



# Our Rights to the Future

*A newsletter produced by the Australian Education Union for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members*

## Teacher Housing for Indigenous Teachers in Discrete Indigenous Communities

Qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) teachers who live and work in their remote home communities across discrete Indigenous communities are facing a dilemma which in some cases is making them reconsider their chosen profession. The problem lies in a very basic working condition - that of access to quality housing.

For example, to be eligible for departmental housing an Education Queensland employee must be transferred into the community and the employee or any household member must not own a private dwelling in that community<sup>1</sup>.

This policy applies to all Education Queensland employees. However, the issue of Indigenous teachers working in their remote home community has a range of impacts. The impacts arise from the standard and overcrowding of homes in remote Indigenous communities which do not meet the standard required by the department<sup>2</sup>. The operation of this policy means that Indigenous

teachers from the remote community they are working in have vastly different living conditions to that of their colleagues who have departmental housing. This leaves many Indigenous teachers feeling frustrated and many choose to leave their home communities so that when they transfer back they become eligible for departmental accommodation. Some teachers choose to leave their chosen profession altogether.

All stakeholders in Indigenous Education recognise the need to support strategies to attract and retain Indigenous teachers to the Department and importantly to teach in rural/remote communities. Illustrating this vividly is the recently released *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2005* which showed that Indigenous teaching staff as a proportion of all teaching staff is a mere 0.87%<sup>3</sup>.

Indigenous teachers are uniquely placed to tackle the persistence of significant and unacceptable gaps between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and those of the general population over time, and the implications of such outcomes in a world of rapid change and increasing demand for high levels of skill and knowledge<sup>4</sup>.

This issue has been raised by a number of Branches and Associated Bodies over the years. Federal Executive considered that the best way to progress the issue would be to determine what policies

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government (October 2007) Education Queensland Employee Housing Management Policy. Second Edition Version 2.2. S5.1.5.4.b and c. p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Government (October 2007) Education Queensland Employee Housing Management Policy. Second Edition Version 2.2. S3.1.3.1.c p.8

<sup>3</sup> Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (2007) p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> <http://education.qld.gov.au/publication/production/reports/pdfs/2000/2000-03-partsuccess.pdf>

exist in each state and territory and in each Branch and Associated Body. Thus, Federal Executive at its May 2008 meeting decided that, “the AEU forward the Housing Survey to all Branches and Associated Bodies to complete and return to the Federal Office for collation”.

### **Word Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) 2008.**

The Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) with the assistance of Melbourne Convention + Visitors Bureau (MCVB) won the right to host the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in 2008. VAEAI and MCVB competed with several other organizations and countries to host the WIPCE and their successful bid was announced at the 2005 conference in Hamilton, New Zealand, which attracted Indigenous peoples from 18 countries.

This international conference, held every 3 years, provides a forum for Indigenous peoples around the world to come together not only to share and learn from their experiences and promote best practice in Indigenous education policies, programs and practice but also to honour and celebrate their cultures and traditions.

4,000 delegates are expected to attend WIPCE 2008 which will take place at the Rod Laver Arena from 7 to 11 December. Cultural events associated with the conference will be held at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl and sites of cultural significance to Indigenous people across Melbourne.

WIPCE is an important event for all Indigenous Australians and educators and provides a unique opportunity to showcase initiatives and programs from across Australia which have a positive impact on the educational outcomes and lives of Indigenous people. It also provides an opportunity to learn about strategies and practices that have been successful for Indigenous people in other countries. WIPCE further provides an excellent opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Australians, to celebrate culture in an international forum.

A website site has been established which provides the latest updates on preparations for WIPCE and can be found at <http://www.wipce2008.com/> . Participants are also able to register on line.

The Federal Executive, with advice from the ATSIECs, has agreed to the following:

1. The Federal Office will fund one representative from each Branch and Associated Body (this will include travel, accommodation/allowances and registration). We will not be able to provide teacher release time so hopefully Branches and Associated Bodies will negotiate this with the relevant departments.
2. Each Branch and Associated Body is urged to fund two additional representatives to the Conference.
3. The 2009 AEU Indigenous Education Seminar (usually held alongside the Federal Conference) will not be held to enable Branches to use funds normally associated with sending representatives to be used to fund representatives to WIPCE.

### **Education International (EI) Indigenous Educators' Seminar**

The Education International (EI) 5<sup>th</sup> World Congress in Berlin saw deliberations on the establishment of an Indigenous Education Steering Committee in recognition of the significance and importance of providing quality education to Indigenous Peoples worldwide. Furthermore, informal discussions were held on the possibility of EI hosting an EI Indigenous Educators Seminar preceding the 2008 World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE) in Melbourne, Australia.

In progressing these discussions, EI and its affiliates from the Australian Education Union (AEU), the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) are hosting the Indigenous

Educators' Seminar prior the WIPCE event. The theme of the Seminar is "Quality Education and Social Justice for Indigenous Peoples" to be held at Conferences on Clarendon, Federation of Education Unions Building, 120 Clarendon Street, South Bank, Victoria on Saturday, December 6th, 2008.

The EI Seminar will provide an opportunity to look more closely at how education in today's world economy may be a major actor in the continuing process of assimilation, colonisation, cultural and linguistic genocide of indigenous peoples. It also provides the opportunity to examine the role of education unions in addressing these issues in the education contexts, and to share models of unions working positively with indigenous peoples.

