

**2002**

**REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

**SIX MONTHLY REPORT to 28 February 2002**

## REPORT TO ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

### FOURTH SIX MONTHLY REPORT ON PERFORMANCE ON INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

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#### 1. OVERVIEW

Indigenous education continues to be a real concern in the ACT, as it is in the rest of the country. This Government has acknowledged there is a need to put workable strategies in place to ensure that educational outcomes for Indigenous students improve.

This report represents the fourth of a series of six monthly reports on our progress in developing strategies to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in the ACT. In brief, the following initiatives have been put in place as the foundation for those strategies.

#### Consultation

##### Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB)

The new IECB is now in place and is providing advice to government on education and community services. It has developed a strategic plan for 2002 to 2004. The goal of the Indigenous Education Consultative Body is to work with ACT education systems, to increase the educational outcomes for Indigenous students to standards comparable with those of the wider student population, and to better the understanding of Indigenous cultures for all.

This is to be achieved through:

1. enabling participation of Indigenous peoples in educational decision making.
2. Ensuring access, equity and participation for Indigenous students in education and training.
3. Encouraging literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students including community development training for adults.
4. Promoting, maintaining and supporting the teaching of Indigenous Studies, cultures and language to Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students.

5. Ensuring equitable and appropriate education outcomes for Indigenous students.
6. Improving the support from government departments for Indigenous families
7. Supporting the rights and responsibilities of Indigenous students and parents.
8. Increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous people in education and training.
9. Improving the implementation, evaluation and resourcing of Indigenous education.

### Indigenous Compact

The Indigenous Education Compact states the commitment of both Indigenous families and the department to working together to overcome inequities and improve the experience of schooling and outcomes for Indigenous students. The wording has been agreed to by the Indigenous Education Consultative Body and the department. The support of Indigenous parents for the Compact is being sought.

The IECB has requested that the Indigenous Compact be sent out to parents for comment before being released. On completion of the consultation the Compact will be signed off by the Chief Executive DECS and the Chair of the IECB.

### **Education Programs**

The Indigenous Education Unit (IEU) provides support to the Department of Education and Community Services (DECS), schools, students and families on matters regarding the education of Indigenous students.

The main priorities are improving the attendance rates of Indigenous students and achieving literacy and numeracy performance levels comparable with non-Indigenous students.

The Indigenous Home/School Liaison Officers and Indigenous Education Workers (IEWs) monitor the attendance of Indigenous students as well as their literacy and numeracy performance.

The Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant is providing support to schools and teachers in developing individual education plans (IEP) for Indigenous students who need assistance in literacy and numeracy. She also provides professional development for teachers.

Indigenous studies continues to grow in emphasis in ACT schools. More schools are accessing the resources available at the IEU and making enquiries about how they can incorporate Indigenous studies in their school curriculum. Through this program, all students have the opportunity to learn about Indigenous cultures.

## **Human Resource Management**

### Increasing Indigenous Staff

As part of the department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002*, the employment of Indigenous teachers is a priority. During the 2001-2002 recruitment campaign Indigenous people were given priority. As a result 8 offers of employment as teachers in the ACT were made with three Indigenous teachers taking up offers. This is the beginning of what is hoped is a trend for future years.

### Training

All new DECS staff participate in an induction program, this also includes new executive teachers, deputy principals and principals. At each induction program a segment is devoted to Indigenous education issues. These include the role of the IEU and the support services it provides, effective strategies for teaching Indigenous students and cultural awareness.

Teacher recruitment panels are trained in cultural awareness with a particular focus on recruiting teachers with demonstrated cultural sensitivity.

Cross-cultural training is offered four times each year for all members of the Department.

## **Literacy and Numeracy**

The ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) for years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) assessment tool are providing valuable data on student, school and ACT performance.

The data on literacy and numeracy levels of Indigenous students is provided in section 2. The data shows that there is still a need to increase the skills of Indigenous students in these key areas.

The IEU and the Literacy and Numeracy team are working with schools to ensure that each school has an explicit commitment to improving the literacy and numeracy standards of Indigenous students.

## **Priority Areas In Agreement with the Commonwealth Government**

Priority areas identified in our Agreement for services with the Commonwealth are integrated within an overall strategy, and some promising results have been achieved.

### Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students through monitoring attendance rates

With the centralised collection of attendance data there can now be an accurate comparison of attendance rates for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Average attendance rate of Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students was:

|                               | Indigenous<br>2001 | Non-Indigenous<br>2001 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Primary Students              | 91%                | 94%                    |
| Secondary Students to Year 10 | 84%                | 91%                    |

#### Increasing professional development of staff involved in Indigenous Education

The Indigenous Education Unit has worked closely with the Literacy and Numeracy Team to develop programs that provide Indigenous perspectives in training programs for teachers, and also to provide professional development for IEU staff.

#### Expanding culturally inclusive curricula

There continues to be increased activity in all sectors to raise the proportions of schools offering Indigenous studies.

In addition, assessment of implementation of the cross-curriculum perspective of Indigenous culture was made part of the School Development process from 2000. Twenty per cent of ACT Government schools undergo this process each year. In the curriculum self-assessment component of the review, the school is required to evaluate how it has complied with this component of the framework. Every school will have been evaluated by 2004.

#### Increase involvement of Indigenous parents/community members in educational decision-making

Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness committees are active in eighty per cent of ACT Government schools.

The IECB in partnership with DECS provided school board training for Indigenous community members in 2001. The community members who attended the training were encouraged to nominate for their respective school boards. Membership as community representatives for school boards was offered to those people who indicated that they would like to be on a school board. Where possible schools with significant numbers of Indigenous students were selected for this purpose. At present there are two Indigenous people on schools boards, one is a parent representative the other is a community representative. This is an improvement from 2001 when there were no Indigenous people on school boards.

#### **Staffing and funding**

There are 16 positions in the IEU. Of these 13 have been identified as Indigenous. There are 14 Indigenous people employed in these positions, three staff presently share two positions

The ACT Department of Education and Community Services and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) jointly fund the IEU. Over and above normal funding for schools, an additional \$770,600 was provided for about

770 Indigenous students in ACT Government schools in 2001. This represents about \$1,000 additional funding per student. Approximately half of this money is provided by the Commonwealth and half by the ACT Government.

### **DEST Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP)**

DECS has renewed the IESIP agreement with the Commonwealth. The agreement is for 2001 to 2004. As part of the IESIP agreement, DECS has also agreed to commitments under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS). Targets and Performance Indicators have been agreed to, under both strategies, to have the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student outcomes closed by 2004.

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| <b>2. LITERACY AND NUMERACY PERFORMANCE:<br/>ACT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM 2001 RESULTS FOR INDIGENOUS<br/>STUDENTS</b> |
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### **Indigenous Participation in 2001 ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP)**

ACTAP was administered in August 2001. It assessed Literacy and Numeracy for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in ACT Government schools and in Years 3 and 5 in Catholic Schools. The data from ACTAP is used to find out not only how individual students are performing but also how schools and the system are performing. It also allows the comparison of attainment levels for sub groups within our schools, in particular between Indigenous and Non Indigenous students.

Students are assessed against the national profiles in English and mathematics and the ACT Curriculum Frameworks. Each year is assessed at four levels:

- Year 3 at Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4
- Year 5 at Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5
- Year 7 at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6
- Year 9 at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Care needs to be taken when comparing the results for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The numbers of Indigenous students at each year level is too small to be statistically significant. Small variations of Indigenous students at any profile level will cause a significant change in the percentage of Indigenous students at the profile levels for that year group. This can also cause wider variations between years than with the whole year population.

The number of Indigenous students assessed at each year level in 2001 was 58 at Year 3, 61 at Year 5, 39 at Year 7 and 43 at Year 9.

## Reading

The table below shows the percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the top three levels for each year group for 2001.

|        | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous |
|--------|------------|----------------|
| Year 3 | 93.0%      | 96.8%          |
| Year 5 | 90.2%      | 98.8%          |
| Year 7 | 92.3%      | 97.2%          |
| Year 9 | 60.5%      | 88.5%          |

## Writing

The table below shows the percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the top three levels for each year group for 2001.

|        | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous |
|--------|------------|----------------|
| Year 3 | 96.6%      | 99.4%          |
| Year 5 | 76.3%      | 95.6%          |
| Year 7 | 70.3%      | 98.2%          |
| Year 9 | 44.4%      | 70.7%          |

## Numeracy

The table below shows the percentage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in the top three levels for each year group for 2001.

