



**Interim Report to the Legislative Assembly
of the Australian Capital Territory
Performance In
Indigenous Education**



**Half yearly report covering the period
January-June 2006**

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Cover photograph: part of the 'sea of hands' created by people on National Sorry Day. The hands were provided by preschools.

All other photographs in this report were taken during Ainslie Primary School's activities to recognise and celebrate Reconciliation Day.

Overview

This report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Indigenous education covers the period from January to June 2006 inclusive.

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

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

- Early school engagement and performance (preschool to Year 3)
- Positive childhood and transition to adulthood

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

- Valuing diversity
- Forming genuine and ongoing partnerships with Indigenous communities

The Department has used these strategic areas for action to assist with and inform the development of its plans for Indigenous education and continue its focus on Indigenous issues.

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

The next report to the ACT Legislative Assembly will cover outcomes for Indigenous students achieved during the full 2006 calendar year.

Valuing Diversity

Cultural awareness

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

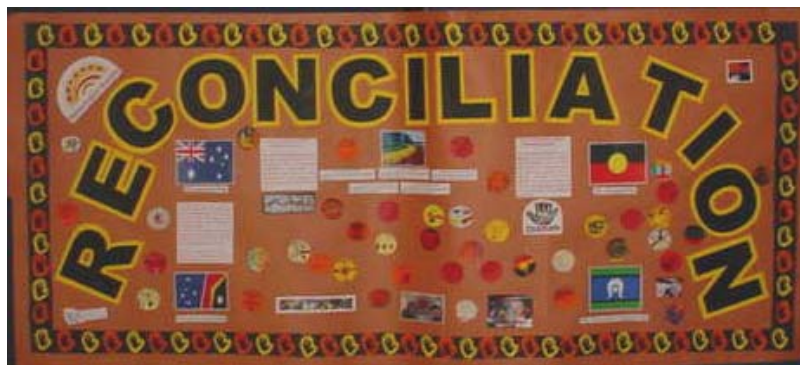
- Information to assist with the recruitment and selection of Indigenous teachers has been developed.
- A cultural awareness course was provided to newly appointed teachers in the Department. The focus of the course was to provide background knowledge about the history of Indigenous education and how that will impact on what is happening in schools today. The course also promotes discussion about how to meet the needs of Indigenous students in ACT Government schools.
- At the start of 2006, newly inducted staff attended cross-cultural awareness sessions held as part of their orientation program.

In term three of 2005 a training program, *Reconciliation, Learning and Leading Together* provided teachers with knowledge and awareness of Indigenous culture; strategies to assist Indigenous students in their learning; and strategies to involve Indigenous families and the community in those processes. That program has been provided to teachers again during the 2006 reporting period.

Building the capacity of Indigenous staff

Two Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers are currently enrolled in teacher education programs. One who works with the Koori Preschools is in her second year while the other is due to complete a Diploma in Education as the final part of a degree.

Two Indigenous Education staff members have commenced their studies towards a *Certificate IV in Community Services*. It is anticipated that this training will be completed in 2006.



Reconciliation poster designed and made by students at Ainslie Primary School

Forming genuine and ongoing partnerships with Indigenous communities

School Boards

With a view to increasing the number of Indigenous people on school boards, the Indigenous Education Consultative Body is working with the Department on the development of a training program specifically for Indigenous parents. The program will focus on giving Indigenous parents the skills and confidence to participate on school boards. This training is planned for the latter part of 2006.

There is a designated position on the Birrigai School Board for an Indigenous person.

Parent Involvement/Parent School Partnership Initiatives (PSPIs)

In 2005 the Australian Government ceased the ASSPA program, replacing it with the *Parent School Partnership Initiative*. The Department has assisted Indigenous parents and schools to prepare submissions for PSPI funding.

Initiatives are currently in various stages of implementation and due to conclude between September and December 2006. Examples of initiatives include:

- the Arawang cluster of schools have involved Indigenous parents at all stages in the preparation of a successful submission for informing parents about ILPs.

- Melrose High School is involving Indigenous parents in an Indigenous studies program
- Reconciliation Day at Boomanulla Oval was celebrated in June 2006. Reconciliation Day involved many parents of Indigenous students accompanying their children and taking part in some of the activities provided during the day.

ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body

Late in 2005 the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) sought applications to fill vacant positions on the 17 member body. In addition to existing vacancies, there were a number of members whose term of membership was due to expire in 2006. To ensure continuity of information and advice around Indigenous education issues and assist with a successful transition period between existing and new members, three members had their membership extended by one additional year. Six new members were recruited.

