

# ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION **2017-18**

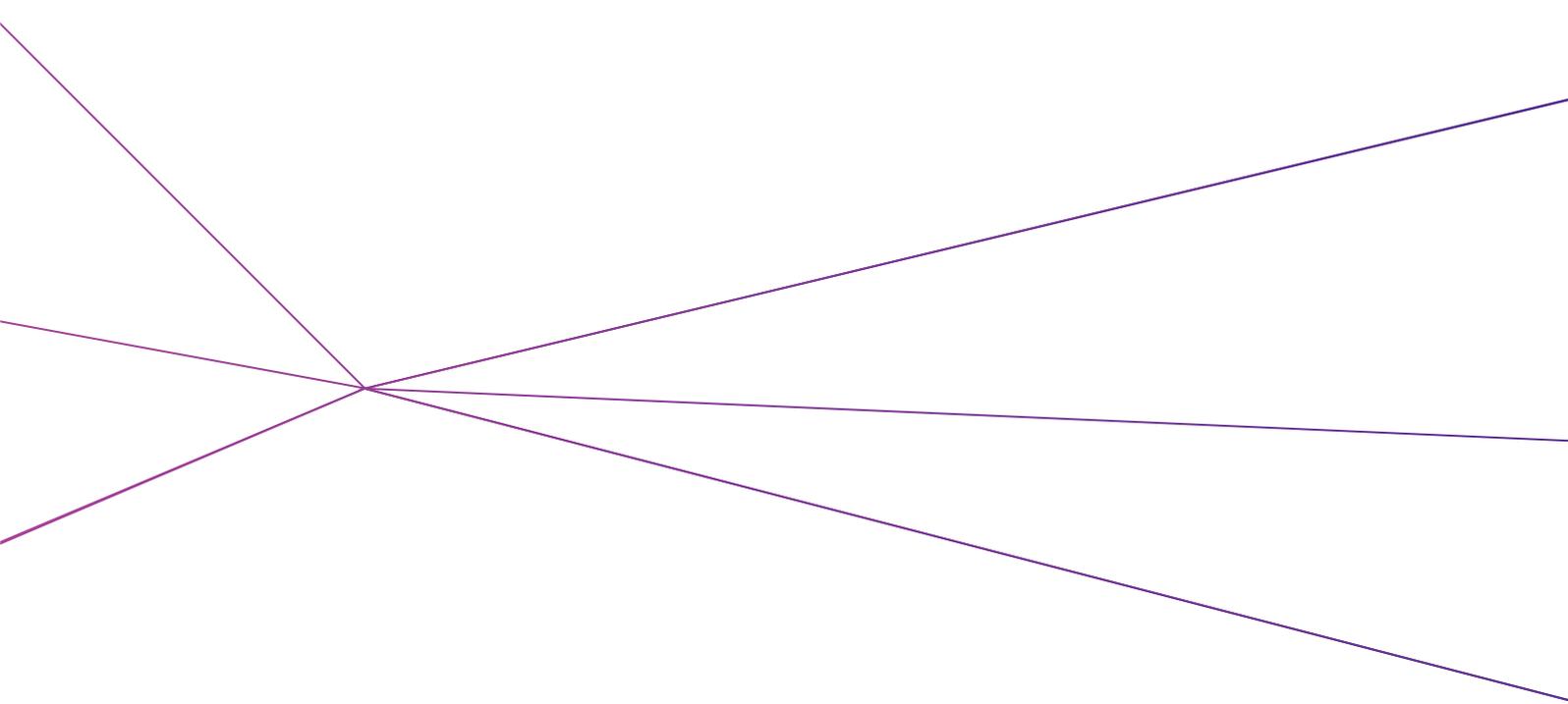
REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY



**ACT**  
Government  
Education

**Cover artwork:**

*Welcome to Country (Ngunna Yerrabi Byangu)*, 2017  
Lynnice Church (Ngunnawal, Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi)  
Acrylic on canvas  
40cm x 122cm

Four thin purple lines intersect at a central point on the left side of the page, extending towards the right edge. The lines create a starburst or web-like pattern.

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## DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S MESSAGE

On behalf of the ACT Education Directorate, I acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Wreck Bay peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands where our public schools educate our children. I pay respect to Elders, past and present, and I extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I am proud to present the annual report on initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in ACT public schools for the period July 2017 to June 2018.

Through the initiatives outlined in this report, the Education Directorate has affirmed its ongoing commitment to enhancing the culture of our education system to better support the needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

While there is more work to be done, I am pleased to note that the Directorate has been successful in developing partnerships and approaches to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in ACT public schools and more broadly in the community.

Over the reporting period, the Directorate has implemented a series of initiatives and activities that will ultimately transform our educational culture to more effectively recognise, organise and address some of the additional barriers faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Some achievements over the reporting period include:

- > The 'Connecting to Country' program was introduced for Years 7 and 8 at Belconnen High School and the Warrumbul Centre at Campbell High School and focuses on the cultural heritage and languages of the nations in the region;

- > increased participation in the Koori Preschool Program (from birth to three years old) which supports transition to formal schooling and enables greater family involvement;
- > increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students identified in the 2018 ACT School Census;
- > the Community Yarns Project was introduced to facilitate improved engagement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and students enrolled in ACT universities;
- > the Directorate celebrated the ACT's first Reconciliation Day on 28 May 2018 and recognised and observed Sorry Day, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week;
- > three Directorate staff members were sponsored to attend the Garma Festival activities in northeast Arnhem Land;
- > 56 Mura Awards were awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for participation and achievement; and
- > preliminary analysis and planning for improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes occurred under the Future of Education initiative.

I look forward to the Education Directorate building on these achievements in the year ahead and future years.

**Natalie Howson**  
**Director-General**

# INTRODUCTION

Reporting to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in ACT public schools commenced in 2001. The objective of the reporting was to provide an update on the performance of the Government on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in ACT public schools. At that time, reporting was six-monthly. Since 2006, reporting has been on an annual basis.

This is the 11th annual report presented to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' outcomes. The report has been organised in the following four priority areas:

1. Engagement with families and communities
2. Teaching with Cultural Integrity
3. Leadership, celebration, and environment
4. High expectations and successful transitions

Although Ngunnawal culture is referenced in this report, the Directorate acknowledges that members of the local community identify as both Ngunnawal and Ngunawal.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

### ACT EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY

The ACT Government is developing an Early Childhood Strategy (the Strategy) for the ACT that will provide a united policy response to support quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) for all children across the Territory. Key elements of the Strategy include:

- > ensuring a seamless transition for children moving into ECEC services, between services, and from ECEC services into schools;
- > ensuring that ECEC services are led by valued, skilled educators who are equipped with the training and resources needed to facilitate children's learning;
- > facilitating greater collaboration and partnerships across the ECEC sector to ensure that children and families have the best access to the range of services that benefit development in the early years; and
- > ensuring that a key focus remains on improving access to quality ECEC services to the most vulnerable children in the ACT community.

We know that children substantially benefit from accessing high-quality early childhood education programs. Those who participate in quality, structured early learning are more likely to make a successful transition to school, stay longer in school, continue on to further education and fully engage in employment and community life as adults.

We also know that not all families in the ACT can access quality ECEC services. For this reason, the development of the Strategy is grounded in the key principles of equity, access and affordability.

The Strategy will build on the strength of the National Quality Framework to develop cultural competence, integrity and safety in early childhood settings.

The Strategy will coordinate approaches across government, and in partnership with non-government organisations, ensure an aligned policy framework for early childhood education and optimise investment in early childhood services in the ACT.

The development of the Strategy is supported by the Minister's Early Childhood Advisory Council (the Council) comprising representatives from government and non-government providers of the ECEC sector. By working in partnership, the sector will address the key elements of the Strategy collectively to ensure the best outcomes for all children.

