



**Report to the Legislative Assembly
of the Australian Capital Territory**

Performance In

Indigenous Education



**Annual report covering the period
January-December 2006**

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Cover Photo: Mural at Melba High School

Overview

This report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Indigenous education covers the period from January to December 2006 inclusive. The report builds on information presented in the *Indigenous Education Progress Report to 30 June 2006*.

This report is presented against strategic areas for action identified in *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage – Key Indicators Report*. The Report is available from the publications section of the Commonwealth Government's Productivity Commission website at:

<http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous>. Key indicators for schooling in the report address the following strategic areas:

- early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3)
- positive childhood and transition to adulthood.

As a means of informing the Assembly on achievements in Indigenous education, the following indicators and strategic areas are also included:

- valuing diversity
- forming genuine and ongoing partnerships with Indigenous communities.

The Department of Education and Training (the Department) has used these strategic areas for action to assist with and inform the development of its plans for Indigenous education for all students. In addition the strategic areas for action support the Department in the continued focus on responding positively to issues affecting the levels of success experienced by Indigenous students.

This report particularly highlights initiatives and actions being undertaken by the Department in literacy and numeracy, professional learning, community involvement and curriculum initiatives as well as cultural celebrations and activities.

K-10 Indigenous student enrolment 2006

Enrolment data collected in the February School Census for 2006 indicate that there were 550 Indigenous students enrolled in K-6 and 235 enrolled in years 7-10.

The August census figures indicate no change in K-6 enrolment. However there was an increase of five students in years 7-10 with a census figure of 240 Indigenous students.

Valuing Diversity

Cultural awareness

The Department continues to provide Indigenous cultural awareness training and multicultural awareness training to staff. Activities during the reporting period are outlined below.

- The history of Indigenous education and how that impacts on future directions in Indigenous education. The content included information about the various periods in Australian history where policies were enacted specifically for Indigenous people, the effects of those policies on access to education, the involvement of Indigenous people in

policy development and employment in education. Participants were engaged in discussions focusing on the priorities for Indigenous education and how they translated to activities in the classroom or school.

- The Reconciliation, Learning and Leading Together Program involved a total of 25 teachers and office-based staff attending four one-day sessions. The workshops conducted during the sessions were designed to move from broader issues of culture to specific learning needs of Indigenous students. The activities associated with the course assisted teachers' professional learning, engaged participants in discussions about classroom practice and capacity building in the school community.

In addition to the above activities, staff members of the Indigenous Education Section were involved as participants at courses and activities conducted by school staff where they were able to provide valuable input to the discussions on specific areas, e.g. Studies of Society and Environment and English Literacy programs.

The Department recognises that more can be done to develop the cultural awareness of classroom teachers. Schools across the ACT Government sector are now seeking information and strategies to assist with their development of culturally inclusive curriculum initiatives.

- Isabella Plains Primary School was assisted with the review of their Indigenous education resource collection
- Mawson Primary and Palmerston Primary Schools were supported to develop cross-curriculum Indigenous studies units
- Melrose High School was supported by an Indigenous Home School Liaison Officer to engage parents and caregivers of Indigenous students to work with school staff to develop Indigenous studies programs.



Students at Ainslie Primary School learned about issues in Indigenous Australia by creating this mural to celebrate Reconciliation Week 2006.

National Sorry Day was also recognised at various schools and preschools

Building the capacity of Indigenous staff

One Indigenous Home School Liaison Officer successfully completed a Diploma in Education in 2006 while another officer continues her studies in early childhood education.

Two Indigenous staff members have completed the requirements for and have been awarded a *Certificate IV in Community Services*.

Throughout the year one Indigenous Home School Liaison Officer undertook temporary placement in a senior position. That officer has since been successful with an application for a position at a higher level with the Australian Government's Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Another Indigenous officer was successful with an application for a higher level position within the ACT Government.

Cultural Celebrations

The Department recognised National Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Week at all levels in 2006. With the theme *Respect the past: Believe in the future* there were many opportunities to explore aspects of Indigenous Australia.

NAIDOC Week was celebrated in different ways in schools this year. Due to the date falling in the last week of the school term, many schools combined for activities that included Indigenous games, family days, flag raising and general acknowledgement of the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians make to society. Both Indigenous flags were raised as part of a small ceremony held at Manning Clark Offices to raise awareness with office based staff in the Department.

