigenous young people being of senior secondary school age and Indigenous young adults being of prime working age. These pressures will be unevenly distributed, so that particular 'hot spots' will develop where there is rapid Indigenous population growth due to high fertility, natural migration or migration arising from changes to government policy settings.

To achieve parity with the non-Indigenous working population, there will need to be a very substantial increase in the number of Indigenous people in employment. Even to maintain existing (low) levels of employment in some regions of Australia will present a challenge to job creation and training programs.

The younger demographic profile of Indigenous Australians compared to the increasing older non-Indigenous profile will make it more difficult for key government agencies responsible for Indigenous service delivery to maintain a budget priority due to the budgetary pressures likely to arise in meeting the needs of older non-Indigenous Australians.

Skill deficits limit the competitiveness of Indigenous people of working age in mainstream employment, especially in regard to high-growth industries and higher level occupations, and limit their opportunities for small business entrepreneurship. Such skill deficits are compounded by health-related problems associated with malnutrition and substance abuse and lack of quality housing which reduces home study and support opportunities. For this reason, a high level of interagency coordination in service delivery is required.

Access to education and training continues to be an issue for Indigenous Australians living in remote areas. That, together with lack of infrastructure in regard to the key areas of health and housing, has substantial resource implications for government if the current infrastructure backlog is to be addressed.

Educational and employment aspirations continue to be heavily influenced by Indigenous culture and interact with Indigenous attitudes towards kin, family commitments and community involvement. CAEPR research demonstrates cultural continuities across remote, regional and urban settings which are likely to influence parent/carer and student interaction with mainstream education and training institutions and the employment sector.

Successful examples of pathways development have been identified which demonstrate the importance of partnerships between Indigenous communities, education and training institutions and prospective employers. These pathways have been developed in urban, regional and remote settings and recognise the diversity of Indigenous employment opportunities, ranging from mainstream employment through to land and sea management in remote communities. A feature of these pathways is a focus on achieving employment through:

- training that is meaningful and presented in a culturally appropriate manner
- continuing support within the workplace, at least in the early stages of employment
- recognition within workplace environments of the importance of Indigenous culture.

# CAEPR: Future research

The Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research conducts an annual research planning retreat where CAEPR researchers map out specific research activities for the coming year and update a rolling triennial plan. The research plan is shaped by a range of different factors and in response to particular events: by individual researchers who have been awarded competitive research grants (e.g. the Australian Research Council), by stakeholders who commission projects (e.g. philanthropic foundations), by government departments or non-government organisations contracting CAEPR staff to carry out research, or in response to periodic (e.g. the release of Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data) or unusual events (e.g. the Howard Government declaration of 'a national emergency' in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory). The CAEPR Research Plan is built around three broad inter-related themes:

- Indigenous economic and social circumstances
- Development options for Indigenous economic futures
- Education, governance and capacity development.

While the third of these themes is of obvious interest to education policy makers, planners and practitioners, as this report has highlighted, there are often valuable insights for these same groups that can be derived from research conducted under the other two themes. In the sections that follow are project titles, brief descriptions and names of the chief investigators of selected CAEPR research planned for 2007 and beyond that may have value for readers in coming months and years.

Other projects will emerge in response to the annual internal research planning exercise and any new commissions from sponsoring bodies.

In the final section, areas of research interest which have been identified during the course of this review of the implications for Indigenous education of CAEPR research are identified.

## The CAEPR research plan for 2007

### Theme 1: Indigenous economic and social circumstances

#### Indigenous socioeconomic outcomes

Boyd Hunter: Ongoing research on socioeconomic indicators, including critically evaluation of the Productivity Commission's *Framework for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage*.

#### The social context of Indigenous poverty

Julie Lahn: Builds on poverty measurement literature, case studies will be conducted.

#### Changes in the CDEP scheme

Jon Altman, Boyd Hunter, Inge Kral, Frances Morphy, John Taylor: Continuing research on the role of the CDEP scheme and the implications and effects of recent changes.

#### Indigenous demographic trends: The 2006 Census

CAEPR staff: New and updated research on Indigenous demographic trends and their policy implications.

### The 2006 Census and Indigenous people in remote areas

John Taylor, Will Sanders, Frances Morphy: ARC Linkage project subtitled 'Assessing the quality of the enumeration process and resulting data' will continue.

### Aboriginal interactions with the criminal justice system

Boyd Hunter, Jerry Schwab and Don Weatherburn (New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research): ARC Linkage project identifying the dynamic factors associated with Indigenous interaction with the criminal justice system.

