



**Australian Education Union**

**Submission to the**

**Inquiry into the Implications of**

**Funding Policy Changes**

**Contained in 2004 Amendments to the**

**Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance Act) 2000**

**for the Senate Employment,**

**Workplace Relations and Education Committee**

**February 2005**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Australian Education Union (AEU) appreciates the opportunity to table this submission on the Inquiry in to Indigenous Education Funding Arrangements to the Senate's Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee.
- 1.2 The AEU represents approximately 165,000 members working in Government early childhood education centres, schools and TAFE institutes across Australia.
- 1.3 It is our contention that the significant changes in (the new Act) at the Commonwealth level have been implemented as a fait accompli by the Commonwealth Government and Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), with little or no consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the public early childhood education, school and TAFE communities which work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities to support their educational aspirations.
- 1.4 Whilst we acknowledge DEST's production of the discussion paper "*Indigenous Education: Achievement through choice and opportunity – Australian Government Indigenous-specific funding for the 2005-2008 quadrennium*" we lament the fact that this paper was presented as information about proposed changes, rather than as a basis for a consultative process.
- 1.5 Very little real consultation with key stakeholders has actually taken place. We have been informed that many people working in State and Territory Education systems feel as though these policy changes have been imposed by the Commonwealth Government and that whilst information about the changes was distributed and feedback provided, very little or none of this feedback was taken in to account.
- 1.6 The AEU believes that this imposition of policy, whilst not a rare action for this Government, is in direct contravention of the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* (1989), which has *Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Educational Decision-Making* as its first goal.
- 1.7 Overall, there has been an unprecedented level of obfuscation over the changes in this funding regime, the most disappointing of which has been led by the Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, who has publicly accused Indigenous parents through ASSPA committees of producing poor educational outcomes for Indigenous students through the funding of BBQs and excursions, in spite of these being allowable under the previous ASSPA guidelines.
- 1.8 We believe that the changes to federal Indigenous education funding that have been imposed on providers are ideologically driven and are either one of the most cynical exercises in cost cutting from the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia, or, one of the poorest examples of public policy implementation that we have ever seen.

- 1.9 We are dismayed at this Government's attempts to 'cherry pick' the pieces of reports that it finds most palatable and use them to make their ideologically driven changes whilst ignoring the serious consequences of these changes. For example, shifting resources from urban and rural to remote areas will impact on those successful programs that are producing outcomes in cities and country towns. Numerically, Indigenous student numbers are greatest along the eastern sea-board of Australia and it is these large numbers of Indigenous students who will be further disadvantaged by an ideologically driven Government who have tried to establish the paradigm that the 'real Aboriginal people' are those that live in remote areas.
- 1.10 We do not dispute the fact that those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live in remote areas suffer great levels of disadvantage, yet we fail to see how social justice and equity with non-Indigenous Australia can be achieved through the shifting of resources and costs. We have long argued for a substantial injection of funds to Indigenous Education in remote areas, but believe that the methodology applied under this new funding regime is poor. Rather than inject additional funding, this Government is, to coin a proverbial phrase, 'robbing from Peter to pay Paul.'
- 1.11 There are some serious national issues that the Government has failed to deal with in the development of this new funding regime. The first of these is the failure to deal in any significant way with the large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who do not have any access to schooling whatsoever. This is particularly apparent in the pre-school sector across Australia and in the secondary sector, particularly in the Northern Territory. In preschool, estimates of those missing out vary between 3000 – 4000 (Watson Consulting, 2003) and 9500 (Kronemann, 2004). In the secondary sector, estimates range from 3500 (Ramsey et. al. 2004) to perhaps 6000 (AEU NT Branch). The AEU believes that this is a national crisis, and a source of great national shame and the failure of the Federal Government to show national leadership and deal with this issue is nothing less than a travesty.

The AEU is also concerned about the low numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers working in both the schooling and TAFE sectors. We understand that research in relation to Indigenous TAFE teachers is about to become available through the National Centre for Vocational Education Research that reveals diminishing numbers of Indigenous teachers in TAFE. The *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* (2003) has stated that the percentage of Indigenous teacher in the schooling sector is 0.8% of all teacher numbers, in spite of the Indigenous schooling population being 4.7% of the total student population (p. 21).

