

2001

REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

SIX MONTHLY REPORT to 31 August 2001

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THIRD SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON PERFORMANCE ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

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1. OVERVIEW

Indigenous education continues to be a real concern in the ACT, as it is in the rest of the country. This Government has acknowledged there is a need to put workable strategies in place to ensure that educational outcomes for Indigenous students improve.

This report represents the third of a series of six monthly reports on our progress in developing strategies to improve the educational outcomes of indigenous students in the ACT. In brief, the following initiatives have been put in place as the foundation for those strategies:

Consultation

Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB)

The current members' terms expire in October 2001. Advertisements calling for expressions of interest from the Indigenous community to be members of the new IECB were posted in August 2001. The new IECB will be in place by the end of October 2001 with the brief to provide advice to government on education and community services.

Indigenous Compact

The development of an Indigenous Compact was the important initiative to emerge from the Indigenous education forums organised by the department and the Indigenous Education Consultative Body in August 2000. The Joint Working Group established from the forum has undertaken broad consultative process in DECS and the local Indigenous and Wreck Bay communities. The final Community consultation was held on 3 September 2001. The Compact was due to be signed off in October 2001.

DECS Strategic Plan for Services to Indigenous People.

DECS also implemented a consultative process to develop a Strategic Plan for Services to Indigenous People. The draft was distributed for consultation in March 2001 and is being finalized before the end of 2001.

Education Programs

The Indigenous Education Unit (IEU) now has completed its recruitment process and an Indigenous person has filled every vacant position.

Priority is being given to improving literacy and numeracy. The Indigenous teacher in the Literacy and Numeracy Team has been in place since the beginning of 2001. The teacher is providing a much appreciated service particularly in relation to the professional development of teachers of Indigenous students.

DECS has made a considerable effort to provide a centralised student attendance data system within MAZE. For the first time reliable data can be collected across all sectors. This permits DECS to have accurate comparable Indigenous and non-Indigenous student attendance data.

Indigenous culture continues to be given increased emphasis. Schools are accountable for the implementation of the cross-curriculum perspective of Indigenous culture through the ongoing School Development process. Twenty per cent of ACT Government schools undergo this process each year, and over the five year cycle all schools will have been required to demonstrate progress made in this area.

As a cultural awareness and reconciliation initiative the Chief Executive has asked that an acknowledgment of country be adopted as a first protocol at all appropriate meetings of DECS officers and community meetings led by DECS officers. This is to include school assemblies. DECS is the first government department across Australia to adopt this as a protocol.

New improved data collection and reporting procedures are now in place within all responsible areas within the Department of Education and Community Services to inform education programs and monitor progress.

Human Resource Management

Principals Appraisal

Targeting improvement in Indigenous outcomes is now a key component of the principals' appraisal process. This means that principals are taking a personal interest in the progress of Indigenous students.

Increasing Indigenous staff

Action has been taken to increase the number of Indigenous staff in education. Of the three key areas of action identified for the three years in the Department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002*, two relate specifically to Indigenous matters, namely Indigenous Employment, Diversity and Inclusivity.

Initiatives from the plan that have been actioned include:

- annually nominate three identified Indigenous teacher positions
- all advertised positions include a statement encouraging Indigenous applicants to apply
- the definition of identified positions has been clarified; and
- broad advertising of identified Indigenous positions.

Scholarships

A scholarship program for Indigenous students was introduced in 2001. The Perkins family has given their permission for the scholarships to be named after their late husband and father, Charlie Perkins. This is honouring not only that Charlie Perkins was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from an Australian university but also the amount of time he spent as a resident of Canberra.

Under this program three scholarships will be offered in each of the next two years, to assist Indigenous students planning further study.

Training

The teacher induction program includes a segment on Indigenous issues including:

- the role of the IEU and the support services it provides;
- effective strategies in teaching Indigenous students; and
- cultural awareness.

Teacher recruitment panels are trained in cultural awareness with particular focus on recruiting teachers with demonstrated cultural sensitivity.

Cross-cultural training is offered four times each year for all members of the Department.