|        | Indigenous | Non-Indigenous |
|--------|------------|----------------|
| Year 3 | 98.3%      | 99.1           |
| Year 5 | 96.7%      | 99.5%          |
| Year 7 | 92.5%      | 98.2%          |
| Year 9 | 83.3%      | 93.5%          |

## National Benchmarks

The national benchmarks in reading, writing, spelling and numeracy describe the minimum standard in reading, writing, spelling and numeracy for students at Years 3, 5 and 7. It allows a comparison of results between states as well as the ability to determine a national result for each area. At present the benchmark cut-scores have been set for Years 3 and 5 reading and numeracy. The cut-scores for Years 3 and 5 writing and spelling as well as Year 7 reading, writing, spelling and numeracy will be set during 2001.

The percentage of Indigenous students the benchmark in reaching and numeracy for 2000 to 2001 for Indigenous students are in the tables below. It is evident from these results that there have been improvements in most years groups for Indigenous students. The proportion of Indigenous students meeting the minimum levels of reading and numeracy are below that of the general population. Consequently improving the Literacy and Numeracy standards for Indigenous students must remain a high priority.

ACT Indigenous Reading Benchmark results 1999 - 2001

|               | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Year 3</b> | 87.7%       | 88.3%       |
| <b>Year 5</b> | 80.9%       | 87.3%       |

ACT General Student Reading Benchmark results 1999 – 2001

|               | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Year 3</b> | 94.8%       | 95.0%       |
| <b>Year 5</b> | 90.8%       | 96.8%       |

ACT Indigenous Numeracy Benchmark Results 2000 – 2001

|               | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Year 3</b> | 88.1%       | 92.2%       |
| <b>Year 5</b> | 79.5%       | 62.3%       |

ACT General Student Numeracy Benchmark results 2000 – 2001

|               | <b>2000</b> | <b>2001</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Year 3</b> | 95.7%       | 96.5%       |
| <b>Year 5</b> | 91.3%       | 89.6%       |

The gaps between Years 3 and 5 reading are generally decreasing as is the gap at Year 3 Numeracy. The difference at Year 5 is a concern. More effort is being put in place at Years 4, 5 and 6 in numeracy by the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant to improve the results for this level.



### **3. EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY AND PLANNING**

The four key policies of the department are:

- The *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program, (IESIP) operating under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals*. The Indigenous Education Agreement for 2001 – 2004 between the ACT Department of Education and Community Services and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) was signed on 18 September 2001.
- The *Strategic Plan for Vocational Education and Training Services to Indigenous People* was developed by December 2000, in partnership with the national strategy. The ACT strategy was developed in consultation with the Indigenous Education Consultative Body.
  - The *Draft Services to Indigenous People Strategic Action Plan 2002-2004* was distributed for consultation in 2001 and the final version will be released later in the year.
- The *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002* identifies Indigenous Employment and Diversity and Inclusivity as two of the three key areas of action for the three years. The plan was developed through consultation with departmental staff and other key stakeholders including the IEU and the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB).

These programs incorporate the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home*, *Deaths in Custody*, and *Reconciliation* reports.

### **4. DETAIL ON EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

#### **Clients**

Preschool to Year 12 students.

- There are approximately 770 Indigenous students in ACT and Jervis Bay schools between Preschool and Year 12.

#### **Services Provided**

Services are provided to improve literacy and numeracy of Indigenous children by monitoring the school attendance of Indigenous students, providing intensive literacy support, working with schools to raise cultural awareness; and supporting schools in their development of Indigenous studies. This is managed through the IEU located in the Mawson Primary School

- **SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS (SST)**  
There are two Student Support Teams each responsible for half the Canberra schools. The teams are made up of a Home School Liaison Officer as Team Leader and four Indigenous Education Workers (IEW). The IEW has the task of working with schools to support and monitor the progress of every Indigenous student enrolled in the government system. In most circumstances it is within the

scope of the IEW's experience and training to provide direct assistance. In others a more intensive intervention may be required which is coordinated through the Student Support Teams and the Student Management Consultant.

- **STUDENT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT**

The Student Management Consultant has resources to assist schools with students with the more challenging behaviours. The Student Management Consultant has a direct communication link to the IEWs and their Team Leader. They work in partnership with schools to plan interventions and provide special resources for these students. This is a very effective targeted use of resources which is well received by Principals.