Forming genuine and ongoing partnerships with Indigenous communities

School Boards

In 2006 an Indigenous parent was elected to the position of Board chair in a primary school.

There is a designated position on the Birrigai School Board for an Indigenous person. This position has been offered to a member of the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB). A member of the IECB has also been nominated for the Hindmarsh Education Centre School Board.

Parent Involvement

In 2005 the Australian Government ceased the ASSPA program, replacing it with the *Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI)*. The 2006 half yearly report described initiatives at several schools using the PSPI funding. These program initiatives will continue to be implemented throughout 2007.

The list below provides information about the schools and projects that were approved for funding at the end of 2006 with implementation beginning in 2007.

Applicant	Project
▪ Erindale College	Personal Development
▪ Ngunnawal Primary School	Learning Lizards & Flying Boomerangs (English Literacy and Numeracy)
▪ Belconnen High School	Indigenous Homework Centre
▪ Ngunnawal and Holt Koori Preschools	Parent Workshops on Early Childhood

ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB)

During second semester of 2006 the IECB held three community meetings to provide parents, caregivers and members of Indigenous communities in the ACT with opportunities to discuss issues that they consider impact on educational outcomes for Indigenous students. These meetings also provided opportunities for parents and caregivers to be informed about the *Towards 2020: Renewing Our Schools* proposal.

IECB members and representatives of education and training providers attended a mini conference held in November. Some of the outcomes from the discussions at the conference include:

- the need to positively reinforce teachers for their effort in meeting the needs of Indigenous students and providing a culturally inclusive classroom environment
- greater representation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on school boards
- promoting local role models of all ages from the ACT Indigenous communities.

Early school engagement and performance (preschool to year 3)

Preschool enrolments

The ACT Government provided preschool education in 82 government preschools and five Koori Preschools. The 2006 February census indicated that a total of 3,369 children were enrolled in government preschool programs.

A total of 87 children out of the total of 3,369 students were identified as Indigenous. This represents 2.6% of the total enrolment.

The August census indicated that of the total 3,531 children enrolled in Government preschool programs, 125 were identified as Indigenous. Nineteen of the Indigenous children were enrolled in more than one Koori preschool or in a Koori preschool and a mainstream preschool. This represents a total of 3.5% of the total preschool enrolment in 2006.

Literacy and Numeracy Kindergarten outcomes

All kindergarten students are assessed in aspects of English literacy and numeracy using the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment on entry to kindergarten, and again at the end of that year to ascertain progress.

Table A shows the proportion of kindergarten students whose entry on PIPS assessment was above the cut scores in reading and mathematics in 2006. The cut score is the minimum standard in reading and mathematics expected at the commencement of kindergarten.

Table A: PIPS Proportion Above minimum standard in February 2006

Indigenous	
Reading	53%
Mathematics	57%
Non-Indigenous	
Reading	78%
Mathematics	77%

Table B shows the comparison of the progress of kindergarten Indigenous and non-Indigenous students during 2006. In mathematics, 62% of Indigenous students made expected or better progress, while in reading 66% made expected or better progress between assessments.

Table B: Progress of students between the February 2006 & November 2006 PIPS assessments

Indigenous students	Mathematics	Reading
	%	%
Less than expected progress	38	34
Expected progress	36	51
Greater than expected progress	26	15

Non-Indigenous Students	Mathematics	Reading
	%	%
Less than expected progress	25	25
Expected progress	50	49
Greater than expected progress	26	26

These are similar results to those achieved in 2005.

Positive childhood and transition years 10 and to adulthood

National Benchmarks

The nationally agreed minimum standards for reading, writing and numeracy at years 3, 5 and 7 are referred to as the national benchmarks.

The reading (91%) and writing (85%) benchmark results for year 3 Indigenous students in government schools were similar to those achieved in 2005. In numeracy, 80% of year 3 Indigenous students were above benchmark, lower than in 2005 (92%).

The proportions of year 5 Indigenous students above benchmark in reading (89%), writing (86%) and numeracy (83%) increased in 2006 compared to the 2005 results, although the changes are not statistically significant.