### Population mobility

John Taylor, Julie Lahn, Ben Smith: Research on migration and mobility in the East Kimberley and North Queensland.

## Theme 2: Development options for Indigenous economic futures

### Estimating the Indigenous estate

Jon Altman, Geoff Buchanan, Bill Fogarty, Libby Larsen, David Pollack: This research on Indigenous land holdings, supported in part by the Poola Foundation and Oxfam, was finalised and published in 2007.

### Indigenous community organisations and miners

Jon Altman, Sarah Holcombe, David Martin, Ben Scambary, John Taylor: ARC Linkage project on Indigenous communities and the mining industry.

### Indigenous poverty alleviation through community-based natural resource management

Jon Altman and CAEPR staff: Collaborative research focused on improving the capacity of Indigenous community-based ranger groups to advocate for themselves by using evidenced-based indicators of performance, alleviating poverty and enhancing the long-term sustainability of natural resource management on the Indigenous estate.

### Philanthropy, non-government organisations and Indigenous development

Janet Hunt, Jerry Schwab: Research on how philanthropic and non-government organisations might bring resources, knowledge and experience to bear on the needs of Australia's most disadvantaged people, Indigenous Australians.

### Socioeconomic study of Indigenous management of dugong and marine turtles

Jon Altman, Geoff Buchanan, Bill Arthur: Collaborative research with the North Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) on the social and economic value of dugong and marine turtles to the livelihoods of Indigenous coastal communities.

### Land rights and native title

CAEPR staff: Monograph from the 'Effects of native title' CAEPR Workshop to be published. Continuing research on legislative changes to the permit system, leasehold and native title.

### Indigenous engagement in water allocation

John Altman, Geoff Buchanan: Collaborative work with NAILSMA, CSIRO, Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research hub and the National Water Commission, with case studies funded by Land and Water Australia.

## Theme 3: Education, governance and capacity development

### Indigenous people and VET: An international overview

Jerry Schwab: an exploration and evaluation of policies and strategies adopted around the world in respect to vocational education and training for Indigenous peoples.

### Indigenous community governance project

CAEPR staff: The project is investigating the structures, processes, institutions, leadership, powers and capabilities of Indigenous community governance across rural, remote and urban settings with several case studies.

### The potential for regional governance in sparsely settled desert areas

Will Sanders, Sarah Holcombe: Research with the Anmatjere Community Government Council, Central Australia, examines governance arrangements focused on single remote communities and the potential for regional community governance arrangements.

### Custom-based land and resource management and the educational and social re-engagement of Indigenous youth in the Northern Territory

Jerry Schwab, Bill Fogarty: ARC Linkage project aims to identify ways to combine Indigenous customary and western science-based land and resource management knowledge with education and training programs to re-engage young people with learning.

### Torres Strait governance

Will Sanders: Ongoing research on the role of the Torres Strait Regional Authority since the demise of ATSIC.

### Lifespan learning and literacy for young adults in remote Indigenous communities

Jerry Schwab and Inge Kral: ARC Linkage project focuses on engagement with learning across the lifespan and increased literacy skills among early school leavers and other young adults.

### Indigenous Australians and alcohol control

Maggie Brady and Boyd Hunter: ARC Discovery project investigates Indigenous social enterprise that intersects with the alcohol industry. The research addresses policy uncertainty surrounding Indigenous ownership of licensed premises and whether this achieves anticipated economic and social goals and reduces alcohol-related problems.

Regular updates on CAEPR research outcomes and new research projects are provided on the CAEPR webpage: ‹http://online.anu.edu.au/caepr/›

# Areas for future research in Indigenous education arising from this study

This project has identified a number of topics on which further research could be valuable, whether undertaken by CAEPR or by other researchers. In either case, research would benefit from using any existing baseline information on which to establish statistical trends or more qualitative changes in pedagogy and curriculum that may occur in the coming period with respect to Indigenous education, especially taking account of the recent Australian Government's Northern Territory National Emergency Response and associated welfare reforms.

## The changing demography of Indigenous Australians

• Analyse the 2006 Census with particular regard to establishing estimated population projections for school-age children, those about to enter the work force and those of prime working age.

• Monitor population mobility, especially the potential impact of current Australian Government policies in Indigenous Affairs.

## Culture, community and family life

• Research the cultural diversity of Indigenous students at the school level and establish baseline information for monitoring future change.