## 2. Recommendations

- A. That the Minister for Education, Science and Training and DEST immediately reverse the punitive funding methodology applied to ITAS tutoring which means that Indigenous students must fail standardised tests in order to receive funding. This funding regime punishes schools for achieving outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- B. Failing the reversal of the funding methodology, that DEST contract an independent evaluation of the ITAS tutorial arrangements after the first year of implementation in order to determine the impacts that these arrangements have had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.
- C. That DEST review their ITAS bulk-funding arrangements to ensure that VET institutions are able to access bulk-funding for ITAS.
- D. That DEST funding guidelines are changed so that schools with less than 20 Indigenous enrolments are able to access ITAS tutoring.
- E. That funding is allocated to train Indigenous parents and their school communities in the development of funding submissions, particularly in relation to the PSPI program.
- F. That the changes to IESIP funding be independently evaluated following twelve months of implementation to determine the impacts of policy changes on Indigenous student outcomes.
- G. That indexation for IESIP funds is allocated at the same rate as the AGSRC.
- H. That DEST release the independent evaluation of the Scaffolding Literacy Program conducted by ACER.
- I. That the financial and academic accountability provisions required by Government schooling systems are applied to all private schools and other institutions in receipt of funding under the Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs, and that these outcomes are made public.
- J. That Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs be evaluated independently following 12 months of implementation.
- K. That DEST, in conjunction with State and Territory Governments, explore options for Government sponsored residential colleges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- L. That the Federal Government immediately abandon its principle of re-directing valuable and much needed resources from one group of disadvantaged Indigenous students to another and consider either a large injection of funding to all disadvantaged Indigenous groups or a redirection of funding from those most advantaged in society to those who are least advantaged.

- M. That the Commonwealth work with the States and Territories to develop strategies, including under the accountability framework to immediately prioritise the training and employment of Indigenous teachers.
- N. That immediate priority in any accountability framework is given to the identification of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are not accessing schooling across all sectors and the development of strategies to ensure this access is increased.
- O. That all levels of Government reassert their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in the context of what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved, and prioritise and fund programs appropriately.

### **3. Terms of Reference 1**

**Proposed changes to the IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to: (a) the new tutorial assistance arrangements and the Whole of School Intervention strategy under IEDA; and (b) new strategic initiatives for Indigenous students in remote areas and the new flagship program for teaching literacy under IESIP.**

#### **3.1 Overview**

3.1.1 Prior to 2005, the Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) program was administered through three elements – the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) scheme, the Vocational Education Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS), which included access to individual tuition, bulk tuition conducted under agreement through school systems and funding for homework centres.

3.1.2 The *2002 National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* (DEST, 2003) states that in 2002, there were:

- 3,811 ASSPA committees with a total expenditure of \$19, 778, 858;
- 9,219 Individual and small group approved students accessing ATAS;
- 735 Institutions conducting ATAS in-school tuition; and
- 583 ATAS funded homework centres.

3.1.3 As the figures above show, the changes to IEDA funding will impact upon significant numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents and schools who have accessed ASSPA, ATAS and VEGAS.

3.1.4 From 2005, total IEDA funding will be \$280.9m, an increase of \$20.7m (8%) over the next quadrennium. DEST figures (*National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training*, DEST 2002) show that enrolment growth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in all primary and secondary schools has averaged 4% per annum from 1998-2002, an enrolment growth rate of 16% over the quadrennium. DEST also reports that VET enrolments from 2001-2002 grew at 8.4%.

3.1.5 It is clear that an 8% funding increase (2% per annum) will not meet Indigenous enrolment increases in the school and VET sectors.

#### **3.2 Tutorial Assistance**

3.2.1 Prior to 2005, the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) was available to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, either through in-school tuition or through the DEST administered program. The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) will replace ATAS with: the In-class tuition scheme (\$105.5m), targeting those students not meeting the Year 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy

benchmarks; a tuition scheme targeting Year 10, 11 and 12 students (\$41.9m) and bulk funding arrangements to tertiary institutions (\$31.5m).

