



**ACT**  
Government

Education and Training

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION

## 2012-13

Report to the Legislative Assembly of  
the Australian Capital Territory



# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION **2012-2013**

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the Australian Capital Territory

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Produced by Publishing Services  
Publication No 13/1281

<http://www.act.gov.au>

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

On behalf of the ACT Education and Training Directorate, I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Wreck Bay peoples as custodians of the lands where ACT public schools are located. I pay respect to the Ngunnawal Elders Council and to all Elders, past and present, of the Ngunnawal Nation and Wreck Bay community. I also extend that respect to other Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have come to call the ACT home.

This report celebrates our successes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education over the reporting period, demonstrates our ongoing commitment to closing the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students, and outlines our continued challenge and work ahead in achieving these priorities.

On average, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are likely to be 18 months to two years behind non-Indigenous students in their schooling. This is not acceptable. We have high expectations for high performance of every student.

As outlined in the Directorate's Strategic Plan 2014-17, *Education Capital: Leading the Nation*, every child, young person and adult will benefit from a high quality, accessible education, childcare and training system. We want every student to learn, thrive and be equipped with the skills and attitudes to lead fulfilling, productive and responsible lives. Further we want all students to believe: *"I can achieve. I am confident. My future is exciting."*

We will continue to work on closing this learning achievement gap through quality teaching, improving literacy and numeracy outcomes through personalised learning strategies, increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' engagement with, and connectedness to school and improving pathways to further education, training and employment. We will continue to work collaboratively across government, with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and wider community to achieve these goals.

Through the Directorate's strategic priorities, the four areas of focus through this plan and the ACT's Implementation Plan for the National Plan for School Improvement we will continue to work to achieve significant and sustainable improvements in the education outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Diane Joseph**  
Director-General

## Highlights:

- fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ACT public school students graduated in 2012 with a Year 12 certificate, five more students than in 2011.
- more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participated in NAPLAN in 2012 than in previous years and there was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who achieved at or above the national minimum standards in year 7 and year 9 writing and numeracy.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers and Workers in high schools and primary schools continued to support improvement in Student attendance and to strengthen relationships between schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- sixty-two executive teachers attended the Leadership Conference on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, held in August 2012. The highly respected guest speaker Jack Johnson was a source of inspiration and insight.
- the Directorate launched a refreshed Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which identifies actions and targets to improve relationships, increase respect, and further opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. Currently, fifteen schools have RAPs and, during 2013, the Directorate is supporting twelve schools to develop a Plan.

# INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on the performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and covers the period July 2012 to June 2013.

The vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT attend public schools. In 2013 there were 1,379 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending public schools, which represents 3.2 per cent of total enrolments, and an increase of 42 students on 2012 enrolment numbers.

This report to the Legislative Assembly details the progress achieved by the Directorate in advancing the key priorities of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters Strategic Plan 2010-2013*.

The four key priority areas of the strategic plan are:

- Learning and Teaching
- School Environment
- Pathways and Transitions
- Leadership and Corporate Development.

This report includes the following appendices:

**Appendix A** provides data obtained for student achievements in literacy and numeracy through NAPLAN.

**Appendix B** shows data from the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) for children in kindergarten programs.

**Appendix C** contains information on the number of Year 12 Certificates completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT 2011-2012.

**Appendix D** provides information about Focus Schools.



# LEARNING AND TEACHING

**Improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.**

**Deliver high quality curriculum which incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.**

Closing the gap in learning outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remains a priority of the Directorate. Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers and Coordinators have supported schools in their implementation of whole school strategies to improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Resources provided to schools support the literacy and numeracy skills development of students achieving below national benchmarks in NAPLAN testing.

Although there have been improvements in some NAPLAN testing areas in 2012, results have been inconsistent. The Directorate acknowledges there is still much work to do to close the gap in learning outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers.

According to NAPLAN data (**Appendix A**), there was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in year 7 and year 9 writing and numeracy in 2012 compared to 2011. There was, however, a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in reading, writing, and numeracy for years 3 and 5 and a decrease in reading in years 7 and 9.

The national Focus Schools, Investing in our Focus Schools, and Next Steps initiatives began operating in 2012 and they have provided additional resources to 31 schools to implement the local level actions of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (ATSIEAP) 2010-2014*. The local level actions of ATSIEAP closely align with the Directorate's Strategic Plans.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and content across the curriculum remains a national priority to which the Directorate is fully committed. All schools in the ACT have begun implementing the Australian Curriculum. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures form one of three Cross-Curriculum Priorities of the Australian Curriculum and the Directorate will continue to support schools as they work towards embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures and languages across all subject areas.

## WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AGAINST THE KEY ACTIONS?

### **Establish personalised learning strategies that include individual targets and support mechanisms for improved literacy and numeracy for students at or below NAPLAN minimum standards in writing and numeracy**

- The Directorate is committed to personalised learning for every student and schools are increasingly consulting and collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and students in the development of personalised learning plans.
- Throughout 2012, the Directorate distributed information and resources to schools about the implementation of personalised learning plans and provided information sessions for the Networks and interested members of the community. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with personalised plans in place. By the end of 2012, 28 (90.3%) of the 31 Focus schools reported that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had a personalised learning plan or individual learning plan.
- In 2012, five Tuggeranong Network high schools completed the Literacy Excellence Project for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The project focused on the development of a culturally responsive environment to improve student engagement and implement literacy strategies through working with leadership teams, students and class teachers. Students participating in the program improved literacy skills, with the greatest improvements in reading and spelling. Key literacy teaching strategies developed during the project, are shared through the literacy coordinator network. The project also developed key information and strategies for the development of culturally responsive learning environments. These strategies will be shared nationally through the *Teach, Learn, Share* website.

### **Track and monitor the performance, progress, and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

- The Directorate continues to support schools to improve processes for the collection of data about student performance and progress. Schools have electronic databases where teachers enter student information, test results, and progress measures such as Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPs) data, Reading Benchmark levels in primary school and NAPLAN data in both primary and high school. The data is used to decide class placements, resource allocation, and intervention to support student progress.
- All kindergarten programs in the ACT participated in the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) survey in 2012 (**Appendix B**) Teachers complete the AEDI survey of children in their first year of fulltime education.
- Many schools in the primary sector have 'data walls' where information on whole school performance is recorded and available for team and whole staff discussions on student performance.
- Schools use the various databases and measurement tools mentioned above to monitor students and inform teachers as to what additional supports are required. Schools are reporting that these tools are providing them with a clearer picture of the performance of all students.

- Schools continue to work collaboratively to develop programs and strategies to enhance student transitions through the years of schooling. The collaboration has enhanced information sharing and increased parent involvement in the development of transition plans for students.
- In 2012, 66 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all sectors in the ACT achieved a year 12 certificate. Fifty of these students graduated from ACT public colleges (**Appendix C**).

### Target strategies and resources to improve performance and monitoring

- Tutorial Support Scheme funding allows schools to engage relief staff to provide tutorial assistance or to allocate staff within existing staffing configurations. Tutorial assistance is directed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their studies, or related study skills and schools have flexibility in implementing their arrangements. Schools involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in determining their needs. It is also expected that schools will ensure that tutorial programs are delivered by teachers in small groups or individually, according to need.

### Deliver professional learning programs in literacy and numeracy, cultural competency, quality teaching and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural and historical knowledge and understanding

- Twelve public schools in the ACT carried out a year-long Action Inquiry Program led by the Accepting the Challenge Officers and supported by Emeritus Professor Tony Shaddock. Each school produced a project paper and this compilation of reports has proved to be an excellent professional learning resource. All projects addressed the priorities of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014*. The Action Inquiry Project was a dynamic way for teachers to engage in evidence based research and practice.
- In April 2013, the Directorate's Early Childhood Education section in association with the Preschool Teachers Professional Association held a professional learning session for approximately sixty preschool teachers. The aim of the session *Belonging, Being & Becoming* was to enhance the educators understanding of Cultural Competence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Early Childhood Education.

### Develop and implement units of work incorporating local Aboriginal content

- *Understanding the Land through the Eyes of the Ngunnawal People* continues to be used by schools as a teaching and learning resource.
- A Koori Preschool has introduced Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal languages into learning activities.
- Schools were taught Burroinjin, a traditional Aboriginal game, which is now widely played in ACT public schools. Each year a schools Burroinjin competition is hosted by Boomanulla Oval and supported by Directorate staff in partnership with other agencies.
- Jervis Bay School has worked in partnership with the local community to develop and implement a unit of work incorporating local Aboriginal language and culture.
- Monash Primary School worked with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council to rename the whole school in Ngunnawal language and developed a strategy to communicate the changes to the school community. In addition, students participate in whole school local content units of work.
- At Ngunnawal Primary School, digital resources including PowerPoint presentations were compiled as classroom resources to teach and encourage discussion about Ngunnawal and Wiradjuri cultures. The Canberra 100 year celebration was used to highlight the change for Aboriginal people in the local area.