• Research the cultural diversity of Indigenous populations resident in urban areas and explore the impact on participation in education, training and employment.

## The health of Indigenous Australians

• Tease out the relationships between the following health-related variables: per capita health expenditure, likelihood of accessing health services, income levels and health status.

• Establish the extent to which education directly or indirectly influences Indigenous health and the related development and evaluation of school-based strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous students.

• Undertake research on the role of Indigenous health workers, their career aspirations and associated training.

## Early childhood education

• At a local or regional level, establish a research program in early childhood education that is culturally appropriate for Indigenous communities and directly addresses early childhood development, school readiness and parental support.

## School and community education partnerships

• Research into the educational values and attitude to schooling held by Indigenous parents and the extent to which these differ across urban, regional and remote Australia.

• Research the most effective forms of joint governance arrangements between Indigenous communities, schools, government agencies and other key stakeholders.

### School leadership

- Research and development of strategies to assist principals working in schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students, especially in regard to: community consultation, staff support, use of resources and interagency cooperation in delivering services in a coordinated and effective manner.

- Develop partnerships with education research institutions to undertake action research and development activities to address in a holistic manner issues such as Indigenous health, domestic violence or boys' behavioural and learning difficulties

### Quality teaching

- Research and development of strategies to assist teachers working in remote areas, especially in regard to: cross-cultural understanding, increasing the educational aspirations of Indigenous students and generally assisting them in living in a remote location.

- Research the roles, responsibilities, career aspirations and training of Indigenous Education Workers.

- Determine the influences on Indigenous participation in teacher training and the development of career paths for IEWs leading into teacher accreditation.

### Pathways to training, employment and higher education

- Using 2006 Census information, undertake detailed analyses of labour markets operating in urban areas, including supply and demand factors.

- Examine the reasons for the high level of diversity across regions in Australia in the employment benefits from completing Year 12 or from attaining a VET qualification.

- Identify the extent to which national adult role models can effectively promote the benefits of education for future employment and lifelong income and in developing strong career aspirations.

- Assess the impact of 'successful' Indigenous students living in remote or regional Australia leaving their local school and going to another school, generally in a major city centre, with a stronger academic reputation—in terms of both the student and the students remaining.

- Research the interplay of culture and Indigenous decision making in regard to choice of jobs and actual job aspirations and commitments to kin and country.

- Examine the extent to which racial discrimination is a significant influence in successful job search and develop strategies that might be used by schools to assist Indigenous job seekers.

- Assess the role schools and training institutions currently play, and could in the future play, in overall regional development in rural and remote Australia.

- Evaluate the potential for companies such as mining companies to develop education and training programs that not only apply to the interests of the company, but also have wider application for community development and the establishment of business enterprises.

- Evaluate the role of the Structured Training and Employment Program (STEP) in directing Indigenous unemployed people to appropriate training for maximising employment options.

# Endnotes

1   Ref No. 132 Taylor.

2   Ref No. 138 Taylor & Bell.

3   Ref No. 133 Taylor.

4   Ref No. 135 Taylor.

5   Ref No. 139 Taylor & Scambary.

6   CAEPR research indicates methodological difficulties in developing population estimates for individual remote communities which may, in turn, create planning difficulties for educational authorities. Ref No. 136 Taylor.

7   Ref No. 132 Taylor; Ref No. 96 Ross & Taylor ; Ref No. 21 Biddle & Hunter.

8   Ref No. 134 Taylor.

9   Ref No. 137 Taylor & Bell; Ref No. 118 B.R. Smith.

10   Ref No. 137 Taylor & Bell.

11   Ref No. 143 Taylor & Kinfu.

12   Ref No. 8 Altman, Buchanan and Larsen; Ref No. 48 Fordham; Fig. 3 adapted from ABS Cat No. 4710.0.

13   Ref No. 146 Taylor; Ref No. 7 Altman.

14   Ref No. 124 Smith D.

15   Ref No. 43 Finlayson, Daly & Smith; Ref No. 91 Musharbash.

16   Ref No. 124 Smith D.

17   Ref No. 115 Schwab.

18   Ref No. 84 Martin.

19   Ref No. 101 Schwab.

20   The 'Be Game Not Shame' poster being used in Indigenous communities on the use of condoms within sex education highlights the cultural role of shame among Indigenous peoples.