DEST's *Indigenous Education Provider Guidelines* (2005-2008) outline that:

*“School systems and non-systemic schools are eligible to apply for funding to deliver an In-Class tuition programme to Indigenous school students, excluding students in schools in State capital cities and Canberra with a total Indigenous enrolment of less than 20”* (p.17).

- 3.2.2 The Indigenous Funding Inquiry (Commonwealth Grant's Commission, 2001) reported that in 1999, more than 60% of Government primary schools have Indigenous enrolments, but of this 60%, about half have less than six students enrolled. This means that approximately half of all primary schools with Indigenous students enrolled will be ineligible to access the ITAS scheme. The AEU believes that these schools should be able to form a cluster, as per the clustering arrangements set out in the IESIP SRA guidelines, so that no Indigenous student is disadvantaged.
- 3.2.3 Further to this, the AEU believes that targeting tutorial assistance to students who have not met the Year 3, 5 and 7 benchmarks is not an effective way to allocate funds. Firstly, schools that run successful programs will in effect be punished for doing so through the loss of funding. Secondly, as students progress through year levels and concepts become increasingly complex, further tutoring will be required. This will no longer be available under ITAS. Thirdly, early intervention has been proven to be successful in relation to improving outcomes, yet students will not be able to access tutorial intervention through the new ITAS until they have reached their fourth (and in some cases their fifth) year of schooling.
- 3.2.4 The AEU has been informed that this change in funding will inevitably mean the loss of employment of existing ATAS tutors. In the Northern Territory, for example, AEU members report that 2600 tutors previously providing ATAS tuition may be reduced to 200.
- 3.2.5 In relation to secondary schools, the Years 10, 11 and 12 tuition scheme is “based on an assessment of students' need for tuition and the availability of funding. Students in remote locations are a priority in providing tuition” (DEST 2005). On one hand, targeting students and schools in remote areas where secondary outcomes are poor seems like a fair and strategic position for the Government to take. On the other hand, access to secondary education in remote areas is poor. Most remote schools in the Northern Territory and Cape York do not run senior secondary programs and further to this, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas have disengaged from secondary education well before Year 9. As the *Future Directions for Secondary Education in the Northern Territory* (DEET Northern Territory 2004) states:

*“Indigenous students currently comprise 32% of the secondary school population, with predictions of a substantial increase in the 14–19 age group by 2016 (Taylor, 2002). However, DEET enrolment and attendance data, ABS data, as well as*

*evidence from consultations and submissions and the literature (Collins, 1999; Boughton 2001) revealed that significant numbers of young Indigenous people of secondary do not participate in education at all, and those who do are often disengaging by Years 8 or 9 in urban areas and even earlier in remote regions” (p. 160).*

- 3.2.6 Thus, the new ITAS will focus tutorial funding assistance towards remote area students who are disengaging from secondary education prior to the years that the strategy takes effect (Years 10, 11 and 12). Two of the many possible issues which may arise and require monitoring through the implementation of the new ITAS are – how many remote area students will be able to access this funding? Also, how many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, in urban and rural areas who are engaged with senior secondary schooling but may need additional tutorial support to assist them to maintain this engagement and complete their senior school certificates, will miss out on funding?
- 3.2.7 There are also concerns in relation to the impacts that the new ITAS has on VET, and in particular the 73.5% (DEST 2003) of all Indigenous students who are enrolled in Government VET systems or TAFE institutes. Bulk funding arrangements for ITAS tutoring are not available to VET Institutions, but are available to Universities. This is in spite of the fact that there has been a significant growth in Indigenous VET enrolments over the past decade.
- 3.2.8 Indigenous enrolments in VET in 2002 were 3.5% of total VET enrolments (DEST 2003). Saunders (et. al. 2003) report that Indigenous participation in VET in 2001 was occurring at approximately twice the rate of non-Indigenous students, but that Indigenous students were less likely to access higher level courses and have had decreasing pass rates and higher withdrawal rates than non-Indigenous students. It is with this in mind that the AEU believes DEST should make bulk-funded tutorial assistance available to VET institutions.