## Establish supplementary tutoring for students from years 5 to 12

- Each year, high schools and colleges are able to apply for funding under the Tutorial Support Scheme. The purpose of the funding is to support schools in their implementation of programs designed to enhance student engagement with learning, improve literacy and numeracy skills, provide extension or enrichment activities, and support students to complete assessment tasks.
- The Targeted Tutorial Support Scheme for colleges was introduced in term 2, 2013. Colleges were invited to apply for additional funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly those in year 11, to complete assessment items and tests. The aim of the Targeted Tutorial Support Scheme is to enhance student transition to college, improve learning outcomes, and maximise completion rates. In the reporting period four colleges received funding under this scheme.
- Schools are also able to apply for supplementary funding to support students from kindergarten to year 6 who are at risk of disengaging from school. Funding is used by schools for additional support in the classroom.

## What are the Directorate's plans for the next 12 months?

The Directorate will:

- evaluate the Tutorial Support and the Targeted Tutorial Support Schemes to determine effectiveness in enhancing student outcomes
- trial an on-line Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Course. The course has been designed by the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia and takes between seven to ten hours to complete. This course aims to provide a foundation of knowledge about the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, their cultures and the effects of colonisation and government policies and practices. The Cultural Competency Course is a TAFE accredited course and supports teachers in meeting Standard 2.4 of the National Professional Standards for Teachers
- support schools to continue their engagement with the Australian Curriculum cross curriculum priority; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- identify and undertake appropriate projects to develop and promote local, regional and national content and perspectives
- develop units of work as a resource for ACT public schools.

# SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

**Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement with, and connectedness to, school.**

**Increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' involvement in schooling and decision-making.**

Regular attendance and engagement in meaningful learning experiences, in positive success-oriented learning environments, are vitally important for all students if they are to maximise their learning potential and graduate from year 12 with the skills required to pursue whatever future path they choose.

Attendance rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT public schools were lower than attendance rates for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the reporting period. Attendance rates for all students were highest throughout the primary years.

Schools need to be safe, supportive and welcoming environments for students and parents. A sense of connectedness to the school community can only enhance parent and community involvement in the education of their children and encourage parent involvement in school decision-making.

Throughout the early part of 2013, a project officer provided support to schools in the implementation of personalised learning strategies. Student and family involvement, high expectations and curriculum learning goals have been the focus of the strategies. A particular emphasis has been placed on specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) goal setting.

During the reporting period, 28 schools implemented Community Partnership Agreements. Due to relatively small size of some ACT schools, these partnerships are developed on a cluster basis, involving neighbouring primary schools, high schools and colleges.

During 2012, there were seven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers in Act public high schools and four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers in public primary schools. The education workers and officers fulfil valuable roles in schools. They are instrumental in strengthening relationships between families and teachers. They encourage families and teachers to have high expectations of students, and students to have high expectations of themselves. An additional two positions were created in 2012, the positions of family support officer and student engagement officer. The officers work closely together with schools and other agencies to assist students to remain engaged with school. During 2012, the officers supported 30 children and their families.

During the reporting period, the Directorate consulted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. The Directorate has consulted with key stakeholders in regards to the Education and Training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy, the Closing the Gap Project, local level school based initiatives, Literacy and Numeracy Plans, Personalised Learning Strategies, the Aspirations Program, the Accepting the Challenge Leadership Program, and the development of the refreshed Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Education and Training Directorate launched the refreshed Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) on 3 December 2012. This two-year plan strongly aligns to the Directorate's *Strategic Plan 2010-2013: Everyone Matters* as well as the ACT Public Service Respect Equity and Diversity Framework and the *ACT Public Service Employment Strategy*. The Directorate's vision in the Reconciliation Action Plan is embedded in practice across many schools now. Currently fifteen schools have Reconciliation Action Plans and 28 schools have Community-School Partnership Agreements. During 2013 the directorate is supporting a further twelve schools to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan.

The partnership between the Directorate and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group continues to strengthen. The Directorate meets regularly with members of the Consultative Group to share information and ideas, and to discuss ways of working together.

## WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AGAINST THE KEY ACTIONS?

### Implement Directorate and School Based Reconciliation Action Plans

- In December 2012, the Directorate launched its refreshed Reconciliation Action Plan, *Reconciliation Matters 2012-2014*, in a celebration at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning. A smoking ceremony and a Welcome to Country commenced the celebration.
- Principals attended a Reconciliation and Human Rights presentation delivered by Directorate staff and supported by partner organisation, Reconciliation Australia.
- During 2012, five schools developed a Reconciliation Action Plan. In the first half of 2013, a further 12 schools were supported to develop their first Reconciliation Action Plan. The schools were invited to apply for a small amount of funding to develop key partnerships with the community through the working groups.