21   Ref No. 93 Petersen (participant in CAEPR NATSISS seminar) ; Ref No. 76 Kral & Morphy.

22   Ref No. 84 Martin.

23   Ref No. 85 Martin.

24   Ref No. 148 Weston & Gray (participants in CAEPR NATSISS seminar).

25   Ref No. 41 Dodson & Smith.

26   Ref No. 122 Smith D.

27   Ref No. 81 Mantziaris & Martin.

28   Ref No. 56 J. Hunt & D.E. Smith.

29   Ref No. 120 D.E. Smith.

30   Ref No. 58 J. Hunt & D.E. Smith; Ref No. 83 Martin.

31   Ref No. 127 D.E. Smith.

32   Ref No. 59 J. Hunt, Ref No. 58 J. Hunt & D.E. Smith.

33   Ref No. 16 Arthur.

34   Ref No. 11 Arthur.

35   Ref No. 101 Schwab.

36   Ref No. 15 Arthur and Morphy.

37   Ref No. 139 Taylor & Scambary.

38   Ref No. 144 Taylor.

39   Ref No. 133 Taylor.

40   Ref No. 141 Taylor & Westbury.

41   Ref No. 145 Taylor.

42   Ref No. 145 Taylor.

43  Ref No. 140 Taylor & Stanley.

44  Ref No. 61 Hunter.

45  Ref No. 51 Gray, Hunter & Taylor; Ref No. 95 Ross.

46  Ref No. 51 Gray, Hunter & Taylor.

47  Ref No. 141 Taylor & Westbury.

48  Ref No. 141 Taylor & Westbury.

49  Ref No. 31 Brady.

50  Ref No. 30 Brady & Martin.

51  Ref No. 29 Brady.

52  Ref No. 75 Kral & Falk. Note: An NCVER funded project, not a CAEPR study, but undertaken
    by a researcher who joined CAEPR.

53  Ref No. 123 Smith D.

54  Ref No. 132 Taylor.

55  Ref No. 22 Biddle.

56  Ref No. 26 Biddle.

57  Ref No. 117 Schwab.

58  Ref No. 117 Schwab.

59  Ref No. 46 Fordham. Note that in the case of some SRAs it was difficult to determine the
    extent to which child care or preschool provision was a priority rather than a consequence
    of some other priority being addressed.

60  Ref No. 77 Kral & Schwab.

61  Ref No. 111 Schwab.

62  Ref No. 103 Schwab.

63  Ref No. 47 Fordham.

64  Ref No. 107 Schwab & Sutherland.

65  Ref No. 32 Campbell & Schwab.

66  Ref No. 34 Champion.

67  Ref No. 112 Schwab.

68  Ref No. 101 Schwab.

69  Ref No. 108 Schwab.

70  e.g. Ref No. 101 Schwab.

71  Ref No. 47 Fordham.

72  Ref No. 126 Smith D.

73  Ref No. 62 Hunter.

74  See for example Ref No. 106 Schwab and Sutherland.

75  Ref No. 37 Daly & Smith D.

76  Ref No. 89 Morphy.

77  Ref No. 116 Schwab.

78  Ref No. 47 Fordham.

79  Ref No. 109 Schwab.

80  Ref No. 59 Hunt.

81  Ref No. 47 Fordham.

82  Ref No. 57 Hunt & Smith D.

83  Ref No. 131 Sutherland.

84  Ref No. 106 Schwab & Sutherland; Ref No. 113 Schwab.

85  Ref No. 117 Schwab.

86  Ref No. 19 Barcham.

87  Ref No. 57 Hunt & Smith.

88  Ref No. 57 Hunt & Smith (see main report link).

89  Ref No. 46 Fordham.

90  Ref No. 130 Sullivan.

91  Ref No. 52 Gray & Sanders.

92  Ref No. 55 Hunt.

93  Ref No. 121 Smith D.

94  Ref No. 47 Fordham.

95  Ref No. 109 Schwab.

96  Ref No. 98 Sanders – for an analysis of the socioeconomic characteristics of town camps.

97  Ref No. 101 Schwab.

98  Ref No. 97 Rowse.

99  Ref No. 99 Sanders & Ref No. 44 Fogarty.

100 It appeared that interest among male elders had particularly waned and it was left to the women to become involved.

101 In a similar vein, a school had spent a lot of time working with their Indigenous community in generating a State Government based submission, only to be rejected. The local community, which had previously had a strong ASSPA committee, was extremely disappointed, resulting in the principal having to spend greater time working through the issues to maintain their interest in the school.