In year 7, 71.9% of Indigenous students scored above benchmark in reading and 72.7% above benchmark in writing. In the numeracy strand, 61.1% scored above benchmark.

Outcomes for Indigenous students in year 9 were similar to those for the year 7 cohort of Indigenous students. The median result for Indigenous students in writing was similar to that of non-Indigenous students (i.e. equivalent proportions in lower 50%). However, the upper part of the year 9 Indigenous student writing distribution is attenuated, with the highest score in the 87th percentile.

Caution should be taken in interpreting the data as small numbers of Indigenous students can affect these results and may produce apparent variations from year to year which may not accurately reflect the long term trend.

English Literacy and Numeracy

The ACTAP results for years 3, 5, 7, 9 continue to suggest that there is improvement being achieved in the outcomes for Indigenous students in those years of schooling. Whilst the percentage of Indigenous students scoring in the lowest quartiles in reading, writing and numeracy strands is significant, progress is being made.

In 2006 the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy consultants continued to work with targeted year 4 students and their teachers to improve outcomes for those students in the 2007 ACTAP. Support from the consultants was extended to all staff to engage them in building and extending their capacity for meeting the needs of Indigenous students.

Results for the cohort of targeted Indigenous students enrolled in year 4 in 2005 indicate that the strategies implemented at the school level were successful. Those students who progressed to year 5 in 2006, recorded an overall improvement of between 3 and 7 points across the three strands assessed.

In addition to working intensively with teachers in targeted schools, the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultants provided cultural awareness opportunities for teachers in non-targeted schools. Presentations at staff meetings have assisted teachers to develop culturally inclusive English literacy and numeracy programs to respond to the learning needs of Indigenous students and also to provide all students in ACT government schools opportunities to learn about Indigenous Australia.

'On Track'

The '*On Track*' program continued to operate from Narrabundah Primary School and the Birrigai Outdoor School with a focus on implementing strategies to engage year 5 and year 6 Indigenous boys in their learning.

As reported in June 2006, the program's operation was expanded to include Indigenous girls in years 5 and 6. With the inclusion of Indigenous girls there was a total of 34 Indigenous students enrolled in the program in years 4-6 from 14 ACT primary schools.

In December students were recognised for their participation and achievements during the 2006 academic year. Certificates were awarded for graduation, participation, encouragement and excellence. All year 6 students – a total of 21 – exited the program at the end of 2006.

Dare to Lead project

There are currently 104 ACT schools that have joined the *Dare to Lead* Coalition of which 75 are government schools. This represents 79% of government schools that are committed to meeting the needs of Indigenous students.

Programs and initiatives conducted over this reporting period include workshops for staff on a school and cluster basis. Officers of the Department's Indigenous Education Section as

well as local and national coordinators supported those initiatives either as participants or presenters.

A DVD of a conference held at Calwell High School was produced for distribution to ACT schools. The DVD contains highlights from the conference and can be used by schools to raise awareness of Indigenous issues amongst their staff and parents.

The *Dare to Lead* newsletter profiles schools in the ACT as a regular item. In the 2006 issues of the newsletter, work being done at Ainslie and Aranda Primary Schools and Melrose and Melba High Schools was featured.

A resource titled *School leadership frame: an Indigenous focus* was distributed to all schools throughout the ACT, including Jervis Bay. The framework was developed by the Australian Principals' Association Professional Development Committee (APAPDC) to assist all education leaders who are committed to promoting Reconciliation and Indigenous perspectives within their school.

Indigenous culture

Throughout the year, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students had many opportunities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Some of the highlights of this reporting period are described.

- Children and their parents attended Reconciliation Day at Boomanulla Oval Narrabundah. Schools were asked to encourage all Indigenous students to invite a non-Indigenous friend to accompany them and join the celebrations.



Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in schools across the ACT acknowledged National Sorry Day in different ways. Some made posters, others created murals while others contributed to a 'Sea of Hands' at the University of Canberra.

- Indigenous parents and teachers of Melrose High School have commenced working together to develop curriculum related activities that provide information about cultural and historical aspects of Indigenous Australia.
- Students at Melba High School designed and painted a mural with the assistance of an Indigenous artist in residence, staff from the school and the Indigenous Education Section.