### Implement functioning partnership agreements at school or cluster level

- There are currently 28 schools with School Community Partnership Agreements. Partnership Agreements are collaborative agreements between schools and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school community. Partnership Agreements can involve either one school or a cluster of neighbouring schools.
- The North Canberra cluster of schools released their third agreement in August 2012.
- Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Framework.
- The Early Years Learning Framework – *Belonging, Being & Becoming*, is implemented across all five Koori Preschool sites. This framework incorporates principles, practices, and outcomes that assist educators to provide young children with opportunities to maximise their potential and develop a strong foundation for future success in learning. This Framework incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and identity, and promotes greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.
- Koori Preschool educators participated in professional development sessions to assist with planning and programming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children. The Koori Preschool sites regularly collaborate through meetings to ensure a sharing of quality practice, cultural competence, and alignment of cultural awareness and understanding across each site.

## Track enrolment and attendance of students in ACT preschools

- The ACT February 2012 Census reported 199 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander preschool students. The February 2013 school census reported 188 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in preschool – a slight decrease of 11 children.
- At the 2013 February Census there were 44 children enrolled in Koori Preschool across the five sites of Ngunnawal Primary School, Kingsford Smith School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School, Wanniasa School and Richardson Primary School.

## Establish support structures at critical transition points in their schooling

- During the reporting period, the development of effective partnerships with families and communities was a focus within the Koori Preschool Program with transition programs implemented to promote a positive start for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their first year of formal schooling.
- The implementation of personalised learning plans promotes rigorous planning to assist in transition support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Schools in the North Canberra/Gungahlin Network have continued their transitions project under the banner of Accepting the Challenge. The work began in 2011 and Accepting the Challenge project officers continue to support the Network in 2013. A comprehensive yearly schedule of activities complements parent and student consultations and evaluations as well as student destination surveys.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Transition Coordinators meet regularly to share strategies and clusters of schools are able to work collaboratively on meeting the needs of students.
- The Directorate has a Transitions and Careers Officer in each of its colleges. Transitions and Careers Officers provide a variety of services aimed at supporting students in the transition to further study, training, and/or employment.

## Implement *Successful Learning in the Early Years of Schooling* – the Indigenous Parent Factor to increase parent and carer capacity to support early learning

- The structure of the Koori Preschool supports the active and accessible engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with community and government support programs including Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health, ACT Therapy and Child and Family Centres. During the reporting period, free services provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children included speech therapy, occupational therapy, hearing checks, and family support.

## Establish training programs that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' involvement and leadership in education decision making

- The Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network have met quarterly and have participated in the development of the draft Education and Training *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan*.

## Implement guidelines for the consistent use of protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country

- The Directorate has developed protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country. In 2012 the Directorate made appropriate amendments after the release of *My Kin My Country* ACT Genealogy Project 2012 to reflect the language and sentiment of the report.

## Other Actions/Activity

- The Education and Training Directorate provides administrative support to the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group (the Consultative Group). The Directorate has a strong relationship with the group, meeting regularly to discuss matters relating to education and directions for the future.
- The Consultative Group seeks feedback and advice from ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to provide advice to the ACT and Australian Governments on education and training programs and initiatives under the National *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan*. The priorities of the Consultative Group are community consultation and engagement, communication and education and training partnerships.

## What are the Directorate's plans for the next 12 Months?

The Directorate will:

- encourage all schools to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan. The aim is to have a minimum of thirty schools with active Reconciliation Action Plans in place by 2014.
- continue to consult with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group to guide policy and practice.
- continue to work with schools to develop programs and strategies to enhance student transitions through the years of schooling to further education, training, and/or employment.
- advance the development of the Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols and their release to schools.
- continue to work collaboratively with key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to promote genuine and timely consultations.
- implement the Education and Training Directorate's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan* commencing late 2013. The initial focus will be on increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in schools.



# PATHWAYS AND TRANSITIONS

## **Increase Pathways opportunities and year 12 completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

Evidence suggests that students who do not complete year 12 or its equivalent have poorer education, employment and general life outcomes than those who do. Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) and vocational education courses offered in ACT public schools provide an opportunity for students to explore career options, to create their own learning pathways and to gain nationally recognised qualifications while completing their secondary education.

In 2012, fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduated with a Year 12 Certificate from ACT public colleges, with eight students also achieving a VET Certificate.

Each year, the Directorate provides up to ten scholarships of \$5,000 for students in years 11 and 12 who are interested in a career in teaching and three university scholarships of \$20,000 for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students undertaking teacher training at the University of Canberra.

## WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AGAINST THE KEY ACTIONS?

### **Establish mechanisms for the delivery of course and career guidance at key transition points**

- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to the broad range of transition support and vocational and career education services available in ACT public schools. The Transitions and Careers Officers offer a range of services to year 11 and 12 students attending ACT public colleges to support their transition from school to post-school options.
- Transitions and Careers Officers organise work experience and structured workplace learning placements. They support students to find and apply for Australian School-Based Apprenticeships and provide advice about tertiary courses (university and VET).
- Transitions and Careers Officers organise tutoring and mentoring for students who need additional support and assist the transition of students from high school to college.
- Schools in the North Canberra/Gungahlin School Network have been working together in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Transitions Program.
- Transitions and Careers Officers have met, and continue to meet each term, to expand and share strategies for successful transition and induction. An important part of the program is interviewing and surveying students from kindergarten to year 12, and their families. The feedback received guides the continual improvement of the program.
- All ACT students in years 6 to 12 participate in the Pathways Planning process, which encourages young people to think about who they are, what they know, where they are going, how they will get there, and who can help them. College students are encouraged to develop a plan for life after school.
- Pathways Planning has promoted a cohesive approach to supporting the career development and transitions of young people while providing a common language to strengthen understanding across the ACT education system.

- ACT schools have partnered with community organisations to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to undertake vocational qualifications and ASBAs that connect young people to their community while developing skills that can contribute toward further training and employment.
- The annual Canberra CareersXpo provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to access current information about post school options from education, industry, employment and community service providers. The Transitions and Careers Officers coordinate the students' attendance at the CareersXpo and as well as the ACT and Region Indigenous Expo.
- The use and management of Individual Learning Plans and Personalised Learning Plans have been linked to elements of Pathways Planning to encourage and support personalised learning for every student.

### Embed the Student Aspirations program from years 5 to 12

- The Student Aspirations Program is an elective program that promotes the successful completion of year 12 and the transition into tertiary education for aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The program is open to students from years 5 to 12 in ACT public schools.
- More than 120 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participated in the Student Aspirations Program in 2012. Similar numbers are involved in 2013.
- In the past 12 months, students have attended taster days at the University of Canberra and the Australian National University (ANU). Students have also participated in a number of excursions including workshops at Questacon and visits to the ABC Studios, the Australian Defence Force Academy, and the School of Art at ANU.
- One of the students involved in the Student Aspirations Program has said:

*"with the help of the Student Aspirations team, I was a recipient of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Scholarship. Receiving this has been a big help to me on my path to university. The Aspirations program has introduced me to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from all over Canberra with similar interests to my own. The program has shown me what options are available for future studies and work that I would not have otherwise known about. I have created a network of friends and contacts in the education department that I know I can call on for help at any time."*

### Conduct comprehensive research on evidence-based programs for disengaged students

- In September 2012, the Directorate received the final report on flexible learning options/centres in the ACT from Professor Martin Mills, University of Queensland and Doctor Glenda McGregor, Griffith University. The report highlighted that shared knowledge across education, youth and community services sectors about the services and programs available in the ACT is fundamental to finding the program that best meets an individual's needs. Professor Mills and Dr McGregor presented an internal Directorate seminar for Senior executive, managers, and program leaders on the findings of the report.

### Broker tertiary preparation programs for years 11 and 12 students

- The Directorate's Student Aspirations Program provides several opportunities for students throughout their secondary schooling to visit Canberra's tertiary institutions and to develop relationships with university staff.
- Transitions and Careers Officers assist students in applying for the university preparation courses available in Canberra and provide advice about pathways to university.
- Each year, the Directorate provides up to ten scholarships of \$5,000 for students in years 11 and 12 who are interested in a career in teaching and three university scholarships of \$20,000 for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students undertaking teacher training at the University of Canberra.

## Broker education and career pathways with external agencies

- In 2012-13, there were 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing ASBAs: 12 in Certificate II level qualifications and three in Certificate III level qualifications. The Directorate partners with the Indigenous Social Inclusion Company (*now known as the Aboriginal Corporation for Sporting and Recreational Activities*) to provide an Australian School-based Apprenticeships program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This program connects young people with their communities whilst developing skills that contribute toward further training and employment.

## Track the progress of year 12 graduates in post-school destinations

- In 2012, Aspirations program staff conducted interviews with college students. Nineteen year 12 destination forms were completed or partially completed. Thirteen of the nineteen students agreed to the Aspiration staff contacting them in 2013 regarding their post-school pathways.

## Build a database of year 12 graduates and mentors for younger students.

- In 2012 the Directorate completed a database of year 12 graduates and mentors for younger students. This initiative will assist the Directorate in identifying leadership opportunities for year 12 graduates, strengthen relationships between students and provide peer mentors for younger students particularly during key transition points.

## What are our Plans for the next 12 Months?

The Directorate will:

- reinforce the pathways planning and transition processes occurring at school and system level
- take eight year 11 and year 12 students on a three-day excursion to visit universities in Sydney and Wollongong
- continue to embed the Student Aspirations Program across ACT public schools providing opportunities to students in year 5-12
- contact students to ascertain their post school destination
- improve year 12 graduate databases and mentoring processes to make the information more accessible and comprehensive
- strengthen student scholarship processes and pathways
- continue to work towards increasing the proportion of students successfully completing year 12 or gaining a Certificate II qualification.