102 Ref No. 42 Finlayson.

103 Ref No. 47 Fordham.

104 Ref No. 109 Schwab.

105 'Significance' is defined in *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* in terms of the pedagogy that helps to make learning more meaningful and important to students.

106 Ref No. 103 Schwab.

107 Ref No. 46 Fordham.

108 Ref No. 35 Cochrane; Ref No. 78 Kral.

109 Ref No. 78 Kral.

110 Ref No. 47 Fordham.

111 Ref No. 78 Kral.

112 Ref No. 77 Kral & Schwab; Ref No. 75 Kral & Falk (an NCVER funded study but one of the researchers has joined CAEPR staff and continues to work in this area).

113 Ref No. 47 Fordham.

114 Ref No. 109 Schwab.

115 Ref No. 128 Smith.

116 Ref No. 42 Finlayson.

117 Ref No. 109 Schwab; Ref No. 47 Fordham.

118 Ref No. 64 Hunter.

119 Ref No. 70 Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor.

120 Ref No. 5 Altman, Gray & Levitus.

121 Ref No. 145 Taylor.

122 Ref No. 67 Hunter and Gray; Ref No. 64 Hunter.

123 Ref No. 64 Hunter.

124 Ref No. 135 Taylor.

125 Ref No. 142 Taylor & Biddle.

126 Ref No. 64 Hunter.

127 Ref No. 142 Taylor & Biddle.

128 Ref No. 4 Altman.

129 Ref No. 97 Rowse.

130 Ref No. 64 Hunter.

[131] Ref No. 2 Altman & Finlayson.

[132] Ref No. 6 Altman.

[133] Ref No. 45 Foley.

[134] Ref No. 70 Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor.

[135] For the Pilbara (WA), Murray–Darling Basin, West and East Kimberley (WA), NSW in general, the NT as a whole and the Thamarrurr region (NT). See Ref Nos. 139, 142, 135, 133, 145, 147, and 144.

[136] Ref No. 69 Hunter & Taylor.

[137] Ref No. 70 Hunter, Kinfu & Taylor.

[138] Ref No. 64 Hunter.

[139] Ref. No. 24 Biddle.

[140] Ref No. 27 Biddle.

[141] Ref No. 25 Biddle.

[142] Ref No. 95 Ross.

[143] Ref No. 23 Biddle.

[144] Ref No. 129 Smith D.

[145] Ref No. 128 Smith D.

[146] Ref. No. 114 Schwab.

[147] Ref No. 47 Fordham.

[148] Ref No. 9 Altman.

[149] Ref No. 102 Schwab.

[150] Ref No. 101 Schwab.

[151] Ref No. 47 Fordham.

[152] Ref No. 54 Henry & Daly.

[153] Ref. No. 101 Schwab.

[154] Ref No. 18 Arthur et al.

[155] Ref No. 18 Arthur et al.

[156] Ref No. 13 Arthur & David-Petero.

[157] Ref. No. 10 Arthur.

[158] Ref No. 12 Arthur & David-Petero.

[159] Ref No. 12 Arthur & David-Petero; Ref No. 14 Arthur & David-Petero.

[160] Ref No. 13 Arthur & David-Petero.

[161] Ref No. 112 Schwab.

[162] Ref No. 32 Campbell & Schwab.

[163] Ref No. 74 Hunter, Gray & Jones.

[164] Ref No. 28 Biddle, Hunter & Schwab.

[165] Ref No. 132 Taylor.

[166] Ref No. 105 Schwab & Sutherland; Ref No. 28 Biddle, Hunter & Schwab.

[167] Ref No. 48 Fordham; see also Ref No. 7 Altman.

[168] Ref No. 28 Biddle, Hunter & Schwab; Ref No. 94 Radoll (a participant in the CAEPR sponsored NATSISS seminar).

[169] Ref No. 38 Daly.

[170] Ref No. 66 Hunter & Gray.

[171] Ref No. 50 Gray & Hunter.

[172] Ref No. 64 Hunter.

[173] Ref No. 53 Gregory (a participant in the CAEPR sponsored NATSISS seminar).

[174] Ref No. 28 Biddle, Hunter & Schwab. 'This article contains more detailed regional information and includes an equivalent map of education participation rates for non-Indigenous adolescents, for comparative purposes.'

[175] Ref No. 139 Taylor & Scambary.

[176] Ref No. 135 Taylor.

[177] Ref No. 133 Taylor.

[178] Ref No. 144 Taylor.

[179] Ref No. 114 Schwab.

[180] Ref No. 47 Fordham.