On 31 July 2018, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry MLA, announced the ACT Government's goal to make the phased-in provision of 15 hours per week (600 hours per year), free, universal quality early childhood education for three year old children a key part of the Strategy. The first phase is expected to be rolled-out in 2020 and will focus on children who are most in need. It will also focus on the provision of culturally safe early learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

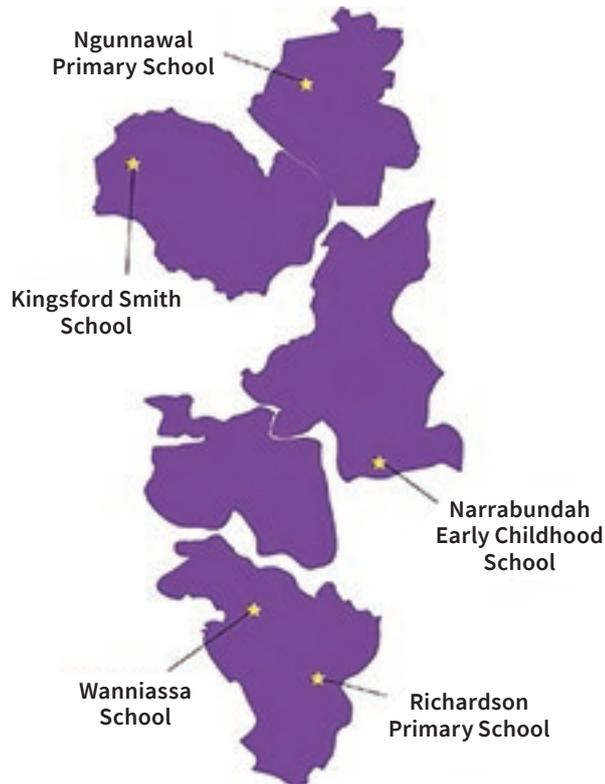
## KOORI PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The Directorate's Koori Preschool Program supports increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in preschool through the provision of high quality early childhood education at five sites. Children from birth to three years can attend a Koori Preschool when accompanied by a parent or guardian, enabling greater family involvement and supporting transition to formal schooling.

Koori Preschools are located at:

1. Ngunnawal Primary School;
2. Wanniasa School;
3. Richardson Primary School;
4. Narrabundah Early Childhood School; and
5. Kingsford Smith School.

*Koori Preschool sites in the ACT*



In addition to enrolling in Koori Preschool, children may also attend their local preschool, allowing access of up to 24 hours per week of high quality preschool education in the 18 months prior to starting kindergarten.

In February 2018, there were 86 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Koori Preschools, with 41 students enrolled in both a Koori Preschool Program and a mainstream ACT public preschool program.

Parental engagement and effective transitions are two key focuses of the Koori Preschool Program. In 2017-18, staff in the Koori Preschool Program worked closely with community and government agencies to support strong relationships and family engagement in preschool education. Early Years Engagement Officers, employed through the Community Services Directorate, play a key role in connecting Koori Preschools with their local community.

In 2017-18, the Directorate facilitated targeted professional learning for staff working in the Koori Preschool Program to build cultural competency to meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This included a Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) accredited full day program at the National Library of Australia, featuring presentations and workshops from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Reconciliation Australia.

The Directorate is supporting Koori Preschools to transition to the National Quality Framework (NQF) in 2019. The NQF sets a national quality benchmark to transform ECEC, improving outcomes for all children participating in ECEC services regardless of which setting they attend or where they live.

The Directorate's Early Childhood Policy and Regulation (ECPR) Unit is working collaboratively with Koori Preschools as they transition to the 'Assessment and Rating' process under the NQF. This support included visits from Authorised Officers throughout 2018.

### **Richardson Koori Preschool**

Koori Preschools use several strategies to engage families. As part of a families' engagement and students' aspirations activity, Richardson Koori Preschool took their students and families (mums, dads, siblings and grandparents) to the National Zoo and Aquarium on 21 May 2018.

Keepers from the zoo ran two sessions with the children and their families. During the first session, everyone had the opportunity to pat a snake and a lizard and in the second session, were taken to feed some deer and an emu.

Feedback from families about the day was positive, with the children enjoying being able to share the experience with family members.

The excursion gave teachers a great opportunity to talk to parents and get to know them away from the barriers of the formal school setting. It provided a safe environment and shared experience where staff and family members could build upon relationships in a genuine way.

This learning experience has also been an excellent language and vocabulary building opportunity. The preschool has linked the experiences with the snake and lizard to learning in the classroom, providing rich oral language

experiences for children, using lots of descriptive language and having parent input into the program using Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri words for snake and lizard.

On 18 June 2018, a follow-up incursion took place with Reptiles Inc. visiting the preschool. Families were invited to participate in the learning experience which resulted in the preschool's highest student attendance to date.

Since the excursion, attendance has improved with the average number of children attending daily growing from eight to 13 or more each day and families are communicating and engaging more openly and frequently with the educators.



*Richardson Koori Preschool's excursion to the National Zoo and Aquarium*

## EARLY CHILDHOOD AND TRANSITION PROGRAMS

In addition to specific Koori Preschool programs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families may also access general enrolment into early childhood and transition programs. In 2017 and 2018, the Education Directorate partnered with the Community Services Directorate to trial the 'Prep for Pre' Program. Developed by West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, 'Prep for Pre' is a targeted strengths-based, multi-disciplinary transition program for children with identified vulnerabilities and/or limited experience in an early childhood education and care setting. In addition to a preschool program, 'Prep for Pre' includes a targeted parenting program providing workshops and direct access to a Child and Family Worker, preschool teachers, and early intervention therapists.

ACT public schools support effective transitions from preschool to primary school through various programs that respond to their local school community. For example, Giralang Primary has developed a strong preschool to kindergarten transition program which includes weekly visits to the school library, participation in whole school activities such as excursions, sports carnivals, and performances, a 'buddy' mentoring program, and an orientation program with a parallel parent program.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION OFFICERS

Over the reporting period, 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers (IEOs) have worked in 13 schools: Kingsford Smith School, Melba Copland Secondary School, Namadgi School, Amaroo School, Harrison School, Melrose High School, Caroline Chisholm School, Ngunnawal Primary School, Macgregor Primary School, Macquarie Primary School, Richardson Primary School, Mount Stromlo High School and Wanniasa School. IEOs assist schools to build their Cultural Integrity by:

- > supporting schools to engage with families and community;
- > supporting teachers to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum;
- > providing advice and leadership to schools on celebrating significant events and milestones for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- > supporting schools to develop a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and
- > facilitating successful student transitions between year levels, between schools and to post school study or work.

## RECONCILIATION DAY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

On 28 May 2018, the ACT held the first Reconciliation Day public holiday.

The Directorate was part of a working group that organised and ran activities on the day. These activities were storytelling with Larry Brandy; painting of community canvases where community members came together to collaborate on artworks; and children's art workshops.

The Education Support Office coordinated a week of National Reconciliation Week activities, focused on Education Support Office employees but open for anyone to attend. Activities included structured Yarning Circles focusing on questions based on the Reconciliation Week theme and film events. The film *MABO* was shown in recognition of Mabo Day. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section as part of the Learning and Teaching branch held a *Don't Keep History a Mystery Morning Tea*. This featured Dhani Gilbert, ACT Young Person of the Year and student at Dickson College, as the guest speaker and a viewing of *Vote Yes*, a short film about the 1967 Referendum. Money raised by the morning tea was donated to the Healing Foundation, a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that partners with communities to address the ongoing trauma caused by actions like the forced removal of children from their families.

Director-General Natalie Howson sent an email to all Directorate staff outlining the theme and urging employees to talk to each other about what Reconciliation means to them. This email included the *Talking about Reconciliation in the Workplace* guidelines, developed by the Directorate.



*Education Directorate staff member, Patrick Chapman with the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry MLA, pictured with the community artwork produced for Reconciliation Day.*

### Amaroo School

In 2018, Amaroo School held their first assembly fully dedicated to Reconciliation Week to commence the school's National Reconciliation Week activities.