Literacy and Numeracy

The literacy and numeracy testing, which the Government already has in place for years 3, 5, 7 and 9, is providing valuable data on student performance.

To further assist, DECS introduced in 2001 a Performance Indicator for Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment tool for Kindergarten. The early assessment is used to gain data on students' experiences prior to school and to assist teachers in their planning of learning experiences. and the second will provide data on growth in kindergarten.

The data on literacy and numeracy levels of Indigenous students available so far is provided in section 5. This data shows that, although progress is being made, a need still exists to increase the skills of Indigenous students in these key areas.

The IEU and the Literacy and Numeracy Team continue to work with schools to ensure each school has an explicit commitment to improve the literacy of Indigenous students.

Priority Areas in Agreement with the Commonwealth Government

Priority areas identified in our Agreement for services with the Commonwealth are integrated within our overall strategy, and some promising results have been achieved.

Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students through monitoring attendance rates

Firstly, through the work led by the IEU and implemented by schools, absentee days per student have dropped significantly, from an average of 31 (per student, per year) in 1998, through 24 (per student, per year) in 1999 to 16 (per student, per year) in 2000. Data collection is now centralised through the MAZE network. 2001 comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students will be tabled in the next six monthly report.

Increasing professional development of staff involved in Indigenous education

The Indigenous Education Unit has worked closely with the Literacy and Numeracy Team to develop programs that provide Indigenous perspectives in training

programs for all teachers where applicable, and also to provide professional development for staff of the IEU.

Expanding culturally inclusive curricula

There continues to be increased activity in all sectors to raise the proportions of schools offering Indigenous studies:

In addition, assessment of implementation of the cross-curriculum perspective of Indigenous culture was made part of the School Development process from 2000. Twenty per cent of ACT Government schools undergo this process each year. In the curriculum self-assessment component of the review, the school is required to evaluate how it has complied with this component of the framework. Every school will have been evaluated by 2004.

Increase involvement of Indigenous parents/community members in educational decision-making

Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness committees are active in eighty per cent of ACT Government schools.

Staffing and funding

There are 16 staff employed by the Department in the IEU. Of these 14 have been identified as Indigenous.

The ACT Department of Education and Community Services and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs jointly fund the IEU. Over and above normal funding for schools, an additional \$770,600 was provided for about 700 Indigenous students in ACT Government schools in 2000. This represents almost \$1,100 additional funding per student. Approximately half of this money is provided by the Commonwealth and half by the ACT Government.

DETYA Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP)

DECS has renewed the IESIP agreement with the Commonwealth. The agreement is for 2001 to 2004. As part of the IESIP agreement, DECS has also agreed to commitments under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS). Targets and Performance Indicators have been agreed to, under both strategies, to have the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student outcomes closed by 2004.

2. EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY AND PLANNING

The four key policies of the department are:

- The *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program, (IESIP) operating under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals* was put in place in 1999. The strategy was developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body.
- The *Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training Services to Indigenous People* was developed by December 2000, in partnership with the national strategy. The ACT strategy was developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body.
- A consultation draft of the *Children's, Youth and Family Services Indigenous Services Plan* will shortly be circulated. The plan has also been developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body.
- The *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002* identifies Indigenous Employment and Diversity and Inclusivity as two of the three key areas of action for the three years. The plan was developed through consultation with departmental staff and other key stakeholders including the IEU and the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB).

These programs incorporate the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home, Deaths in Custody, and Reconciliation* reports.

The Department of Education and Community Services is developing a cross-Department strategic plan, *Services to Indigenous People Strategic Plan 2001 – 2004*.

The plan builds on strategies that have already been developed with the community, such as the Education Compact, and provides a more integrated approach to planning services.

Officers of the Department met with the IECB on 21 February 2001 to advise that the plan was being developed and to seek the IECB's endorsement and views on a consultation process. The IECB is pleased with the initiative and agreed to a consultation phase commencing at its next meeting on 5 April.

