

**2003**

**REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**PERFORMANCE IN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

**SIXTH REPORT TO 28 FEBRUARY 2003**

**REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
SIXTH REPORT ON PERFORMANCE IN  
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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## **Overview**

In May 2000 the previous ACT Government agreed to a motion to issue regular reports on performance in Indigenous education. This report is the sixth in a series presented to government since that agreement. The reporting period for this edition is from September 2002 to February 2003 inclusive.

The Government has a vision for this community that is inclusive of all Canberrans. There is particular recognition for the needs of the most vulnerable, which includes Indigenous youth and children in our schools. Many of these young people require targeted assistance and much is being done to provide for their needs.

It is the Government's commitment to ensure that the outcomes for Indigenous students are the same as for non-Indigenous students. To this end, we are working towards improved participation, retention and outcomes for Indigenous students within a context of family, community and Government assistance and support.

The ACT Indigenous community today, with significant representation from across Australia, is unique in its diversity and mobility. The *Within Reach of Us All, Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004* recognises this through its acknowledgement of the strength, spirit, endurance and diversity of Australia's Indigenous people. The action plan describes four commitments that articulate the resolve to make a positive difference to the lives of Indigenous young people in the community.

This report is presented against the commitments and outcomes of the Services to Indigenous People Action Plan *Within Reach of Us All* 2002 – 2004. The action plan outlines ways in which schools, the department and other agencies will work together to improve outcomes for Indigenous youth and their families.

## ***Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002 - 2004***

The Services to Indigenous People Action Plan *Within Reach of Us All* was launched on 4 July 2002. Key initiatives in the plan address these commitments:

- overcoming racism and valuing diversity;
- forming genuine and on-going partnerships with Indigenous communities;
- creating safe, supportive, welcoming and culturally inclusive educational and service environments; and;
- Indigenous children and young people achieving outcomes equitable to the total population.

## **Commitments**

### **Overcoming racism and valuing diversity**

There is a clear framework for action aimed at eliminating racism and valuing diversity in all work environments and school communities. ACT government schools are recognising and valuing indigenous cultures in a range of different ways.

#### *RICHARDSON PRIMARY SCHOOL*

*The school has established a “Rock” at the entrance to the school recognising the Ngunnawal as our traditional landowners. All of the Indigenous students attending the school have painted the “ROCK”. An Indigenous year 6 student, Peter (named changed), is designing the artwork for the surrounding cement area that will be painted next year. Peter’s attendance at school was spasmodic at best but since the school has made connection with Peter through his art he has a 100% attendance record and has had a great year at school.*

The actions to be taken by schools and the Department are spelt out in the *Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004*.

One of the articulated actions is to annually review policies for achieving racial respect. Both the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education* policy and the *Combating Racism in Schools and the Workplace* policy are currently under review.

Again in line with the *Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004* collection of school data on incidents of harassment including sexual harassment and racism commenced in 2002. The online school administration system has been amended to include the capacity for schools to record reported incidents of racism and outcomes.

In relation to complaints, each school trains and appoints an *Anti-Racism Contact Officer for Students*. An Anti-Racism Handbook outlining procedures for complaints resolution is available in each school.

### **Forming genuine and on-going partnerships with Indigenous communities**

#### Parent Involvement

The participation of parents and families of Indigenous students within the school setting is increasing. There are a number of opportunities for parents and families to be involved in their child/ren’s schooling, including Aboriginal and Student Support and Parent Awareness Committees, P&C Committees,

School Boards, Indigenous Education Consultative Body. In the period September 2002 - February 2003, DEYFS held an information session to encourage parent involvement which had a particular focus on Indigenous parents.

Four ACT Koori preschools staffed by qualified teachers provide sessional preschool programs for Indigenous children from birth to school age. Indigenous children and their families may access one session of Koori Preschool a week. For the 3–4 year age group that may be in addition to mainstream preschool attendance. Children under the age of three attend with a parent or carer providing regular opportunities for home/school liaison. Families of three and four year old children are encouraged by the Koori Preschool staff to apply for entry to mainstream preschool for their children.

