



ACT
Government
Education and Training

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION

2013-14

Report to the Legislative Assembly of
the Australian Capital Territory



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION **2013-2014**

Report to the Legislative Assembly of
the Australian Capital Territory

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Telephone: Canberra Connect 13 22 81

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

On behalf of the ACT Education and Training Directorate I acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Wreck Bay peoples as custodians of the lands on which our public schools are located and on which we live and work. I pay respect to their Elders, past and present. I also extend respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have come to call the ACT home.

Quality learning, inspirational teaching and leadership, high expectations, high performance, connecting with families and the community and business innovation and improvement are the building blocks of a strong education system. Each is equally important if we are to achieve equity in education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT public schools.

Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in the ACT deserves the opportunities provided through an excellent education irrespective of where they live, their circumstances, or the school they attend. We want every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student to believe, "I can achieve. I am confident. My future is exciting." While there is much to celebrate, the Directorate acknowledges we have more work to do to close the achievement gap between non-Indigenous students and their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander class mates.

The Directorate has established a suite of integrated programs and strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student learning across the spectrum. Strategies such as personal learning plans, or progress with flexible learning options, and employment pathways are universal in their approach; that is they support all learners. Other programs such as Koori Preschool and the Aspirations Program are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. Some approaches require additional financial investments; and all depend on the significant efforts of the dedicated specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and classroom teachers for their success.

This report celebrates the Directorate's achievements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and identifies areas for continued or renewed focus as the ACT strengthens its claim as the education capital.

Diane Joseph
Director-General

Highlights:

- There was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in year 3, 5 and 7 in reading, writing and numeracy.
- In 2013, 39 of the 55 year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduated with a Year 12 Certificate from ACT public colleges and seven obtained a Certificate II or higher in a nationally recognised vocational course.
- Ten of the year 12 graduates obtained a tertiary entrance statement.
- More than 70 percent of ACT public schools now have personalised learning plans in place for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Partnerships with the wider community were formed to support curriculum initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. These included a community delivered dance program, language programs, bush tucker garden projects, art projects, a didgeridoo group, and an Indigenous courtyard project, excursions to significant sites and places, and participation in an Indigenous Student Action Group.
- *The Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017* was launched by the Director-General in December 2013.

INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in ACT public schools and covers the period July 2013 to June 2014.

In 2014, 1,568 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in ACT public schools, representing 3.7 percent of total enrolments. There were 1,043 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in primary schools, 352 enrolled in high schools, and 173 enrolled in secondary colleges. (A full breakdown of Aboriginal and Torres Strait student enrolments by level of schooling is provided at **Appendix D**).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled across all schools in the ACT with the largest enrolments at Namadgi School, Wanniasa School, Ngunnawal Primary School, Kingsford Smith School, Erindale College, The Canberra College and Jervis Bay School.

This report details achievements under the priorities of the Directorate's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters Strategic Plan 2010-2013* and progress against the priorities identified in the Directorate's *Education Capital: Leading the Nation Strategic Plan 2014-17* and the *2014 Action Plan*. There is a close alignment between the priorities in the two Strategic Plans.

This report includes a **Glossary** and the following appendices:

Appendix A shows data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) for children in kindergarten programs.

Appendix B provides data obtained for student achievements in literacy and numeracy through NAPLAN measuring instruments.

Appendix C provides information about the recently concluded national Focus Schools initiative.

Appendix D provides a breakdown of Aboriginal and Torres Strait student enrolments by level of schooling.

GLOSSARY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section

Team within the Student Engagement Branch of the Education and Training Directorate.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Officer

A member of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section. This officer works with families and schools to implement strategies to encourage greater student engagement with learning and to improve attendance.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander views of historical events, bodies of knowledge, ways of knowing and culture.

Accepting the Challenge Action Inquiry program

School based staff participate in a year-long processes of reflection, planning, data collection and analysis, research and collaboration to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of programs and initiatives and implement improvement at individual, team, school and cluster level.

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group

The Group is made up of parent and community representatives. The Group consults with ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, groups and organisations and provides 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.

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

Established under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008, the group comprises of seven members who represent the interests of the local community.

ACT Teacher Quality Institute

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) was established by the ACT Government under the ACT TQI Act 2010 to uphold the standards of the teaching profession in the ACT and to strengthen the quality and sustainability of the teaching workforce.

Aspirations Program

The Student Aspirations Program supports students to reach their potential through successful completion of secondary school and progression to further education, training and employment options. It caters to students from years 5 to 12 and provides career education, career development and mentoring opportunities.

Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) survey

The AEDC survey is conducted every three years. The last survey was completed in 2012 and the next one will be conducted in 2015. Teachers complete the AEDC survey of children in their first year of fulltime education. The survey identifies children who are developmentally vulnerable, as well as the number of children performing well on each of the domains tested.

Early Years Learning Framework – Belonging, Being & Becoming

A national framework that describes the principles, practices and outcomes that support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school.

Focus Schools

A national project that commenced in 2012 to support schools to implement local level actions of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan. Thirty one ACT public schools participated in this project.

Investing in Focus Schools initiative

An extension of the Focus Schools project involving 11 ACT public schools.

NAPLAN

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy.

Network Student Engagement Teams

Multidisciplinary teams within the Student Engagement Branch. These teams include a deputy principal, senior psychologist, social worker, Behaviour Support Partner and Disability Education Partner.

Pathways Planning

Pathways Planning is an ongoing career education/career development process that 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.

Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS)

PIPS is a computer based assessment program that assists teachers to assess each student's early literacy and numeracy skills, monitor ongoing progress and identify students who will benefit from intervention or enrichment programs.

Personalised Learning

Personalised learning is student centred learning which meets the interests, learning needs and aspirations of individual students.

Personalised Learning Plans

A Personalised Learning Plan is a student centred plan. Parents/care givers are actively involved in the development of the plan. Plans vary in format but are linked to pathways planning and are often articulated as learning goals.

Reading Benchmark Levels

Reading Benchmark Levels refer to the minimum competency levels a student may be expected to achieve in a particular year of schooling.

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)

A business plan that documents what a school or organisation will do within its sphere of influence to contribute to reconciliation in Australia. A RAP documents practical actions to build strong relationships and enhanced respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

School Community Partnership Agreement

A collaborative agreement between a school or a cluster and their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Stronger Smarter Leadership Program

The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program aims to challenge and support school and community leaders in their pursuit of educational excellence for all students by providing learning opportunities to enhance their leadership capacity, challenge their assumptions and contribute to the critical mass of leaders creating positive changes in education.

QUALITY LEARNING

This Directorate priority ensures all learners have access to powerful and relevant learning experiences. In particular, to meet the learning needs of every student and seek to close the achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The strategies outlined below support this priority.

i. Literacy and Numeracy

NAPLAN data Appendix B shows there was an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving at or above the national minimum standards in years 3, 5, and 7 in reading, writing and numeracy in 2013 compared to 2012. 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 in year 9.

The year 3, 5, and 7 results attest to the success of the Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers and Coordinators who support schools in their implementation of whole school strategies to improve student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. The Field Officers target students achieving below national benchmarks in NAPLAN testing.

ii. Response to Intervention

In 2013, the Directorate began exploring the introduction of Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies in ACT public schools and trials commenced in three schools in 2014. RTI is an approach to teaching that uses a system of tiered instruction to provide the appropriate intensity of intervention especially in areas of reading and mathematics. Early data from the project is positive.

iii. Supplementary tutoring for students in years 5 to 12

Primary schools access funding on a needs basis to support them to meet the learning needs of individual students. During the reporting period the referral and evaluation process have been refined to improve the monitoring of student progress. The referral and evaluation processes have strengthened the use of Personalised Learning Plans in targeting support for individual students, increased the information sharing between schools and central office teams, and informed best practice. Approximately \$57,000 was allocated to seven schools to implement school based initiatives.

Each semester, high schools and colleges are invited to apply for funding through the Tutorial Support Scheme. The funding supports the staffing of a variety of school-based strategies and programs including home work clubs, tutorial support groups, and one-on-one tutoring. Schools are encouraged through the application and evaluation process to involve students in the decision-making about the structure and nature of the tutorial support provided. Approximately \$190,000 was allocated to high schools and colleges over the reporting period.

iv. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives

One of the three Cross-curriculum priorities of the Australian Curriculum is *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures*. Schools continue to work towards embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures across all subject areas.

At the beginning of the 2014 school year, five primary schools commenced extensive evaluations of the curriculum resource *Yarning Strong*. The evaluating schools are reporting on the professional learning they used to familiarise teachers with the resource, how the resource was implemented and how effective the resource is in

achieving learning outcomes. Evaluating schools will participate in a professional learning session in early 2015 to share the findings of their work using this teaching and learning resource.