Branch and Associated Bodies delegates should register online at:  
[http://www.ei-ie.org/form/20081206\\_en.php](http://www.ei-ie.org/form/20081206_en.php)

## **AEU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar Report**



Members of the AEU ATSIEC/TAFE ATSIEC at the Seminar.

The Seminar is a part of the AEU Annual Federal Conference program and focuses on issues that are relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in the early childhood, schooling and TAFE sectors.

This year the Seminar was held on the traditional lands of the Gadigal Clan of the Eora Nation in Sydney, and hosted by the New South

Wales Teachers' Federation at their spectacular auditorium. Many thanks to the Federation for allowing us to hold the seminar in their venue. Seminar attendees participated in a significant cultural protocol program which included a Smoking Ceremony performed by Uncle Max Eulo and a Welcome to Country performed by Elder Aunty Sylvia Scott.

Once the formalities were completed the business portion of the Seminar Agenda began. This included two keynote speakers who were Dr Kaye Price, Lecturer, School of Education and Community Studies, University of Canberra and Rob Durbridge, AEU Federal Industrial Officer. Dr Price



presented a paper on the provision of public education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the light of the national education agenda. Rob Durbridge presented a paper on what the future of industrial relations holds and what it means for Indigenous teachers and education workers in a public education setting. Both presentations provided valuable insight for the Yarning Circle sessions.



The respective presentations were consistent with the Seminar theme which was "Our Voices, Our Vision: Our Right to the Future". This theme was intended to stimulate discussion

on improving the capacity of public preschools, schools and TAFE to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and workers. The keynote presentations were explored through two Yarning Circle Sessions which allowed groups to generate insight and forward looking campaign strategies into important AEU campaigns. The Yarning Circle topics were as follows:-

- The National Education Agenda – exploring implications of the proposed National Curriculum, National Reporting and Testing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and a way forward; and
- Linking Community and Education – exploring a way forward on the issues of school attendance, Community and Parent Community participation, Indigenous Employment in Schools and associated funding issues.

The Seminar also provided an opportunity to announce the winner of the 2007 AEU Arthur Hamilton Award for the Provision of Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (formerly known as the Reconciliation Award). The 2007 Award was won by Kerry Wellham, Principal of the Waratah West Public School in Newcastle. Kerry's inspired leadership in the school and encouragement and promotion of Indigenous community participation has fostered "seismic" lifts in the literacy and numeracy achievement of Indigenous students at the school. The Award is well deserved and reflects a team effort by the school community.

### **AEU Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education**

The 2007 winner of the Arthur Hamilton Award for Outstanding Contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education was announced at the 2008 Aboriginal Education Seminar. The award was won by Kerry Wellham, Principal of the Waratah West Public School, NSW. The presentation of the award was made at the AEU

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Seminar held in Sydney on 14 January 2008.



Susan Hopgood, AEU Federal Secretary, presenting the Award to Kerry Wellham

Kerry's inspired leadership in the school and encouragement and promotion of Indigenous community participation has fostered "seismic" lifts in the literacy and numeracy achievement of Indigenous students at the school. The Award is well deserved and reflects a team effort by the school community. The AEU congratulates Kerry Wellham, the Aboriginal Education Team and the Waratah West Public School staff, students and community on your success in winning this award.

The AEU will be calling for applications soon for this important Award with the prize money increased this year to \$1000. Applications are particularly invited from the TAFE sector to celebrate the good work this division is doing in improving educational and vocational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### **Budget 2008 – Indigenous Education Funding<sup>1</sup>.**

The Australian Government and state and territory governments have agreed to the following specific Indigenous education and employment targets:

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<sup>1</sup>

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/Gillard/Releases/ClosingtheGapbetweenIndigenousandNonIndigenousAustralians.htm>

- within five years all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities will be able to attend a proper early childhood centre or opportunity;
- within a decade the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy benchmark achievement will be halved;
- within a decade the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians will be halved; and
- by 2020 the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the attainment of Year 12, or its vocational equivalent, will be halved.

The Budget contains a range of initiatives to achieve these goals, including:

- \$56.4 million has been allocated over four years for the Building Strong Foundations Program to assist in the delivery of literacy and numeracy programs for underachieving Indigenous students as well as Individual Learning Plans;
- \$28.9 million over four years to build three new Indigenous boarding facilities in the Northern Territory; and
- \$98.8 million over five years from 2007-08 to increase teacher numbers in the Northern Territory by 200 over the 2007-08 to 2011-12 period.

The 2008-09 Budget also provides for other initiatives as part of the ongoing Northern Territory Emergency Response:

- \$2.3 million investment in operational funding in 2008-09 for 10 crèches in the Northern Territory;
- to improve school attendance and engagement, \$7.4 million will be provided in 2008-09 to continue providing breakfast and lunch to school-age children under the School Nutrition program;
- funding of \$19.1 million in 2008-09 under the Enhancing Education initiatives including funds to continue professional development of teachers of Indigenous students; and

- funding of \$75.4 million in 2007-08 and 2008-09 has been allocated to enhance employment opportunities (including through the provision of Community Employment Brokers) and continue to provide employment services to Indigenous job seekers who were previously on Remote Area Exemptions.

## Feedback

What do you think about our newsletter? Please help us to make it yours by sending your articles, photos and ideas to:

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## Subscription

This newsletter will be produced twice a year. If you would like to be put on to the subscriber list, please email [samg@aeufederal.org.au](mailto:samg@aeufederal.org.au)



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