

SUBMISSION

***Senate Employment, Education and Training
References Committee
Inquiry into Indigenous Education***

‘Talk the Talk’ ... now ... ‘Walk the Walk’

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‘The river is the river and the sea is the sea. Salt water and fresh, two separate domains. Each has its own complex patterns, origins, stories. Even though they come together they will always exist in their own right. My hopes for reconciliation are like that.’

(Reconciliation at the Crossroads - Pat Dodson’s address to the National Press Club April 1996)

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The AEU requests that the Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee Inquiry into Indigenous Education consider the three major recommendations listed below:

- 1 That all future Commonwealth, State and Territory policies and strategies be developed and delivered in a context that recognises, and takes full account of, the cultural history, identity, diversity and ongoing educational disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 2 That the focus of all future education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be on the consolidation and implementation of the many excellent initiatives outlined in reports over the 10 year period covered by the Inquiry.
- 3 That a coordinated consultative national approach be adopted to ensure that culturally appropriate best practice informs all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training needs. Further that to ensure certainty, consistency and cultural appropriateness in the delivery of education and training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Body inclusive of all Indigenous education stakeholders and with representation from all States and Territories be established as the primary advisory body on all education and training matters.
- 4 That a set of national participation goals, targets and outcomes be developed for the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and that these cover the spectrum of life long learning with specific and designated responsibilities being allocated to the Commonwealth and to States and Territories.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Indigenous Education – The Context*

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has pleasure in contributing to the Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee Inquiry on the effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians. The AEU welcomes the review of parliamentary, government and commission reports on Indigenous education presented during the past ten years.

The Inquiry is taking place against a backdrop of racist vitriol in the guise of democratic debate, directed at Australia's Indigenous peoples. The so-called debate, fuelled by misinformation and misrepresentation has even raised questions about the appropriateness of enfranchising Aborigines. The findings of this inquiry will be crucial in determining the future direction of Indigenous education throughout Australia.

According to Mrs Pauline Hanson 'Australian's would have had second thoughts about enfranchising Aborigines in 1967 if they had known what lay ahead'. (*The Age*, 15 July, 1998)

The directions indicated by the outcomes of this Inquiry will be of supreme importance to Australia's stability, international standing and ultimately to the economic survival of our nation.

Governments must stand firm and maintain resolve in order to redress not only the educational disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but the extreme disadvantage experienced in health, welfare and employment. Education plays a primary part in these spheres too.

1.2 *The Australian Education Union Submission*

The Australian Education Union welcomes the opportunity to provide responses to the Committee to assist in:

- the review and assessment of the recommendations made in reports;
- the investigation of the extent to which action has been taken to address the recommendations of the reports;
- the identification of impediments to implementation; and
- recommendations as to how such impediments may be removed.

This submission will respond to the recommendations of reports identified in the terms of reference and provide information about the effects of gaps in policy, funding and administrative arrangements.

At the outset the AEU requests that the Committee note its formal apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for the role that educators and schools had in the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities and their subsequent mistreatment.

1.3 Themes

The comprehensive, significant and detailed nature of the reports in the ten-year period covered by the inquiry represent a sound foundation for ongoing coordinated activity. Although they have contributed to significant improvements in education and training for Indigenous Australians there is far to go. Ensuring that the recommendations of these reports continue to be implemented and monitored in a climate of peripheral, but nevertheless damaging debate is essential.

Many reports dealing with education and training have wider relevance for Indigenous Australians. These are identified in many reports dealing with the education and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Themes of self-determination and reconciliation underpin many of the recommendations, and cover specific issues such as:

- linking training to actual work experience for employment and economic independence;
- a recognition that different outcomes are appropriate and that equity should not be determined solely in terms of the outcomes of 'mainstream' education;
- cultural awareness and sensitivity including the recognition of traditional skills and methods of learning;
- improvements in literacy levels as prerequisites for successful participation in education and training;
- culturally relevant management training to meet the needs of isolated communities;
- consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- self-determination, empowerment, control of curriculum and delivery modes; and
- cultural diversity, empowerment of learners.

1.4 Education and Justice

In *Justice Under Scrutiny* (1994) the report of the Inquiry into the Implementation by Governments of the Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody there are several recommendations that are of significance to education and training. The Report acknowledges that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody is a 'monumental document providing one of the most significant analyses of the lives and issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ever undertaken in Australia.' (1994:9)

'As well as inquiring into the immediate cause of each death, the Royal Commission looked at the underlying factors that led to imprisonment. The Report dealt with the underlying social, cultural, historical, economic and legal factors which had a bearing on the deaths. A major thrust of the Royal Commission's recommendations was to address and overcome the disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in all aspects of their lives. The Royal Commission strongly emphasised the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be fully involved in the process of implementing its recommendations. Empowerment and self determination were seen as key elements in overcoming disadvantage.' (1994:9)

Bringing Them Home (1997) a guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families provides further evidence for the urgent need to address

reconciliation issues and redress the disadvantage in the aftermath of one of Australia's greatest tragedies.

The inquiry has been of fundamental importance in validating the stories of generations of Indigenous people who until now have carried the burden of one of Australia's greatest tragedies.

The Inquiry understands many children from other cultures have been forcibly removed from their families. We recognise their pain; we urge Australia to undertake the process of healing these broken relationships, where it is possible to do so.

Indigenous families and communities have endured gross violations of their human rights. These violations continue to affect Indigenous people's daily lives. They were an act of genocide, aimed to wiping out Indigenous families, communities and cultures, vital to the precious and inalienable heritage of Australia.

The Inquiry's recommendations are directed to healing and reconciliation for the benefit of all Australians.

A commitment to the implementation of both the spirit and letter of these recommendations is essential to the future unity, justice and peace of the nation.

The process of telling and listening has only begun. The process will not be easy; it will not go away.

It is for all of us to make the journey of reconciliation, and with open hearts and minds it is possible for us to begin 'bringing them home'. (1994:33)

Bringing them Home contained specific recommendations in relation to school education:

- 8a** *That state and territory governments ensure that primary and secondary school curricula include substantial compulsory modules on the history and continuing effects of forcible removal.*
- 8b** *That the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies be funded by the Commonwealth to develop these modules. (1994:36)*

It referred also to the need to establish language, culture and history centres:

- 12a** *That the Commonwealth expand the funding of Indigenous language, culture and history centres to ensure national coverage at regional level.*
- 12b** *That where the Indigenous community so determines, the regional language, culture and history centres be funded to record and maintain local Indigenous languages and to teach those languages, especially to people whose forcible removal deprived them of opportunities to learn and maintain their language and to their descendants. (1994:37)*

1.5 Implementation

The Report to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia *Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program – AESIP 1990 and 1991* was required to:

- Identify types of programs, projects and other matters in respect of which payments were made under AESIP agreements; and
- Contain an assessment of the extent to which each type of program, project or other matters advanced the objects of the Act. (1992:5)

It addressed the implementation of AESIP over the years 1990 and 1991 of the first AEP triennium and focussed on ‘the contribution made by AESIP in providing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in school based decision making, providing assistance with the establishment of effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education consultative groups and facilitating operational monitoring and reporting.’ (1992:5) It noted too the important role of reconciliation and the significance of the Aboriginal Education Policy which includes ‘a goal directed towards providing all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.’ (1992:6)

This review identified significant policy issues requiring attention in the second triennium 1993-1995 which would assist in achieving the goals of the Aboriginal Education Policy. These are listed below.

- improved consultation and communication between education providers/government departments/Ministers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- support for preschool delivery arrangements in the context of a more coordinated provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services;
- achieving a better integration of monitoring and reporting arrangements;
- research and evaluation, address issues such as assessing school attainment, high attrition rates and meeting the special needs of remote/traditionally oriented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- establishment of a statistical and financial database;
- funding programs, in order to target strategic initiatives addressing the particular disadvantages facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- resource needs of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community education providers not covered by mainstream funding programs; and
- significant increase in the rate of development and introduction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies courses for all students and the pre-service and in-service training of teachers. (1992:10-11)

1.6 Reconciliation

This submission reflects the commitment of the AEU to reconciliation, to self-determination and to culturally relevant processes and structures for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The AEU shares the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation vision for ‘a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice for all.’ Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is the responsibility of all Australians and is fundamental to Indigenous education.

The role of reconciliation in ensuring success and progress in Indigenous education and training is paramount. Australian Education Union policy affirms that the movement or process of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must include:

An acknowledgment and respect for the diversity and wealth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures with particular understanding of their spiritual links to land and sea combined with the role of guardian of land and sea for future generations.

A recognition that Australian history is shared and to be accurate must include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.

An acknowledgment of the past injustices such as invasion, dispossession from the land and attempts of genocide via government policies of segregation, assimilation and the practice of the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children away from their families.

An understanding that past injustices have contributed to present day injustices that place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with fewer educational opportunities, poorer educational outcomes, poorer health standards, higher unemployment and higher rates of imprisonment and detention and deaths in custody compared with the wider Australian community.

An understanding that there is a need for the wider Australian community in making changes to laws, government, education, economic and social structures to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in order to be truly equitable for all Australians.

A recognition of the importance of land and sea rights and self determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There may be forms of compensation which will foster new and equitable relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The AEU understands that the reconciliation process is an acknowledgment that it will not be an easy or smooth road, but rather an ongoing process which requires negotiation, time and a wide range of strategies to be implemented within all sectors of the Australian community. (AEU Policy)

1.7 Reports, Research and Inquiries

The Australian Education Union acknowledges the value of parliamentary, government and commission inquiries during the past decade which have made progressive recommendations on education and training for Indigenous Australians. The AEU will, within the terms of reference address the following major reports:

- Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (1988);
- The Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991); and
- The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (1995).

The membership of the AEU covers all geographical areas of Australia with members working in and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Further, the AEU has had a long-standing commitment to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are directly involved in decision making. It has employed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer and supports an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee with representation for all States and Territories. The identification of impediments to the implementation of the various recommendations, and the development of recommendations as to how these might be removed is urgent, especially in light of serious, 'often racist' challenges to government policies which have sought to redress the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians.

The AEU envisages that its responses will represent a significant contribution to the review and assessment of the recommendations made in these reports.

Gaps in policy, administration and funding arrangements will be identified, and where possible, suggestions made as to how best to provide Indigenous Australians with educational opportunities appropriate to their needs.

'It has been more the 10 years since the National Indigenous Education policy was formulated but we have only scraped the surface of the problem of our people, the rest of Australia needs a better understanding of this. They seem to think all will be well in no time at all.'

(Member of AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee.)

In developing this submission the AEU has also made reference to recommendations contained in the following reports:

- Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (1985)
- Justice Under Scrutiny :Report of the Inquiry into the Implementation by Governments of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1994)
- Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program – AESIP 1990 and 1991: AESIP Implementation Report to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (1992)
- Bringing them Home: A guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (1997)
- A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 1996-2002
- ABSTUDY: An Investment for Tomorrow's Employment, A Review of ABSTUDY for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (1998)
- Building Pathways: School-Industry Work Placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Students (1998)
- New Apprenticeships and Traineeship Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. (1997)
- Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program – AESIP 1990 and 1991, (1992)
- National Review of Education for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1995)
- Culture Matters (199(?))

The AEU has adopted the view that the role of education and training is integral to redressing the disadvantageous position of Indigenous Australians across all cultural social, economic spheres.

The three major reports that are the subject of review and assessment contain wide-ranging recommendations that are consistent with this position. Therefore this submission makes reference to all recommendations of these reports in a context of education and training across the living and learning needs of Indigenous Australians.