There are currently three positions to be filled to enable the IECB to function at full membership capacity. Processes to ensure that those vacancies are filled have been put in place, including seeking a nomination from the Indigenous community at Wreck Bay.

Early school engagement and performance (preschool to Year 3)

Preschool enrolments

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

A total of 87 children out of the total of 3,369 students were identified as Indigenous. This represents 2.6% of the total enrolment. Thirty-six of these children are attending Koori Preschool programs.

Literacy and Numeracy Kindergarten outcomes

All ACT students entering Kindergarten are assessed using the Performance Indicators for Primary Schools assessment tool. The results for the February 2006 assessment show that more than half of the Indigenous student cohort scored above the cut score in the three areas assessed - mathematics, reading and phonics. The highest result was in phonics with a difference of 5 percentage points between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Positive childhood and transition to adulthood

Literacy and numeracy

While the 2005 ACTAP results for Years 3, 5, 7, 9 suggest there is improvement being made in the outcomes for Indigenous students in those years of schooling, there is still a significant percentage of Indigenous students scoring in the lowest quartile in reading, writing and numeracy strands.

In 2005 the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy consultants worked with Year 4 Indigenous students who were in the lowest 20% in the Year 3 ACTAP results of 2004 to improve their outcomes in the 2006 ACTAP. During this reporting period a more concentrated effort was

also placed on working with teachers of Indigenous students in Year 4 to assist with the development of individual learning programs for these students.

Initiatives to date include action research with the staff of a primary school to identify their needs in supporting the learning of Indigenous students, in order to assist with the development and delivery of strategies that will impact on outcomes for Indigenous students throughout their years of primary school education.



Artwork and stories explaining Reconciliation Day decorate the foyer of Ainslie Primary School

K-10 Indigenous student enrolment 2006

Enrolment data collected in the February School Census for 2006 indicate that there were 553 Indigenous students enrolled in K-6 and 240 enrolled in Years 7-10.

'On Track'

The 'On Track' program continues to operate from Birrigai Outdoor School and Narrabundah Primary School with a focus on implementing strategies to engage Year 5 and Year 6 Indigenous boys in their learning. The total number of boys currently participating in the program is 25.

This year the program's operation was expanded to include Indigenous girls in Years 5 and 6. Nineteen Indigenous female students participated the program during the reporting period.

By the end of Term Two, Indigenous students from a total of 16 government primary schools were involved in the program.

Dare to Lead project

There are currently 103 ACT schools that have joined the Dare to Lead Coalition of which 75 are government schools.

The Dare to Lead project offers support and motivation as well as a practical tool in 'What Works? The Work Program'. This is an effective tool for achieving Dare to Lead targets as it emphasises the values of a whole school approach and offers information and support to classroom teachers.

Programs and initiatives conducted over this reporting period include workshops for school staff on a cluster basis. Officers of the Department's Indigenous Education Section were involved either as participants or presenters in some of these workshops.



Students at Ainslie Primary School worked together to produce a wall mosaic

Indigenous culture

Throughout each year, Indigenous students have many opportunities to enhance their learning experiences and learn about their culture. Some of the highlights for this reporting period are outlined below.

- Children and their parents attended Reconciliation Day at Boomanulla Oval Narrabundah. Schools were asked to encourage all Indigenous students to invite a non-Indigenous friend to accompany them and join the celebrations.
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in schools across the ACT acknowledged National Sorry Day in different ways. Some made posters, others created murals while others contributed to a 'Sea of Hands' at the University of Canberra.
- Indigenous parents and teachers of Melrose High School have commenced working together to develop curriculum related activities that provide information about cultural and historical aspects of Indigenous Australia.

NAIDOC Week was celebrated in different ways in schools this year. Due to the date being in the last week of the school term, many schools combined for activities that included Indigenous games, family days, flag raising and general acknowledgement of the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians make to society.

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

Students learn about aspects of culture such as visual and performing arts and are provided with opportunities to develop or enhance their skills in English literacy and numeracy. There

are more than 30 participants in the program, which is expected to increase during the remainder of the year.

Years 10 and 12 enrolment

Enrolment data from the February school census indicates that a total of 57 Indigenous students are enrolled in Year 10 in government secondary schools. The total number for Years 11 and 12 enrolled in ACT Colleges is 103.

College transition program

In Term 1 2006 a program developed for senior students was introduced at Erindale College. The program aims to enhance retention rates for Indigenous students by engaging them in discussion about their needs after they finish college. The focus for students is on educational outcomes that contribute to enhanced opportunities for further study and or employment.

Leadership and mentoring program

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

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



Art work produced by students at Ainslie Primary School