Partnerships with the wider community were formed to support curriculum initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. These included a community delivered dance program, language program, bush tucker garden projects, art projects, a didgeridoo group, and an Indigenous courtyard project, excursions to significant sites and places, and participation in an Indigenous Student Action Group.

v. Personalised Learning and Personalised Learning Plans

Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) take a variety of forms but fundamental to any successful PLP, learning goal or learning strategy is the student's sense of ownership and relevance. This sense of ownership is developed through meaningful conversations and effective relationships between students, parents, families and teachers. International and national research indicates that students are more engaged in their learning when they have a say in what they are studying.

Schools are increasingly consulting and collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and students in the development of PLPs. During the reporting period, approximately 74 percent of ACT public schools reported to have PLPs in place for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

A number of the schools that participated in the Focus Schools initiative (see Appendix C) reported that PLPs were a strong vehicle to build and sustain meaningful partnerships with parents and carers and that high student input and ongoing review and feedback processes were vital in making the plans a 'living' effective document focussed on improved outcomes.

The *2013 Accepting the Challenge Action Inquiry program* provided evidence of an increase in schools linking initiatives such as literacy programs, homework clubs and scaffolding programs to students' PLPs.

vi. Quality professional learning programs

a) Koori Preschool

Koori Preschool teachers and assistants participated in professional learning sessions to assist with planning and programming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Koori Preschool sites regularly collaborate to ensure a sharing of quality practice, cultural competence, and alignment of cultural awareness and understanding across each site. This contributes to the continuous building of teacher skills in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Preschool children with developmental delays benefit from early identification and participation in programs to meet their needs. Staff from the Koori Preschool Program, Therapy ACT and the Child and Family Centres participated in an integrated workshop, reflecting on the current strategies for 4 and 5 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT. As a result, teachers will be better prepared to meet the needs of children entering school.

In May 2014, 116 participants (school leaders, teachers and assistants) attended *Mirrors and Windows: Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives within Our Preschool* professional learning delivered across all school networks to share their approaches.

b) Action Inquiry Program

Fourteen schools are participating in the 2014 Action Inquiry Program. The program has recently been accredited for teacher registration through the ACT Teacher Quality Institute. Emeritus Professor Tony Shaddock provides academic expertise and guidance and participants are supported by officers in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section.

This year inquiries are focussed on family and community engagement, improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy through personalised learning plans, targeted curriculum, and pedagogy and out of class programs. All reports including analysis of data and recommendations for future action will be published for use by schools in the ACT in 2015.

c) Leadership

Two principals, two teachers and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Support Officer participated in the *2013 Stronger Smarter Leadership Program* in Queensland.

School leaders from the schools participating in the Focus School initiatives met each term in 2013 to engage in professional learning, share resources and discuss progress and challenges. Highlights included a curriculum workshop, presentations by Aboriginal leaders and by Wreck Bay Elder, Ms Julie Freeman in August 2013, and a two day study tour to Jervis Bay and Wreck Bay in November 2013.

The Accepting the Challenge Leadership Day in 2013 provided opportunities for leaders and aspiring leaders to build their capacity and leadership skills.

d) Curriculum and Cultural competency

In 2014 progress has been achieved in increasing the number of schools where all staff members have participated in professional learning relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross Curriculum Priority and National Professional Standards for Teachers.

The majority of this professional learning is based on *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education – An introduction for the teaching profession* written by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and educators and edited by Dr Kaye Price who is well known and respected locally and nationally. The text includes a section on histories and cultures as well as providing strong support for curriculum implementation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

School leaders from the Focus School Network (see Appendix C) participated in two curriculum specific workshops in semester 2, 2013. Two principals facilitated a curriculum planning workshop in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and Wreck Bay Elder, Ms Julie Freeman provided participants with many new insights into culture and technology. The workshop conducted by Ms Freeman was the “springboard” for a cultural awareness study tour of 18 leaders and aspiring leaders to Jervis Bay where they participated in further learning with Ms Freeman and the local community. Three schools built on these experiences and have engaged Ms Freeman to conduct workshops with both their students and teachers.

CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

The Directorate focuses on building and sustaining partnerships with parents, carers and families and to improve engagement with community and industry. Closing the achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires the community to support children to attend at school.

i. Supporting students to attend school

Schools are implementing a range of practical strategies to inform parents about the importance of regular school attendance and to support students experiencing difficulties to remain engaged with their school communities.