The rest of Australia do not understand fully our problems and think we are getting much more than we should!!! Therefore there needs to be a compulsory Cultural Awareness Training program for all political people who work in government, starting with the politicians.
(Member of AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee.

2. ADDRESSING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Australian Education Union submission links recommendations from major and other relevant reports to each of the terms of reference. It then includes responses which aim to assist the Committee with its Inquiry. Recommendations are also included. They focus mainly on implementation strategies and for the most part a reaffirmation of recommendations and issues already addressed in the major and relevant reports.

(a) Survey the recommendations arising over the past decade from parliamentary, government, commission and agency reports which deal with Aboriginal education and training

2.1 Disadvantage

For more than a decade recommendations have focussed on policies and practices that incorporate consultative, culturally appropriate and sensitive principles; information dissemination processes that address the disadvantage of distance and isolation; and professionally structured and adequately resourced programs aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours and ultimately being positive strategies for the achievement of equity.

The 1985 *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs* noted that:

Since the Referendum in 1967, inability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to gain a livelihood and, in particular, to share in opportunities for employment has been of particular concern to Commonwealth governments. Increasing resources have been devoted to analysing the nature and cause of this inability and to devising means to overcome it. In this unemployment affecting these people and on the factors inhibiting their access to the labour market.

Inclusive and flexible approaches to marketing, teaching, curriculum, information dissemination and delivery practices; the inclusion of targets; recognition of prior learning; special measures in respect of language and literacy expanding the applications of technology, are included in many reports.

Addressing the causes of educational disadvantage within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client groups in a nationally coordinated, consistent and committed manner will do much to stem the perpetuation of disadvantage.

Recommendations of The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 1996-2002.

The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 1996-2002 was developed following consideration of the operational plans and strategies of all State and Territory Education and Training providers. The MCEETYA Taskforce included the following recommendations:

b) That all State/Territory and Commonwealth Ministers acknowledge that they and their governments have a clear responsibility to implement

the following eight priorities which incorporate the 21 goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy:

- **to establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making;**
 - **to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in education and training;**
 - **to ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to education and training services;**
 - **to ensure participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education and training;**
 - **to ensure equitable and appropriate educational achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;**
 - **to promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, culture and languages to all Indigenous students;**
 - **to provide community development training services including proficiency in English literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults; and**
 - **to improve NATSIEP implementation, evaluation and resourcing arrangements.**
- c) That, to meet the above responsibilities, all Ministers support the achievement of the outcomes proposed by the Taskforce for the early childhood, schooling, vocational education and training and higher education sectors.**
- d) That State and Territory Ministers endorse the strategies proposed by the Taskforce and agree that all systems within their legislative responsibility will examine these strategies and implement them in ways appropriate to their particular State or Territory.**
- e) That each State and Territory Minister agrees to the preparation of system Annual Reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training which will report on the outcomes and performance measures established by the Taskforce. Ministers should note that such a report should be in a form to maximise reporting to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.**
- f) That State and Territory Ministers acknowledge that the Commonwealth, in partnership with the States and Territories, will negotiate in future discussions the development of clear guidelines for education and training providers in developing appropriate NATSIEP operational plans, requirements for reporting and review, and allocation of State/Territory and Commonwealth NATSIEP funds.
(1995:iii)**

The AEU reaffirms its support for the National Strategy and recommends that the Committee note the eight priorities and in particular, the Collaborative Action Plan which is inclusive of detailed outcomes and strategies. Further the AEU believes that the Strategy represents the most comprehensive and culturally appropriate consolidation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy to date. The AEU believes

that its in-depth material will be invaluable to the Committee in the review and assessment process.

2.2 Strategies for Change

Many other parliamentary, government and agency reports during this period have acknowledged and proposed strategies to redress the educational disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recommendations have covered issues associated with:

- dismantling barriers caused by discrimination;
- cultural isolation;
- geographical isolation;
- successful participation in, and access to high quality curriculum;
- creating culturally sensitive and supportive environments; and
- providing flexible, integrated opportunities for lifelong learning.

Many have considered issues which specifically relate to early childhood education, primary and secondary education, vocational education and training and higher education. Although this submission focuses on recommendations that pertain to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and vocational education and training, Indigenous education cannot, and should not, be divided into categories that have little or no relevance to communities. Education and training initiatives determined without the involvement of Indigenous People in decision making and without reference to cultural circumstances.

Recommendations of The Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

The Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force represented the first stage for the development of the National Policy in Aboriginal Education. It sought from the Australian Government 'a firm commitment to redress the severe economic inequality and social injustice faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians'. (1988:1) It noted that fundamental rights were not being extended to all Aboriginal families and outlined the following situation.

... in the compulsory school years, 1 in 8 Aboriginal children aged 5 to 9 years do not go to school or pre-school, and for those aged 10 to 15 years an appalling 1 in 6 do not have access to appropriate schooling. Moreover, access to and participation in education for Aborigines beyond the age of 15, whether in senior secondary school, technical and further education or higher education, remains at unacceptably low levels – generally at rates some 3 to 5 times lower than for the community as a whole. (1988:1)

The AEU has revisited these recommendations under each of the terms of reference.

Recommendation 32

Increase the proportion of Aboriginal TAFE students who are enrolled in courses leading to a qualification, such as associate diploma or trade or other certificate qualifications, including child care, which are recognised in the labour market. (1988:33)

Recommendation 33

Support education and training centres to develop skill programs which lead to and support employment outcomes. (1988:33)

Recommendation 34

Seek the employment of increased numbers of Aboriginal people in TAFE through direct employment and career development strategies. (1988:33)

Recommendations 32, 33 and 34 focussed on the crucial role of education and training in relation to employment and career outcomes.

It is essential that strong support continue to be provided to increase the numbers of Indigenous students in courses which lead to qualifications that enhance job prospects. Stacking students into bridging courses and courses that have little or no relevance to the labour market will increase frustration, diminish job prospects, and lead to a lessening of confidence and self-esteem. Access to supported training is need to develop skills.

2.3 Policies and Action

Government policies have generally been supportive of increasing the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander involvement in the management of programs for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, policies have not always been translated into action and policies must be implemented to build foundations that are appropriate and practical.

Moves to more autonomous self-governing institutions and economic rationalist practices have limited the number of programs for Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander students. Decision making at council/board/governing body level rarely involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Strong steps must be taken to remedy this as participation at decision-making levels will facilitate greater participation at all levels of education and training.

Provision therefore must be made to ensure that Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented at all decision-making levels.

Recommendation 36

Provide direct funding of Aboriginal TAFE programs by the progressive earmarking of a proportion of general TAFE funds for Aboriginal courses leading to an award, to free special purpose Commonwealth funds for use in new TAFE initiatives for Aborigines. Institutions should be required to specify equity and program goals for both planning and accountability purposes. (1988:33)

Recommendation 37

Negotiate with Aboriginal controlled tertiary colleges with a view to adopting a development plan for each institution, including the offering of some accredited and award courses, and arrangements for future Commonwealth financial support. (1988:33,34)

Direct funding of courses, equity and program goals are starting points only. Supporting TAFE institutes community and other private providers throughout the negotiation and implementation phases is crucial. Knowing how, for example, a development plan at institution level will operate and being aware of the likely impact on students, their families and their communities is just as important as the processes of funding and development of strategies.

Recommendation 38

Promote the training of increased numbers of Aboriginal people as technical and further education teachers, under the Government's policy of achieving the goal of 1000 Aboriginal teachers by 1990. (1988:34)

There is an acute problem when teachers trained with the specific purpose of meeting education and training goals are snapped up for employment in other industries. There are many reasons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education workers not being able to maintain stable roles in their communities and within their chosen careers. Short term, precarious employment characterised by limited or non-existent career structures continue to be the lot of many highly skilled education workers.

2.4 Support for Success

The Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards a New Way (1995) investigated the working conditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers (AIEWs). Its recommendations offer solutions to the many problems within this sector of Australia's education industry.

Recommendation 39

Seek better coordination between Commonwealth and State agencies to ensure that works projects and Community Development Employment Programs on communities are undertaken by local Aboriginal people, with training being provided by TAFE and non-government further education institutions. (1988:34)

The links between education and training and successful employment are well-documented and improvements in coordination have until recent cut-backs seen Aboriginal people gain skills for living and learning. It is essential that support continue to be provided to Commonwealth and State agencies to coordinate activities that will see a re-investment in works and Community Development Employment Programs.

Recommendation 40

The Task Force recommends that existing arrangements be reviewed with the aim of increasing the number of students with access to support services, and ensuring the effectiveness of the academic and personal support provided. These services should include effective bridging course arrangements which are targeted at the range of professional and other study areas in an institution, and which include both core units in academic preparation and study skills and specialised study units leading to chosen career outcomes. Attention should also be given to access to culturally appropriate accommodation which is important to the academic success of Aboriginal students. (1988:35)

Subsequent reports found that support services which target academic, personal and cultural needs do contribute to the successful completion of courses.

Recommendation 41

The Task force recommends the establishment of eight Aboriginal Education Centres in higher education institutions in the next five years. It is suggested that the Centres be established under arrangements similar to the Key Centres program, with special Commonwealth funding for each Centre for three years, after which institutions would be expected to continue the program from other funding sources. The Task Force proposes that the Government negotiate appropriate arrangements with institutions and State bodies. It is expected that the Centre will be responsible to a board of studies or management board which consists of a majority of Aboriginal members one of whom will be the chair person. Each Centre should specialise in teaching and/or research activities, and may undertake other important functions such as resource development. The Aboriginal Education Centre should focus on Aboriginal education, Aboriginal Studies programs and Aboriginal cultural studies courses, as well as advise on existing courses to increase their relevance for Aboriginal students and contribution of Aboriginal cultural maintenance and survival. (1988:37)

Recommendation 42

To promote increased research into Aboriginal education, the Task Force recommends the continued support of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and regards the Institute as a key provider of research expertise and data in the implementation of this report. It should continue its role in research into Aboriginal cultures and history. The Task Force also recommends that:

- ***projects be initiated and managed in co-operation with Aboriginal people;***
- ***the Institute management be “Aboriginalised” within the next 12 months;***
- ***research more sensitively reflect community needs and be less academically based; and***
- ***the operations of the Institute be decentralised by 1990, to bring its resources closer to Aboriginal people in the states. (1988:38)***

2.5 Indigenous Culture – A Priority

In this submission the AEU emphasises the degree to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history must be woven into the education and training framework. Ongoing commitment to preserving and integrating the cultural richness and uniqueness of Indigenous culture is a priority.

Recommendation 43

That particular institutions which wish to provide such a program to draw upon a national pool of Aboriginal applicants be assisted to do so. An example of such an approach currently exists in the School of Medicine at the University of Newcastle. (1988:38)

Recommendations 41, 42, 43 are examples of models that are culturally appropriate, represent good practice in respect of social cohesion and provide for services to reach into communities, rather than members of communities having to live and learn in external, daunting and often alienating environments.