The Department in partnership with the Australian Catholic University is a recipient of Community Inclusion Funds for a program titled *What's Up Down South?* which is an after school program of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies for primary and high school students and their families.

Students were provided with opportunities to learn about aspects of Indigenous cultures such as traditional dance, painting techniques and designs.

Junior Ranger Program

Jervis Bay Primary School has direct links with the Booderee National Park, Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community, HMAS Creswell and Jervis Bay Village.

The Junior Ranger Program provides opportunity for students to learn about their local area and the local Indigenous culture. They are provided with opportunities to listen to the dreaming stories, learn about the bush, the sea and their history.

The Rangers from Booderee have presented information in lessons about land care and usage. Activities have included planting bush tucker gardens, identifying bush foods and medicines, tracking animals, fishing and the identification of weeds and the damage they do.

The purpose of the program is to give students an experience that is relevant to them and provides a significant reason for attaining successful educational outcomes - possibly in park management, biodiversity, horticulture and so on.

The Junior Ranger Program has entered the digital age and students will be using technology to share their learning with all students.

Years 10 and 12 enrolment

Enrolment data from the February 2006 school census indicates that a total of 57 Indigenous students were enrolled in year 10 in government secondary schools. The total number for years 11 and 12 enrolled in ACT colleges at the February census was 98.

In August, year 10 enrolments remained at 57 and years 11 and 12 enrolments had increased to 104.

College transition program

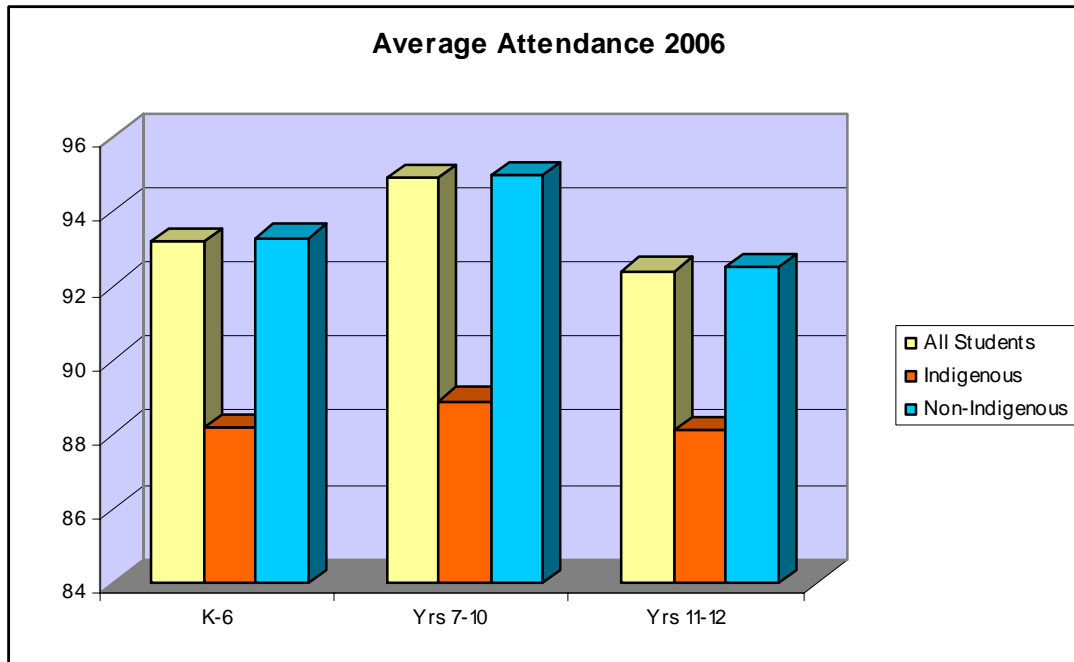
In term 1 2006 a program developed for senior students was introduced at Erindale College. The program aimed to enhance retention rates for Indigenous students by engaging them in discussion about their needs after they finish college. Issues identified during the program were discussed with college staff with a view to identifying ways in which the college could build on support for Indigenous students in 2007.

The total number of Indigenous students enrolled in year 12 in ACT government colleges in 2006 was 42. Of this cohort a total of 21 were awarded a year 12 Certificate.