More than 2,000 students, staff, parents and community members attended. The school invited local Ngunnawal Elder, Auntie Violet, to give the Welcome to Country and the special guest speaker, Squadron Leader Gary Oakley, delivered a thought-provoking speech, encouraging students and staff to research more on the 2018 theme of National Reconciliation Week "Don't keep history a mystery".

The assembly was run by the school captains and the junior choir led the school in singing "Narragunnawali", a song about achieving reconciliation.

In week 7 of term 2, as a symbol of Amaroo School's Reconciliation journey, the whole school participated in a Reconciliation Rock painting activity during the Buddies Program. Each buddy pair was given the task to come up with words and a design that reflected what Reconciliation meant to them. The Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian flag colours were used on the rocks. Once sealed, students will place their rocks in the dry river bed in the school's new Reconciliation Bush Tucker Garden.

## **NAIDOC BY THE LAKE 2017**

The Directorate is a proud partner in the planning and coordination of the annual NAIDOC by the Lake celebrations at the Belconnen Arts Centre. NAIDOC Week brings the ACT community together to celebrate our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, achievements and histories. The celebration included performances from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander singers and dancers. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, story tellers and government agencies hosted stalls and workshops.

## **INNER NORTH CLUSTER CELEBRATION**

The annual Inner North Indigenous Cluster Celebration took place on Thursday 19 October 2017. This event recognises the North Canberra Cluster of Schools and Community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Agreement and reinforces the commitment to the agreement through acknowledgement and celebration of the achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The event was started with Elder Wally Bell providing the Welcome to Country. Activities included a dance and singing performance, yarn stick sculptures, bush tucker yarns with Greening Australia rangers, medicinal plant use explorations, and a range of workshops covering boomerang design, drumming, ochre use, and beading. The Australian Catholic University supported the event by funding the barbeque.

Dickson College students showed excellent leadership on the day, giving performances, organising a Buroinjin match, cooking the barbecue, acting as the official photographer and running activities for younger students.

Narrabundah Koori Preschool students, families and staff attended for the first time as did students and staff from the Gungahlin cluster. It was a happy day full of exciting activities – cultural, sporting and culinary.

## **ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION ADVISORY GROUP**

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group (Advisory Group - formerly the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Group) provides advice to the ACT Government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT and Jervis Bay, local education providers and other external stakeholders on education and training matters that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and communities.

The Directorate regularly consults with and provides secretariat support to the Advisory Group on local and national education issues regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families.

The Advisory Group consists of four parent/caregiver members; four members from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, higher education support centres, and/or community organisations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and one member of the Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY

The Director-General and other senior executives met regularly with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body representative for Education, Mr Maurice Walker, providing a valuable forum for discussion and resolution of key issues in education. There was a particular focus on needs based funding, student attendance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment targets, Ngunnawal language and culture in schools, and the restructure of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group to the Advisory Group.

## COMMUNITY YARNS

The Community Yarns project was developed as part of the Directorate's *Connection Collaboration Careers Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017*. The aim is to engage members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for employment opportunities with the Directorate.

A review of the Community Yarn process was undertaken in late 2016 in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network. This resulted in extending our focus during 2017 and 2018 to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in ACT universities.

The first Community Yarn in 2017 was held during National Reconciliation Week at the end of May to engage with community members and provide information regarding career opportunities.

A second Community Yarn was held in partnership with the Ngunnawal Centre at the University of Canberra in August to engage with current pre-service teachers and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also interested in a career in education. Mr Maurice Walker from the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body attended this Community Yarn.

In 2018 two Community Yarns are planned; one at the Australian Catholic University and one in partnership with the Smith Family.

The responses to the Community Yarns were positive. The process allows for two-way connections and conversations to occur, enabling potential employees to discuss options and meet key contacts within the Directorate. Current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are invited to share their employment journey within the Directorate. In 2017 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers were able to become Associate Members of the Education Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network.

# TEACHING WITH CULTURAL INTEGRITY

## CULTURAL INTEGRITY IN ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Cultural Integrity describes the environment a school creates to demonstrate respect and high regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, knowledge systems and languages; and meet the learning needs and aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Cultural Integrity represents a break from the negative discourse that has dominated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education for many years. Cultural Integrity is positive and constructive, benefiting the whole-school community by developing knowledge and understanding.

ACT school leaders are ‘change agents’ building a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to ensure improving Cultural Integrity is a priority.

Schools will continue to receive a rich set of supporting resources, framed around a self-assessment continuum. Resources feature examples of local and international leading practice. Schools also have ongoing access to the Directorate’s suite of targeted support programs.

From the beginning of 2018, resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have been allocated to schools in two ways: an annual payment to all schools to build their Cultural Integrity, and an enrolments-driven allocation, which is higher for students in the crucial early years of schooling, and for students in the key transition phases at Years 7 and 11.

By building Cultural Integrity in all schools, the ACT is growing richer, more engaging learning environments for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and for the entire school community.

## CULTURAL INTEGRITY PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

The Directorate Executive and principals are key to building inclusive workplace culture.

A meeting between the Senior Executive Team and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network Executive in late 2016, led to the development of a proposal to provide Cultural Integrity training for all principals and Directorate Executive with Mr Scott Gorringer and Mr David Spillman, MurriMatters Consulting and Mr Grant Sarra, Sarra Consulting in 2017.

Cultural Integrity training was provided for all principals and corporate executives. Participants received three days of training. The training incorporated an understanding of historical and current experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and provided an opportunity to challenge perceptions and deficit discourse and led to the creation of site based cultural action plans and a Cultural Integrity framework for the Directorate.

The first session in early October 2017, facilitated by MurriMatters (Mr Scott Gorringer and Mr David Spillman) engaged participants in a cultural analysis and the implications of deficit discourse. The second training session a fortnight later, with Mr Grant Sarra engaged participants in a strategic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander awareness workshop “To Understand the Present – We Must Understand the Past”. The final session in November 2017, facilitated by MurriMatters, examined approaches to complex challenges and cultural change.

In December 2017, the Director-General invited principals to engage in an ongoing conversation about Cultural Integrity school-based actions and next steps. The Cultural Integrity Self-Assessment Continuum, developed to assist schools to continuously reflect and rigorously examine their school environments, curriculum and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, will support continued growth and challenge assumptions and unconscious bias.

# Cultural Integrity Continuum



*Cultural Integrity Continuum at Richardson Primary School*

## Cultural Integrity Focus at Richardson Primary School

Richardson Primary School conducted an extensive and culturally sensitive consultation process with input from students, staff and community members, resulting in the creation of a Cultural Integrity continuum framework. A display was set up in the school's foyer outlining the Cultural Integrity continuum. Community members, staff and senior students were encouraged to indicate where they felt the school sits on the continuum at the present time.

This process has provided direction for staff and assisted them to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into all learning and engagement areas.

## ONLINE CULTURAL COMPETENCE COURSE

Between July 2017 and June 2018 more than 80 staff undertook cultural competency training. Staff completed 10 online modules of an accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence course provided through the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia. This was supplemented with three workshops designed to integrate the local (Ngunnawal) context and provided opportunities for sharing practice, reflection and planning action.

The workshops provided opportunities to learn about Ngunnawal plant use as well as objects and resources available as part of the Museum's extensive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections. Participants in the 2017 training group were treated to a special viewing of *Songlines – Tracking the Seven Sisters*. Overall, the face-to-face workshops were highly valued by participants. Many commented on the importance of these sessions for collaborating and sharing with others.

Participant comments included:

*“This is a very valuable course that I feel should be mandatory for all staff to ensure that we are displaying cultural competence in the way we conduct our duties and interact with others.”*

*“I loved the practical demonstrations, seeing artefacts . . . touching historical items, learning about the meaning behind artwork.”*

*“It was wonderful to see the plants and foods and medicines continuing [to be used] in our community.”*

At the end of the training, participants committed to a personal action plan. For some this took the form of continuing a deeply personal and meaningful journey of reconciliation; for others it involved a specific workplace project. The projects included:

- > development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education scope and sequence to provide teaching ideas for each year group supported by links to books and resources readily available within the school to assist teachers implement the learning sequences; and
- > establishment of a student group to create a strong student driven movement for promoting, celebrating and discussing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories within the school community.

