

Australian Education Union



Response

To the

**Review of Australian Directions in
Indigenous Education 2005 - 2008**

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Has your organisation had a role in supporting the implementation of Australian Directions?

The AEU represents over 180,000 teachers, principals and support staff working in public schools, early childhood education centres and TAFE institutes across Australia. As State and Territory government employees, AEU members have had direct roles in supporting the implementation of Australian Directions across all levels and sectors of the education system.

As an organisation independent of governments, the AEU has not had a direct role in supporting the implementation of the Australian Directions framework. However, many of the strategies outlined in the document align with AEU policy, and therefore the AEU supports these through advocacy and campaigning.

AEU campaigns include:

- universal access to high quality Early Childhood Education for Indigenous 3 & 4 year olds;
- mandatory Indigenous Studies for pre-service and in-service teachers;
- improved professional learning for principals and school leaders in the area of Indigenous education;
- improved staffing models for schools with large cohorts of Indigenous students;
- improved employment conditions and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, education workers and principals;
- improved funding models;
- improved school infrastructure and teacher accommodation.

What aspects of Australian Directions has your organisation engaged with? Please respond in relation to the major recommendations which impact on the five domain areas.

Early Childhood Education

The AEU has long campaigned for universal free provision of early childhood education for all three and four year old children, with priority access to two years high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education to all three and four year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The AEU also supports the provision of adequate levels of high quality early childhood education and care for 0 to 3 year olds to meet family and community needs. We believe that governments should provide better links and coordination between early childhood services to provide a seamless continuum of education and care.

The AEU at the Federal level and through its Branches and Associated Bodies and membership engages in a range of strategies, including:

- Promotion and teaching of (and in) Indigenous languages as a pathway to building proficiency in Standard Australian English;
- Lobbying for an increase in the number of Indigenous teachers in the sector;
- Support for innovative projects promoting active parent engagement, such as the *Parents as First Teachers programme*, which is run through Western Cape College in Queensland;
- Advocacy for co-location of early childhood education centres with schools in order to provide better links and optimise school readiness.

School and Community Educational Partnerships

There are a number of local agreements in operation across Australia. This domain however, has not been implemented to the extent that it is outlined in the Australian Directions document.

Some Branches and Associated Bodies of the AEU have worked with State and Territory Governments to develop recruitment models aimed at attracting and keeping staff in remote communities. The AEU however, opposes any model that would allow state and territory governments to abrogate their responsibilities as employers to ensure schools are fully staffed with appropriately qualified people.

In 2003, the AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar focused on Partnerships and Agreement Making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Whilst some aspects of the report *Whose Business? Everybody's Business! - Forging partnerships and making agreements between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and educational institutions* are dated; much of the information contained in the report is relevant to this domain.

One outcome of the Seminar was the development of a set of Principles for Agreement Making, which is at attachment A of this submission. Please note that whilst much of the information in the report from the seminar and the principles at attachment A concur with AEU policy, the document is not an AEU endorsed policy position, but rather a document developed to generate further discussion across the sector about the process of Agreement Making.

School Leadership

The AEU supports the idea expressed in recommendation six of the Australian Directions document. The AEU National Principal's Committee Statement of Core Beliefs, Role and Action Plan outlines that the committee will:

“Promote and support Indigenous education within the public education system (through) encouraging and supporting Indigenous educators at all levels including principals/vice/assistant/deputy (principals); advocating for public schools with significant Indigenous enrolments; and influencing policy that supports Indigenous educators and Indigenous students within our schools.”

The AEU is an organisational partner of the Dare to Lead coalition, and supports building leadership capacity in all school staff in relation to Indigenous education. In particular, the AEU believes there must be improved systemic recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, who in many cases are already regarded as educational leaders within their own communities.

Quality Teaching

The AEU believes that Indigenous studies must be a prerequisite for employment as a teacher in the public education system; and/or built in to the registration of teaching qualifications through teacher accreditation authorities. We have campaigned at federal and state and territory levels for many years to achieve this goal. We acknowledge some progress to this end in some states and territories, but believe that this issue must be a national priority.

Pathways to Training, Employment and Higher Education

The Australian Directions document reiterated a range of evidence linking school completion to employment. The AEU supports the basic premise of recommendation 10. We have worked with other organisations, including unions through the ACTU Indigenous committee, and the former National VET Indigenous Advisory Taskforce (NVIAT), to promote and support linkages between education, training and employment.

To this end, the AEU would like to draw the review's attention to 2 pieces of research, commissioned by the NVIAT in partnership with the NCVER. The first, *Guide to success for organisations in achieving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*¹ presents a guideline for employment organisations, based on a study of nine organisations successful in this area. The second, *Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in good-practice models*² is a detailed report on the research project. The research finds a number of essential and desirable characteristics of best practice providers/brokers of employment for Indigenous peoples, including 'offering "job related" and culturally appropriate training' (p. 7).

What progress has been made in moving from a deficit to an inclusive view of Indigenous education?

The AEU believes there has been some progress in the move from a deficit to inclusive view of Indigenous education. In particular, we note the development of State and Territory policies and practices, which are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and perspectives.