### ***Recommendations – ITAS***

- A. That the Minister for EST and DEST immediately reverse the punitive funding methodology applied to ITAS tutoring which means that Indigenous students must fail standardised tests in order to receive funding. This funding regime punishes schools for achieving outcomes with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- B. Failing the reversal of the funding methodology, that DEST contract an independent evaluation of the ITAS tutorial arrangements after the first year of implementation in order to determine the impacts that these arrangements have had on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.
- C. That DEST review their ITAS bulk-funding arrangements to ensure that VET institutions are able to access bulk-funding for ITAS.
- D. That DEST funding guidelines are changed so that schools with less than 20 Indigenous enrolments are able to access ITAS tutoring.

### 3.3 *Whole of School Intervention Strategy*

3.3.1 Former ASSPA and VEGAS funding programs will be combined and replaced with the “Whole of School Intervention Strategy” which will provide \$62.5m for submission-based Parent School Partnerships Initiative funding with 50% of this funding targeted at remote areas and a continuation of Homework Centre funding (\$37.8m).

3.3.2 Previously, ASSPA committees were allocated funding following the submission of an activity plan to DEST. Funding was allocated on a per head capita rate, with remote area allocations being higher than urban and rural area allocations. An internal review of the IEDA program, including the ASSPA element, was done by the then Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA, 2000). This review found that the ASSPA program:

*“has proven to be appropriate as a method of increasing the access of the parents of Indigenous students to decision-making structures” (p. 34).*

3.3.3 The review reported that in 1999, parent participation in ASSPA included coverage of almost 91% of all Indigenous pre-school and school students (DETYA 2000, p. 36). The review found that the program overall was effective in engaging Indigenous parents in Educational decision-making, particularly in relation to cultural activities and that greater effort was required to engage and support Indigenous parents’ involvement in ASSPA committees. It also concluded that some ASSPA committees were not as effective as they could be, due to dominance by the school principal or one particular family group within a community.

3.3.4 There was no mention in the review’s recommendations, or in the chapter covering ASSPA about the need to reconfigure the program in to the *Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI)* and no suggestion of how a competitive submission-based program would lead to improved outcomes.

3.3.5 The review, (DETYA 2000) however, did mention that:

*“The involvement of Indigenous parents and communities in education is still an appropriate policy response, but the ASSPA program in itself is no longer an appropriate intervention to achieve this. The role of Indigenous parents should be an integral component of the overall IEDA program and mainstream education providers and peak parent bodies should be encouraged to step up their activities to encourage and engage Indigenous parents in school education issues in particular” (p. 45).*

Additionally, the report cites that:

*“There is broad consensus that the success of ASSPA within a particular school community is heavily reliant upon the attitudes, skills and motivation of the Indigenous parents, the school principal and the AIEW and the level of structural support provided by the relevant educational authority. The most successful ASSPA*

*committees are those where there is a genuine partnership between the committee and the school” (DETYA 2000, p. 44).*

- 3.3.6 The review in to IEDA and in particular ASSPA has recognised the structural, social and political issues that need to be worked through in order for a committee to function successfully. It mentions the onerous nature of running an ASSPA committee and the pressure that this places on Indigenous parent volunteers. It is unfortunate then that the Government has not responded to these issues through the creation of the new PSPI. There is a two-stage concept plan and submission process for the PSPI, which members have reported will be an onerous task.
- 3.3.7 50% of the PSPI funding is to be targeted at remote areas. Many small remote area schools (some of which are staffed by a teaching principal and an AIEW) may not have the time or the capacity to engage parents in a two-stage submission-writing process, particularly where parents speak English as a second, third or fourth language.
- 3.3.8 A further concern is what will happen to those ASSPA committees and schools that are functioning well and running successful programs – particularly those that are based in urban and rural settings. Members have informed us that, given such a significant reform process consultation processes have been limited, and the ability for schools to have input in to the process or an impact on the decisions that have been made, have been minimal.
- 3.3.9 In addition, the AEU is concerned that the Minister for Science, Education and Training has justified these erroneous changes through the promulgation of misinformation, through statements such as this in the media:

*“There are 3,800 of these committees throughout Australia and the review which we conducted of those found that they have delivered quite poor outcomes educationally for Aboriginal students. We’re now significantly increasing the funding in that area but going to a project based arrangement, putting in \$62 million and instead of funding bbqs and excursions we’re actually going to fund programmes that involve parents and broader communities that deliver good outcomes for Aboriginal kids. For the critics I just suggest they actually read the detail” (Minister for Science, Education and Training, 2004b).*

- 3.3.10 It is disappointing that the Minister did not mention that BBQs and excursions have been included in ASSPA funding guidelines as being appropriate ways to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to become involved with school-based processes, particularly where school experiences for some parents have resulted in a negative perception of schooling and a reticence to engage with a school. If the previous Activity Plan submission processes that ASSPA committees needed to conduct in order to receive funding from DEST were approved, as per the guidelines, then why does the Minister see fit to assert that these committees are responsible for the delivery of ‘quite poor outcomes educationally for Aboriginal students’?

- 3.3.11 The AEU believes that there has been a missed opportunity in the creation of strategic linkages between ASSPA committees at a local level and Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECBs) at a State/Territory level. These have never been established systemically. Given that funding for these entities comes from the same ‘bucket’, it would seem like a logical step to have ensured that there was capacity to harness advice at a local level and create strategic linkages from this to regional to state/territory and national levels.
- 3.3.12 In relation to the Minister’s claims that funding will be ‘significantly increased’ the figures tell a different story. Firstly, the IEDA program, including ASSPA, has not received any significant growth funding over all of its years of operation. The IEDA review (2000) stated in relation to incremental increases in funding that:
- “A small growth factor of approximately one per cent is applied to these numbers and that figure is multiplied by the appropriate per capita rate stated in the ASSPA Program Guidelines”* (p.14).
- 3.3.13 Secondly, the new PSPI will be funded at \$62.5m over the quadrennium, which is approximately \$15.6m per annum. The 2001 ASSPA funding allocation was approximately \$19.6m and the 2002 allocation approximately \$19.7m, which is a significant decrease of about \$4 million per annum.
- 3.3.14 Therefore there has been a significant decrease in funding to support the engagement of Indigenous parents in educational decision-making, and again, this increase does not come near meeting the significant enrolment growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which averaged 4% per annum over the last quadrennium.
- 3.3.15 The issues that the AEU and our members have had with the changes to the ASSPA program are not against the need to reform the program per-se. We are concerned that the processes put in to place by DEST have not given Indigenous parents and community members, along with schools, enough time to (a) determine how these changes will impact upon their existing programs; and (b) respond in any significant way to the DEST in relation to the implications of these changes.

### ***Recommendations – Whole of School Intervention Strategy***

- E. That funding is allocated to train Indigenous parents and their school communities in the development of funding submissions, particularly in relation to the PSPI program.

### ***3.4 IESIP Strategic Initiatives for remote areas***

- 3.4.1 For the 2001-2004 quadrennium, funding under IESIP was comprised of Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) money paid to providers per capita, based on sectors being funded and remoteness; ESL-ILSS money paid to assist English as a Second Language speakers in their first year of schooling; NIELNS money paid to support the attainment of objectives under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; Away from Base – Mixed Mode Delivery