## GOOGLE COMMUNITY

Directorate staff are supported on their Cultural Integrity journey through the *Cultural Integrity in ACT Public Schools Google Community*.

Here, school-based staff and Education Support Office staff have access to resources relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages, share upcoming events and best practice ideas, and ask questions.

As of 6 July 2018, the Google Community had 630 members.

## PROMOTING CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES

Children’s Education and Care Assurance (CECA) is the regulatory authority for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in the ACT. CECA continues to promote and apply cultural competency as a part of its approach to quality assurance under the Education and Care Services National Law for Assessment and Rating (the National Law).

CECA implements three key aspects to achieve this:

1. Training of Authorised Officers: cultural competence training is included in the training course undertaken by CECA’s Authorised Officers before they are able to undertake Assessment and Rating against the National Quality Standards. CECA has engaged with recognised presenters in the ACT to conduct training on cultural competence for its staff. CECA aims to promote a strong understanding of different ways of ‘being and knowing’ across its work.
2. Application of the National Quality Standards to services through Assessment and Rating: Authorised Officers require evidence of a service’s cultural competence across many elements of the National Standards, for example:
  - > Element 1.1.2 *Each child’s current knowledge, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program*. This requires that children’s and families’ culture, heritage and ethnicity are considered in the development of the educational program.
  - > Element 6.3.4 *The service builds relationships and engages with the local community*. This requires services to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including acknowledging the traditional owners of the land and local elders in a meaningful and respectful manner.

3. Sector development: the national curriculum documents are mandated to be used under the National Law. CECA enables the delivery of training opportunities for the ECEC sector to ensure greater understanding is developed of the principle of Respect for Diversity and practice of Cultural Competence as part of the curriculum documents. CECA facilitates presentations at its ACT Education and Care Sector meetings and symposiums; copresenting with organisations such as the Professional Support Coordinator (a Commonwealth funded professional development body) and joining with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority to present workshops on Quality Area One – educational program and practice.

CECA continues to apply the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework in:

- > emphasising the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity that underpin the Framework; and
- > ensuring that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.

CECA's Authorised Officers also attended the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) conference held in the ACT in 2017. SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

As well as its role as the regulatory authority, CECA also provides education and information to the ECEC sector. During the October 2017 Education and Care Sector symposium, representatives from Reconciliation Australia presented and the *Narragunawali: Reconciliation Australia in Schools and Early Learning* website was promoted to approximately 160 participants.

This further informed Authorised Officers about social justice and equity issues relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and effective programs for engaging the community in educational progress.

## CURRICULUM

The Australian Curriculum provides schools with opportunities to plan and deliver culturally inclusive school curriculum. The cross-curriculum priorities support the delivery of learning area content at the same time as developing knowledge, understanding and skills relating to each priority. Content descriptions and elaborations are tagged with icons indicating where opportunities exist for teachers to incorporate each priority.

Opportunities for teachers to address the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority are identified in learning areas, however, at this stage there is no detailed information or strategies within or attached to the Australian Curriculum to support teachers to incorporate these cross curriculum priorities. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is currently developing teaching ideas that link the Australian Curriculum: Science with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority. This initiative will include advice for teachers on principles and practices for working with local communities to develop their own units of work with Cultural Integrity.

In the ACT, teachers have been supported to access and use culturally inclusive resources and teaching practices through the provision of resources including *Understanding the Land through the Eyes of the Nggunawal People* and the supporting curriculum document, which the Directorate is in the process of updating to align with the Australian Curriculum. This work is being done in collaboration with the Environment, Planning, and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD). Teachers' judicious selection of pedagogy and resources drives the incorporation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curriculum priority across all learning areas. For example, using a variety of texts to build literacy skills and using maps and timelines to focus on geography and numeracy skills.

Once the refresh of *Understanding the Land through the Eyes of the Ngunnawal People* curriculum document has been completed, the Directorate, in consultation with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and other local people, will develop additional materials focusing on the local area.

Through the Google Community and resources made available to support Cultural Integrity in ACT public schools, teachers are sharing new and existing resources to continually update and refine the ways they incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their teaching. Examples from two schools are provided below.

### **Macgregor Primary School**

In Term 1 2018, Year 6 students at Macgregor Primary School visited the Seven Sisters exhibition at the National Museum of Australia. The students learnt about traditional song lines that cross the country and how these song lines are represented through different artworks.

The knowledge gained during this excursion has been incorporated into art classes and projects with students learning weaving techniques to create a Seven Sisters artwork for the school.

### **Melba Copland Secondary School**

As part of Year 9 science at Melba Copland Secondary School, the Indigenous Education Officer worked with the class on a unit focussing on sound waves using a didgeridoo.

The class learnt about the process of making a didgeridoo and the techniques that are used when playing one to change its pitch and tone.



# LEADERSHIP, CELEBRATION AND ENVIRONMENT

## RECONCILIATION

In 2017, the Directorate continued the Reconciliation journey through developing, designing and delivering a range of Cultural Integrity initiatives across schools and within the Education Support Office.

The Directorate's approach to Cultural Integrity promotes and facilitates respect, trust and positive relationships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and between the wider Canberra community to develop schools that meet the needs and aspirations of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In the lead up to the first ACT public holiday on 28 May 2018 to recognise and celebrate Reconciliation, nine ACT public schools received funding from the ACT Reconciliation Day Grant Program. This funding aimed to further promote Reconciliation within schools by building Cultural Integrity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and strengthen links to the community. The grants enabled schools to develop projects and organise events reflecting the diversity within the Reconciliation journey and included:

- > establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student groups;
- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student-led assemblies;
- > development of public reconciliation artwork for installation within schools;
- > development of Reconciliation bush tucker gardens;
- > community consultations through yarning circles; and
- > development of educational Cultural Integrity walks visiting sites of significance in local areas.

## RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN – KEEPING IT ALIVE 2016-2018

Reconciliation - Keeping It Alive 2016-2018 articulates the Directorate's commitment to Reconciliation which is demonstrated through an individual's 'next most powerful step'. This requires reflecting upon Reconciliation, then determining and taking a personally meaningful action to support Reconciliation.

During National Reconciliation Week 2018, the Directorate supported staff to actively engage with the theme *Don't Make History a Mystery*. The Directorate developed the *Talking about Reconciliation in the Workplace* guidelines to encourage staff to take their next most powerful step through talking about Reconciliation in the workplace.

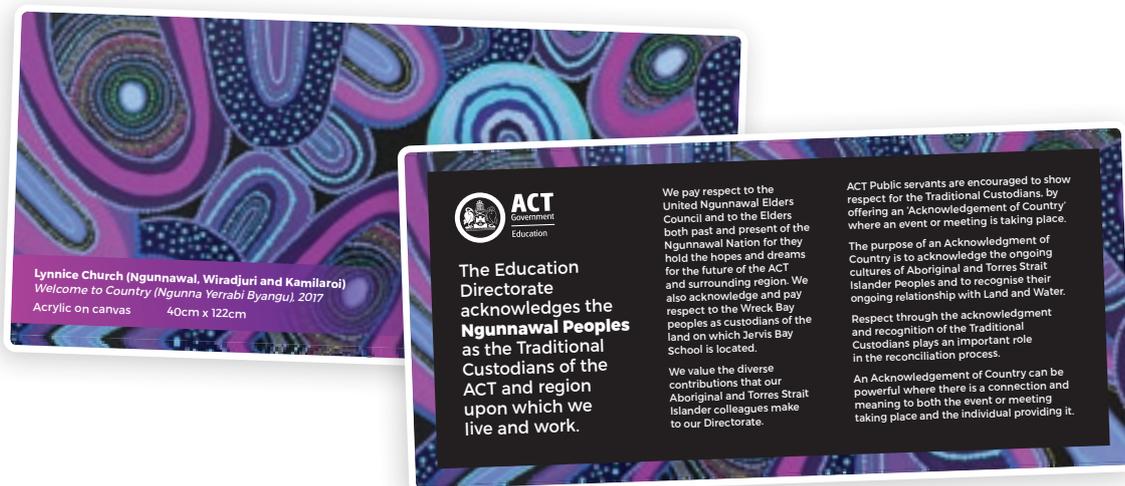
These guidelines were communicated through the Director-General's Reconciliation Day and National Reconciliation Week message to all staff, published through the newly developed Directorate's intranet Reconciliation page and the Directorate's *Cultural Integrity in Canberra Public Schools* private Google Community page.