Attendance is a key measure of a student's engagement with education, which in turn has a direct impact on educational outcomes. Directorate data shows that attendance rates remain lower for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in ACT public schools compared to attendance rates for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

During the reporting period, Jervis Bay School has focused on improving attendance with great success. They engage directly with families about non-attendance and provide attendance awards to students.

In the Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers support teachers to improve attendance, support student transitions, establish connections and build relationships between schools, families and communities. Officers can be a reassuring point of contact for families and they enrich school life through the facilitation of a variety of cultural programs and school community events.

Eleven Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers are currently employed across 14 ACT public schools.

- Calwell High School
- Caroline Chisholm School
- Wanniasa School-Senior Campus
- Melrose High School
- Namadgi School
- Mount Stromlo High School
- Telopea Park School
- Lyneham High School
- Melba Copland Secondary School
- Richardson Primary School
- Wanniasa Hills Primary School
- Ngunnawal Primary School
- Gilmore Primary School
- Theodore Primary School

ii. Reconciliation Action Plans

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are based on three key elements of relationships, respect and opportunities. The RAPs outline practical actions to build strong relationships and enhanced respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

In the ACT they have proven to be a practical tool for schools to engage with their communities. The practical action elements in the RAPs should drive greater equality by pursuing sustainable opportunities. Eleven ACT public schools had formally endorsed Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) in place in 2013.

iii. Parent and community involvement in schooling and decision-making

The Directorate consults regularly with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body about local and national directions in education.

Currently, 28 schools have School Community Partnership Agreements in place. These are developed at either the individual school or cluster level and may be formal or informal. Such agreements can be very valuable in strengthening relationships and encouraging schools to work more directly with their local communities.

iv. Preschool and early childhood education

The ACT February 2014 School Census reported 244 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in preschool – an increase of 56 children on 2013 enrolments.

Seventy-two of these children were enrolled in a Koori Preschool program across the five sites of Ngunnawal Primary School, Kingsford Smith School, Narrabundah Early Childhood School, Wanniasa School and Richardson Primary School.

Koori Preschools promote and support the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with community and government programs and services such as those provided through Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, Therapy ACT and the ACT Child and Family Centres. Services provided include speech therapy, occupational therapy, hearing checks, and family support.

The Early Years Learning Framework – *Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017*, is implemented across all ACT public preschools and within the five Koori Preschool sites. This Framework incorporates Principles, Practices, and Learning 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 provides strategies for teachers to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and identity, and promotes greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS, HIGH PERFORMANCE

The Directorate seeks to encourage high performance from all students enrolled in ACT public schools in particular, to meet the learning needs of every student and seek to close the achievement gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Reducing the number of students who did not receive a Year 12 Certificate or equivalent was a critical goal. The below strategies are in place to support this goal.

i. Increase pathway opportunities and year 12 completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Pathways planning, career education, work experience and vocational education opportunities are provided to all secondary students to encourage them to explore their interests and create goals for themselves.

Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) and vocational education courses enable students to explore career options, to create their own learning pathways and to gain nationally recognised qualifications while completing their secondary education.

In 2013, 39 of the 55 year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduated with a Year 12 Certificate from ACT public colleges and seven obtained a Certificate II or higher in a nationally recognised vocational course.

ii. Increase opportunities for students to excel

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 were nominated by their schools to be part of the Student Aspirations Program in 2013. As of June 2014, 162 students were enrolled in the program.

In the past 12 months, Aspiration students have attended taster days at the University of Canberra and the Australian National University (ANU). They have also visited NSW universities including University of Technology Sydney, Macquarie University, University of Sydney, University of NSW, and the University of Wollongong. Students participated in subject specific workshops such as the Free Range Chemistry workshop at ANU, and sound production at the ANU college of Music. Other excursions included visits to the National Zoo and Aquarium (with a focus on veterinarian science), ADFA and Questacon. In March 2014, primary students attended the Halogen Foundation's National Young Leaders Day in Sydney.

iii. Promote and support participation in post school education and training

The scholarship program for senior secondary students interested in a career in teaching commenced in 2009. Up to ten \$5,000 scholarships have been available each year. To date 30 students have received scholarships.

In 2013 the program was extended to include students interested in pursuing a career in health. Eight students were granted a secondary scholarship for commencement in 2014. One health and seven teaching scholarships were awarded.

Six of the previous scholarship holders have remained in contact with the Directorate and all went on to study at university after graduating from year 12.

In addition, three university scholarships of \$20,000 are available each year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking teacher training at the University of Canberra or the Australian Catholic University. In 2014, three teacher education students (one from University of Canberra and two from the Australian Catholic University) were awarded scholarships.