Recommendation 44

Adopt a participation target for Aboriginal people in higher education of at least 2.5 per cent by the year 2000, from the 0.6 per cent in 1986. To do this, participation rates at a number of age levels will be targeted for increases through the Aboriginal Participation Initiative: from 2 per cent to 16 per cent of 18 to 20 year olds; and from 1.4 per cent to 16 per cent of 18 to 20 year olds; and from 1.4 per cent to 8 per cent for adults aged 21 to 24 years, who may require special entry provisions. These participation levels will then equate more closely with the population generally. (1988:38)

Recommendation 45

Increase the proportion of Aboriginal higher education students who are enrolled in postgraduate courses from 4.6 per cent to 16 per cent, and in Bachelor's degree courses from 35 per cent to 67 per cent with a view to reaching the goal of 2 000 Aboriginal graduates by the year 2000. (1988:39)

Recommendation 46

Continue the program to increase the number of teacher education graduates. (1988:39)

Recommendation 47

Increase Aboriginal higher education enrolments in all major disciplines of study, with particular emphasis on areas that would benefit community development, such as health, architecture and building, agriculture, business studies, engineering, law and the sciences. The ultimate goal would be to have Aboriginal students enrolled in all higher education study areas to achieve parity in participation with the student population generally. (1988:39)

Recommendation 48

Begin negotiations with higher education institutions to have bridging courses and the cost of orientation programs and student support services met from general institutional budgets, including Aboriginal Participation Initiative grants, from the beginning of 1991. To assist with this process, guidelines for the allocation and expenditure of Aboriginal Participation Initiative funds need to be developed. In the interim period, additional special course funding should be provided to increase the support services available. (1988:39)

Recommendation 49

Require institutions to specify appropriate equity goals and strategies in their educational profiles, in keeping with the Government's approach to broadening access and participation in higher education outlined in the recent statement Higher Education: A policy information. (1988:39)

Recommendations 44-49 focus on strategies to improve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education. Pathways to higher education and the attainment of long-term educational goals are influenced by the levels of involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities in all facets of education and training for communities.

2.6 Technology and Flexible Learning

The rapid technological advancements and new flexible learning options are increasingly being used by education and training providers. Their application to support the greater participation of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander in education and training should be the subject of further consideration.

Recommendation 50

***Fund the development of off-campus study programs which enable students to undertake at least part of a course of study in their home communities, and the adaptation of external studies arrangements to increase their accessibility to Aboriginal students, especially by those institutions specialising in these course arrangements.* (1988:39)**

Recommendation 51

***Provide increased funding for remote area teacher education in order to expand the availability of this type of teacher training to other traditionally-oriented communities in central and northern Australia, and to rural and remote towns and communities elsewhere. Extension of this form of teacher education to rural and remote towns in other parts of Australia will provide opportunities for Aboriginal people already in schools and other educational activities to obtain formal qualifications.* (1988:40)**

Recommendation 52

***Seek the agreement of higher education institutions to increase the level of Aboriginal input and management of their programs for Aborigines, and the employment of increased numbers of Aboriginal people through direct employment and career development strategies.* (1988:40)**

2.7 The Education Spectrum

Although the AEU submission does not specifically address higher education recommendations it fully supports an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander input into the management of programs as this will have a direct and positive impact across all education and training levels.

Recommendation 53

Through guidelines to higher education institutions, establish the responsibility of each institution to ensure that its courses in higher education acknowledge the validity of Aboriginal culture and present Aboriginal communities and cultures in a positive manner in all teaching and research activities. This is particularly necessary in teacher education curricula that should include compulsory sections on Aboriginal education, Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal learning styles. (1988:40)

To overcome national ignorance about the history and culture of Australia's Indigenous peoples it is crucial that teacher education curricula be inclusive of Aboriginal education, Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Learning Styles. The Committee is alerted that specific definitions and explanations are applicable to the terms 'Aboriginal Education' and 'Aboriginal Studies'.

(b) Assess the implementation, ongoing relevance and efficacy of recommendations which seek to raise educational achievement and to employ culturally-appropriate pedagogy to maximise participation of Indigenous Australians in formal educational settings

2.8 Eliminating Covert Barriers

Entrenched resistance to change, particularly systemic change that aims to eradicate discriminatory beliefs remains. Overt barriers have been identified and it is now time to remove all such barriers that continue to deny Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples full participation in education and training in Australia. Covert barriers remain and their effects contribute stymieing progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Many reports linked outcomes to planning and funding arrangements and formulated timelines, targets and ways of measuring progress, rather than success - the achievement of change being viewed as an incremental process.

Recommendations of The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 1996-2002.

As previously mentioned, the National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1996 – 2002 is an extremely important report. It identifies a framework for implementation and it integrates many recommendations of earlier reports.

The AEU emphasises that support for the implementation of recommendations from the Strategy (and from other reports) is the most important issue to be addressed by the Committee. The form, level, accessibility and continuity of support for all communities and all organisations involved in the delivery of education and training in Australia is fundamental to improving the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Priority 1 seeks to establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making.

Long-term goals of involvement and self-determination have been pursued by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for many years, and are supported by all Australian governments. There is a particular need for reforms at the point of the delivery of the education and training programs, recognising the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the continued trend of devolution of the management of education services.

There is a need for greater coordination of arrangements for involvement to enable all members of communities to pursue shared interests and create partnerships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education on a local, district, regional, State and Territory or national level, if they wish. To implement these arrangements, strategies are needed which guarantee such involvement.

The notion that all advisory groups must be totally independent – that their membership be only elected community members preferably not employed by any provider – is not helpful in creating partnerships that work for the implementation of operational plans. The philosophy and politics that underpin the call for total independence are well understood. However, in order to advance educational outcomes in Australian systems or institutions the participation of Indigenous people in education decision-making must include as many people as possible at every level of operations.

State/Territory local AECGs are one way of achieving Indigenous involvement and independent advice. However, they are not the only way in which the aim of Indigenous involvement can be attained. In fact, a reliance only upon such groups may disenfranchise many Indigenous leaders of other local agencies, parents and students at the day-to-day local level, including those employed within education providers simply because they are not included. There is a need for each State and Territory and the Commonwealth to develop arrangements that allow for more involvement of Indigenous people in the day-to-day business of early childhood education, schooling, vocational education and training and higher education.

An expansion of arrangements for Indigenous peoples' input will increase both the capacity and autonomy of Indigenous involvement in the process. This involvement will enhance the development of the principle of self-determination. Arrangements which include employed staff cannot be seen as independent, but they do advance the principles of involvement and self-management. These staff are also members of the Indigenous community who have expertise and knowledge that is needed. The vast majority are advocates for the development of successful programs and outcomes for their community and have a right to be part of the process of implementation. (1995:9).

The above recommendations have ongoing relevance insofar as they provide culturally appropriate foundations for maximising the participation of Indigenous Australians in formal education settings.

Only when effective arrangements are made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making will participation in formal education settings lead to raised educational achievement being fully supported. Such support will include the employment of culturally appropriate pedagogy.

2.9 *Culturally Appropriate Pedagogy*

The employment of culturally appropriate pedagogy is an essential tool for maximising participation. The National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 1996-2002 incorporates this view and outlines excellent strategies to achieve outcomes.

Recommendations of The Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

Recommendation 3

The Task Force recommends the adoption of an education participation objective for Aboriginal people at all levels of education with the aim of reaching parity in participation rates by the turn of the century. (1988:19)

Recommendation 4

That all governments adopt a participation target in early childhood education of parity for Aboriginal children with all children in Australia by 1992. (1988:22)

There is a need to continue the use of participation targets as a means of raising educational achievement. Participation rates across all levels of education remain unacceptable and strategies to support greater participation do have ongoing relevance.

Recommendation 12

That the Government continue to provide a particular focus on appropriate teaching strategies. Evidence suggests that current pedagogical approaches are not always compatible with Aboriginal learning styles, requiring more action research into appropriate pedagogy.

2.9 Learning Styles and Cultures

In light of the findings of further research on appropriate teaching strategies and Aboriginal learning styles it is time to formulate and implement pedagogical approaches that will assist in raising the educational achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Culture Matters: Community Report explores factors that affect the outcomes of vocational education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Conducted by the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training of the University of Technology, Sydney, the project notes:

For twenty years or more, government policies have urged Australian education and training institutions to respond to the needs of Australian indigenous people. The right of access to vocational education and training for indigenous people has been stated in policies concerning vocational education and training. (199?:1)

The project notes 'that there is not much information on how course delivery for indigenous Australian people can be improved... and the ways in which Aboriginal culture and identity can be taken into account. (199?:2)

The main conclusion reached by the researchers was that there are many factors affecting outcomes in participation, and it is important to see how all of these factors are in fact part of a human system for delivery.

The message coming from the interviews suggests strongly that effective course delivery to Aboriginal people must be cross-cultural in all aspects. It must focus on both the cultural appropriateness in the program and on the effectiveness with which the program is delivered. Positive VET outcomes are the result of achieving effectiveness in these two areas.

This requires more than setting up course designs that appear to suit the known social, economic and educational needs of Australia's Indigenous people in the way courses are delivered.

Therefore, factors such as access entry, assessment, teaching, learning and support must be negotiated between Aboriginal communities and institutions if they are to be culturally appropriate and effective. (199?:9)

The project lists key guiding principles for better course delivery and uses the messages of students, teachers and administrators to provide practical illustrations. The key guiding principles are:

- recognise that education and training is a cultural response;
- make a space for Aboriginality within an Institution;
- involve Aboriginal communities in course deliver;
- be flexible and negotiate appropriate teaching and learning;
- recognise that a range of types of support is needed;
- make language and literacy part of course delivery; and
- evaluate the effectiveness of each part of the system of course delivery. (199?:11-15)

Recommendation 13

That the Government continue to provide curriculum reform aimed at the cultural relevance of curricula and teaching materials and the development of cultural studies programs for Aboriginal students. Aboriginal Studies programs across primary and secondary school curricula remain a major policy issue for the Aboriginal community and these should provide the base for such reform. It is hoped that these programs will also provide information for a concerted attack on racism. (1988:25)

Recommendation 14

That the Government develop a National Aboriginal Languages policy recognising the following:

- ***the need to increase access to bi-lingual/bi-cultural programs where students' first language is not English;***
- ***access to the study of Aboriginal languages for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students;***
- ***accepting the validity of Aboriginal English as a legitimate and real form of communication;***
- ***accepting the right of Aboriginal communities to determine the form such programs should take. (1988:26)***

Recommendation 15

That the Government continue to promote the importance of improved health and welfare services for students and the need for coordination by the responsible agencies to allow for action including curriculum reform in education.

Aspects to be particularly noted include hearing and sight difficulties, drug and substance abuse, nutrition and child protection. (1988:26)

The AEU asserts that much more must be done to improve health and welfare services for students if educational outcomes are to improve. Hungry students cannot learn. Cold students cannot learn. Ill students cannot learn. These primary obstacles must be eliminated through the provision of support services at the community level.

Recommendation 16

That the Government continue its support for Aboriginal independent schools and their community development and cultural maintenance objectives, as well as community education centres which provide an effective interface between school and community. (1988:26)

Recommendation 17

That the Task Force recommends the promotion of support services such as enclave programs, and the development of regional resource centres to support cultural and language teaching. (1988:26)

Recommendation 31

Develop and implement a national Aboriginal literacy strategy aimed to significantly increase the opportunities available to Aboriginal adults to improve their literacy skills and general educational standards. (1988:33)

Within vocational education and training there have been many reports which are relevant to the work of the committee. Elkins, McNamara and Valadian in papers on *Research Priorities in Vocational Education and Training - A Discussion*, (1994) discuss the needs of special groups and identify research priorities. Elkins focuses in the inclusive learning of disadvantaged adults within the context of the school, training, work transition and the concept of inclusion and makes recommendations about further evaluation and research. McNamara and Valadian address the needs of 'special groups' as they apply to Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and also make suggestions for the further research agenda.