National Reconciliation Week is acknowledged and celebrated through the Directorate's annual National Reconciliation Week program of events. In 2018 these events focused on introducing staff to Yarning Circles which have been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years to discuss important issues in an inclusive and collaborative way.

The Directorate's National Reconciliation Week program consisted of a series of lunchtime yarning circles using the *Talking about Reconciliation in the Workplace* guidelines to support staff to participate in Reconciliation conversations.

To encourage staff to show respect for the traditional custodians through offering an Acknowledgement of Country where an event or meeting is taking place, the Directorate produced new Acknowledgement of Country banners with an accompanying series of Acknowledgement of Country postcards.

The postcards illustrated with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist Lynnice Church's *Welcome to Country* set out the Acknowledgement of Country text developed in consultation with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF NETWORK

The Directorate continued to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network (Staff Network). Membership is open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees; including permanent, contract and casual staff. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers studying at the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University, are invited to become associate members and attend meetings to connect with Directorate staff, as part of peer mentoring opportunities and an introduction to the Directorate.

The Staff Network structure consists of two co-chairs, elected bi-annually from the teaching and administrative staffing streams. As part of capacity and capability development, past co-chairs mentor newly elected co-chairs and staff interested in these roles in the future are also offered mentoring support. In 2017, Vicki Lucas, Principal of Gilmore Primary School and Viv Higgins, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer were elected for the 2017-2018 term in the teaching and administrative streams respectively. Secretariat support for the Staff Network is provided through the Diversity and Cultural Integrity Section.

Since 2016, the Staff Network has met quarterly with the Senior Executive Team to progress issues raised through members, including culturally responsive recruitment practices, career development and leadership. The meetings provide opportunities for the Senior Executive Team to update the Staff Network on key initiatives and seek feedback on Directorate activities.

In 2017, the Staff Network Executive worked extensively with the Senior Executive Team in relation to Cultural Integrity, unconscious bias and cultural change processes relating to a diverse workforce within the Directorate. This resulted in the development of an extensive Cultural Integrity learning journey for all corporate executives and ACT public school principals.

## BUROINJIN

Buroinjin is a traditional Aboriginal game which was played throughout the east coast of Australia. Buroinjin is a community game and each team consists of boys and girls playing together. The game is similar to European Handball and the ball, called a buroinjin, was traditionally made from animal skin, sown together with sinew and stuffed with grass.

The ACT junior and senior Buroinjin carnivals have been held each year since 2013. In 2018, the junior and senior carnivals were held on March 13 and 14 respectively, and saw the largest attendance since the competitions began with 56 teams (approximately 800 students) competing across the two days.

## NGURU SCHOOL PROGRAM

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre has been working with Melrose High School every Wednesday through the Nguru Program. The program is centred around a Men's Group consisting of six to eight students in Years 7 to 10.

During the program, students learn about traditional and modern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, beliefs and values systems, respect, the effects of discrimination and what it means to be a strong Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person today.

Activities that the group have participated in include visiting grass tree sites near the Cotter where the students learnt about the site, uses of different plants in the region and how to best use those plants in different situations.

## FUTURE OF EDUCATION

The Future of Education Strategy enabled the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development to engage with a broad spectrum of students, parents and carers, community members, teachers, educators and education leaders, to listen to their views about schooling and early childhood education and care to inform a strategy for the Future of Education in the ACT.

The consultation methodology positioned the conversation beyond schools and towards education within a community context. This included considering what our goals as a community are and how education can support those. It also meant looking beyond the traditional education system to health, community services and justice to ensure we have a true conversation about education as a driver of equity.

The conversation occurred over three broad phases and used innovative engagement techniques (including a Future of Education video booth at school/community events) to hear and integrate the voice of our community into a bold vision for education. The Future of Education strategy has now been released.

## SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM

The ACT Government has invested \$10 million over three years to design and implement a modern, fully integrated school administration system. The new system will transform the administration of ACT public schools and provide enhanced digital communications between home and school.

The system will provide improved monitoring of achievement, progress and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The system has been progressively implemented across all ACT public schools from the start of the 2018 school year.

## ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

In 2016, the ACT Government made a commitment to supply every public high school and college student in the ACT with a high quality, up-to-date device. This three-year program, under the *Better schools for our kids - technology enabled learning* initiative, began with the rollout of Chromebooks to Year 7 to 11 ACT public school students in term 1, 2018. In 2019, all ACT public secondary students will have the opportunity to access a Chromebook for learning at school and at home. These Chromebooks help engage all secondary students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, enhance their learning experience and provide opportunities to collaborate and discover. In doing so the Directorate is developing responsible, literate and knowledgeable digital citizens.

## GOOGLE G SUITE FOR EDUCATION

Google G Suite for Education (GSFE) is a modern cloud based online suite of applications to support teaching and learning. The applications can be accessed through the Directorate's online learning portal, the Digital Backpack. GSFE provides the ability to create and share documents and presentations. GSFE aggregates class tasks and assignments; facilitates online collaboration; and provides communication tools such as email and web conferencing. GSFE also comes with unlimited online storage for teachers and students. As of June 2017, there were more than 53,600 active public school users including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

# HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

## KICKSTART MY CAREER THROUGH CULTURE

Kickstart My Career Through Culture (Kickstart) is a joint initiative between the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD), the Education Directorate, the Community Services Directorate (CSD) and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT).

The program is currently delivered to all students including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT public schools with a focus on those in Years 5 to 12. The aim of Kickstart is to increase engagement and/or re-engagement of students in schooling and includes career pathway development and access to further education options.

Kickstart delivered a competency-based Vocational Learning Option (VLO) with CIT in Semester 2, 2017. Nine students successfully completed two competencies in the certificate III in Conservation & Land Management course:

- > Recognise fauna; and
- > Interpret aspects of local Australian Indigenous culture.

The program was delivered predominantly on country over 10 weeks to students in Years 9 to 12. Students are given the opportunity to work with external agencies such as Greening Australia and Parks and Conservation Rangers as well as Traditional Owners.

The Kickstart program, with CIT, is delivering two new programs in 2018:

- > Certificate III in Conservation & Land Management; and
- > Certificate II in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts.

## STUDENT ASPIRATIONS YEARS 5 AND 6 LEADERSHIP DAY

The Student Aspirations Program promotes participation in leadership opportunities and supports the retention and attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, focusing on pathways and transitions.

The 2017 Student Aspirations Years 5 and 6 Leadership Day was held at Birrigai Outdoor School on 29 November 2017. Thirty-two Aspirations students from 15 schools attended the day.

Students participated in team building activities, such as the vertical playpen, which required cooperation between two climbers in order to climb the structure together. Students also learnt about native plants and their uses and visited significant Aboriginal sites located at Birrigai.

Students developed their leadership and team building skills and learnt about local Aboriginal history and culture. Students reported that they felt more confident in taking these skills and knowledge back to their schools to teach their peers. They also felt more able to progress their own leadership aspirations.

## MURA AWARDS

The Mura Awards initiative recognises student achievement and provides an opportunity for schools to acknowledge the consistent effort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to engage with families and the local community. The small bursaries attached to the Mura Awards encourages participation in education by providing some financial assistance for educational expenses such as excursions and uniforms.