The draft strategic plan has four key commitments for the Department of Education and Community Services in the provision of services to improve the outcomes for Indigenous children, young people and their families:

- eliminating racism;
- forming real and on-going partnerships between Indigenous communities and the ACT Department of Education and Community Services;

- creating educational and service environments that are welcoming, safe, supportive and culturally inclusive; and
- ensuring that the outcomes are the same for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous young people.

There will be a lengthy period of community consultation for this strategy, starting in April and running until December 2001.

3. Detail on Education Programs

Clients

Preschool to Year 12 students.

- There are approximately 800 Indigenous students in ACT and Jervis Bay schools between Preschool and Year 12.

Services Provided

Services are provided to improve literacy and numeracy of Indigenous children by monitoring school attendance of Indigenous students, providing intensive literacy support, working with schools to raise cultural awareness; and supporting schools in their development of Indigenous studies. This is managed through the IEU now located in the Mawson Primary School. The relocation allowed the IEU to raise its profile, making both Schools and the wider community more aware of the support and work of the IEU. The IEU is also more accessible for students and parents.

- **SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS (SST)**
There are two SSTs each responsible for half the Canberra schools. The teams are made up of a Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) as Team Leader and four Indigenous Education Workers (IEW). The IEW has the task of working with schools to support and monitor the progress of every Indigenous student enrolled in the government system. In most circumstances it is within the scope of the IEW's experience and training to provide direct assistance. In others a more intensive intervention may be required which is coordinated through the SST and the Student Management Consultant.
- **STUDENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (SMC)**
The SMC has resources to assist schools with students with the more challenging behaviours. The SMC has a direct communication link to the IEWs and their Team Leader. They work in partnership with schools to plan interventions and provide special resources for these students. This is a very effective targeted use of resources and well received by Principals.

- **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FIELD OFFICER PROGRAM (IEFO)**
This is a joint initiative between the IEU and the Literacy and Numeracy Team. An Indigenous teacher has been appointed to this position for 2001 fulfilling a commitment of the government to create an Indigenous teaching position in the Literacy and Numeracy Team. The IEFO provides support and advice for teachers of Indigenous students with special literacy needs. ACT Assessment Program results, Learning Assistance surveys, Kindergarten Assessments and referrals from the IEU are used to help target the work of this officer.
- **CULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES**
The IEU has developed a resource library. It is an excellent resource for teachers and school students. The resource library is open from Monday to Wednesday, 9.00am to 4.30pm. The library provides books, Indigenous Education Packages, videos and posters for loan to preschools, schools and Bachelor of Education students.
- **ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE**
Many schools now display examples of the work created by the Artist in Residence working with students. While this is still a service provided it has been extended to include Indigenous art workshops.
- **PRESCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
There are Indigenous Preschools at Holt, Wanniasa and Narrabundah. Students are enrolled to four years of age and transport is provided when needed. The Pre-school Teacher is also a member of the DECS Literacy and Numeracy Team and is used extensively in providing advice about the teaching of Indigenous children.
- **OTHER SERVICES**
 - Schools are supported in their development of Indigenous studies and courses:
 - Society and Environment is a key learning area of the curriculum framework for Government schools, and one of the cross-curriculum perspectives is Indigenous culture.
 - The IEU informs schools about relevant events and resources for use in their curriculum (eg Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, and NAIDOC Week). Indigenous presenters run Indigenous awareness workshops in some schools.
 - Assessment of implementation of the cross-curriculum perspective of Indigenous culture was made part of the School Development process from 2000. 20% of ACT Government schools undergo this process each year. In the curriculum self-assessment component of the review, the school is required to evaluate how it has complied with this component of the framework.
 - Parent and family involvement in schooling is encouraged through departmental links to Commonwealth programs such as Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness, and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme.