Their work indicates that further research is needed to:

- ascertain what disadvantaged groups think about their needs (thus avoiding unnecessary help, and identifying gaps); and
- research to improve the total system of training via systemic change. (*Stocktake of Equity Reports and Literature in Vocational Education and Training* 1997:100)

Recommendations of the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, (1994) examines what has happened up to the present and assesses what has and has not worked in education for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. It also looks forward and suggests ways to improve the way things are done, as well as new actions to further improve Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders' experience of education.

On the basis of evidence presented to the Review, the educational experiences of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders have improved in the last five years. (ie to 1994) However inequity of opportunity and outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders remain as serious issues. The Review asserts that, 'In 1994 Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged groups in Australia.' (1994:2) Submissions to the Review on equity covered the following themes:

- equity is generally interpreted in terms of outcomes of 'mainstream' education and assumes that these goals and outcomes are applicable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- educational inequality suffered by Indigenous peoples is related to cultural differences;
- greater equity can be achieved if educational processes are conducted with greater cultural awareness and sensitivity;
- educational outcomes for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders students can only be equitable if there is a recognition that different outcomes are appropriate;
- services must be culturally appropriate and provide Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders with the opportunity to negotiate, manage and provide their own services;
- 'Cultural integrity and heritage programs' are important for increasing awareness of Indigenous cultures and spirituality in the education system and in the community generally. (*Australian National Training Authority, Stocktake of Equity Reports and Literature in Vocational Education and Training 1997:104*)

Recommendations focused on the need for all Australian governments to reaffirm their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and urged that the work of all bodies developing policy and/or providing educational programs and services which have an impact on Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders be based on the following principles:

- self-determination in education - putting the authority to make decisions in the hands of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders; e.g. developing arrangements for the allocation, distribution and management of resources which permit the direct funding of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders incorporated bodies so that they may, as they deem appropriate;
- independently provide education and training services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders, contract with other bodies for the provision of education services, and/or otherwise assist in empowering access and participation in education;
- diversity - empowering Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders to exercise the maximum degree of choice in education;

- subsidiarity - shifting responsibility for, and about, education for
- aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders as far 'down' administrative systems as possible, given the demands of accountability and the efficient delivery of services;
- affiliation - ensuring coordination between groups as far 'up' the administrative system as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities wish, to pursue shared aims and to achieve economies of scale; and
- efficiency - of the available resources, minimising the amount of money spent on administration and maximising the amount of money spent on actually providing education services for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. (Australian National Training Authority, *Stocktake of Equity Reports and Literature in Vocational Education and Training* 1997:103-104)

2.10 Learning from Experience

In their paper, *Learner attributes and outcomes: Experiences of Indigenous Vocational Education and Training participants from a longitudinal study*, Golding and Volkoff have contributed to a greater understanding of the complex relationships between reasons for participation in vocational education and training and the difficulties and outcomes experienced for Indigenous people. They use cameos and quotes from interviewees to indicate particularly critical aspects of their own accounts. These have been included in the AEU submission as a means of conveying the degree to which Indigenous history, culture and identity are inextricably linked to education and training outcomes.

'Didn't get along with no teachers'

B (A103), a sixteen year old male in an automotive pre-apprenticeship course at a large regional TAFE in a remote area got into trouble in early secondary school. He was referred to an Indigenous training organisation but 'got kicked out there: I didn't learn anything there or enjoy it at all'. He finished school down south, came back to a TAFE Indigenous cultural centre and felt embraced by the diversity there. 'Mixed age groups and different people so you feel comfortable. With older people as well I can learn more off them – stabilising thing, learn more from them and with just the younger ones would just muck around'. He was encouraged by parents to get an apprenticeship. They promised a car for Christmas if he finished his course successfully, 'But would be doing the course anyway. I have to finish something, I'm getting older now. I'm 16 and I've wasted a lot of time. Hardly been to school. Didn't get along with no teachers. I like this course And the teacher motivates you as well.'

A year later B has finished the course and is working in an automotive outlet. He had been placed in a service station 'for work experience and the boss got me a part-time job ... and that led to the full time job and now my apprenticeship ... I'm currently a trainee assistant and then will move into an apprenticeship: guaranteed'. From his pre-apprenticeship course he acknowledges that he 'Gained a course, knowledge. Get a better wage now ... Then I will become an apprentice. I achieved what I set out to. I gained more self confidence. Had a rough time previously. Felt at my lowest point before I started at the pre-voc course. I had a bad reputation and had to straighten myself up. It's OK now. I can walk around town with my head held up high now. The cops said I done right by them and (the TAFE Indigenous centre) that helped me through. The staff ... will always help me when I need it'. He recognises benefits from, 'social contact with other people – I'm better

able now to relate to most people outside the course ... I identify as an Aboriginal person'. Every weekend he returns to his parents' country to work on the farm. At seventeen, he says, 'it was really my fault because I was being an idiot and messing around in school and being kicked out and having to go to a different school and so I just missed out on the education. Now I know how to stand back from trouble. I want to keep my job, have no police record and want to keep it that way. I'm worried about trade school and whether that will be like school as opposed to the (TAFE Indigenous centre stuff'.)

While B achieve his primary reasons for participation, his pathway was far from straightforward. He continues to highly value the culturally appropriate learning environment and support through an Indigenous TAFE centre, which allowed him space to take charge of his own life. This cameo illustrates the ongoing effects of negative attitudes acquired to school education, and the need for some individuals to strengthen their Indigenous identity through education and training as they enter the workforce.

'It's flexible and needs to be like that ...'

K (A806), a female in her early thirties, living in a remote area, left school in year 11 and worked in a supermarket for a year, then "... just travelled around ... did a bit of bar work and rouseabout for a while ... but nothing long term'. She '... got to thirty and thought I haven't really done anything and have no experience or qualification; probably 12 to 15 years since I really worked and no resumes etc. Did a course at SkillShare and brought a bloke over here' (to an Indigenous training organisation) ... They said they were looking for women. Fourteen month course but I've take about two years. I seem to be getting what I want out of it in terms of a job'. Being an Indigenous organisation there was flexibility with family and traditional responsibilities. 'I have a daughter ... when my kid is sick ... means you don't come. But this place is flexible as long as you ring up and tell them what you are doing. It's flexible and needs to be like that. Earlier in the year I had a family tragedy and had to go home for funerals ... Better that you handle it when you need to, to sort it out'.

One year later K is doing level 3 in the same course while working as a lecturer at level 1. 'I'm still learning, always learning. I've got a whole life out of that course.' By working with communities in outstations, she can now understand two Indigenous languages. 'They teach me more and more every time I go out there'. Her job prospects '... sure have changed ... they expect me to do other things, not just become a teacher of this course; might get too old to work out bush after a few years'.

K came upon the Indigenous training organisation largely by chance, but stayed and flourished mainly because of the flexibility of the organisation and the program's ability to continually challenge her. She had enough prior education and training to take advantage of the opportunities as they arose. This came gives some insight into the importance of flexibility, challenge and mentoring within Indigenous organisations required by some Indigenous adults in order to achieve a vocational outcome.'

'It's just I can't put it all on a piece of paper'

F(C208), a male in his early thirties, also went to many schools. 'I went to four different schools in Grade 8. Got kicked out of one after a few hours and then another one. They made me sit outside the office all day on the first day and then I left and then I just never went back to school. My son is at high school. He got something plus on his report card but I can't even read his report card at all ... Straight after I left school I got a job. The family always had bakeries ... I learnt all the skills in the bakery business but only on the job from family members. This (vocational access course at a regional TAFE) is the first formal education I've done. I saw the ad on TV, I can get a job, any hard physical labouring jobs. Sick of doing these hard jobs ... It's my ability to spell that's the problem. I have a phobia about spelling ... Want to be able to get a easier job ... My attitude, my brains, my physical state, I can do anything. It's just I can't put it all on a piece of paper. I couldn't even get a licence to drive because I couldn't go down and fill in the form and I'm too proud to tell them I couldn't read or write. Used to make me vicious and angry. All for the piece of paper.

A year later F has not finished the course. 'I don't know why. Just got down a bit and like me I got a bit light footed and took off. Last year I was a bit enthusiastic but this year I just sort of lost it. Maybe a bit older or something but now not really enthusiastic. I did end up getting my licence and that was a really big step in me life ... I did the course because I wanted to read and write. I think I got a bit more self confidence and learnt to deal with people better ... I'm a bit of a loner and also got to do some of the things I wanted to do like screen printing and welding.' He gets some casual work at the port as a dogman, is looking for more but not having any luck. His low literacy can't even read street signs, don't read the newspapers and don't know what's going on. If you can't tune into conversations ... I feel I'm on a different level to other people ... never got anything out of reading and writing. They just tell me what to do at work. That's all I've done all my life. It's hard to be sociable if you can't read and write. People have parties and I can't even go to the barbecues unless I've known them just about all my life. I can't talk to them about what they know and they've read about. They have the background and I've got none ... I think I might have got more help through a one to one tutor.'

F came and left VET with literacy problems, which cut deeply into his personal and social life. He came to VET looking for a way out, and while he benefited in some ways, he did not achieve what he set out to. The work he can do labouring remains limited, vocationally, socially and personally, by his low literacy. This cameo confirm the crucial role literacy plays in determining options within and beyond work for Indigenous people, and the huge and tragic social penalties for low literacy levels.

'I was a qualified shit worker but now I have learnt something'

L (B306), a female in her mid thirties, living in a regional town, enrolled in a certificate course in reception and office skills, 'I worked for ten years as a dairy factory hand making cheese – good money but no training and nothing to fall back on. When the cows stop milking, there's no job, no credentials, no skills'. Her aim was '... a long term job. I've done some (Aboriginal) adult ed courses (at a rural TAFE campus) previously and they were mainly for self esteem raising. Being at home with a sick child makes you lose your confidence and self esteem, but now I feel more confident and able'. She reported enough confidence 'to pack up house and move here and start studying full time'. She came to TAFE as a result of the Aboriginal access

officer ‘badgering, encouraging and motivating’. The course was chosen with a few options in mind: to get a traineeship, another office skills course at TAFE, ‘a job or hospitality maybe’.

A year later L is in a disability support worker course. ‘I was a qualified shit worker but now I have learnt something. ... Next year I’ll do the Diploma in Community studies plus finish off (the other) modules as they come up, I’m a different person ... I’m addicted to this course. I enrolled originally to try for a new career because my son was sick, and fell against brick walls. I want to do this course to see if I can help someone else in the same circumstances. My aim is a long term job eventually ... don’t want to just go out and get a job at the level I’m at now: would rather do more and get more knowledge and skills up my sleeve before I get work.’ Meanwhile, ‘Self confidence and self esteem have been my main gains in this course. In everyday terms nothing seems a barrier any more’. Being the only Aboriginal in a mainstream group doesn’t worry her. ‘One Aboriginal, one greenie, a few chauvinists etc ... a good mix.’

L returned to study through Indigenous adult education offered locally. While originally motivated by a job and a desire to help other parents raising a child with a disability, she became pleasantly addicted to learning and moved to a higher level. This cameo illustrates that the reasons why some Indigenous people return to study are multi-faceted and change with time as other opportunities unfold. It also illustrates the need for individualised attention necessary for some Indigenous people to overcome previous disadvantage.