Fifty-six Mura Awards were awarded in late 2017 with each student receiving a \$400 bursary for the 2018 school year.

## SCHOOL APPRENTICES ACROSS ACT GOVERNMENT PROGRAM

The Directorate continued to support the employment of Australian School Based Apprentices (ASBA) in public schools. The School Apprentices across ACT Government program provided school students with the opportunity to work across ACT public schools and ACT Government directorates. Registered Training Organisations provided the off-the-job learning component through nationally recognised training.

In June 2018, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Yvette Berry, and the Minister for Higher Education, Training and Research, Meegan Fitzharris, signed a funding agreement to access the Commonwealth Government Skilling Australian Fund to increase the number of fully and partially funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ASBA placements in ACT Government directorates from 10 to 15. There are also up to 100 employer funded ASBA places that can be utilised by all ACT public school students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In 2017-18, 24 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students commenced an ASBA in public and non-government schools. This year also saw six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students complete their ASBA placements.

## VOCATIONAL LEARNING OPTIONS

Vocational Learning Options (VLOs) are curriculum enrichment programs that aim to strengthen student engagement with learning and career planning. VLOs help students develop a connection between their future study, training and work goals.

Delivered by industry experts in an authentic learning or work environment, VLOs provide an alternative learning experience for students while they attend high school and college. VLOs offered in 2017-18 included beauty therapy, community work, animal care, café essentials, electrotechnology, sports coaching, hairdressing and bricklaying. Sixteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participated in VLOs in semester 2, 2017 and 12 in semester 1, 2018.

## ANNUAL CANBERRA CAREERSXPO

The Canberra CareersXpo is organised each year by the Rotary Club of Canberra City in partnership with the Directorate. It is an inclusive event and is the largest of its type in Canberra and the NSW Southern region.

In 2017, ACT public high schools and colleges organised excursions to the CareersXpo for all students in Years 9 to 12. Year 6 students from eight primary schools were also invited to attend as part of a new initiative that recognises the importance of starting career development at an early age. The CareersXpo featured more than 100 exhibitors including tertiary and vocational education institutions, federal and local government departments, employer organisations and individual businesses. The Indigenous Employment Exhibition, the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), and the WorldSkills Try'aSkill including Supporting and Linking Tradeswomen (SALT) were also special features of the 2017 CareersXpo.

The CareersXpo hosted three WorldSkills Regional Competitions in the trade areas of tiling, painting and plastering. Students had the opportunity to watch competitors complete projects aligned to industry endorsed training packages for the chance to compete at a national level.



*From left to right: Meg Brighton, Deputy Director-General; with scholarship recipients Natarsha Radoll; Dhani Gilbert; Madison Walker; Liam Ellis; Lachlan Mayo; and Natalie Howson, Director-General.*

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS

A total of \$75,000 is available annually for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Scholarships Program, targeting students interested in pursuing degrees in health, teaching or a vocational qualification.

From 2009 to 2018 inclusive, 57 senior secondary students received scholarships: 42 for teaching, 14 for health and one for vocational education.

In 2017, the Directorate awarded six scholarships, four for students interested in a career in education and two for students interested in a career in health.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year \$80,000 is available for scholarships (worth up to \$20,000 per student) to tertiary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying teaching or health at the Australian Catholic University (ACU), University of Canberra (UC) or the Australian National University (ANU).

From 2009 to 2018 inclusive, 31 tertiary scholarships were awarded: 26 for students undertaking teaching degrees and six for students studying an approved health degree.

In 2018, the Directorate received 16 applications, the largest field in the history of the Tertiary Scholarship program. The Directorate awarded three teaching scholarships and two health scholarships to students attending UC and ACU.



*From left to right: Kate McMahon, Director Learning and Teaching; scholarship recipients Bradley Horton; and Lily Coleman; David Matthews, Executive Director Business Services; and scholarship recipients Belinda Whyte; Karina Hopkins; and Nyingari Little.*

## Broaden Your Horizons – ACT Supreme Court

On 17 May 2018, 47 students from 11 schools attended the inaugural Broaden your Horizons careers event at the ACT Supreme Court. Students participated in a behind the scenes tour, mini legal career expo and mock trial to raise awareness about the pathways in the legal and justice sector.

Feedback from participating teachers and students was overwhelmingly positive, with students indicating that the event had assisted them in making decisions about their future pathways.



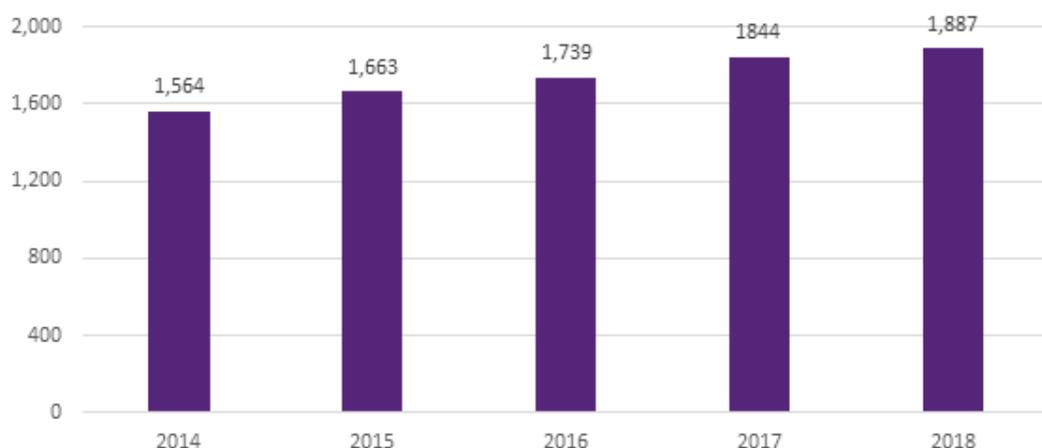
*Students at the ACT Supreme Court.*

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENT OUTCOMES

## ENROLMENTS

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has increased each year over the last five years. In February 2018, 1,887 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in public schools (79% of the total), an increase of 43 students from 1,844 in 2017. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represents 3.1 percent of total enrolments across all levels and sectors of schooling in the ACT.

Figure 1: Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in ACT public schools, 2014 to 2018



Source: ACT Government Education Directorate

## NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM – LITERACY AND NUMERACY

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment for all Australian students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN tests a student's skill level in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, punctuation and numeracy.

In 2017, the ACT consistently had a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the National Minimum Standard (NMS) for both reading and numeracy compared with national results. For Years 5 and 7 reading, the difference was greater than 10 percentage points.

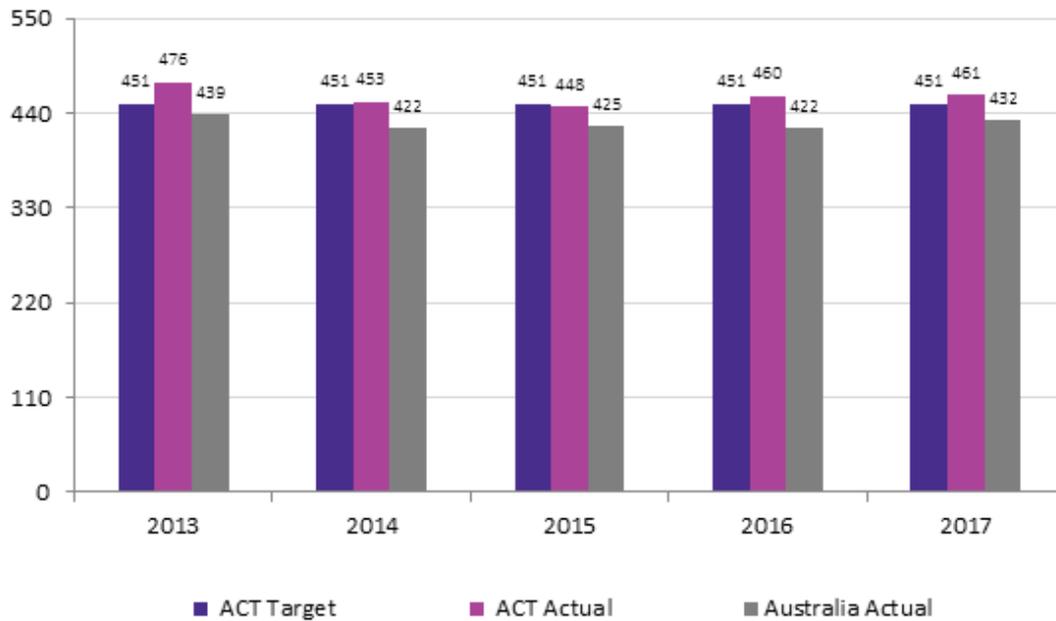
In 2017, 87.5 percent of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 7 students performed at or above the national minimum standard for reading which is significantly above the national figure for Indigenous students of 74.4 percent.