Particular initiatives introduced in 2001 include:

- For NADIOC Week in 2001 the IEU ran a very successful series of concerts in schools. The performers were made up of Indigenous dancers from the JARAM Indigenous Theatre and a contemporary jazz ensemble with students from Daramalan and Narrabundah Colleges. The group performed widely in NAIDOC week and extremely positive feedback was received.
- The Department and the Indigenous Community through the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) agreed to establish an Indigenous Education Compact. This joint initiative arises from the Indigenous Education Forums held in August 2000. The Compact will be launched in November 2001.
- Introduction of improved data collection and reporting procedures for Indigenous education. From work done with the MAZE software in 2001 the department is now able to obtain centralised attendance data on all students. This allows for accurate comparisons between the Non-Indigenous and Indigenous students' attendance patterns.

4. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002* identifies Indigenous Employment, and Diversity and Inclusivity as two of the three key areas of action for the three years.

The plan was developed through consultation with departmental staff and other key stakeholders including the IEU and the IECB.

Initiatives from the plan that have been actioned include:

- Annually nominate three identified Indigenous teacher positions. Four Indigenous Teachers applied in 2000 and all were offered places in the ACT Government system for 2001.
- all advertised positions include a statement encouraging Indigenous applicants to apply
- broad advertising of identified Indigenous positions; and
- Indigenous student scholarships.

Staff Induction Program for Teachers

An initiative started in the 2000 program is to include a segment on Indigenous issues including:

- the IEU and the support services it provides
- ensuring an Indigenous perspective in education programs
- effective strategies in teaching Indigenous students
- cultural awareness.

Teacher Recruitment

Teacher recruitment panels are now trained in cultural awareness with particular focus on recruiting teachers with demonstrated cultural sensitivity.

Training for Schools and Cross Department Staff Development

The O'Connell (professional development) Centre holds courses relating to cross cultural awareness. For example, recent courses have been:

- Blue Eyed Model - Tackling discrimination.
- Team Service Excellence - incorporating diversity.
- Skills for relief administration staff - including a session on diversity.
- A two day seminar on cross cultural awareness with a component on Indigenous cultural awareness.
- The IEU provides in-house training for staff in schools. The training includes ensuring an Indigenous perspective in education programs and effective strategies in teaching Indigenous students.

Indigenous Scholarships

Indigenous employment is a key area under the department's Equity and Diversity Plan.

Six Indigenous scholarships are being offered over two years to ACT year 12 students completing college and undertaking further study. Preference is given to students planning post secondary college study in an area relevant to the functions of the Department of Education and Community Services, for example social work, youth work, sport and administration. Two Indigenous Students were nominated and have been awarded scholarships for 2001.

The scholarships are designed to assist students to pay for amenities and services fees, books and other study material.

<p>5. LITERACY AND NUMERACY PERFORMANCE: ACT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM 2000 RESULTS FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS</p>

Indigenous Participation in 2001 ACT Assessment Program

The ACT Assessment Program highlights individual student's literacy and numeracy strengths and weaknesses and allows schools to tailor extension or remedial programs to students' needs. It was administered in August 2001 and the results will be available in October 2001.

Care must be exercised in the interpretation of this type of data as the number of Indigenous students in each cohort is not large enough to be statistically reliable. This means that there may be considerable differences from year to year.

Profile Levels for Indigenous Students

Profiles describe the progression of learning typically achieved by students in years 1 to 10. It is expected that students will reach levels 2 or 3 by year 3, levels 3 or 4 by year 5, levels 4 or 5 by year 7 and levels 5 or 6 by year 9.

The literacy strands tested in the ACT Assessment Program are reading, writing content and writing language for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 and additionally, speaking, viewing and listening for years 3 and 5.

The numeracy strands tested are number, space and measurement and data for years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

At each assessment year level tested in 2000 the Indigenous students had improved by almost one profile level. This is growing closer to the rate of development shown by all students. However, a higher proportion of Indigenous students are still in the bottom profile levels of each year level.

The programs developed to redress this situation are starting to close the gap in student outcomes. With the small number of students involved, it is possible to develop individual programs.

Indigenous students Achieving the Reading Benchmark results

	1999	2000
Year 3	67.2%	87.7%
Year 5	69.0%	80.9%

General student Reading Benchmark results

	1999	2000
Year 3	89.9%	94.8%
Year 5	90.4%	90.8%

November 2001