Our men were warriors and we don’t like being told what to do’

S (C506), a 32 year old Torres Strait Islander enrolled in a woodwork skills course in prison, where 70 per cent of his fellow inmates were Indigenous, most of them NESB men with some proficiency in multiple languages. He spoke three: an Indigenous language, Creole and English. Expelled for fighting from school in year nine, he had no other formal training. In prison he also undertook an external, university drug and alcohol (D & A) course which gave useful insights into domestic violence, beyond the prison’s drug and alcohol course. He reported that the prison based courses, while not accredited, were typically undertaken a number of times ‘to get the points down’ to get a lower classification and quicker release. He observed that ‘The uni course really gives you information and makes you think. The D & A course here just looks at your behaviour, that’s all.’ He also observed that the warders ‘still don’t understand the cultural things’; most of the prison population are ‘... Indigenous people, very knowledgeable people ... Our men were warriors and we don’t like being told what to do. If they used their manners we would respond but they don’t know how to ask.’

A year later S is still in prison with a few weeks to go before release. He was a painter by trade and wanted to become an exterior and interior decorator. Despite his interest in working as a carpenter no accredited TAFE course is available in prison and he can only wait to do one on release. ‘I will need something like that to help me get work.’ He had been working in carpentry. ‘I’m just working there and they don’t hand out Certificates in the Carpentry area ... Have a training instructor. But in the new workshop, he will write up a resume for you to say what you can do.’ However, ‘There’s no follow up or help for people leaving as in looking for a job. There should be help but there’s none. It’s just ‘See you later’.’

S needed vocationally specific credentials plus support on release, but wasted a lot of energy repeating internally offered non-accredited courses to gain points for an earlier release. He feels angry that his Indigenous culture and knowledge have not been valued in the education and training process and will be released with low English literacy levels similar to those he had when he came in. The cameo provides an insight into the difficult education and training context for Indigenous people in custody.

Each of the Indigenous interviewees was engaged in vocational education and training, at least partly, for vocational reasons. The author argues strongly that, these cameos illustrate the importance of recognising benefits of outcomes in terms which go beyond the individual and an immediate job. The problems they faced were exacerbated particularly by their low skills, insufficient education and training and prior unemployment. Assistance and encouragement in coming to terms with and strengthening Indigenous identity and self esteem offered within vocational education and training providers was an important factor in the difficult road to employment. (XXXX)

They also state that, it is clear from these personal stories that there are many threads rather than one single thread of disadvantage associated with being Indigenous in Australia. There are a range of causes of disadvantage. It is too simple to categorise Indigenous NESB people as simply having low literacy or language skills; many are fluent, highly educated and enculturated within their own language, and are disadvantaged by having to confront what they see as an uncompromising society, culture and a workplace. The long history of setbacks experienced by many Indigenous Australians, trying simultaneously to persist, resist and compromise, socially, vocationally and culturally, make the many positive outcomes reported in VET, such as a job, vocational skills, self confidence and social contacts even more important and more significant if achieved. These outcomes clearly extend beyond vocational ones to benefit Indigenous and no Indigenous communities and families.

While our paper most closely examines involvement of Indigenous people in VET, it illustrates the more general difficulties with analysing learner attributes and their outcomes. It highlights the complexities of experience and outcome within and between a number of different groups as well as for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in particular. The cameos serve to highlight not only the problems behind categorisation of disadvantage based on only one learner attribute or outcome measure. (1998:7-11)

The role of AIEWs in working with communities, in establishing links with training providers and in ensuring that literacy programs are culturally appropriate is of great importance.

(c) Examine the extent to which recommendations aimed at improving Indigenous peoples' educational participation and achievement have been implemented by the relevant authorities, and evaluate the benefits which have flowed from them

2.11 New Problems Need New Solutions

Many of the recommendations during the ten-year period focussed specifically on improving the educational participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The AEU congratulates all authorities which have diligently and conscientiously carried out their implementation roles.

Some reports have addressed implementation matters and sought to identify gaps pertinent to achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The AEU urges that all recommendations relevant to implementation strategies should be consolidated and cross referenced and given close scrutiny by the Committee as they go about their task of evaluating benefits in terms of educational participation and achievement.

It is essential that creative and culturally appropriate solutions be devised for difficulties that result in the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (see below).

I teach Adult Basic Education (Reading and Writing for Adults). I have classes in a local Aboriginal Community Centre.

Four 13 year olds arrived to study literacy and numeracy. They were high school dropouts. The boys had been suspended over and over again and both school and student had finally given up.

The TAFE system could not enrol them because of age (under 15). Schools education had continually suspended them. They were now non-attenders, virtually wandering the streets. I taught them for three months while both Schools and TAFE tried to sort out the problem and come to some agreement. No agreement occurred. Although they were not eligible for the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme because they were not 'in a course', the students were regular attenders and were successful in their learning, BUT could not be enrolled and I am unable to include them in TAFE programs.

I have had 21 enquiries for under 15's to do courses in the community.

ABE teacher and AEU member.

(d) Identify any obstacles to the achievement of participation of Indigenous Australians in education and training and make recommendations as to how these might be overcome

2.12 Literacy and Numeracy – The Key to Participation

The need to make language, literacy and numeracy skills integral to all levels of education and training cannot be over emphasised. This has been reinforced by the recommendations and strategies arising from many reports on the educational participation of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islanders.

The long-term negative effects of practices that divided families by forcibly removing children cannot be underestimated. The legacies of these inhumane practices remain as serious obstacles for people who carry the scars that are perpetual by such loss.

‘If there was ever an activity which illustrates the need to bring access and equity to Indigenous people, then the present National Inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal Children (being held in Sydney) does this. Many of these children were forcibly removed or taken away on the pretext of training. In 1990 NSW used the term-indentured labour and young girls were used as domestic servants and never saw any wages. Some training!

Indigenous people carry this legacy. I’m a very strong supporter of TAFE. It has provided real opportunities in NSW to gain training. Aboriginal people are well represented in TAFE across Australia.

I think there is a real danger in the current political climate that Indigenous people will be left behind. It is interesting to note that 50% of Aborigines are under the age of 20. They will need skills, training and access’. (quote from Linda Burney speaking at the second Annual Conference of the Australian National Training Authority).

An ACER analysis summarised below of available statistics in school to work transition for Indigenous Australians provides useful data especially on the participation of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples in education and training, especially in rural and remote areas. (1998:Tabled at Meeting of School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians Task Force)

Introductory Comments

- This analysis examines the participation of young Indigenous Australians in education and their educational and labour market outcomes. It provides information across time, separately for males and females and, where possible, for States and regions. The analysis is based on the 1991 and 1996 Censuses and other supplementary sources.

Demography

- Indigenous Australians comprise 2.1% of the Australian population and 2.6% of the 15 to 19 year old Australian population.

- The majority of 15 to 19 year old Indigenous Australians live in NSW (27%), Qld (27%), the NT (15%) and WA (14%).
- 15 to 19 year old Indigenous Australians comprise 31% of the 15-19 year old population in the NT and substantial percentages of the rural population in WA, Qld and NSW.
- Although young Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in rural areas than other Australians, the majority live in urban areas outside the capital cities (60%) and in capital cities (28%).

School Retention

- Indigenous year 12 retention rates are less than half that of other students.
- Indigenous Year 12 retention rates do not show any improvement over the four years for which truly national figures are available (1994-1997).
- Indigenous Australians receive about 1.1 fewer years of schooling than Non-Indigenous Australians.

Educational Participation

- 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians were a $\frac{1}{2}$ less likely than other Australians to be in school and less than $\frac{1}{2}$ as likely to be in tertiary study.
- The educational participation of 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians was almost unchanged between 1991 and 1996 (42.1 to 41.8% for males and 43.4% to 45.1% for females).
- The overall level of disadvantage of 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians in terms of educational participation was virtually unchanged between 1991 and 1996 for both males and females.

Vocational Education and Training

- The participation of 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians is broadly comparable with other Australians, despite differences between States.
- Indigenous Australians aged 15-19 years enter the vocational education and training sector with fewer years of schooling than other Australians and are substantially over-represented at the lower end of the skills profile.

Higher Education

- The participation rate of 15-19 year old Indigenous Australians in higher education is about a quarter of the participation rate other Australians.
- Young Indigenous Australians are more likely than other Australians to enter higher education through special entry schemes rather than degrees. They are also less likely than other Australians to graduate.

Educational Attainment

- For persons aged 20 to 24, on average Indigenous Australians left school at a younger age (16.1 years for males and 16.2 years for females) than other Australians (16.9 years for males and 17.0 years for females). The main age at which students left school increased from 15.8 years to 16.1 years for Indigenous Australians aged 20 to 24 in 1991 and 1996.

- Among 20-24 year olds, Indigenous Australians are only about a third as likely to obtain a post-school qualification (12%) as other Australians (33%). This is so for males (12% and 32%) and for females (11% and 32%). The extent of the difference although reduced is still large in capital cities.
- The educational attainment of 20-24 year old Indigenous Australians has improved between 1991 and 1996. Indigenous early school leavers (15 or younger) declined from 36% to 29% and those with a post-secondary qualification have increased from 8% to 12%. Each category of post-school qualification increased, especially higher vocational qualifications.
- Although substantial differences remain, between 1991 and 1996, differences between the educational attainment's of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians aged between 20 and 24 years have been reduced.

Labour Market Outcomes

- Two sets of employment measures are presented – one based on the labour force (employment rates) and the other on the population (employment ratios).
- Male Indigenous Australians aged 20-24, have lower employment rates (69.8%) than other Australians (84.9%) and lower rates of full-time employment (41.9% compared with 63.7%).
- Male Indigenous Australians aged 20-24, have lower levels of participation in the labour force (75.1% compared with 85.8%), producing a substantially lower percentage in employment (52.4% compared with 72.8%) and in full time employment (31.4% compared with 54.6%).
- Female Indigenous Australians aged 20-24 have lower employment rates (75.7%) than other Australians (88.1%) and lower rates of full time employment (39.4% compared with 55.0%).
- Female Indigenous Australians aged 20-24, have much lower levels of participation in the labour force (50.1% compared with 76.9%) producing a substantially lower percentage in employment (37.9% compared with 67.8%) and in full-time employment (19.8 compared with 42.3%).

Educational Attainment and Employment

- Indigenous Australians with higher levels of educational attainment have lower unemployment rates (ie those employed as a percentage of those in the labour force.) This relationship is large by any criterion.
- The relationship is somewhat larger in capital cities than in other urban areas, and larger in other urban areas than in rural areas. The reason for the difference is the substantially lower unemployment rates for persons in rural areas without post-school qualifications. CDEP, which is a substantial source of employment in rural areas, acts to reduce the returns to post-compulsory schooling and further education in rural areas.
- Unemployment rates are higher for Indigenous Australians than for Non-Indigenous Australians with the same educational attainment. For most categories of attainment, Indigenous Australians are just under twice as likely to be unemployed as Non-Indigenous Australians.
- Comparisons of 1991 and 1996 Indigenous unemployment rates within categories of educational attainment show a reduction in unemployment levels for most categories by about a quarter.
- The shift in relative unemployment rates between 1991 and 1996 has seen reductions in Indigenous – Non-Indigenous differences at the lower end of

educational attainment, marginally increased differences for skilled vocational and diploma qualifications, and increased differences for degrees.

- The full-time employment ratio (ie. Of the total population), increases almost uniformly across categories of educational attainment.
- Differences between the full-time employment ratios of Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians are greatest for the lower levels of educational attainment and least for higher educational attainment's. (1998: Tabled at Meeting of School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians Task Force).

2.13 Educational Participation – A Snapshot of the Issues

The Review of the Literature on School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians (1998: Tabled at Meeting of School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians Task Force) restates the issues identified across numerous reports. The summary is particularly useful in conveying a snapshot of issues relevant to the participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It notes that education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment.