However, in the ACT, and across Australia, the mean scores for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were significantly lower than the mean scores for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all year levels and all testing domains.

The following data shows that from 2013 to 2017, there was no significant change in the NAPLAN performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT public schools in either reading or numeracy (Figures 2 to 5).

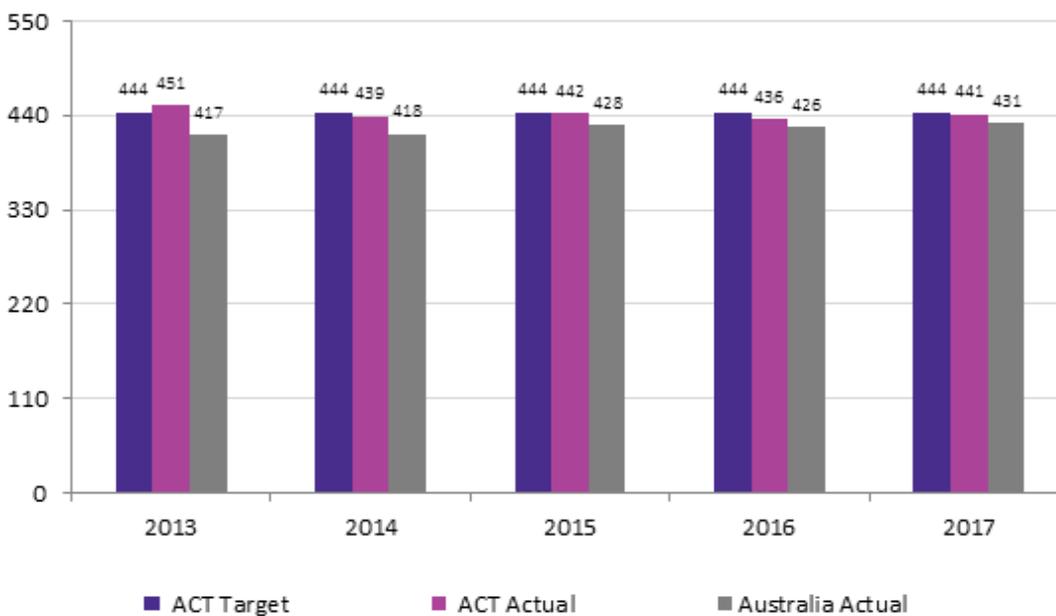
During 2018-19, the Directorate will be working to develop indicators to better measure equity and gain in student NAPLAN performance. The development of revised indicators will include consultation at the national level. The Future of Education conversation will also play an important role in developing new indicators.

Figure 2: Mean achievement score of Year 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public school students in reading in NAPLAN, 2013 to 2017



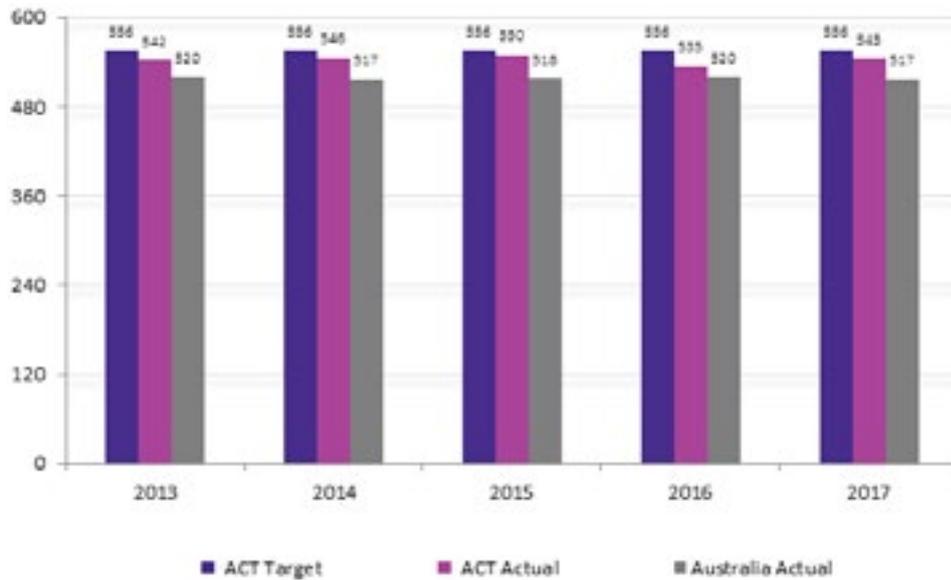
Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2013 to 2017

Figure 3: Mean achievement score of Year 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public school students in numeracy in NAPLAN, 2013 to 2017



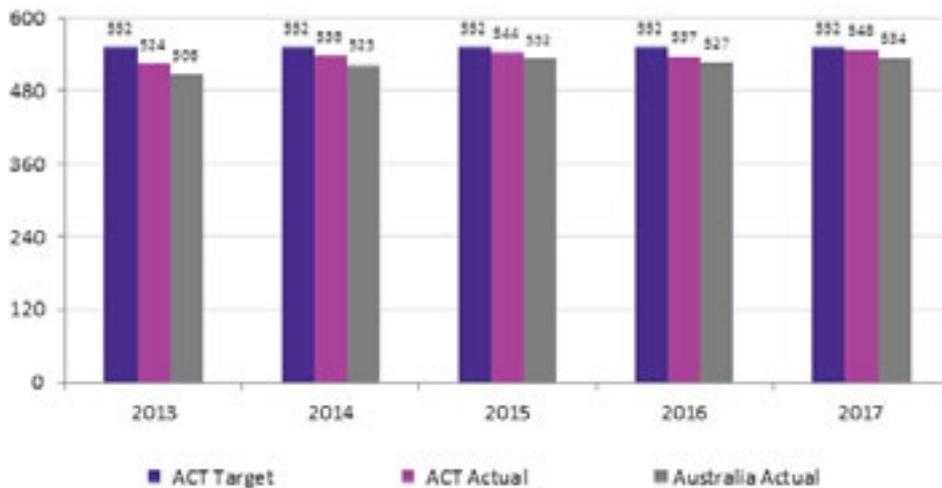
Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2013 to 2017

Figure 4: Mean achievement score of Year 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public school students in reading in NAPLAN, 2013 to 2017



Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2013 to 2017

Figure 5: Mean achievement score of Year 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public school students in numeracy in NAPLAN, 2013 to 2017



Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2013 to 2017

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Programs in ACT public schools such as the Student Aspirations Program, Vocational Learning Options, Tutorial Support and scholarships were instrumental in motivating and engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in school activities. Attendance is intrinsically linked to engagement in school. Staying connected to school is also a positive influence on students' social and emotional wellbeing. ACT schools took a multi-faceted approach to engaging students. Attendance measures included:

- > principals developing attendance procedures that are communicated to students, families and staff;
- > an attendance monitoring and SMS messaging service for families;
- > phone calls and meetings with families to discuss barriers to attendance and explore options to address these;
- > referring parents and students to appropriate support services; and
- > seeking support from the Education Directorate's multi-disciplinary Network Student Engagement Teams (NSETs).