- money paid to support students in VET institutions and universities who are based in their home communities and either require travel to block delivery sessions on campus, or require teachers to travel to them.
- 3.4.2 The 2005-2008 quadrennium will see a continuation of IESIP funding, although many of the program areas will be redefined, with a significant focus on remote areas. IESIP funding will be comprised of SRA money paid to providers per capita and Strategic Initiatives (SI) funding (a continuation of \$128.1m).
- 3.4.3 SRA funding will increase by \$86.3m or 20.2% - from \$427.2m (01-04) to \$513.5m (2005-2008). SRA increases are based on enrolment projections over the quadrennium. As mentioned previously, Indigenous enrolments in the schooling sector alone are grew at an average of 4% per annum over the last quadrennium. Increases in funding for the next quadrennium will reflect projected growth in student numbers across all sectors. Therefore, the 'new' money indicated for IESIP can be attributed primarily to growth in Indigenous enrolments.
- 3.4.4 Strategic Initiatives projects will focus on students in remote areas and cover:
- NIELNS (a reoriented program based around 'what works' and focusing on skills of teachers and support staff, early schooling preparation, and post-compulsory schooling initiatives – Year 12 or VET equivalents);
  - The "Dare to Lead" project (DEST media release refers to a project to 'progress coalitions with school principals');
  - Support for the extension of the 'Scaffolding Literacy' program (\$14m, \$8m of which will support the roll-out of the program across the NT education system, and \$6m for a continuation of support for 'partnership pilots' in other parts of Australia);
  - The ESL-ILSS program;
  - Continuation of funding for Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECBs) and Indigenous Support Units (ISUs);
  - Continuation of funding for Croc Festivals; and
  - Continuation of funding for Mentoring Pilots.
- 3.4.5 The IESIP fund source has historically been used to sponsor a range of national projects, or national strategic initiatives in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. For example, the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy was implemented over the for the 2001-2004 funding quadrennium with both provider-run projects (\$63m) and national DEST administered projects (\$13.3m) which represented approximately 10% of the total IESIP funding. This total of \$76.3m was not a new funding allocation. It was a quarantining of 10% of the existing IESIP allocation to the NEILNS (Hugh Watson Consulting, 2003).
- 3.4.6 Funding for some of the on-going projects for example, NEILNS and Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies, will be allocated from the *Indigenous Education Capital and non-Capital Projects* source. DEST's *Indigenous Education Provider Funding Guidelines* (2005-2008) state that:

*“funding for Indigenous Education Projects is limited and applicants, whilst eligible to apply, are not guaranteed that any application will be approved”* (p. 38).

- 3.4.7 Remoteness boundaries will be redefined according to the 2000 census and all ‘new’ SRA funds will be targeted to remote areas. Funding for those providers who have been reclassified from remote to non-remote and funding for students in engaged in schooling and VET in State capital cities and Canberra will have their funding maintained at 2004 levels. These areas will receive no growth funding.
- 3.4.8 This is a concern to the AEU, particularly in relation to those systems which have relied on NEILNS or other forms of IESIP funding to employ Indigenous people and run projects in their early childhood centres, schools or TAFE institutes. TAFE Tasmania, for example, has previously run all of its Indigenous programs through the IESIP fund source, particularly NEILNS. The state government has promised to allocate a third of the previous quadrennium’s funding to continue programs, which has resulted in a shortfall of two-thirds of the total funding from the last quadrennium.
- 3.4.9 Another example of the impacts of focussing funds to remote areas is in Queensland, where the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA) has been informed that they will lose a substantial slice of the NEILNS funding because it has been redirected to the Northern Territory. This is in spite of the fact that IETA provides professional development and learning services primarily to Cape York schools, which are remote area schools.
- 3.4.10 These are the unforeseen consequences of the funding shift from urban centres to rural and remote regions. There has been an expectation from the Commonwealth that mainstream funding should be leveraged to provide Indigenous programs. Whilst this is immensely supportable in principle, in practice, these vast changes in policy and practice require consultation and negotiation with State and Territory systems.
- 3.4.11 An additional issue is that historically, IESIP has been allocated indexation funding at a rate lower than the AGSRC. The AEU considers that this is an anomalous funding policy, which should be rectified.
- 3.4.12 The AEU believes that remote area funding should be a priority for Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and that this priority should be met by a significant injection of funding to these areas. The current method applied by the Commonwealth means that there is the potential to wind back positive steps made in urban and rural areas.

### ***Recommendations – IESIP***

- F. That the changes to IESIP funding be independently evaluated following twelve months of implementation to determine the impacts of policy changes on Indigenous student outcomes.