The Context of Transition for Indigenous Young People

- While participation in education has increased in the last five years, the size of the gaps between Indigenous students' and other students' participation remains largely unchanged (AEP Review 1995).
- Because the Indigenous working-age population is increasing rapidly, Indigenous unemployment is also expected to increase.
- Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment.

Transition Barriers and Difficulties

- Identified barriers to access and success in school education include:
 - racism
 - lack of parental support
 - a lack of support at school from Indigenous Education Workers
 - transiency
 - poverty
 - competing responsibilities
- Identified barriers to access and success in VET include inadequate schooling (especially poor literacy/numeracy)
- Identified barriers to employment include:
 - few jobs and intense competition for them
 - inadequate training
 - transport problems
 - lack of child care and family responsibilities
 - homelessness/health and substance abuse/having been in custody
 - high levels of mobility
 - low levels of self confidence
 - being a member of other disadvantaged groups.

Commonwealth Government Programmes

- The 1994 review of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy, noted that because equality in educational outcomes for Indigenous people is unlikely to be achieved this century, training and school-to-work transition arrangements will be needed to bridge the gap.
- It is acknowledged that the development of an economic base for many Indigenous communities will be influenced by remoteness, under-developed technical and entrepreneurial skills, sometimes contradictory cultural values, lack of local and regional infrastructure, and a lack of capital. For many communities, CDEP will remain the only employment option. As a result employment and income outcomes for Indigenous people can not be expected to mirror those of non-Indigenous people.
- The focus of Indigenous employment is now the private sector (supporting case management practices which adequately prepare Indigenous job seekers for private sector opportunities; increasing joint venture arrangements between industry and labour market programmes; supporting the establishment of Indigenous business enterprises).
- There may be conflict between AEDP and AEP programmes. Eg, part-time CDEP employment may discourage continuing in education. CDEP needs to be linked with education and training. There is also concern that part-time CDEP employment requires low skills and provides lower income.
- An evaluation of ATAS (1994) identified positive outcomes for Indigenous students including increased self-esteem, confidence and motivation, improved quality of work, enhanced social skills, reduced absenteeism and increased parental participation in schools.
- A review of TAP Employment Strategies (1994) noted difficulties in matching available Indigenous job seekers to employer requirements.
- An evaluation of ASSPA (1998) found that it overcame the cost barrier for students, increased their access to school programmes and activities, expanded their educational horizon and raised self esteem/confidence. Through ASSPA, Indigenous students became more familiar with and took pride in their own culture.
- An evaluation of User Choice in 1998 found overwhelming support for it among Indigenous community members, because it enabled them to more confidently articulate what sort of training they wanted and raised their expectations that the training program would be customised accordingly.
- Group Training schemes, together with New Apprenticeships in schools, have the potential to ease the transition from school to work for Indigenous young people. Indigenous people are more likely to be involved in Group Training schemes in the public sector than the private sector, and more likely to undertake traineeships and apprenticeships.

Transition Issues and Solutions

Primary to Secondary

- In the final primary years, Indigenous students were often accorded independence and responsibility on a level comparable with that which they enjoy at home', while the secondary years caused 'confusion, a loss of responsibility, choice and freedom and a lack of recognition as a person'.

Junior to Senior Secondary

- Indigenous students who stay on at school tend to have strong Indigenous and personal identities, supportive parents and peers, role models, positive relationships with teachers/counsellors, a determination and desire to succeed at school, and long-term career goals.
- In moving from compulsory to post-compulsory schooling, students and parents need to be consulted about future options. A decision to go on to Years 11 and 12 may be a major one for Indigenous students, which requires a great deal of encouragement from home and school.
- Indigenous teenagers may need social and economic activity which incorporates appropriate educational provision, rather than the reverse. (ie courses which have strong vocational, practical and salary components). Careers Aspirations and Tertiary Aspirations Programmes may also help. Indigenous students make informed career choices.

School to Further Education

- Indigenous school students have a better perception of TAFE than of schools. Although students felt that VET contributed to their employability and career options, Indigenous employment outcomes from VET are not as good as for the general community. Also, VET pathways for Indigenous students are mainly non-vocational: two thirds were completing catch-up or pre-vocational programmes.

The AEU notes too that there is a need to deliver and consolidate skills not gained in primary and secondary schools. This includes meeting needs for cohesion and comfort from within Indigenous groups.

School to Higher Education

- The major needs identified by students were: improved support services; better attitudes of staff; reducing student feeling of isolation; more relevant courses; and adequate career counselling.

School to Work

- There is considerable potential for school to work and VET in schools programmes to improve the educational, personal and employment outcomes for Indigenous students. New Apprenticeships in schools, competency based training and enabling courses are also supported.
- Apprenticeship and traineeship development needs to be integrated into the emerging schools VET pathways as well as into pathways beyond VET, to provide upward, transferable skills and vocational mobility.

Unemployment to School or Work

- Back to school programs are effective for some early school leaver. Effective employment services involve community-based Indigenous organisations, acknowledge Indigenous values (particularly regarding family), address pre-vocational needs, are aware of substance use issues and support programs, establish personal relationships with clients, acknowledge soci-cultural differences and provide post service follow-up. (1998: Tabled at Meeting of School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians Taskforce)

Recommendations of the Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

Recommendation 5

That the Federal Government change the eligibility criteria for Commonwealth school-level programs to enable Aboriginal children before the age of formal schooling to benefit from funding provided to the States and Territories for primary and secondary education, in recognition of the disadvantages experienced by many young Aboriginal children. (1988:23)

2.14 Early Childhood Education

This is one of the few recommendations that deals with early childhood education. The AEU believes that the work already undertaken at the vocational education and training end of the spectrum must be matched by similar emphasis on early childhood and primary level education and services. The AEU is aware of work done in respect of early childhood education but there is an urgent need for 'real on-the-ground' action.

Recommendation 35

Seek agreement of Government TAFE systems to increase the level of Aboriginal input and management of their programs for Aborigines. (1988:33)

Recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

2.15 Training, Learning and Justice

The recommendation identified truancy as a factor not only as limiting a factor for participation and achievement but as a major issue relevant to juvenile justice.

Schooling

- 72. *That in responding to truancy the primary principle to be followed by government agencies be to provide support, in collaboration with appropriate Aboriginal individuals and organisations, to the juvenile and to those responsible for the care of the juvenile; such support to include addressing the cultural and social factors identified by the juvenile and by those responsible for the care of the juvenile as being relevant to the truancy. (2:368)***

The AEU endorses the primary principle set out in the above recommendation and urges that strong measures are taken to provide support for collaboration as described above.

Recommendations of the Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

Recommendation 10

The Task Force recommends that a concerted attack be launched on the lack of access to school provisions for Aboriginal children and young people, and on the circumstances which cause lack of attendance at schools where schooling is provided (Tables 2 and 6). This will involve identifying all primary school age students without access to a school program and special measures by the Commonwealth, including recurrent and capital funding, to ensure school programs are available to them at the earliest possible time. (1988:24)

Recommendation 11

For secondary school age students, the Task Force recommends that the Government provide funds to encourage the exploration by school systems and schools of alternative ways of providing secondary education, and the establishment of these provisions. These could include:

- ***Adding one or more secondary classes to existing primary schools, or adding to primary schools with some secondary classes;***
- ***Specialised learning centres established in Aboriginal communities for secondary school age youth;***
- ***Developing alternative curricula which may include in school and out-of-school study and learning experiences within a total school program, or school-TAFE programs;***
- ***Use of new technologies in distance education approaches; and***
- ***Student support services in secondary schools. (1988:25)***

2.16 Consultation with Local Communities

The Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards A New Way Stage 3 includes the following recommendation which stresses the need for consultation with local communities.

Recommendation 19

That all curricula developed by AIEWs, including any developed and accredited nationally, provide significant opportunities for the local application of general skills and knowledge, and for exploration of local community needs and aspirations. (1995:Appendix J:12)

The AEU notes that the ‘Developing Learning Strategies for Training Packages for VET in Schools Project’ has objectives for the development and publication of learning strategies and appropriate support resources for inclusion as non-endorsed components of National Training Packages. It is essential that the non endorsed elements of National Training Packages be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples inclusive of those crucial issues already identified in vocational education and training reports on the participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Two Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council discussion papers, *New Apprenticeship and Traineeship Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (1997) and *Building Pathways* (1998) are also important to the inquiry.

The first paper aimed to assist the formation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Training Advisory Council (ATS IPTAC) advice to the Board of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). It presented an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective in order to inform the development of New Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities for Australian Indigenous people. (1997:3)

Along with many other reports this discussion paper provides an overview of the Indigenous context which 'Is characterised by extreme labour market disadvantage'. (1997:4)

Barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in vocational and education and training are cited.

The key barriers limiting access include:

- the lack of understanding of our cultural difference by the non-Indigenous society
- inappropriate provider responses to that difference, and
- a legacy of poor literacy and numeracy from previous disadvantage.

Barriers to participation and outcomes include a lack of:

- recognition of the cultural assumptions associated with participation and outcome measures
- employment from which to access training or employment after training
- culturally sensitive or appropriate programs
- tailored support services, and professional development activity
- Indigenous controls over all aspects of education and training. (1997:5)

The importance of consultation is emphasised insofar as solutions must be those of Indigenous Australians:

The most pressing issue for most Indigenous Australians is how to increase the sense of investment and community involvement in shaping the future of Australian education (Schwab 1996, 18). We see opportunities in what ANTA and the federal government currently proposes for apprenticeships and traineeships, if we are fully involved and properly consulted. Access is a problem but not the biggest problem. Equity and outcomes will not flow without matching our needs and aspirations to the opportunities available, and without ongoing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals. Approaches which ignore the needs of our people as a group are culturally inappropriate, and based on all the available research evidence, are very likely not to produce sustainable outcomes. (1997:11)

The Building Pathways the second discussion paper argues that pathways in education, training and employment for Indigenous people are limited and poorly defined and that it is imperative that stronger bridges be built between school education and vocational education and training. (1998:4)

The paper suggests that:

The challenge is to establish and build pathways from school education into post school education, training and employment that are seen by our people as worthwhile, relevant, viable and accessible. These pathways are best constructed by our people in cooperation with industry, schools and vocational education and training sectors. (1998:5)

It should be noted that the significant barriers faced by Indigenous people identified in this 1998 paper bear too many similarities with those identified in reports 10 and more years ago, namely:

- concentration of senior secondary certificates of education upon traditional academic subjects and assessments designed to produce a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER);
- confinement of educational outcomes to assessment scores and the Tertiary Entrance Rank;
- highly centralised and relatively limited range of senior secondary subjects;
- recent moves of a number of TAFE authorities to use the Tertiary Entrance Rank as a means of selection for their advanced courses;
- concentration of school education upon classroom and didactic teaching styles;
- relative absence of curriculum related to Indigenous cultures;
- lack of cross-cultural understanding of Indigenous cultures;
- lack of Indigenous people employed as teachers and trainers, and the lack of senior secondary schools in some areas;
- relative isolation of many Indigenous communities;
- high levels of poverty amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and
- lack of attention given to the retention of Indigenous students post Year 10. (1998:4)

2.17 Understanding the Barriers

Building Pathways identifies and categorises barriers to access and success of Indigenous people in mainstream secondary education. This is, in the view of the AEU one area in which more research would add to this significant body of knowledge.