Five students were awarded a VTE Certificate and a year 12 Certificate while two students achieved a VTE Certificate without the year 12 Certificate.

Fourteen students who were awarded a year 12 Certificate also partially completed a VTE Certificate. There was a total of 11 students who finished the year with a partially completed VTE Certificate and did not receive a year 12 Certificate.

Attendance



In 2006 the average attendance rate for Indigenous students across all sectors of schooling was 88.4% compared to 93.6% for non-Indigenous students. In the secondary sector, Indigenous students attendance was 88.9% and 95.0% for non-Indigenous students.

Vocational Education & Training

Employment and training opportunities for Indigenous people in New Apprenticeships, group training schemes, and through skill centres continues to be a feature of Indigenous education beyond schooling.

During the reporting period a total of 115 Indigenous students were active in traineeships and apprenticeships as well as undertaking /completing their school programs. 78 commenced their traineeship and 37 commenced their apprenticeship in 2006.

- There were 26 Indigenous people who were involved in a traineeship in Community Services and Health while a further nine commenced their traineeship in business and clerical fields.
- In the category of building and construction there were three traineeships and six apprenticeships.
- There were two trainees and six apprentices in tourism and hospitality.
- In other categories there were 38 Indigenous trainees and 25 apprentices.

Leadership and mentoring program

Fifteen Indigenous female students from five Northside high schools attended an Indigenous Girls Leadership Camp organised by girls in year 10 from Melba High School as part of their leadership program. The camp was held at the Warrambui Retreat and Conference Centre at Murrumbateman.

Indigenous Elders and Indigenous women met with the girls to share their experiences and stories about growing up. Students were also engaged in a major activity to design and complete a painting for each of the schools represented at the camp.

Outcomes of the camp are demonstrated through the enhanced level of respect the girls have for their peers and Elders, their commitment to learning which is evident by changes in attendance patterns, and their confidence as young leaders in their schools.

Twenty Indigenous students in years 9 and 10 participated in a performing arts workshop coordinated by the Canberra Theatre and the Bangarra Dance Company. The program provided explanation of skills and movements in performing arts as well as opportunities for students to meet and talk with performers.

Fifteen year 9 and 10 Indigenous students were involved in two separate one-day programs that explored and developed skills necessary for student leadership.

The students were engaged in discussions about their perception of leadership at the school level and then moved on to discussing leadership qualities necessary for post school life.

The latter part of each day involved students discussing their aspirations for the remainder of their school program and identifying strategies for supporting them in their pursuit of those aspirations.

Teachers of Indigenous Students Network

The Teachers of Indigenous Students Network (TISN) met three times throughout the year to discuss and share strategies for working successfully with Indigenous students. On one occasion representatives from Jacaranda Educational attended and presented information about the latest resources available to assist schools with aspects of Indigenous studies programs.

Enhanced home/school liaison

Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers (IHSLOs) primarily support teachers and students in schools from P-10. These officers also work with families of Indigenous students to enhance the support provided to Indigenous students.

Resulting from their daily work routine, a range of issues have been identified as reasons for visits to and contact with parents and caregivers of Indigenous students. These are summarised in the table below.

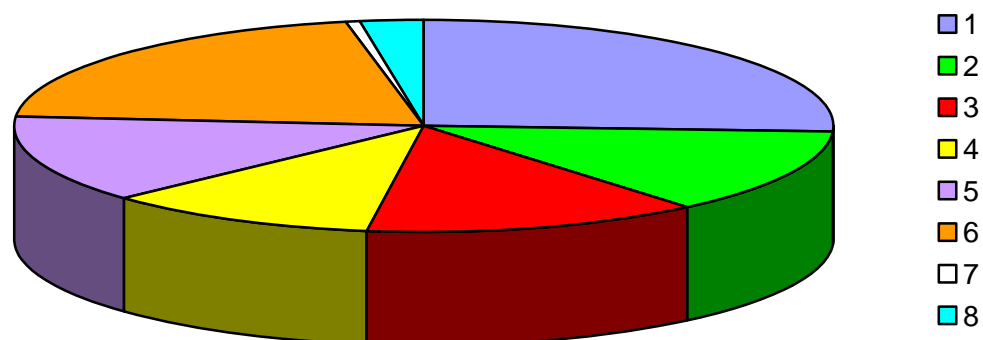
K – 10 data

REASON FOR VISIT/MEETING	
1.	Attendance/Absenteeism
2.	Behaviour
3.	Grades/Academic progress/Individual Learning Plans
4.	Developing alternate plans
5.	Personal/Family matters/Substance misuse/Medical
6.	Home-school communication
7.	Juvenile Justice
8.	Bullying
9.	Racism (IHSLO's were not required to deal with any issues of racism during the reporting period.)