Indigenous Home/School Liaison Officers liaise with Indigenous families on a regular basis. This contact may be to facilitate students and families accessing appropriate services, supporting a student to re-enter schooling, and encouraging schools and families to communicate openly and honestly with each other. The value of home/school liaison was recognised in a current budget initiative with multiple Indigenous education worker positions being upgraded to encompass home/school liaison.

#### Indigenous Education Compact

The ACT Indigenous Education Compact was signed in December last year. The Compact is a signed agreement between the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) and the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services describing the commitment both parties will make to the education of Indigenous children and youth. The department, IECB members and, through the IECB, the Indigenous parent community all negotiated and agreed on the wording of the Compact. The department is currently negotiating to have the Compact produced in a format that can be used by families and schools.

#### *CANBERRA HIGH SCHOOL*

*The school has organised a special Reconciliation support group. It includes all the Indigenous students and one of their non-Indigenous friends. They meet regularly, facilitated by the two Aboriginal contact teachers in the school, to plan activities, excursions and to purchase resources for the school. All decision making comes from the group. The Principal has commented that they are one of the most active and constructive groups in the school and, in 2002, have contributed more to the life of the school than the SRC.*

## Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB)

The **IECB Strategic Plan** 2002-2004 was launched 9 May 2002 and has since informed the development of other departmental plans.

One IECB strategy was to commission a **review of Indigenous Education** in ACT government schools. The IECB facilitated community discussions groups with the review team in the ACT and Jervis Bay territory. A draft report has been considered with a request for further work to be done by the review consultant.

## School Boards and Committees

All schools with more than 10% Indigenous student enrolment had Indigenous membership on their school board. In 2002:

- one school board had an Indigenous Chairperson
- four school boards had Indigenous representation
- one school board had an Indigenous departmental representative

The seventeen voluntary parent and community members of the IECB sit on various departmental committees.

In 2002, seventy five Aboriginal and Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) Committees were funded by the Commonwealth to participate in ACT government school settings. ASSPA Committees are parent based and include representation from the school staff. Committees fund various programs within schools including funding excursions for Indigenous students, parent support programs (eg, literacy in the home), cultural events in the school (eg, concerts, performances), purchasing resources with Indigenous content, sponsoring Indigenous murals/artwork within the school setting

### *MELBA HIGH SCHOOL*

*The ASSPA committee at the school organised a whole school activity on the afternoon 13 September. It included Islander and aboriginal dancers, cooking, art and Indigenous Games on the school oval. They also organised a camp for their Indigenous students with the Wreck Bay Community.*

## Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Planning Group

The ACT Indigenous COAG trial involves a community and whole of government approach (including territory and commonwealth) to Indigenous youth and education. Discussions commenced in August last year. The Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) is represented on the working group. A draft consultation strategy has been proposed for discussion between the IECB, ACT Chief Ministers Department (CMD), DEYFS and the community. This strategy sets out the consultative process

(10 March-9 September 2003), designed to include the ACT Indigenous community as a full partner in developing an appropriate model.

### **Creating safe, supportive, welcoming and culturally inclusive educational and service environments**

#### Professional development

Indigenous cultural awareness training has been given a significant priority. The department has undertaken eight half-day sessions of Indigenous cultural awareness training sessions for executive and managers. The training sessions were held in November 2002 and March 2003. In total, 67 people at an executive or manager level attended.

The feedback, as received from the participants, show that the training was highly appreciated and directly applicable to the business of the department. Indigenous cultural awareness training for the department's leaders is fundamental to the work of the organisation and will have a role model effect for all staff as well as add value to staff interaction with Indigenous community members.