A number of states and territories have developed better-coordinated systemic approaches to educating Indigenous students, including engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities. We believe however, that the true test of inclusivity is in ensuring equal outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and all other students. We recognise that much progress has been made to this end over the past 20 years, but believe that more needs to be done.

Noting that inclusive practices are the basis from which to achieve equal outcomes, the AEU believes that the new National Curriculum should be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives.

What factors do you believe are critical to ensuring that Indigenous education is 'built in' to core business?

The AEU believes that early and ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, parents and communities at all levels of the system is fundamental to ensuring that Indigenous education is 'built in' to core business.

¹ Giddy, K, Lopez,J. and Redman, A (2009) *Guide to success for organisations in achieving employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, NCVER, http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr08703_1.pdf

² Giddy, K, Lopez,J. and Redman, A (2009) *Brokering successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes: Common themes in good-practice models*, NCVER, http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/proj/nr08703_2.pdf

Further, there are numerous policy documents, which articulate the 'built-in' premise, however, their impact is limited without an underlying long-term commitment from governments and political parties at all levels to adequately resource and support their implementation.

Do you have suggestions for case studies in any of the five domains which are suitable illustrations of good practice for inclusion in a national report aimed at improving outcomes for the education of Indigenous children?

The AEU has established the Annual Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education for AEU members.

Below is a list of recent recipients of the Award, including some Special Commendation Recipients.

The Aboriginal Training Programs Team of Polytechnic Tasmania

All positions within the Aboriginal Programs Team are staffed by Aboriginal people in identified positions. They deliver quality vocational education and training and are committed to ensuring quality content and delivery of Aboriginal specific programs delivered outside their program.

Gina Archer

Gina is a retired teacher with over thirty years experience and continues to be actively involved in Indigenous education as the Chair of the Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee (QIECC).

Stephanie Ingster, Matraville Sports High School, Chifley

Stephanie has established successful ongoing courses and approaches for students and teachers; she has fostered communication with the local Aboriginal community and has been a strong voice behind their involvement within the school.

Donna Bridge East Kalgoorlie Primary School

As an Aboriginal Principal Donna Bridge always had high aspirations for what could be achieved at her school. She has used her leadership competencies to empower staff, students and parents to share a vision of improvement and they are seeing Aboriginal students demonstrating sustainable and improved outcomes.

Can you please describe some of the key supportive or inhibitive factors which impact on improved outcomes in the five domains?

The AEU believes that there must be a greater investment in building the capacity of teachers to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families and communities to deliver appropriate education. This includes:

- Improved pre and in-service teacher education, which needs to be made a requirement for teacher registration;
- A concerted strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers;
- A concerted strategy to stabilise staffing in schools with high staff turn-over.

Equally, we believe that there must be greater recognition of the important leadership role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers fulfil in schools. This should include:

- Stabilising employment;
- Developing better career pathways;
- Developing and implementing better professional development models.

Is it desirable to update Australian Directions? If Yes, what should be included?

AEU supports an update of the Australian Directions in Indigenous Education. The AEU believes that different structures and models that take into account the needs of Indigenous students and their particular communities need to be developed.

What should be the priorities for future collaborative work to be undertaken amongst education authorities in the government, Catholic and Independent sectors [to maintain a strategic approach and reduce duplication of effort in improving outcomes in Indigenous education]?

The AEU, working with a number of Indigenous education leaders has produced a framework for a national plan for Indigenous education. We intend to continue to consult with key Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders to further develop and progress this plan. Some of the key elements of this plan are outlined in the cover letter to this submission.

Attachment A

Extract from the report on the AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar (2003) *Whose Business? Everybody's Business! -Forging partnerships and making agreements between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and educational institutions*. From <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Atsi/2003SemOut.pdf>

Principles for Agreement Making

1. Race, Culture and Identity

Agreements should:

- Recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Ensure community ownership and control of the process, including development, implementation and evaluation
- Protect the rights of all cultural, family groups and other stakeholders
- Provide a platform for systems and communities to analyse and evaluate their ability to respond to needs and demands within a cultural framework

2. Information, Communication and Knowledge

Agreements should:

- Ensure that all stakeholders have access to information and knowledge
- Build in mechanisms to ensure that knowledge is developed and kept within the community
- Recognise and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise
- Provide a conduit for the development and sharing (where appropriate) of knowledge at local, regional, state and national levels, in a cross-cultural context

3. Accountability and Outcomes

Agreements should:

- Outline the specific outcomes that needed to be achieved
- Ensure reciprocal responsibilities
- Measure both quantitative and qualitative outcomes
- Build in mechanisms to ensure that systemic accountabilities to the community are given as much weight as community accountabilities to the system

4. Resources

Agreements should:

- Build in mechanisms to sustain 'good-practice'
- Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the attainment of objectives
- Be flexible enough to enable the allocation of resources at times when it is appropriate for the stakeholders, not only Government funding cycles

- Recognise that in order to attain 'equal outcomes' some times additional funding is required due to the situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

5. Leadership

Agreements should:

- Build in opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to develop skills and knowledge of their own models of leadership and Western models of leadership
- Build in opportunities for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to develop skills and knowledge of their own models of leadership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander models of leadership
- Ensure that they value the roles of people from the local community, including educators
- Ensure that policy is enacted