- **INDIGENOUS LITERACY AND NUMERACY CONSULTANT**

This is a joint initiative between the IEU and the Literacy and Numeracy Team. An Indigenous teacher has been appointed to this position fulfilling a commitment of the government to create an Indigenous teaching position in the Literacy and Numeracy Team. The Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Consultant provides support and advice for teachers of Indigenous students with special literacy needs. ACT Assessment Program (ACTAP) results, Learning Assistance surveys, Kindergarten Assessments and referrals from the IEU are used to help target the work of this officer.

- **CULTURAL AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES**

The Indigenous Education Unit has developed a resource library. It is an excellent resource for teachers and school students. The resource library is open from Monday to Wednesday, 9.00am to 4.30pm. The library provides books, Indigenous Education Packages, videos and posters for loan to preschools, schools and Bachelor of Education students.

- **PRESCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

There are Indigenous Preschools at Holt, Wanniasa and Narrabundah. Students are enrolled to four years of age and transport is provided when needed. The Preschool Teacher is also a member of the DECS Literacy and Numeracy Team and is used extensively in providing advice about the teaching of Indigenous children. The Indigenous Preschool Assistant supports the Preschool teacher at the Koori Preschool sessions and also provides the link between Preschool, parents and the community.

- **OTHER SERVICES**

- Schools are supported in their development of Indigenous studies and courses:
  - Indigenous Studies can be a part of all Key Learning Areas but particularly Studies of Society and Environment. Many schools have developed courses or units in Indigenous studies. The IEU assists schools in this through provision of advice and resources. Indigenous Education is an Across Curriculum Perspective which is required to be included in all KLAs.
  - The IEU informs schools about relevant events and resources for use in their curriculum (eg Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, and NAIDOC Week).

Indigenous presenters run Indigenous Cultural awareness workshops in some schools.

- Assessment of implementation of the cross-curriculum perspective of Indigenous culture was made part of the School Development process from 2000. 20% of ACT Government schools undergo this process each year. In the curriculum self-assessment component of the review, the school is required to evaluate how it has complied with this component of the framework.
- Parent and family involvement in schooling is encouraged through departmental links to Commonwealth programs such as Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness, and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme.

**Particular initiatives include:**

- The Department and the Indigenous Community through the Indigenous Education Consultative Body (IECB) agreed to establish an Indigenous Education Compact. This joint initiative arises from the Indigenous Education Forums held in August 2000. The Compact will be signed off in the first half of 2002.
- Improved data collection and reporting procedures for Indigenous education have now been introduced. From work done with the MAZE administration program in 2001 the department is now able to obtain centralised attendance data on all students. This allows for accurate comparisons between the attendance patterns of Non-Indigenous and Indigenous students.

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| <b>5. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT</b> |
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The department's *Equity and Diversity Plan 2000-2002* identifies Indigenous Employment, and Diversity and Inclusivity as two of the three key areas of action for the three years.

The plan was developed through consultation with departmental staff and other key stakeholders including the IEU and the IECB.

Initiatives from the plan that have been actioned include:

- Annually nominating three identified Indigenous teacher positions.
- all advertised positions include a statement encouraging Indigenous applicants to apply
- broad advertising of identified Indigenous positions; and
- Indigenous student scholarships.

**Staff Induction Program for Teachers**

An initiative started in the 2000, and expanded to include non-teaching staff in 2002, includes a segment on Indigenous issues including:

- the IEU and the support services it provides
- ensuring an Indigenous perspective in education programs
- effective strategies in teaching Indigenous students
- cultural awareness.

### **Teacher Recruitment**

Eight offers were made to Indigenous teachers at the end of 2001. Three of these teachers accepted the offers and were appointed at the beginning of 2002. Teacher recruitment panels are now trained in cultural awareness with a particular focus on recruiting teachers with demonstrated cultural sensitivity.

### **Indigenous Scholarships**

Indigenous employment is a key area under the department's Equity and Diversity Plan, 2000 - 2002.

Six Indigenous scholarships were offered in 2001 to ACT Year 12 students completing college and undertaking further study. Preference is given to students planning post secondary college study in an area relevant to the functions of the Department of Education and Community Services, for example social work, youth work, sport and administration. Six scholarships were awarded for 2002.

The scholarships are designed to assist students to pay for amenities and services fees, books and other study material.

May 2002