#### *GORDON PRIMARY SCHOOL*

*In consultation with the Ngunnawal community and an Indigenous artist the school organised the painting of a Rainbow Serpent which literally 'snakes' its way all around the school. It is 600 metres long and, unbroken, encircles all the of the school's four pods. Every student in the school was assigned a metre of the snake to paint. The design was up to them. Some did individual designs; others worked in groups to tell a story through the artwork. The head of the serpent starts in the central courtyard and its tail ends up curled around the flagpole at the entrance of the school. It took weekends as well as weekdays to complete. Students from Lanyon High were also involved. It was officially launched Wednesday 18 December 2002 at a ceremony attended by the whole school and many invited guests. The attendees were entertained by an Aboriginal Dance group and welcomed by Ngunnawal Elder, Mr Don Bell. The project was plan and coordinated by teachers, parents and the Indigenous artist.*

In term 4, 2002, about fifty participants of the **Teachers of Indigenous Students Network** met to explore examples of quality work happening in our schools. Teachers from Koori Preschool, Chisholm Primary School, Jervis Bay School, Narrabundah Primary School, Gilmore Primary School and Lanyon High School presented their programs which were all focussed on inclusivity.

Developing inclusive programs for **behaviour management settings** where Indigenous students may be present was a specific focus for one particular session.

School-based **administrative staff** attended a conference in January this year at which a keynote address was on the topic of *Inclusivity and Our Roles in Schools*. The critical role school based administrative staff play in meeting the commitments of the *Services to Indigenous People Action Plan* was highlighted. In particular, participants were asked to develop action plans for 2003 to improve their contribution to creating inclusive school environments.

All ACT Government **preschool staff** took part in professional learning sessions on Indigenous perspectives:

- across the curriculum
- Aboriginal English
- using Indigenous resources, and
- inclusivity.

Staff presented two lectures to University of Canberra students on issues in Indigenous education.

### Employment

In 2002 there were eight applicants for **teaching positions** who identified themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. Four of these applicants have been placed in ACT Government schools. Recruitment advertising specifically targeted publications aimed to reach more prospective Indigenous applicants. To assist selection, panels included an Indigenous employee.

The department is supporting an Indigenous staff member to study towards entering preschool **teacher education** at the University of Canberra.

### Resources

The **teaching resources** for Indigenous education are presently held in a location separate to other resources. An online catalogue for use by ACT schools now includes all Indigenous education resources providing more efficient borrowing. A databank of teaching resources has been developed on themes appropriate to Indigenous education.

Support has been provided by the department for the development of **new Indigenous education resources**. These include:

- Lanyon High School Indigenous Virtual School
- Narrabundah Primary School CD ROM involving the participation of many indigenous students
- Belnorth Cyber School Cultural Mapping Project, which has the capacity to include Indigenous elements within the project
- Jervis Bay School's reconciliation website

- Isabella Plains Primary School Indigenous theme website, *Meeting Place* Jervis Bay School teacher participation in Learning Technologies Facilitator's Workshop

## **Indigenous children and young people achieving outcomes equitable to the total population.**

### Budget initiative

The ACT Government budget Initiative to enhance student programs through upgrading the positions of Indigenous support staff was furthered during the period September 2002 - February 2003. Affected staff and the Community and Public Sector Union entered into negotiations about proposed industrial conditions and training required for staff in upgraded positions. Input was also sought from the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body. Training for affected staff commenced during this period. Agreement between all parties on the proposed restructure and working conditions was reached in February 2003.

### DEYFS Strategic Plan

DEYFS released its Strategic Plan 2003-05 early this year after a cooperative planning process involving executives, managers and representatives from principals' associations. The plan sets out the department's strategic imperatives and objectives for the next three years.

One of the five strategic imperatives is: *Improving outcomes for the most vulnerable*. This imperative aims to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community with the objective of: *Indigenous children and young people have equitable social and educational outcomes*.

### Entry to School

Last year **Koori Preschool** was expanded from three (Narrabundah, Wanniasa Hills and Holt) to four (Calwell) sessions due to increased enrolments. Approximately forty five Indigenous students attended the four preschool sessions, including children aged 0-4, early entry students (4 year olds) and those students also accessing mainstream preschool programs. Members of the Indigenous community were part of the celebrations of the opening of the Calwell Koori Preschool.