[181] Ref No. 109 Schwab.

[182] Ref No. 68 Hunter & Schwab.

[183] Ref No. 40 Dodson & Hunter.

[184] Ref No. 114 Schwab.

[185] Ref. No. 116 Schwab.

[186] Ref No. 65 Hunter & Schwab.

[187] Ref No. 114 Schwab.

[188] Ref No. 65 Hunter & Schwab.

[189] Ref No. 139 Taylor and Scambary.

[190] Ref No. 32 Campbell and Schwab.

[191] Ref No. 73 Hunter, Gray and Chapman.

[192] Ref No. 33 Campbell.

[193] Ref No. 112 Schwab.

[194] Ref No. 28 Biddle, Hunter and Schwab.

[195] Ref No. 110 Schwab and Anderson; Ref No. 104 Schwab and Anderson.

[196] Ref No. 47 Fordham.

[197] Ref 75, Kral and Falk NCVER report – note this is not a CAEPR study although undertaken by a researcher now on CAEPR staff. It is included here as it complements the previous CAEPR study and has provided a basis for further CAEPR analysis.

[198] Ref No. 109 Schwab.

[199] Ref No. 17 Arthur.

[200] Ref No. 125 Smith; Ref No. 49 Gray & Thacker; Ref No. 80 Madden.

[201] Ref No. 63 Hunter.

[202] Ref No. 71 Hunter; Ref No. 72 Hunter; Ref No. 64 Hunter; Ref No. 39 Daly, Henry and Smith; Ref No. 12 Arthur and David-Petero.

[203] Ref No. 72 Hunter.

[204] Ref No. 39 Daly, Henry & Smith; Ref No.12 Arthur & David-Petero.

[205] Ref No. 20 Biddle.

[206] Ref No. 120 Smith.

[207] Ref No. 107 Schwab and Sutherland.

[208] Ref No. 75 Kral & Falk Report to NCVER – note this is not a CAEPR study but one undertaken jointly by a researcher now on CAEPR staff.

[209] Ref No. 77 Kral and Schwab.

[210] Ref No. 36 Daly & Preece.

[211] Ref No. 88 McDonnell and Westbury.

[212] Ref No. 86 McDonnell.

[213] Ref No. 45 Foley.

[214] Ref No. 87 McDonnell and Martin.

[215] Ref No. 44 Fogarty.

[216] Ref No. 109 Schwab.

[217] Ref No. 79 Kral.

[218] Ref No. 8 Altman, Buchanan and Larsen.

[219] Ref. No. 35 Cochrane; see also Ref No. 119 Smith B.R. and Claudie.

[220]  Ref No. 1 Altman and Cochrane.

[221]  Ref No. 102 Schwab.

[222]  Ref No. 4 Altman.

[223]  Ref No. 3 Altman & Schwab.

[224]  Ref No. 92 O'Faircheallaigh.

[225]  Ref No. 82 Martin.

[226]  Ref No. 92 O'Faircheallaigh.

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[228]  Ref No. 139 Taylor and Scambary.

[229]  Such research is currently underway at Griffith University (Qld).

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# Reference sources

This report has drawn on the research findings, insights and educational implications of 148 research projects undertaken by CAEPR staff, CAEPR research associates and other researchers who have participated in CAEPR seminars on specialist Indigenous issues.

Summaries of each of these 148 research projects are to be found on the CAEPR website. The relevant link to each summary is listed below against each reference source.

Each summary contains information on the:

**Title of research**

- **Research Publication** – including a website link, where available, to the full research report.

- **Name of Researcher(s)**

- **Time period** – during which the research was undertaken or for which reported statistical analyses were relevant.

- **Geographic location** – in which the research was undertaken or for which statistical analyses, including levels of data disaggregation, were relevant.

- **Methodology** – including major sources of data.

- **Aims of the project.**

- **Selected findings and insights** – particularly those most relevant to Indigenous education, training, higher education and pathways to employment.

- **Educational implications** – as identified by the authors of this report on the basis of their implications for Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008.

- **Relevance** – to particular domains and sub-domains of Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008.

- **Related papers** – either by the same researchers or other CAEPR researchers, together with website links, where available.

Responsibility for the preparation of these summaries rests with the authors of this report rather than the researchers themselves, particularly in regard to drawing out possible educational implications from their work. The online version of this report contains hotlinks from the main report to the summaries, and from the summaries to the full research publications where those links are available. This will assist readers who want to explore topics in more depth.

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