The table below shows that attendance for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students increased between 2014 and 2017. The increase for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 7 to 10 was greater than the increase for non-Indigenous students.

Table 4: Attendance rates in ACT public schools, 2014 to 2017

Sector	Students	2014	2015	2016	2017
Primary (Years 1 to 6)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	87.5	88.1	86.8	88.1
	Non-Indigenous	93.5	93.6	93.4	93.6
High (Years 7 to 10)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	76.6	79.8	79.9	80.8
	Non-Indigenous	88.6	89.6	89.5	90.4

Source: ACT Government Education Directorate

When comparing results for ACT students against the national results in 2017, the ACT attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 1 to 10 was slightly higher (85.4%) than the national rate (83.2%).

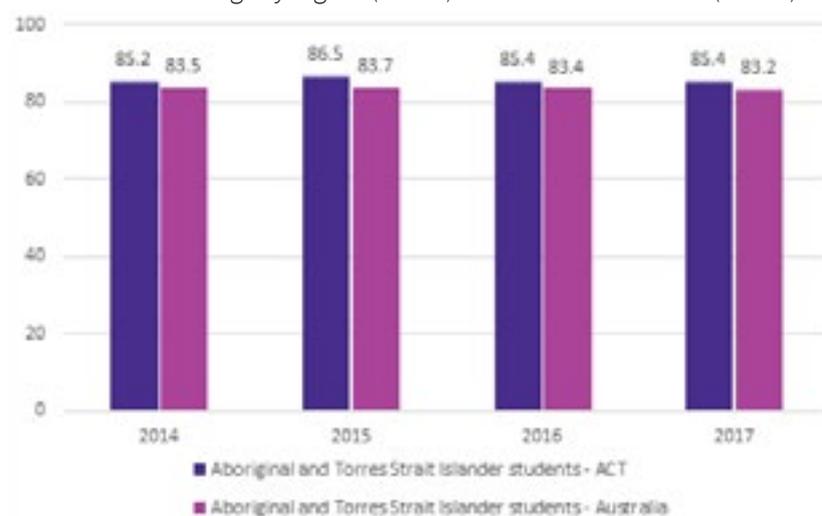


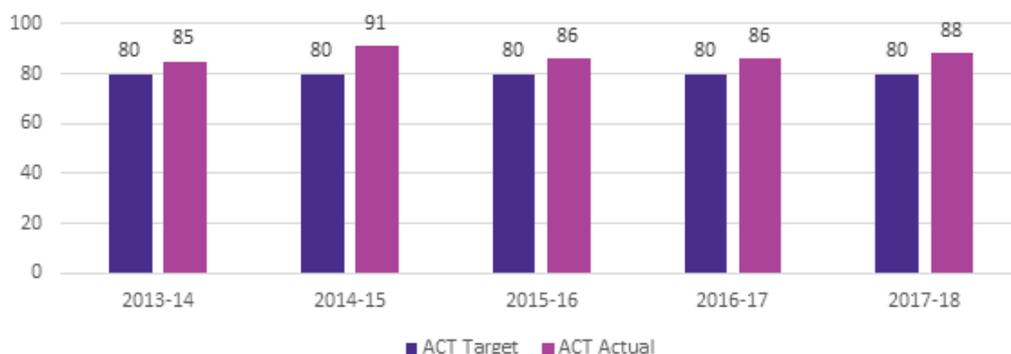
Figure 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attendance rates (%) Years 1 to 10 combined, all schools, ACT and Australia, 2014 to 2017

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

An indicator of student engagement is the retention of year 10 students in ACT public schools to year 11 in ACT public colleges. The percentage of year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who proceed to public secondary college education reports the total number of year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in public high schools, as at the August census, who enrolled in year 11 at ACT public colleges as at the February census in the following year. The percentage of year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who proceeded to public secondary education exceeded the target and remained relatively stable over the last five years (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Percentage of Year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who proceed to public secondary college education, 2013-14 to 2017-18



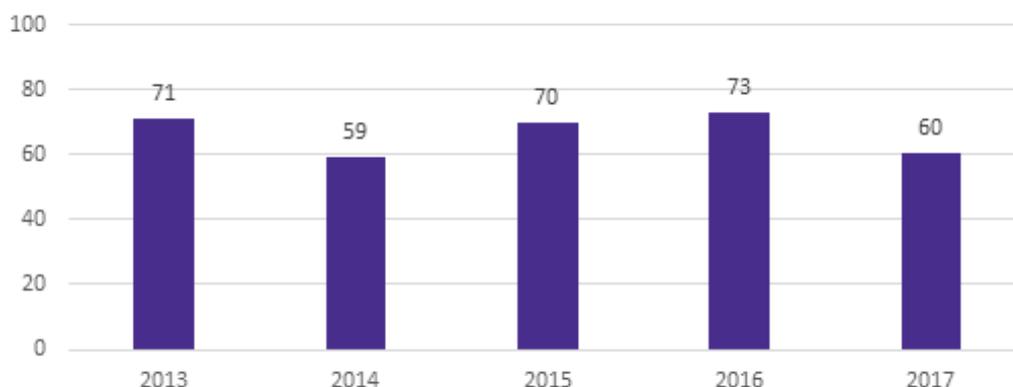
Source: ACT Education Directorate

## YEAR 12 RETENTION AND ATTAINMENT

ACT colleges and high schools collaborate closely to provide relevant and timely orientation and transition programs. Each high school and college have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education contact teacher, a student services/support team and a pastoral care program.

In 2017, 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved an ACT Senior Secondary Certificate, representing a year 12 completion rate of 60 percent (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ACT public schools) attaining a Senior Secondary Certificate from 2013 to 2017.

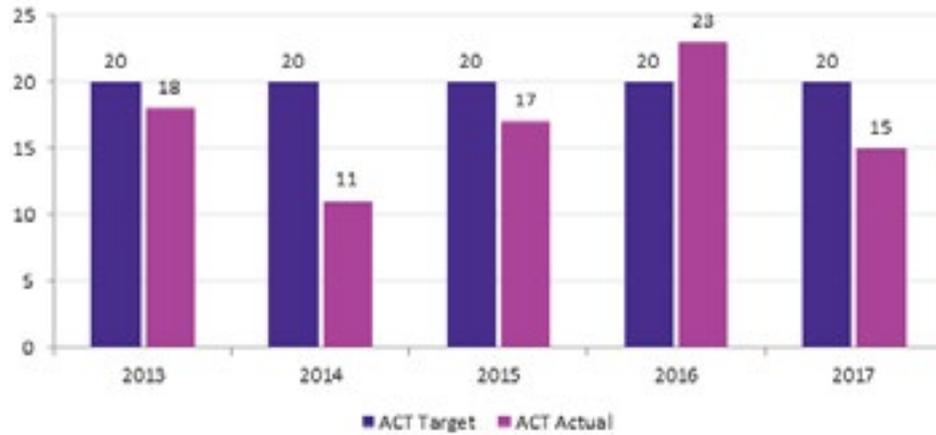


Source: ACT Education Directorate

**Note:** Due to change in methodology, the proportion for 2016 onwards is not comparable with previous years. The change involved excluding older students who were in year one of year 12 and as such not eligible for completing year 12 requirements in the reference year.

Of the 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who completed year 12 in 2017, 17 received a Tertiary Entrance Statement representing a rate of 15 percent (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who received a Tertiary Entrance Statement, 2013 to 2017



Source: ACT Education Directorate

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people participating in employment and/or study six months after leaving school has been monitored for the last four years (2014-2017). This proportion has varied between 78 percent and 93 percent for year 12 graduates, and between 72 percent and 77 percent for school leavers.

Whilst the proportion has varied, particularly for year 12 graduates, the differences between years were not statistically significant due to the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who completed the survey each year.

In general, these results were similar to the overall ACT results which have been consistently above 90 percent for year 12 graduates and above 70 percent for school leavers for the last four years.

