

2002

REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

FIFTH SIX MONTHLY REPORT to 31 August 2002

**REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIFTH SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON PERFORMANCE ON
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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OVERVIEW

This report is the fifth report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Indigenous Education covering the period from March 2002 to August 2002. Every six months a report is provided from the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services to inform the Legislative Assembly about progress in Indigenous education.

As stated in previous reports, Indigenous people are the most disadvantaged group in Australian society. Most indicators show gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Education is no different.

Gains are being made. Improvements in attendance rates, literacy and numeracy and retention to year 10 and year 12 are being achieved. Unfortunately due to the small numbers of Indigenous students in each year group much of the data is statistically unreliable. Therefore caution should be taken when drawing conclusions as minor changes in the number of Indigenous students can result in a major change in percentages. In this respect the data does indicate trends that can be monitored over time.

The most significant initiative in Indigenous education in ACT Government School Education in the past six months is the Government's budget initiative. This initiative will have a major impact on the services provided to Indigenous students and their families. It also demonstrates that the Government values the work of Indigenous staff.

The agreement by the Indigenous parent community of ACT Government schools to the wording of the Indigenous Education Compact is a significant step forward. It is the first time that both the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services and the Indigenous community in government schools have spelled out the commitments they are willing to undertake.

The Services to Indigenous People Action Plan gives guidance to schools, the central office and service areas. It stipulates what needs to be done to achieve equitable outcomes for Indigenous people in education.

BUDGET INITIATIVE

The ACT government has committed \$787,000 over the next four years for the Indigenous Education Initiative. This initiative will increase the skill level of staff working with Indigenous young people and improve the home-school liaison services to Indigenous families.

The government initiative aims to address the gap in learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. It also addresses the attendance and retention rates of Indigenous students. Staff will monitor attendance and provide support to students and their families so that Indigenous students will stay on and complete their schooling.

To achieve this the number of Indigenous Home School Liaison Officers (IHSL) will be increased from two to eleven. This provides increased home/school support for Indigenous families. Two new Indigenous Education Support Officers (IESO)

positions will provide team leadership and supervision for the two school support teams, critical incident support to IHSLOs and greater administrative support to the department.

An important part of this initiative will be appropriate training for staff. Besides an induction program and ongoing professional learning that will be put in place, formal qualifications to Certificate IV Governance (Governance/Indigenous Affairs) will be required. The appropriate course/s are being sourced by the department and negotiated with relevant staff following analysis of needs.

A human resources business plan was developed to address issues regarding the implementation of the initiative. After acceptance of the business plan the positions will be advertised and progressively filled.

PLANNING & CONSULTATION

(a) Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-2004

The Services to Indigenous People Action Plan was launched on 4 July 2002. Key initiatives in the plan address the commitments of:

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

All Indigenous families with children attending ACT government schools were invited to provide comments on a draft plan and, since publication, have received copies of the Services to Indigenous People Action Plan.

(b) ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body Strategic Plan 2002-2004

This plan was launched in 2002. It includes strategies that focus on improving: Indigenous participation; access and equity; literacy and numeracy outcomes; the teaching of Indigenous studies; equitable learning outcomes; government support; knowledge of rights and responsibilities; employment opportunities; evaluation and resourcing of Indigenous programs.

(c) Compact

The Compact will be a signed agreement between the ACT IECB and the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services describing the commitment both parties will make to the education of Indigenous children and youth. The department, IECB members and, through the IECB, the Indigenous parent community, have all negotiated and agreed on the wording of the Compact. Plans for its signing and publication are in progress.

(d) VET Plan

This year the Indigenous Education Consultative Board and the VETA Board has endorsed an ACT draft implementation plan to support the national VET strategy, *Partners in a Learning Culture - Blueprint for Implementation*. The ACT plan is to be launched by the Minister early in 2003. It identifies the strategies needed for the provision of culturally appropriate vocational education and training, which would improve education, training and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is an important factor in improving outcomes of Indigenous students. The collection of attendance data through the school computer system allows for accurate calculation of attendance rates for all students. Below are the attendance rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students for term 1 2002.