- **cultural** in that in general the teaching and learning modes of secondary education take little account of Indigenous languages, form of knowledge and beliefs, relationships and values. Abstract and rationalistic knowledge, normative and competitive assessment; the concentration upon the English language, and largely book based learning can be an alienating experience for many Indigenous students.
- **pedagogical** in that it is generally confined to didactic and classroom based learning. The lack of connection of teaching and learning approaches to Indigenous ways of learning is a significant barrier to understand and acceptance;
- **structural** in that secondary education is constricted in its range and contexts, and in its linkages to other forms of formal and informal learning, including paid and unpaid work; and

- **economic** in that Indigenous people suffer the same educational disadvantages as other people from families and communities with relatively low incomes and who live in isolated areas. (1998:6)

Action for the removal of structural and delivery barriers at secondary education level are outlined in the basis of a need for:

- inclusion of a greater variety of areas of knowledge and experience within the secondary curriculum and especially the upper secondary curriculum;
- more diverse and more culturally appropriate forms of assessment, including the recognition of a broader range of educational outcomes, including learning outcomes achieved and recognised in the workplace;
- structural changes to the school certificates that will allow the inclusion of areas of learning more appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and cultures;
- the inclusion and recognition of more diverse forms of learning, including competency based learning;
- the use of more diverse forms of learning in providing access to post school education and training programs; and
- the development of structured links with employment and other forms of education and training. (1998:7)

The paper urges that all solutions must be based upon the capacity of Indigenous communities to invest in and become involved in, the future of Australian education, and to undertake the direction of their own education. Structural and delivery arrangements will not be sensitive to the needs and aspirations of our people without our full involvement.

The paper strongly argues for community participation and local solutions and suggest that:

- the support and direction of the local community,
- the participation and direction of local employers, and
- to be valued by the students. (1998:5-8)

(e) Examine recent initiatives which have proven successful in improving the participation rates and levels of achievement of Indigenous Australians in the national vocational education and training system

2.18 Living and Learning within Communities

The provision of support to students their families and their communities across all levels of education and training is a positive strategy for achieving positive outcomes. The long-term benefits of such support go far beyond quantitative indicators such as improvements in retention rates and increased enrolments. Support engenders confidence and self-esteem in students, families and communities. It enables them to participate in, and contribute fully at broader community and societal levels. These benefits cannot be accurately measured in quantitative terms, yet their qualitative impact is one that is clearly visible over time.

Flexible delivery provides the concrete means of eliminating much systemic and indirect discrimination. Flexible delivery modes based on open and distance learning, community based partnerships, information technology, cross-sectoral provision and innovative programs are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples especially those who are living in rural and remote areas.

Recognition of Prior Learning has the capacity to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently disadvantaged education, training and in the labour market. Many education and training providers have successfully implemented RPL needs of industry, training providers and the community, as well as those of models which are realistic, practical and efficient.

The AEU believes that the issues raised in the Final Report of the ‘School to Work Transition for Indigenous Australians’ should be included in future consideration at to the type and level of support needed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in vocational education and training delivery.

Its task is to:

- develop a coherent DEETYA approach to Indigenous school to work transition (ISTWT);
- make recommendations to improve and better use existing DEETYA programmes and services; and
- analyse the current situation in terms of Indigenous school to work transition.

Issues raised this far included:

The School to Work Transition: the Context

- The situation experienced by all young Australians over the past decade includes:
 - declining full-time employment opportunities for all Australian teenagers;
 - a greater proportion of teenagers not in full-time work or in full-time education;
 - keen competition for jobs;
 - completion of Year 12 a necessity to be competitive in this environment; (most Indigenous people leave in Year 9);

- a need for suitable employment opportunities for young people; for example (involve young people in schools as trainees); and
- their need for the skills, information and guidance to take advantage of such opportunities.

Indigenous School to Work Transition: Key Issues

- Indigenous young people tend to suffer multiple disadvantage, their access to education, training and employment often being subject to fundamental socio-economic and cultural issues.
- These are not issues DEETYA alone can address but they underline the need for an holistic, community-based approach to service delivery.
- VET in schools programmes are potentially of great value to Indigenous students, especially if accredited and able to provide pathways into apprenticeships, traineeships or other employment.
- Concerns are held that Indigenous youth often lack career aspirations, seeing participation in CDEP as an employment goal. In these instances, CDEP may act as an incentive to leave school. CDEP has an important role in Indigenous peoples' enterprise and economic development, and is often their only employment option.
- However there is a need for CDEP to better link to training so young people regard CDEP participation as a stepping stone rather than a destination. ATSIC has refocused CDEP's objectives to focus on business development, training and skills acquisition leading to employment.
- Access to employment is bound up with issues of economic development and self-determination.
- Given the often limited employment opportunities, and that many Indigenous young people do not wish to move away from their homes, local DEETYA activities need to be linked into ATSIC's regional development plans.

Access to accredited training is essential to provide pathways to and from apprenticeships and traineeships, linking education and training provision to regional development plans is also desirable

Exiting Policy and Programmes: Making the Links

- The concepts of multiple school to work pathways, with various access and re-entry points, and lifelong learning are highly relevant to meeting the needs of Indigenous young people. DEETYA has an appropriate range of programmes, which operate within the framework of the mainstream school to work agenda, the AEDP and the AEP. Given that Indigenous youth do not appear to be reaping the full benefit of current policies and programmes, there is a need to improve access to, participation in, and outcomes from such programmes.

Providing More Effective Programmes and Service Delivery

- Addressing the needs of young Indigenous people in term of education and employment is a core DEETYA responsibility. There is an array of programme assistance which can be brought to bear and linkages which can be made.

DEETYA need to provide planned, well coordinated, customer focussed services and packages of assistance, which makes linkages from education to training and into employment, as well as across Commonwealth, State and non government programme areas. (1998:Paper tabled at Task Force meeting)

Recommendations of the Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

2.19 Participation Targets

Recommendation 26

Promote the training of increased numbers of Aboriginal people as primary and particularly, secondary education teachers under the Government's policy of achieving the goal of 1000 Aboriginal teachers by 1990. The Task Force recommends that the Government negotiate with tertiary education institutions to extend off-campus teacher education programs for Aboriginal people living in traditionally-oriented communities and rural and remote townships. (1988:28)

Recommendation 27

Extend the National Scheme for Placement of Teachers in Aboriginal Schools to include additional participating states, and develop programs to assist community school councils to develop skills in teacher selection. (1988:29)

Recommendation 29

The Task Force therefore recommends that the Government should assist TAFE Institutions with significant Aboriginal enrolments to provide support units able to give appropriate support to Aboriginal TAFE students. (1988:30)

Recommendation 30

Establish an Aboriginal Participation in TAFE Initiative which will provide for the:

- **adoption of a participation target for Aboriginal people in TAFE of at least 4 per cent by the year 2000, from 1.4 per cent in 1986. To do this, participation rates at a number of age levels will be targeted for increases: from 4.8 per cent to 20 per cent for 16 and 17 year old school leavers; from 4 per cent to 25 percent for 18 to 20 year olds; and from 2.6 per cent to 12 per cent for 21 to 24 year olds. These participation levels will then equate more closely with the population generally;**
- **provision of special course funding to provide bridging and orientation courses, and students support measures including child care;**
- **provision of capital funding for grants to enable an extension of TAFE annexes in rural and remote areas for the provision of Aboriginal education programs;**

- ***encouragement for the development of off-campus and external study programs to increase participation in TAFE by Aborigines in rural and remote communities, and support for other ways to increase the responsiveness of TAFE to Aboriginal community needs for on-site courses and training programs;***
- ***encouragement for the development of accredited TAFE courses to serve the particular needs of Aboriginal communities and enterprises; and***
- ***development of guidelines to TAFE authorities which establish the responsibility of each institution to ensure that its courses in technical and further education acknowledge the validity of Aboriginal culture, and present Aboriginal communities and cultures in a positive manner in all teaching and research activities.***
(1988:31,32)

Recommendations 26-30 demonstrate the interrelated nature of many recommendations. Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community school council in teacher selection, teachers, assisting establishing support units and setting and monitoring targets are all linked to attainment and participation.

Many recent initiatives have been successful insofar as the participation rates and levels of achievement have improved for Indigenous Australians. However, when compared with the participation rates and levels of achievement of the non-Indigenous population it is evident that there is an ongoing need to maintain, monitor and review these initiatives to achieve equitable outcomes.

The emergence of racism in the guise of open discussion accompanied by blatant misrepresentation of the position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in respect of educational expenditure has fuelled attitudes that 'they get too much', that 'it's unfair' and that we should all be 'treated equally'!

Many initiatives have included strategies with clearly defined timelines, targets and tools to measure success only quantitative terms. Even though several reports have identified progress there have been limited opportunities to record important incremental progress as being successful.

The AEU believes that the direct links between successful, measurable outcomes and funding and planning arrangements do cause a number of difficulties if initiatives are deemed to be unsuccessful simply because pre-determined targets were not met, then programs are likely to be jettisoned for the wrong reasons. Due regard will not have been given to the impact of programs on influencing and consolidating awareness, attitudes and community support.

Further there must be ways of recognising and rewarding achievements that although not within pre-determined targets, are nevertheless successful.

2.20 Stability for AEIWs

The Ara Kuwaritjakutu Project: Towards A New Way Stage 3 contains recommendations that are crucial to achieving employment stability for Australia's Indigenous education workers.

The precarious employment of AIEWs is detrimental to the profession must be alleviated if real and enduring change is to be achieved for Indigenous Australians.

The high turn-over of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers can be attributed to poor working conditions, low status and lack of recognition of skills, low salaries, racism, exploration, lack of career paths/structures and limited access to professional development and further training and education.

Recommendation 4

That training trialed during the AVTS pilot project be designed intentionally to benefit immediately and directly the provision of training for the whole cohort of AIEWs. (1995:Appendix J:10)

Recommendation 10

- a) ***That the Ministers of Education, the Catholic Education Commissions and the Independent Schools Boards in all states and territories ensure that job and person specifications/position descriptions for all positions held by AIEWs are reviewed to ensure that they are congruent with, and reflective of, the duties performed.***
- b) ***That, when negotiating on behalf of AIEWs, unions seek to ensure that job and person specifications/position descriptions are congruent with, and reflective of, the duties performed. (1995:Appendix J:11)***

Recommendation 11

- a) ***That the Ministers of Education, the Catholic Education Commissions and the Independent Schools Boards in all states and territories ensure that all industrial arrangements for the employment of AIEWs (such as awards and enterprise-based agreements) provide a career structure, adequate incentives for becoming further qualified and adequate protection for all AIEWs. (1995:Appendix J:11)***

Recommendation 12

- a) ***That Ministers of Education, the Catholic Education Commissions and the Independent Schools Boards ensure that AIEWs accessing study leave in order to study part-time have their workload modified appropriately.***
- b) ***That the unions representing AIEWs inform their members of their rights with respect to study leave, and advocate for the modification of the workloads of those AIEWs who are receiving study leave.***
- b) ***That relief AIEWs are provided whenever AIEWs are granted study leave. (1995:Appendix J:12)***

Recommendation 13

That provision for relief AIEWs be made for all AIEWs on study leave (full-time or part-time) from additional state and territory funding and from AESIP allocations. (1995:Appendix J:12)

Recommendation 14

- a) ***That DEET modify Traineeship guidelines so that successfully completed Traineeships for AIEWs must end in employment.***
- b) ***That employers of AIEWs throughout the country guarantee continuing employment for AIEWs who have successfully completed Traineeships. (1995:Appendix J:12)***

Recommendation 15

That DEET ensures that AIEW courses appear in the profiles process and funding allocations within the Higher Education sector, thereby ensuring that they are given priority and guaranteed continuity of provision. (1995:Appendix J:12)