In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait students enrolled in an approved health program at a university in Canberra will be eligible to apply for a tertiary health scholarship worth \$20,000 in 2015.

The 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.

2014 saw the beginning of a new partnership between AIME (Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience), the University of Canberra and the Australian National University. In the first six months in the ACT, AIME worked with 96 mentees and 61 mentors. Eleven public secondary schools and colleges are currently participating in the AIME program.

The Directorate is involved in partnerships with the University of Canberra and the Australian National University through the ACT Indigenous Success Project (ACT-IS). The primary aim of the ACT-IS Project is to break down barriers to higher education for students from Indigenous and low socio economic backgrounds and to support the aspirations of participating students.

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.

iv. Supporting students at key transition points

Transitions and Careers Officers coordinate a range of services to year 11 and 12 students attending ACT public colleges to support their transition from school to post-school options. Officers assisted students with work experience and vocational learning opportunities. They supported students to find and apply for Australian School-based Apprenticeships and provide advice about tertiary courses (university and VET).

Support was also provided to students who require tutoring and mentoring and who need additional support and with the transition from high school to college. Transitions and Careers Officers met with students and parents/carers to assist with planning for future education, training and employment.

The North Canberra/Gungahlin Network of schools (21 schools) continued to develop professional learning about, and implementation of, a consistent process of supporting effective transitions for students and their families within the Network. Coordinators continue to meet each term, to expand and share strategies for successful transitions. An important part of the transitions project is interviewing and surveying students and their families. The feedback received guides the continual improvement of the program.

The Pathways website was launched on 9 May 2014. This interactive website supports young people to develop a Pathways Plan. The website provides structured career development and transition activities to encourage 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.

The online pathways website has promoted a cohesive approach to supporting the career development and transitions of young people by providing developmentally appropriate career activities to strengthen their transitions through schooling and beyond.

v. Flexible Learning Options

Flexible Learning Options (FLOs) provide opportunities for students to explore various industries and pathways to further education and training. Such programs encourage students to remain engaged with education and to set career goals.

A FLO was run by the Aboriginal Corporation for Sport and Recreational Activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Semester 1, 2014. This FLO enabled students to work toward gaining their Certificate II in Business. Fifteen students from years 10 to 12 were enrolled in the program. Thirteen students successfully completed their Certificate II in Business and one student completed a statement of attainment.

In addition, a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have successfully completed other FLOs in a variety of industry areas resulting in Statements of Attainment. Two students completed a FLO in Hairdressing in Semester 2, completing three competencies in Certificate II in Hairdressing and achieving a Statement of Attainment, two students completed a FLO in Automotive in Semester 1, completing two competencies in Certificate II in Automotive.

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

The Directorate's post school data is obtained by interviews with Year 12 graduates. In 2013, 36 interviews with year 11 and 12 Aspirations program college students were conducted. Seven year 12 students agreed to the Aspirations program staff contacting them in 2014 regarding their post school pathways. Of these students, six are currently engaged in studies at universities or private colleges.

INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP

The Directorate's priority is to build the capacities of teachers and leaders by design, not chance. The following strategies support this priority.

i. Increase school capacity to improve outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

The Accepting the Challenge Action Inquiry Program supports teachers and school leaders to design, implement and evaluate strategies aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Seventeen schools participated in the 2013 program and there are 14 schools participating in the 2014 program. By the end of the 2014 school year, 63 discrete action inquiry projects will have been completed in ACT public schools since 2010.

ii. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the Directorate

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in the Directorate increased from 37 fulltime equivalent (temporary and permanent) positions in June 2013 to 42 fulltime equivalent positions in June 2014.

Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017 (the Plan) was launched by the Director-General in December 2013. It provides a new framework to link education, employment, choice and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the ACT.

The Director-General reports progress against the action of the Plan to the Chief Minister, the Commissioner for Public Administration and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed across the Directorate in a variety of roles, including teachers, school leaders, school support staff and administrative staff in central office. A strong focus of *Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership* is to create opportunities for career development and to become an employer of choice in the ACT for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Directorate participates in the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Traineeship program with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees who are able to explore a variety of roles during their traineeship through work-shadowing opportunities. Supervisors of the trainees attend cultural awareness training as part of the program.

The success of the *Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership Action Plan* will be evidenced by an increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in teaching, school leadership and management roles within the Directorate.