Based on records of meetings or contact with parents of Indigenous students as well as work within the school, the total number of visits made by the Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers (IHSLOs) in K-10 settings throughout 2006 was 534. The frequency of those visits is represented by the figure below.

The majority of visits were related to the concerns raised about the behaviour of Indigenous students. Associated with that is the time spent working with school personnel and parents developing and/or discussing alternate learning/attendance programs.

Total for 2006

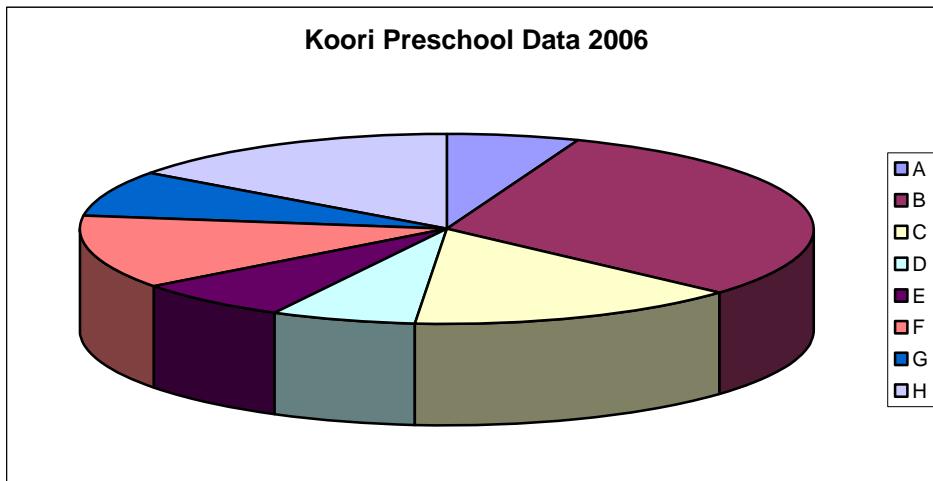


The frequency of interaction between parents and caregivers of Indigenous students attending Koori Preschool as well as other government preschool sessions was similar to the K-10 schools. The reasons for visiting or meeting with parents and caregivers differed with a focus more on educational outcomes for students.

This involved working collaboratively with parents and caregivers to ensure that there were opportunities to develop understanding about the schooling system as well as the specific needs of children from a cultural perspective.

Preschool data:

REASON FOR VISIT/MEETING	
A)	Home visits
B)	Collaboration
C)	Attendance
D)	Transition
E)	Education and Child Development
F)	Enrolments
G)	Curriculum
H)	Other



Conclusion

While gains have been made, the general performance of Indigenous students continues to be below that of non-Indigenous students. Of particular concern is the number of Indigenous students in year 3 and 5 who score in the lower 20%-40% of results in reading, writing and numeracy. This places these students on average 12 – 18 months behind non-Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy.

Attendance related issues continue to have considerable impact on educational outcomes for Indigenous students. To address this, the Department has developed a model aimed at locating support closer to schools and communities. The model to be implemented in 2007 will allocate Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers on a cluster basis to high schools with support being provided to the high school and contributing primary schools.

The primary focus for 2007 will be attendance and educational partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities. Evidence from other jurisdictions strongly indicate that partnerships between schools and Indigenous parents and caregivers have positive short-term

and long-term effects on a range of educational outcomes for Indigenous students including retention to year 10 and year 12.

Schools will continue to be encouraged to develop materials and teaching programs that are inclusive of Indigenous Australia – particularly the local areas – whilst Indigenous people will be encouraged to become involved in the education of their children at all stages of schooling.

The Department will continue to strengthen its relationship with Indigenous community groups and agencies to ensure that relevant services are involved in meeting the identified needs of Indigenous students.