In 2002 approximately fifty Indigenous children were **enrolled in mainstream preschools**. Nine children were enrolled as early entry/priority placements during second semester. This program allows four year olds to access preschool sessions in the six months prior to their regular enrolment.

### *Indigenous Kindergarten Students*

At the beginning of each year **all Kindergarten students** in Government schools participate in the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment. This assesses the students' reading, phonics and mathematics preparedness on entry to school. Research has shown that the results are good predictors for the future. PIPS is readministered at the end of the year to measure the growth or value added since the beginning of the year.

The beginning of year results for 2002 were reported in the 5<sup>th</sup> Report to the Legislative Assembly on Indigenous Education.

The 2002 results show that Indigenous students in Kindergarten made considerable progress. 87.3% of Indigenous students made progress at an expected or greater than expected rate in reading, while 85.2% met this standard in mathematics.

The following below shows the value added in reading and mathematics for Indigenous students and all students. A student who makes expected progress has a value added level of 3. Students with value added levels of 4 and 5 are making better than expected progress, while students with levels of 1 and 2 are making less than expected progress.

Value added level	1	2	3	4	5
Reading: Indigenous	0.0%	12.7%	54.5%	16.4%	16.4%
Reading: non-Indigenous	4.7%	10.1%	49.9%	18.8%	16.5%
Mathematics: Indigenous	7.3%	20.0%	58.2%	7.3%	7.3%
Mathematics: non-Indigenous	8.1%	14.7%	49.9%	15.0%	12.3%

Students who start the year at a low level will generally make considerable progress during the year, while those who commence the year at a high level do not show up as making considerable progress during the year. This is due the "ceiling" effect of PIPS.

### Attendance

It can be seen from the table below that in 2002 absenteeism for Indigenous students is far greater in term 4 than in term 1. In term 4 in primary schools, 5.8% of non-Indigenous students and 20.4% of Indigenous students were absent from school more than one day a week. In high schools, the figures were 18.0% and 51.9%, respectively.

## 2002 – Term 1 and Term 4

Average days % Absent	Number Attendance	Number missing more than 20% of school days	Percentage missing more than 20 % of school days
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### PRIMARY SCHOOL

All non Indigenous students	Term1 <sup>1</sup>	2.4	95	592	3
	<b>Term 4<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>5.8</b>
All Indigenous students	Term1	4.1	92	48	9
	<b>Term 4</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>20.4</b>

### HIGH SCHOOL

All non Indigenous students	Term1	4.0	92	716	7
	<b>Term 4</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>1746</b>	<b>18.0</b>
All Indigenous students	Term1	7.0	86	51	22
	<b>Term 4</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>51.9</b>

It is expected that the new staffing structure funded will help to improve the attendance of Indigenous students.

### Literacy and Numeracy

During fourth term 2002, the **Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant** supported teachers of approximately 82 Indigenous students in 14 schools. Support included demonstration lessons, support to write Individual Learning Plans, advice on culturally inclusive practices, monitoring of student progress, provision of resource material, facilitating access to specialist services such as educational assessments.

The consultant also planned for the delivery of professional learning opportunities by contacting 27 targeted primary schools. One specific activity was to assist one school to ensure its new numeracy plan was culturally inclusive and respectful of Indigenous ways of learning.

<sup>1</sup> Term 1 – 10 weeks data

<sup>2</sup> Term 4 – 7 weeks data

### *ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP)*

There is a large percentage of Indigenous students performing at a profile level that indicates satisfactory progress, or better, in reading and numeracy at Years 3, 5 and 7 and in Year 3 writing.

Students are assessed against the **profile levels** in English and mathematics and the ACT Curriculum Frameworks. Each year is assessed at four levels:

- Year 3 at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Year 5 at Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Year 7 at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6
- Year 9 at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Care needs to be taken when comparing the results for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The numbers of Indigenous students at each year level is too small to be statistically significant.