The 2014 implementation focus has included:

- the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Implementation Working Group, to oversee the implementation of the Plan.
- stakeholder consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the Education and Training Directorate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network.
- the draft development of an annual staff satisfaction survey *Our Mob Our Stories Staff Survey*.
- the development of a draft pre-employment *Our Mob Our Voices* induction program.

- building connections with tertiary education providers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support centres and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education students in the ACT.
- mapping of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions across the Directorate.
- working with individual schools to support the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.
- meeting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members interested in a career in education and providing information in regards to career pathways and employment opportunities.

iii. Involvement and leadership in education decision making

The Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Network (Staff Network) provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees the opportunity to connect across roles and professions. It is an avenue to provide input into strategic directions in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, retention, career pathways and leadership opportunities. The Staff Network also contributes to and provides membership to the ACTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network. Through the Chair and Secretariat the Staff Network provide reports to the Respect, Equity and Diversity Committee regarding Network activities and is represented on the ACTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network Working Group.

In the current reporting period the Staff Network met quarterly as per their Terms of Reference; including a meeting with the Director, People and Performance. The Staff Network contributed to the development, design and launch of the Directorate's *Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017* and the *Our Mob Our Voices Our Stories* promotional materials; which feature the voices and stories of seven current Aboriginal employees.

In 2014 the Staff Network provided input and feedback into the implementation of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017*, and provided a response to a discussion paper created as part of the Review of the ACTPS Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework.

In June 2014 the Staff Network hosted the ACTPS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network meeting which was attended and addressed by Ms Diane Joseph, Director-General.

iv. 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education priorities and targets are embedded in the Directorate's Strategic Plan which provides the framework for all Directorate planning.

v. 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 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members, community members, and parents, has been developed to ensure the validity of cultural awareness courses in ACT contexts.

BUSINESS INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT

High quality data enables the Directorate to evaluate the success of targeted strategies and programs designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

i. Tracking and monitoring the performance, progress and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Schools collect and record the data required to track and monitor student progress. In addition to school-based attendance and assessment data, primary schools record Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) data and Reading Benchmark levels. NAPLAN data is used in both primary and high schools to inform program design and determine staffing.

All kindergarten programs in the ACT participated in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) survey in 2012 Appendix A. Teachers complete the AEDC survey of children in their first year of fulltime education. The next survey is to be conducted in 2015. This data provides useful information to principals about the children surveyed at their school. Summary data includes details about the number of children who are considered to be developmentally vulnerable, as well as the number of children performing well on each of the domains tested.

ii. Increasing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Tracking and monitoring of student progress is critical and goes beyond the gathering of attendance and assessment data for statistical purposes. In addition to supports provided through Network Student Engagement Teams, staff from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section including the school-based officers, get to know as many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait students as possible. Effective relationships with students, families and communities enable staff to monitor students as they progress through their years of schooling. The Aspirations Program Coordinators aim to meet with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait students in years 9 to 12 throughout the school year. Students participating in the Aspirations Program (years 5 to 12) are interviewed each year about their interests and goals.

Schools continue to work closely with staff from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education section, Network Student Engagement Teams and other central office teams to support students to remain engaged with education and to transition through the years of schooling. This collaboration has enhanced information sharing to better inform the development of targeted strategies.

NEXT STEPS FOR 2014-2015

Quality learning	Inspirational teaching and leadership
Evaluate the 2014 school-based projects aimed at supporting literacy and numeracy skills development and the completion of assessment tasks to identify and promote best practice.	Create a Directorate publication promoting the key findings and examples of best practice from the Accepting the Challenge Action Inquiry program, 2010 to 2013.
Complete and evaluate the RTI trials.	Continue to implement the Directorate's <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan</i> with the initial focus on increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in schools.
Support schools to develop and deliver teaching and learning programs and activities that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives.	Facilitate delivery of cultural competence professional learning that is accredited through TQI for teacher registration purposes.
Increase sharing of teaching and learning resources to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures and ways of knowing across all subject areas.	Implement the pre-employment 'Our Mob Our Voices' induction program.
High expectations, high performance	Connecting with families and the community
Provide more enrichment activities for Student Aspirations students in years 5-6, including a whole day leadership program.	Meet regularly with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, the Staff Network and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group to consult about policy and practice and explore ways of working together.
Strengthen partnerships and create new ones to expand the delivery of Flexible Learning Options.	Increase the number of schools with Reconciliation Action Plans.
Support colleges and high schools to work in partnership in action inquiry projects aimed at improving student transitions, retention and attainment through the years of schooling to further education, training, and employment.	Increase the number of schools promoting and participating in celebrations and events significant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
Launch the Mura Achievement Awards for students in years 4 to 10.	Work in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, representative bodies and businesses to develop local curriculum resources and cultural education programs for ACT public schools.
Support schools to conduct action inquiry projects with a specific focus on improving attendance rates.	
Business Innovation and Improvement	
Ensure each school's annual plan has a focus on sustainable improvement in achievement outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and increased engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and the broader community.	
Improve access to, and the use of, data to track students and to support the evaluation of targeted strategies.	