# LEADERSHIP AND CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

**Increase Leaders' capacity to improve outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.**

**Strengthen understanding of issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.**

**Nurture and support the participation and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our workforce.**

The Directorate is committed to strengthening the capacity of school leaders to lead the development and implementation of school-based strategies and programs aimed at strengthening relationships with parents, families, and community members. Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff deliver Cultural Awareness Training as part of a larger suite of training offered to aspiring school leaders.

During this reporting period, the Directorate continued to deliver its leadership program *Accepting the Challenge – Improving learning outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students* to an expanded group of school leaders and aspiring leaders, including school support staff in leadership roles. *Accepting the Challenge* also supported the participation of school leaders in programs delivered by the Stronger Smarter Institute in Queensland. In 2013, a number of school leaders participated in professional learning delivered by Dare to Lead to supplement the programs delivered by *Accepting the Challenge*.

The Directorate participates in the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Traineeship program with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees offered work-shadowing opportunities during their traineeship, in a variety of roles across the Directorate, depending on their areas of interest. Supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trainees attend Cultural Awareness Training as part of the ACTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship Program.

The *Education and Training Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan* is in the final stages of development and is evidence of the Directorate's ongoing commitment to increasing employment opportunities and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AGAINST THE KEY ACTIONS?

### **Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education priorities in school and Network plans, Principal Performance and Development Agreements, business plans and other Directorate Plans.**

- The ACT Education and Training Directorate Priorities 2012-2013 include key actions to close the learning and achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- All 31 Focus Schools (See Appendix D for more information) have incorporated additional strategies to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their school's annual operating plan. Eleven of these schools are implementing more resource intensive programs as part of the *Investing in Focus Schools* Program.

### **Deliver professional learning to leaders and aspiring leaders through the Accepting the Challenge, Quality Teaching and practitioner-based enquiry programs**

- Twelve schools completed the 2012 Action-Inquiry Program and provided reports on their school-based inquiries as part of the *Accepting the Challenge: Improving learning outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students* program. These reports were compiled into one document then printed and distributed to schools so achievements could be more widely shared. This was the first time that reports from this program have been presented in this format.
- In August 2012, 62 school leaders (staff in School Leader A, School Leader B and School Leader C roles) attended an intensive leadership seminar structured around a keynote presentation delivered by Mr Mark (Jack) Johnson, CEO of the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council.
- In 2013 an additional 16 schools from across all School Networks commenced the Accepting the Challenge Action Inquiry Program. Eleven schools in the *Investing in Focus Schools* program are undertaking action inquiries.
- In October 2012, three school principals and five officers from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section participated in the two day 2012 Stronger Smarter Summit in Brisbane. The Summit theme was From Rhetoric to Reality. Participants shared what they had learned at the Summit to the Focus Schools Principal's Network in term 4, 2012.
- Eight school leaders in the North Canberra cluster (Dickson College, Campbell High School and Lyneham High School), including five leaders who participated in the 2012 Stronger Smarter leadership training, formed a strong network, using the Action-Inquiry Program and the North Canberra/Gungahlin Transitions program as a springboard for aligning strategies across the cluster. The network is currently undertaking research with colleagues in South Australia to build on a mentoring model to improve outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the cluster.
- The *Focus Schools Leaders Network* has continued to meet once a term throughout 2012-13 for professional learning and sharing of successful strategies. Representatives from at least two thirds of the 31 Focus schools regularly attend these meetings.
- *Accepting the Challenge* officers continued to present workshops and coordinate professional learning for schools and clusters, including after school workshops, full day programs conducted in stand down, and a full day program for administrative staff of Red Hill and Forrest primary schools and Narrabundah Early Childhood School.

In May 2013, a three hour, whole of school professional learning evening was delivered for four schools in the Woden cluster. Approximately 175 staff attended including school executive, classroom teachers, school support staff and administrative staff.

- For the first time, the Education and Training Directorate Leadership Conference, presented in May 2013, included a professional learning session specifically targeting leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education. Mr Leon Brown, Ms Julie Freeman and Mr Bob Pastor, all based at Jervis Bay School, presented a workshop on youth transition, cultural awareness and engaging the community. Over 30 school leaders elected to attend this workshop, with extremely positive feedback.

### **Implement cultural competency programs for all staff**

- An expectation exists within the Directorate that supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees will have cultural competency training.
- A clear consultation process, involving ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, community members, and parents, has been developed to ensure the validity of the training in an ACT context.