The number of Indigenous students assessed at each year level in 2002 was 87 at Year 3, 77 at Year 5, 66 at Year 7 and 49 at Year 9.

There is still a gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, which needs to be addressed. Assistance is being given through the development of Individual Learning Plans and other support programs in literacy and numeracy.

The results for reading and writing in Year 9 show that the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is greater. The Government is addressing this through initiatives such as the High School Development Program and the Indigenous Education Support Program. Professional learning programs on writing in high schools are being offered to teachers.

Percentage of Indigenous students in the top three profile levels for each year in 2002

	Reading	Writing	Numeracy
Year 3 Profile levels 2,3 & 4	85.2%	94.7%	92.6%
Year 5 Profile levels 3,4 & 5	90.2%	77.2%	98.6%
Year 7 Profile levels 4,5 & 6	88.2%	75.5%	90.2%
Year 9 Profile levels 5,6 & 7	46.6%	58.2%	74.4%

National benchmarks

The percentage of Indigenous students meeting the benchmark in reading and numeracy for 2000 to 2002 are shown below. It is evident that there was some improvement in the Year 5 results from 2001 to 2002 for Indigenous students. The proportion of Indigenous students meeting the benchmarks is below that of the general population.

ACT Indigenous Reading Benchmark results 2000 - 2002

	2000	2001	2002
<b>Year 3</b>	86.9%	89.8%	85.0%
<b>Year 5</b>	83.7%	82.1%	85.6%

ACT Indigenous Writing Benchmark results 2000 – 2002

	2000	2001	2002
<b>Year 3</b>	77.9%	87.3%	76.5%
<b>Year 5</b>	71.4%	66.5%	67.2%

ACT Indigenous Numeracy Benchmark Results 2000 – 2002

	2000	2001	2002
<b>Year 3</b>	88.1%	91.4%	84.5%
<b>Year 5</b>	79.5%	71.5%	74.1%

## Year 10 & Year 12 Retention & Certification

In 2002, there were more Indigenous students enrolled in Year 10, 55 students, than were enrolled in Year 7 in 1999, 45 students. This reflects an apparent retention rate of 122%. Of the 55 Indigenous students in year 10 in 2002, 96% of these received a year 10 certificate.

In 2002, there were fewer Indigenous students enrolled in Year 12, 34 students, than were enrolled in Year 10 in 2000, 45 students. This shows an apparent retention rate of 75%. 31 Indigenous students received a year 12 certificate in 2002.

<b>2002 Cohort</b>	<b>Non-Indigenous Students</b>	<b>Indigenous Students</b>
Year 12 Certificates received	4080	31
Commenced in Yr 11	4926	46
<i>Year 12 Certificate receivers who:</i>		
Received University Admission Index (UAI) at or above 73	1459	2
Received a UAI below 73	1286	6
Received Vocational Education & Training (VET) Certificate	757	7
Received VET Statement of Attainment only	1060	10
Did not receive UAI or VET qualification	480	8

Of those students who commenced year 11, 83% of non-Indigenous students and 67% of Indigenous students received a year 12 certificate in 2002.

Of those students who received a year 12 certificate in 2002, 88% of non-Indigenous students and 74% of Indigenous students received a UAI or a VET qualification.

### *COPLAND COLLEGE*

*The College is working with three at risk Indigenous students to ensure they will graduate with a Year 12 Certificate. The College has modified the students programs so that they will be able to meet all requirements by the end of Term 1 2003. The College assigned an administration staff member specifically to monitor the progress and attendance of the students and to be a mentor to them. This has frequently meant searching the College car park for the students and encouraging them into classes and arranging regular home visits by the Indigenous Education Units Home School Liaison Officer. This is a typical example of the commitment displayed in all of our eight secondary colleges.*

## Youth Programs

A number of **Indigenous specific youth programs** Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation, Urayarra Indigenous Education Service (Galilee) and the Indigenous Education Support Unit (IESU Gugan Gulwan) are available in the ACT.