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 2013 PIPS results, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made similar progress in mathematics but less progress in reading compared to their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers during their kindergarten year. A lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students made expected or better than expected progress than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers.

APPENDIX B

NAPLAN 2013

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 2012 and 2013.

In comparison to 2012 NAPLAN, table B demonstrates that in 2013:

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

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students sitting the NAPLAN reading test in 2013, 87.6 per cent of year 3 students, 93.7 per cent of year 5 students, 90.9 per cent of year 7 students and 81.0 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 90.2 per cent of year 3 students, 83.6 per cent of year 5 students, 78.3 per cent of year 7 students and 59.8 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 91.4 per cent of year 3 students, 87.1 per cent of year 5 students, 90.0 per cent of year 7 students and 70.9 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 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)

Student Participation and Gap	Year 3 Reading	Year 3 Writing	Year 3 Numeracy	Year 5 Reading	Year 5 Writing	Year 5 Numeracy
2012						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	85.7	88.4	84.0	80.4	74.3	81.5
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	96.3	96.6	96.8	95.3	94.1	96.2
Gap	10.0	8.2	12.5	14.9	19.8	14.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±7.8	±6.9	±7.6	±8.1	±9.5	±8.9
2013						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	87.6	90.2	91.4	93.7	83.6	87.1
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	96.4	95.6	96.7	95.7	94.4	95.2
Gap	8.8	5.4	5.3	3.4	10.8	8.1
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±7.6	±7.2	±4.9	±4.9	±8.2	±8.5
Student Participation and Gap	Year 7 Reading	Year 7 Writing	Year 7 Numeracy	Year 9 Reading	Year 9 Writing	Year 9 Numeracy
2012						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	84.1	71.9	81.9	82.4	63.9	86.8
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	96	90.2	95.4	94.9	83.8	95.7
Gap	11.9	18.3	13.5	12.5	19.9	8.9
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±7.9	±10.6	±9.2	±9.9	±10.8	±7
2013						
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	90.9	78.3	90.0	81.0	59.8	70.9
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	96	91.1	96.0	96.4	87.3	93.6
Gap	5.1	12.8	6.0	15.4	27.5	22.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander confidence intervals	±5.9	±9.8	±7.4	±8.1	±10.0	±11.3

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, 2013 (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, 2013 (per cent)

Student Participation	Year 3 ACT	Year 3 Australia	Year 5 ACT	Year 5 Australia	Year 7 ACT	Year 7 Australia	Year 9 ACT	Year 9 Australia
Reading								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	83.3	89.4	91.5	89.7	86.2	87.7	74.4	76.8
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.4	95.7	94.8	96.2	94.1	96.0	91.0	93.0
Writing								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	85.9	89.7	91.5	90.0	85.3	88.1	78.4	77.2
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.4	95.5	95.1	96.1	95.1	96.1	91.7	93.3
Numeracy								
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	81.1	88.6	91.5	88.5	81.9	86.6	74.4	75.7
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	93.4	95.4	94.7	95.9	94.2	95.6	90.8	92.3

Note:

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

Source:

ACARA, National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), 2013.

APPENDIX C

The Focus Schools initiative

The Focus Schools initiative concluded early in 2014. Thirty one schools participated in this initiative since 2012. Below are the highlights and achievements of the participating schools.

In the ACT, Investing in Focus Schools have engaged in sustained efforts to build meaningful partnerships with parents and community. Five Investing in Focus Schools have formal and active Community Partnership Agreements that involve ongoing participation and celebration. At the end of 2013 an additional school was in the process of finalising a Community Partnership Agreement (CPA). Within the ACT context, formal documentation of partnerships was not deemed as important as implementing measures that develop partnerships. One school specifically reported that families have indicated that they do not wish, nor need, to develop formal agreements.