### **Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy**

- During this reporting period the ACT Education and Training Directorate employment strategy has been drafted and is in the final stages of consultation. The Education and Training Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network have actively participated in the development of the Directorate's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan*.
- The Director-General reports progress against the action of the Plan to the Chief Minister, the Commissioner for Public Administration and the ACT Indigenous Elected Body.

### **Implement induction programs targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander officers**

- The Induction programs will form part of the Directorate's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan*.

### **Establish culturally responsive supervision practices**

- Culturally responsive supervision practices will form part of the Directorate's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan*.

### **What are our Plans for the Next 12 Months?**

The Directorate will:

- work collaboratively with tertiary education providers, registered training organisations, and local community groups to implement a variety of professional learning opportunities for teachers, school support staff, and other Directorate staff to develop cultural competency.
- trial an on-line Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competency Course in term 3 2013 with schools in the Tuggeranong Network who participated in the Closing the Gap Literacy and Numeracy Project. The course is delivered by the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia and is a TAFE accredited course. The course will assist teachers to demonstrate competency in the professional standard 2.4 of the *National Professional Standards for Teachers: Understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* to promote reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The trial will commence in term 3, 2013 and takes approximately seven to ten hours to complete.

- launch the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan* in December 2013. The initial focus will be increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people working in schools.
- continue to encourage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network to be actively involved in the ongoing implementation of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan*.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Australian Early Development Index

All kindergarten programs in the ACT participated in the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) survey in 2012. Table A shows the AEDI data for the ACT and Australia.

The AEDI is a survey completed by teachers of children in their first year of full time schooling and provides information on young children's development. The five developmental domains covered by the AEDI are physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge.

The AEDI indicated that 55.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 'developmentally on track' in four or more domains across the ACT, in comparison to 68.1 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The data also identified a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT that were assessed as being 'developmentally on track' in four or more domains. This was eight per cent higher than the overall Australian figure.

Table A

Proportion of children in Australian Capital Territory assessed as 'developmentally on track' in four or more domains of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI), 2012 (per cent)		
	Australian Capital Territory	Australia
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (per cent)	55.7	47.7
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (per cent)	68.1	70.3

**Notes:**

- The AEDI population comprises children with at least one valid domain score.
- Children are deemed to be developmentally 'on track' if they scored above the 25th percentile of the national AEDI population in four or more AEDI domains.
- Where Standard Australian English is not the child's first language, there may be an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are assessed as developmentally vulnerable in the 'language and cognitive skills' or the 'communication skills and general knowledge' domains of the AEDI. Cultural differences in the child's mode of communication and general knowledge should always be considered when reviewing the AEDI data.

Source: Australian Government DEEWR, unpublished Australian Early Development Index data, 2012 data collection

### School Readiness

All students in kindergarten in the ACT are assessed on their readiness for schooling using the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment tool. This tool assesses readiness in the areas of reading and mathematics. According to 2012 PIPS results, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made less progress during their kindergarten year compared to their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers, particularly in reading. This is reflected in the lower mean-scale score and the lower proportion of students making expected or better than expected progress.



# APPENDIX B

## NAPLAN 2012

Appendix B provides a summary of NAPLAN outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT achieving at or above the national minimum standards in year 3, 5, 7 and 9 reading, writing and numeracy for 2011 and 2012.

In comparison to 2011 NAPLAN, table B demonstrates that in 2012:

- there was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in year 7 and year 9 writing and numeracy.
- there was a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in reading, writing and numeracy for years 3 and 5.
- there was a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in reading in years 7 and 9.

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students sitting the NAPLAN reading test in 2012, 85.7 per cent of year 3 students, 80.4 per cent of year 5 students, 84.1 per cent of year 7 students and 82.4 per cent of year 9 students achieved at or above the national minimum standards.

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students sitting the NAPLAN writing test 88.4 per cent of year 3 students, 74.3 per cent of year 5 students, 71.9 per cent of year 7 students and 63.9 per cent of year 9 students achieved at or above the national minimum standards.

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students sitting the NAPLAN numeracy test 84.3 per cent of year 3 students, 81.2 per cent of year 5 students, 81.9 per cent of year 7 students and 86.8 per cent of year 9 students achieved at or above the national minimum standards.

Four year groups and three test areas equates to 12 distinct tests. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT had a higher participation rate than the national average for Indigenous students for five of the 12 tests.