Recommendation 16

That ANTA ensures that AIEW courses appear in the training profiles process and funding allocations within the Vocational Education and Training sector, thereby ensuring that they are given priority and guaranteed continuity of provision. (1995:Appendix J:12)

Recommendation 16

That the National Staff Development Committee and the National Federation of AECGs be asked to present to the Project Management Committee of the AVTS pilot project the results of their joint investigation into the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and their recommendations regarding the management of RPL for students. (1995:Appendix J:12)

Recommendation 18

That training programs developed for AIEWs incorporate processes which manage Recognition of Prior Learning in culturally appropriate ways. (1995:Appendix J:12)

Recommendation 23

- a) ***That employers of AIEWs maintain full salary entitlements for AIEWs seeking qualifications.***

- b) That employers of AIEWs develop packages of financial support for AIEWs which are drawn from sources such as Abstudy, workforce programs (including the Training Wage and Traineeships), employer funded study leave, bursaries, trust funds, private sponsorship).**
- c) That DEET modify Workforce planning program and Abstudy guidelines so that employers of AIEWs seeking qualifications have flexibility when devising composite packages of financial support from them. (1995:Appendix J:13)**

The profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers has changed markedly in the last twenty years as many now having tertiary qualifications and a small percentage of Aboriginal are in the middle ranks of the bureaucracy carrying out administrative and managerial tasks. Since the adoption of the Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) the tasks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers have become even more complex. Although, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers are moving towards a new definition of the para-professional within education, many are still employed in temporary positions with no guaranteed funding to protect employment and salary scales which take little account of the demands of the job. Training opportunities are piecemeal and there are still no career structures. These and other issues are explored in the report. (1997:105)

(f) Formulate advice concerning the development and management of education and training programs by Indigenous Australians for Indigenous Australians

Recommendations of The Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

2.21 Advisory Structures

Recommendation 2

Whilst recognising that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission will also be involved in education, the Task Force recommends a separate advisory or consultative structure to the Minister, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and the Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Department of Employment, Education and Training be established to continue work developed by the National Aboriginal Education Committee and the National Aboriginal Employment and Training Committee. It is essential that a formal voice be available to the Commonwealth if it is to see through the objectives and strategies proposed in this report. (1988:18)

One of the major recommendations from the AEU to the Inquiry deals with the importance of having a national body with Indigenous State and Territory representation to provide advice on Indigenous education and training issues (see p.3)

Recommendation 6

That the Federal Government develop a coordinated approach to Commonwealth funds provided to the States and Territories for early childhood education. This will result in part from recent changes to portfolio responsibilities and will provide a more effective Commonwealth funding approach in support of early childhood education for Aboriginal children. In the case of funds provided through the Department of Employment, Education and Training, current commitments should continue in 1988-89. The new arrangements should be negotiated with the States and begin in the 1989-90 financial year. In the case of funds provided through the Department of Community Services and Health for the existing Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) Centres, the Government should explore with the States the possibility of extending the functions of the Centres to include specific provision for pre-schooling, where pre-school facilities are not available to the communities served by a MACS Centre. (1988:23)

The AEU urges the Committee to consider measures which will provide effective funding to support early childhood education especially in rural and remote areas.

Recommendation 7

That the Federal and all responsible State and Territory Government s provide funds for curriculum developments to help ensure that curricula and teaching materials used in early childhood education appropriately represent Aboriginal culture, and ensure Aboriginal Studies programs enable young non-Aboriginal children to be introduced in a positive way to the Aboriginal cultures of Australia. (1988:23)

Recommendation 8

That the Federal Government promote the training of increased numbers of Aboriginal people as early childhood education teachers. The Government should also negotiate with tertiary education institutions to extend off-campus teacher education programs to early childhood education training for Aboriginal people living in traditionally-oriented communities, or rural and remote townships. (1988:23)

Recommendation 9

Aboriginal assistants or education workers are a vitally important resource in both early childhood education and schooling programs. The Task Force recommends that the Commonwealth continue its support for these positions in a way which recognises that their roles are clearly different from other ancillary staff usually employed by schools and systems. (1988:23,24)

2.22 Educating Across the Spectrum

Recommendations 7, 8 and 9 identified the importance of addressing early childhood education issues. These remain a priority and should be revisited by the Inquiry.

Recommendation 19

Encourage each State and Territory Government to recognise the extent of non-participation and to adopt a target for:

- ***participation of Aboriginal children aged 5 to 15 years in primary or secondary schooling from 85 per cent to near 100 per cent by 1992;***
- ***participation of Aboriginal people aged 16 and 17 years in schooling from 26 per cent to at least 55 per cent by the year 2000;***
- ***retention of Aboriginal students from Year 8 through to Year 12 in secondary education, or an appropriate equivalent educational programs, from a rate of 17 per cent to at least 65 per cent by the year 2000. (1988:27)***

Recommendation 20

Support the provision of new places in schools to ensure all Aboriginal children and youth aged 5 to 15 have access to a school, by giving priority to new places in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Element of the Capital Grants Program. (1988: 27)

Recommendation 21

Support the provision of secondary education study for all Aboriginal students by giving priority to secondary education facilities in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Element of the Capital Grants Program, including priority to the development of alternative forms of secondary education provision.

Recommendations 19, 20 and 21 focus on primary and secondary education and the need to improve retention rates from Year 8 to 12. Several reports of the vocational education and training level have affirmed the need to look closely at the participation and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at primary, secondary schooling levels.

Recommendations of The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

2.23 Deaths in Custody – A National Priority

Recommendations of The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody include those that focus on the role of education into the future. These are of supreme national importance but more particularly they are a top priority for Indigenous Australians. The AEU urges the Committee to incorporate these recommendations into its report along with advice about ongoing implementation.

Educating for the Future

289. That

- a. governments, State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and local AECGs should pay great attention to the fact that the scope of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy extends to pre-schooling programs and that it should be recognised that to a considerable extent the success of the whole NAEP will turn on the success of the pre-schooling initiatives;**
- b. That pre-schooling programs should have as a major aim the involvement not only of the children, but of the parents or those responsible for the care of the children. (4:303)**

290. That curricula of schools at all levels should reflect the fact that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters. It is essential that Aboriginal viewpoints, interests, perceptions and expectations are reflected in curricula, teaching and administration of schools. (4:308)

291. That:

- a. In designing and implementing programs at a local level which incorporate Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters local schools should,**

wherever possible, seek the support and participation of the local Aboriginal community in addition to any other appropriate Aboriginal organisations or groups; and

b. In engaging local Aboriginal people to assist in the preparation and delivery of such courses at a local level, school principals and the relevant education departments accept that in recognition of the expertise which local Aboriginal people would bring to such a program, payment for the services of such Aboriginal people would be appropriate. (4:309)

292. That the AECGs in each State and Territory take into account in discussing with governments the needs of the Aboriginal communities in their area, and that local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups take into account when consulting with school principals and providers at the local level, the fact that many Aboriginal communities and organisations have identified the need for the education curriculum to include a course of study to inform students on social issues such as the legal system-including police and Courts-civil liberties, drug and alcohol use and sex education. (4:309)

293. That the introduction of the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program be commended as being an appropriate recognition of the need for the participation of Aboriginal people at a local level in the delivery of school programs. The Commission notes, however, that the success of the program will be dependent on the extent to which the Aboriginal community is guaranteed adequate consultation, negotiation and support in devising and implementing this program. (4:314)

294. That governments and Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups take note of the methodology employed in such programs as that at Batchelor College, Northern Territory in the training of Aboriginal, teachers and others for work in remote communities. (4:318)

295. That:

a. All teacher training courses include courses which will enable student teachers to understand that Australia has an Aboriginal history and Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical matters, and to teach the curriculum which reflects those matters;

b. In-service training courses for teachers he provided so that teachers may improve their skill, knowledge and understanding to teach curricula which incorporate Aboriginal viewpoints on social, cultural and historical

- c. ***Aboriginal people should be involved in the training courses both at student teacher and in-service level. (4:322)***

296. ***That:***

- a. ***AECGs consider such processes which might allow communities and teachers to negotiate and agree upon the role of teachers at local community level; and***
- b. ***Governments, AECGs and, where appropriate, unions explore processes which will enable teachers, pupils and parents to negotiate guidelines for the teaching of Aboriginal students and the employment and conditions of teachers on local communities. (4:322)***

297. ***That:***

- a. ***The vital role which Aboriginal Education Workers or persons performing a similar role but with another title-- can play in ensuring effective Aboriginal participation in***
- b. ***Aboriginal Education Workers be given the recognition and remuneration which their role merits and that it be recognised that they suffer from conflicting expectations of community and Department as to their role; and***
- c. ***It be understood that there is a need for them to have accountability to the Aboriginal community as well as to their employer. (4:327)***

4. ***That:***

- a. ***Governments support Aboriginal community controlled adult education institutions and other institutions which provide a program of courses which have the support of***
- b. ***Governments accept that courses delivered by such institutions should be regarded as courses entitling students to such payments or allowances as would be their entitlement in the event that they were participating for the same or equivalent time in a TAFE course; and***
- c. ***It be recognised that owing to the substantial historical educational disadvantage which Aboriginal people have experienced, a course for Aboriginal students may necessarily be longer than might be the case if the course were provided to non-Aboriginal students. (4:345)***

4. ***That:***

- a. ***At every stage of the application of the National Aboriginal Education Policy the utmost respect be paid to the first long-term goal expressed in the policy, that is: To***

establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery, and evaluation of pre-school, primary, and secondary education services for their children.

- b. It be recognised that the aims of the Policy are not only to achieve equity in education for Aboriginal people but also to achieve a strengthening of Aboriginal identity, decision making and self-determination; and***
- c. It is unlikely that either of these aims can be achieved without the achieving of the other. (4:351)***

(g) Provide a comparative account of the levels of resources, both Commonwealth and State, devoted to education and training programs for Indigenous Australians

2.24 Resource for Success

Funding arrangements are directly relevant to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education and training. The impact of fees, costs and other charges on participation should be closely monitored, so that existing and/or emerging, impediments to access and/or participation can be identified and remedied.

Recommendations of The Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force

The following recommendations are relevant to the work of the Committee in ascertaining resource allocations for Indigenous Australians.

Recommendation 1

That an identifiable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student assistance scheme continue to receive support from the Government. (1988:17)

Recommendation 18

The Task Force strongly recommends that maintenance of the program of allowances for Aboriginal students in secondary schools as an identifiable student assistance program, under the arrangements recently announced for the ABSTUDY scheme. The Task Force further recommends that the Government should also investigate the extension of the tutorial provision of the scheme to year 5 and over students in primary schools and more flexibility in fee allowances to provide greater choice in schooling options. (1988:26)

Recommendation 22

Provide additional funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Element of the Capital Grants Program to help achieve the above participation objectives. (1988:28)

Recommendation 23

Support this capital expenditure by providing additional recurrent funds for new places in primary and homeland schools. This recurrent grant support should continue for 5 years when progress on achieving parity for Aboriginal children in schooling will be reviewed. (1988:28)

Recommendation 24

Establish a new program titled the Aboriginal Secondary Education Equity Program (ASEEP) to provide assistance with the recurrent costs of additional places in secondary education for Aboriginal students, and of alternative forms of secondary school provision which meet the needs of Aboriginal students in rural and remote areas and those disadvantaged by other circumstances. Two program elements should be established, one to help meet the costs of secondary education provision in rural and remote towns and communities, and the other to help meet the costs of alternative programs for disadvantaged Aboriginal students in urban areas. (1988:28)

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