Urayarra and IESU are recent initiatives funded in the 2001 budget and are progressing well. The first cohort of young people graduated from the IESU and Urayarra in December 2002. Urayarra and the IESU provide literacy, numeracy, skills development, schools support, case management and recreation-based programs for high needs Indigenous young people (homeless, substance abuse, justice issues, mental health and educational need).

Gugan Gulwan provides a range of programs which assist Indigenous young people to address their substance abuse issues, help families stay together and help young people stay in school.

An officer has recently transferred to the position of Indigenous Youth Services Coordinator and started an **Indigenous services network**.

Youth Justice Services (Quamby and Direct Services in Youth Services Branch) have a range of Indigenous staff (13% of all staff are Indigenous) and programs which facilitate positive support for Indigenous young people in the youth justice system. These include intensive support for young people and their families, education support for young people in custody and accommodation options for Indigenous young people in transition.

## Mentor program

The ACT Mentoring Pilot Program is helping twenty five participating students, who share information on issues relating to classroom behaviour, teacher difficulties and family/social matters (including sexuality, nutrition and sport). In the period September 2002-February 2003, the ACT Mentoring Pilot Program completed its training and development phase. The program commenced in February 2003 and currently involves 16 students from Melrose High School and 9 students from Kambah High School.

## Student pathways plans

Individual pathways plans will assist all students in years 9 to 12 to identify their personal strengths and interests. This planning will enable students to take an active role in shaping their own transitions through secondary education to further study and work. Individual pathways planning will be an effective, practical strategy for enhancing the educational, social and employment outcomes of young people.

A research and consultation paper has been developed and a pilot of the project will commence in Term 3, 2003.

### Students with disabilities

The Manager, Special Education Section, and a senior counsellor, visited Jervis Bay Primary School to provide support and advice to the school relation to an Indigenous student with a disability. Visits to the school by special education personnel and senior counsellors will now become a regular occurrence.

### Vocational Education & Training

The *Partners in a Learning Culture - ACT Indigenous Action Plan 2003-2005* - was launched on 12 February 2003. The Government through this plan will proactively address the vocational education and training needs of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

Through this action plan a pilot was established for 15 students to commence **New Apprenticeships** in the building and construction trades called "Industry Pathways in Construction". It is estimated that more Indigenous students will take up the New Apprenticeships.

Each day **Indigenous detainees** in *Quamby Youth Detention Centre* can participate in one unit of a vocational learning program. A range of programs is on offer including: horticulture; permaculture; wood/metal technology; animal/poultry husbandry. It is planned to collect Indigenous participation figures in this area.

*Number of Indigenous Students in ACT Government Colleges Studying a Vocational Course in Semester 2 2002*

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Number</b>
AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY	F	1
	M	8
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	F	3
	M	3
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION A	F	1
COMMUNITY SERVICES	F	3
	M	1
FASHION DESIGN	M	1
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STUDIES	F	9
	M	7
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STUDIES A	M	5
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	F	2
	M	4
IT - APPLICATIONS T	F	4
	M	2
IT - GENERAL STUDIES T	M	1
IT - SYSTEMS	M	2
IT APPLICATIONS	M	3
LABORATORY SKILLS B	M	2
METALS FABRICATION A	M	1
MULTIMEDIA	M	2
MULTIMEDIA A	F	2
	M	1
RETAIL	M	2
SPORT & REC'N INDUSTRY STUDIES	M	1
SPORT & RECREATION ADMIN.	F	1
TECH. PROD. FOR LIVE THEATRE	M	2
TOURISM INDUSTRY STUDIES	F	1
	M	2
TOURISM INDUSTRY STUDIES A	F	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>78</b>

### Careers

The *Journey of Careers* especially for Indigenous students took place last September. This day provided students with the opportunity to seek information from such organisations and potential employers/trainers as the Australian Federal Police, tertiary institutions, defence force recruitment. It also provided workshops on resume writing and other job search skills. The event was coordinated and supported by the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce/Indigenous Business Chamber in collaboration with schools.