There continues to be an achievement gap in all NAPLAN results between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Table B: NAPLAN outcomes

NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy trend summary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, Australian Capital Territory, 2011-2012 (per cent)												
	Year 3			Year 5			Year 7			Year 9		
	Reading	Writing	Num.	Reading	Writing	Num.	Reading	Writing	Num.	Reading	Writing	Num.
<b>2011</b>												
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	86.8	90.5	88.9	86.0	87.0	86.0	86.1	69.3	79.6	89.0	62.7	83.0
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	95.8	96.3	96.6	94.7	93.9	95.6	97.1	92.4	96.1	94.6	86.1	94.9
Gap	9.0	5.8	7.7	8.7	6.9	9.6	11.0	23.1	16.5	5.6	23.4	11.9
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±8.7	±5.3	±7.8	±8.3	±7.3	±9.2	±7.1	±11.6	±8.6	±8.5	±13.4	±8.5
<b>2012</b>												
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	85.7	88.4	84.0	80.4	74.3	81.5	84.1	71.9	81.9	82.4	63.9	86.8
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	96.3	96.6	96.8	95.3	94.1	96.2	96	90.2	95.4	94.9	83.8	95.7
Gap	10.0	8.2	12.5	14.9	19.8	14.7	11.9	18.3	13.5	12.5	19.9	8.9
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±7.8	±6.9	±7.6	±8.1	±9.5	±8.9	±7.9	±10.6	±9.2	±9.9	±10.8	±7

**Notes:**

- The confidence intervals for 2011 to 2012 in this table are specifically for Australian Capital Territory.
- A new scale was introduced for writing in 2011. With the break in the time series, the persuasive writing results for 2011 should not be directly compared to the narrative writing results from previous years.

Source: ACARA, National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), 2011–2012

## NAPLAN PARTICIPATION

There were 67,536 students across all sectors in the ACT in 2012. This included 1,648 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, accounting for 2.4 per cent of the student population. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participation in NAPLAN testing is lower than participation rates for non-Indigenous students and caution is advised in the interpretation of ACT data. Table C shows NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, exemptions, absences/withdrawals and assessed students in ACT and Australia, 2012 (per cent).

**Table C:**

NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, exemptions, absences/withdrawals and assessed students in Australian Capital Territory and Australia, 2012 (per cent)								
	Year 3		Year 5		Year 7		Year 9	
	ACT	Aust.	ACT	Aust.	ACT	Aust.	ACT	Aust.
<b>Reading</b>								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	85.4	89.7	88.7	89.6	84.1	87.8	79.8	77.1
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.7	95.7	95.8	96.3	94.8	95.9	92.6	92.9
<b>Writing</b>								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	89.6	89.9	90.6	89.5	88.5	87.6	82.6	77.7
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.9	95.6	96.0	96.2	94.7	96.1	92.7	93.2
<b>Numeracy</b>								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	87.3	88.2	88.7	88.4	83.2	86.2	78.0	75.8
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.5	95.5	95.9	96.0	94.4	95.6	91.7	92.4

**Note:**

The NAPLAN participation data provided reflects students who were exempted, absent/withdrawn and assessed.

Source: ACARA, *National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)*, 2012

## APPENDIX C

The number of Year 12 Certificates completed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Australian Capital Territory, 2011–2012.

Qualification	ACT public school students	
	2011	2012
Year 12 Certificate	45	50
Year 12 Certificate and VET Certificate	8	8
VET Certificate but no Year 12 Certificate	1	0
Neither Year 12 nor VET Certificate	2	0

Source: ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies

# APPENDIX D

## Focus Schools

The Australian Capital Territory had 31 Focus schools in 2012. Focus schools were identified as schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have the greatest need and where effort should be focused to make the greatest possible difference. All schools were in the public education sector and had a total enrolment of 617 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from preschool to year 6 as of February 2012 census. The Koori Preschool program is located in five Focus Schools.

Seven Focus Schools were Literacy and Numeracy Partnership Schools and four were low SES schools. All Focus Schools in the ACT are classified as metropolitan with the exception of Jervis Bay School, which is classified as provincial.

A Focus School Network of school leaders has been established. The group met three times in 2012. The network meetings focused on professional learning, the sharing successful strategies and resources, resolving challenges and reporting responsibilities.

### The 31 Focus schools are:

Jervis Bay Primary School	Charnwood-Dunlop Primary School
North Ainslie Primary School	Kingsford Smith School (Junior School)
Ngunnawal Primary School	Amaroo School (Junior School)
Curtin Primary School	Kaleen Primary School
Richardson Primary School	Ainslie Primary School
Red Hill Primary School	Narrabundah Early Childhood School
Gilmore Primary School	Weetangera Primary School
Latham Primary School	Gold Creek School (Junior Campus)
Charles Conder Primary School	Caroline Chisholm School (Junior Campus)
Fraser Primary School	Namadgi School (Junior Campus)
Taylor Primary School	
Macgregor Primary School	
Theodore Primary School	
Monash Primary School	
Torrens Primary School	
Majura Primary School	
Arawang Primary School	
Lyneham Primary School	
Wanniassa School (Junior School)	
Florey Primary School	
Wanniassa Hills Primary School	