Measures used by Investing in Focus Schools include, Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), community engagement in NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day Walk and Yarning Circles. Some schools reported that partnerships were forged through curriculum initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education such as a community delivered dance program, a didgeridoo group, an Indigenous courtyard project, excursions to significant sites and places and participation in an Indigenous Student Action Group. Many of the schools reported that PLPs were a strong vehicle to build and sustain meaningful partnerships with parents and carers.

Nearly all (91%) of the 11 Investing in Focus Schools reported full implementation of PLPs. One school reported that some parents asked not to have PLPs. Four schools included a transition goal in their PLPs as these schools were active in the North Canberra Gungahlin Network where sustained work has been done on transition plans as part of PLPs for the 20 schools in the network. A number of the schools provided detailed information on the PLP process and commented that the process opened communication between teacher, parents and staff, that the PLP was implemented through class work and specialist programs and included aspirational and extension programs. Schools reported that PLPs were a strong vehicle to build and sustain meaningful partnerships with parents and carers and that high student input and ongoing review and feedback processes were vital in making the plans a 'living' effective document focussed on improved outcomes.

In the ACT it was possible to bring all Investing in Focus Schools together for targeted and productive professional learning that supported National Professional Learning Standards for Principals and for Teachers.

A network of leaders from Focus Schools was established in 2012 and continued in 2013. The network met each term to engage in professional learning, resource sharing and to discuss progress and challenges. Highlights included a curriculum workshop, presentations by Aboriginal leaders and by Wreck Bay Elder, Julie Freeman, and a two day study tour to Jervis Bay and Wreck Bay. One Investing in Focus Schools principal attended the three day Stronger Smarter Summit in October 2012 and, in partnership with officers from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section, lead discussion and provided resources to Investing In Our Focus Schools leaders.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (2012), edited by Kaye Price, was used as the key text for Investing In Focus Schools as a tool for principals to lead professional discussion in their schools.

All Investing in Focus Schools participated in a yearlong Action Inquiry program that incorporated professional development. The focus of the professional development was priority actions to improve education outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Participants worked with Emeritus Professor Tony Shaddock and were supported by officers in the Directorate's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Section. The majority of the inquiries focussed on improving outcomes in literacy and numeracy and included inquiries into improving numeracy outcomes through the use of Numicon, the impact of MULTILIT and Minilit, targeted intensive reading intervention, goal setting, oral language storytelling and written language, student engagement and connectedness, Scaffolded Literacy Strategies and the impact of Visible Learning Strategies on reading.

All reports included collection and analysis of data, implementation of initiatives, findings and recommendations, reports from the 11 Investing in Focus schools were published for use by ACT public schools.

Nine leaders or teachers at Investing in Our Focus Schools participated in the Accepting the Challenge Leadership program in August 2013. The program included a keynote address by Professor Mark Rose, a presentation by Reconciliation Australia and panels and workshops that focussed on increasing individual understanding and knowledge, as well as strategies for improved outcomes.

APPENDIX D

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments by year level 2014

Table 1 shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait student enrolments compared to the student population across that level of schooling. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students represent on average 3.7 percent of the total population across all schooling levels except within preschool (5.5%) and Year 5 (4.3%) where it is above the average.

Table 1: Number of enrolments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, level of schooling and year level, 2014^{1,2}

Level of schooling	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (%)	Non-Indigenous	Not stated	Total
Primary school					
Preschool	267	5.5	4,603	3	4,873
Kindergarten	120	3.4	3,365	1	3,486
Year 1	119	3.5	3,287	1	3,407
Year 2	117	3.6	3,134	3	3,254
Year 3	104	3.4	2,973	5	3,082
Year 4	110	3.9	2,714	4	2,828
Year 5	120	4.3	2,666	5	2,791
Year 6	86	3.3	2,502	1	2,589
Subtotal primary school	1,043	4.0	25,244	23	26,310
High school					
Year 7	89	3.8	2,256	11	2,356
Year 8	91	3.7	2,329	20	2,440
Year 9	87	3.4	2,426	21	2,534
Year 10	85	3.3	2,474	23	2,582
Subtotal high school	352	3.6	9,485	75	9,912
College					
Year 11	106	3.2	3,165	30	3,301
Year 12	59	2.2	2,605	15	2,679
Mature/Older	8	23.5	26	-	34
Subtotal college	173	2.9	5,796	45	6,014
Total all schools	1,568	3.7	40,525	143	42,236

Note:

¹ Includes a small number of students who attended more than one school.

² Includes students from specialist schools.