	Average Days Absent	Percentage Attendance	Number missing more than 20%	Percentage missing more than 20%
PRIMARY				
All non Indigenous students	2.4	95	592	3
All Indigenous	4.1	92	48	9
HIGH SCHOOLS				
All non Indigenous students	4.0	92	716	7
All Indigenous	7.0	86	51	22

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous average rates of attendance in primary schools is small. Work on monitoring attendance and communicating with families about the importance of ensuring students' attendance at school needs to continue to remove the difference.

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous average rates of attendance in high schools is much greater. Of particular concern is the proportion of Indigenous students who are missing more than 20% of schools days.

The department is identifying students who fall into this category. The schools affected are receiving support to assist in improving these students' attendance. In some cases alternate educational settings are being investigated for students who are chronic non-attendeers.

LITERACY & NUMERACY

(a) Entry to School

All students commencing Kindergarten at the beginning of 2002 participated in the Performance in Primary Schools (PIPS) baseline assessment. This year the computer program used was modified to make it more relevant to Australian students.

The results for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are in the table below. The results show the number and percentage of students whose scores were in the top 80%. Students in the lower 20% of scores provided with support programs to enable them to progress at a satisfactory rate.

	Indigenous Students		Non-Indigenous Students	
	<i>Number in top 80% of total scores / Total number of Indigenous students</i>	<i>Percentage in top 80% of total scores</i>	<i>Number in top 80% of total scores / Total number of non-Indigenous students</i>	<i>Percentage in top 80% of total scores</i>
Mathematics	28/59	47.5	2222/2714	81.9
Reading	30/59	50.8	2207/2714	81.3
Phonics	38/59	64.4	2184/2714	80.5

The results show that there is a large gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' literacy and numeracy skills at the commencement of Kindergarten. The gap was least in the phonics assessment.

Kindergarten teachers received detailed reports on the performance of each child as well as their class. They are then able to modify their learning programs to reflect the skills that some children already bring to school. They can also cater for the needs of students who do not have adequate literacy or numeracy skills. This would include the development of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with specific needs.

The assessment will be readministered during term 4 to examine the progress of students in their first year of schooling. The results of the end of year assessment will be available for the next Legislative Assembly report.

(b) Consultancy Support

The Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant provides support for schools and teachers to improve literacy and numeracy skills of Indigenous students. One of the main roles is to assist teachers in developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for Indigenous students needing support in literacy and numeracy. Other tasks include providing advice to schools about Indigenous literacy and numeracy and professional learning opportunities for school staff.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

(a) Student Participation

Indigenous students are taking advantage of the opportunity to acquire vocational skills through ACT secondary colleges. There are 50 Indigenous students enrolled in 23 different vocational courses. These students are all in years 11 and 12. Some students are enrolled in more than one course making 80 course enrolments as shown in the table below. Of these enrolments, 50 are male and 30 are female students. The largest enrolments are in the areas of hospitality and automotive technology.

Course Title	Male	Female	Total
AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY	8	1	9
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	3	3	6
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION A	0	1	1
COMMUNITY SERVICES	1	3	4
FASHION DESIGN	1	0	1
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STUDIES	7	9	16
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STUDIES A	5	0	5
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	4	2	6
IT – APPLICATIONS T	2	4	6
IT – GENERAL STUDIES T	1	0	1
IT – SYSTEMS	2	0	2
IT APPLICATIONS	3	0	3
LABORATORY SKILLS B	2	0	2
METALS FABRICATION A	1	0	1
MULTIMEDIA	2	0	2
MULTIMEDIA A	1	2	3
RETAIL	2	0	2
SPORT & REC'N INDUSTRY STUDIES	1	0	1
SPORT & RECREATION ADMIN.	0	1	1
TECH. PROD. FOR LIVE THEATRE	2	0	2
TOURISM INDUSTRY STUDIES	2	1	3
TOURISM INDUSTRY STUDIES A	0	3	3
Total	50	30	80

(b) VET Plan

See Planning & Consultation section on page 5.

STUDENT SUPPORT

(b) Student Management

Officers implementing student management programs work closely with staff in support of all Indigenous education programs. These programs are both mainstream as well as Indigenous specific.

(c) Indigenous Mentoring Pilot Program

The ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services is participating in the national Indigenous mentoring pilot program. The Commonwealth has provided funding for the pilot.

The pilot program is being established in three high schools. The schools selected were Lyneham High School, Melrose High School and Kambah High School. These schools were selected because they had the highest numbers of Indigenous students.

The Indigenous Mentoring Pilot program is aimed at Indigenous students to assist in improving participation in school. Mentors have been selected and trained. Around twenty students and their parents have agreed to participate. The schools are ready for the pilot program to begin.

All mentors are volunteers with no payment made for their services. The project complements all other ongoing support for Indigenous students.

A full time project manager was employed to manage the mentoring program. The pilot is overseen by a steering committee which includes members of the Indigenous community.

(d) Indigenous Youth Alcohol & Drug Project

Cross-agency links have been established for the referral of Indigenous students who are experiencing drug or alcohol problems to receive available services. This will have longer term benefits for Indigenous students to become active participants in school and the wider community.

(d) Children's, Youth & Family Services

This year a review of foster care services for Indigenous children has been completed. Outcomes of the review will focus on an improved service provision and more appropriate models of support for Indigenous families.

The department has recruited a number of Indigenous case workers to assist Indigenous youth in the justice system. These young people may or may not be in the school system.

In consultation with the community, the role of Indigenous workers in supporting Indigenous family services is being reviewed. The aim of the review is to develop an outward looking community role for supporting the needs of Indigenous families.

HUMAN RESOURCES

(a) Teaching Staff

The level one teacher recruitment round is complete. This year there was an increased number of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous applicants. As indicated in the Equity and Diversity Plan, a target of a minimum of three Indigenous teachers has been set.

This year an Indigenous teacher was selected to be part of the recruitment round team. This particular action highlighted Indigenous employment as one of the key priorities of the recruitment round.

(b) Professional Development

With the increased number of Indigenous staff employed comes the challenge to retain these valued staff members. An Indigenous staff network is being considered. The ACT branch of the Australian Education Union, in collaboration with the department, is keen to facilitate the beginnings of the network and are consulting with Indigenous staff about this idea.

The network would provide support to Indigenous staff who often operate in isolation from people from their cultural background. It would also provide additional opportunities to participate in professional development and provide input to policies and directions in the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services.

Through the Government's budget initiative the staffing configuration for the support of Indigenous students is undergoing a restructure. This initiative includes a comprehensive training program which is being negotiated. Other details were described earlier in this report.

A departmental priority for professional development this year has been focused on the theme of inclusivity. Course organisers have been proactive in arranging training for all levels of staffing to promote cross-cultural knowledge and inclusive practice across the department and in schools.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

In July this year Jervis Bay School students entered the primary schools' Wakakirri dance contest with a performance on the issue of Reconciliation.

Narrabundah Primary School continues to harness community services to enhance the lives of Indigenous students. Ongoing programs include: breakfast program; free medical services; multicultural dance group; and social skilling program.

Four Koori preschools are now in operation with the latest preschool being trialed for community acceptance and participation at Calwell. Other Koori preschools operate at Holt, Narrabundah and Wanniasa Hills.

Lanyon High School organised an all day activities program to support NAIDOC Week for the high school and its feeder primary schools. The event was available for students from Kindergarten to year 10.

Indigenous high school and college students participated in a Careers expo organised for Indigenous students by the ACT Chamber of Commerce at Boomanulla Oval.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. In Reach of Us All – ACT Schools Plan 2002-04
- B. Services to Indigenous People Action Plan 2002-04
- C. Student Support Services Action Plan 2002-04