G. That indexation for IESIP funds be allocated at the same rate as the AGSRC.

### 3.5 *Literacy program*

3.5.1 The What Works program ([http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4\\_2\\_3\\_6.htm](http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4_2_3_6.htm)) describes the Scaffolding Literacy Program as:

*“(A) teaching approach adopted in the program (which) takes a somewhat radical and direct perspective which allows students who may be performing years below their grade level to work at, or very close to, reading levels appropriate for their age.”*

3.5.2 The program is focused on an intensive teacher-directed exploration of a level-appropriate text that students decode and work with through initial processes of teacher modelling.

What Works states that:

*“In scaffolding interactions teachers manage learning engagement initially through modelling and providing information to learners rather than asking learners to ‘discover’ or explore using their own learning resources. However, the developing interaction process in the classroom is a highly dynamic one and the roles of teacher and learners shift as interaction progresses over time until the learners can function by themselves without teacher help. This kind of teacher support makes teacher expectations about the ways of learning and thinking necessary for school success clearly visible to learners, especially those who don’t have the culturally acquired understandings necessary to ‘tune in’ to school learning without such explicit help.*

*The outcome is the development of students who are ‘literate’ in a sense of the term that is far broader than learning simply how to read, write and spell. While reading, writing and spelling form the core focus of the program, the program also provides a platform from which students can come to learn the ‘ways of speaking and thinking’ that are necessary for educational success”* ([http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4\\_2\\_3\\_6.htm](http://www.whatworks.edu.au/4_2_3_6.htm)).

3.5.3 Research has shown that the Scaffolding Literacy Program has shown improvements in the literacy skills of students in schools where the program has been introduced. AEU members who have been engaged in teaching scaffolding literacy have reported the effectiveness of the program for some students.

3.5.4 Some members have contended that the features of the program’s success are not reliant on the program itself, but the methodology behind its implementation in schools. Teachers receive extensive in-servicing and support in order to learn how to teach the methodology, there is often a whole-school commitment to the implementation of the program, which leads to the development of an expectation of success. Resourcing the introduction of the program has also been intensive, which teachers argue has led to the production of successful literacy outcomes.

3.5.6 The AEU was represented on the Indigenous Reference Group for the Evaluation of the NEILNS. This group's comments were reported as follows in the evaluation:

*“The IRG was presented with strong evidence regarding the success of the Scaffolding pedagogy in improving literacy for Indigenous students. The IRG believed that the literacy scaffolding methodology can improve education outcomes for Indigenous students. They asked the Department that a way be found to make it widely available to schools and to practising teachers, to universities which are training teachers, to Registered Training Organisations, and all other organisations engaged in literacy instruction, as quickly as possible. They also expressed their hope that matters connected to ownership of the methodology, copyright of intellectual property and other related issues do not stand in the way of the dissemination of literacy scaffolding”* (p. 128).

3.5.7 The Scaffolding Literacy Program was not evaluated with the provider-based projects, and thus, the IRG were introduced to the methodology through a presentation by the scaffolding literacy team. An independent evaluation of the program, conducted by the Australian College of Educational Research (DETYA Annual Report 2003) has not been publicly released.

3.5.8 Members have raised some concerns about the impact that the methodology may have on the maintenance of traditional languages, however, in relation to the teaching of English, members have presented no concerns in relation to this methodology, particularly if it improves outcomes in such a significant way. The AEU nevertheless believes that the independent evaluation of the program that was conducted by ACER should be released to the public.

### ***Recommendation – Literacy Program***

H. That DEST release the independent evaluation of the Scaffolding Literacy Program conducted by ACER.

## 4. Terms of Reference 2

**The likely educational outcomes of the Commonwealth's new Indigenous specific funding measures, with reference to:**

- a) **the Indigenous youth leadership and Indigenous youth mobility programs**
- b) **the Government's objective of accelerating educational outcomes for Indigenous students as stated in the 10 point national agenda for schooling announced in November 2003.**

### *4.1 Indigenous Youth Leadership and Youth Mobility Programs*

- 4.1.1 These programs were announced by the Government as a part of the 2004 election campaign. Minister Nelson's media release (December 2004) states that \$11m will be provided over four years for the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program, and that \$19.5m will be provided for an Indigenous Youth Mobility Program. The Youth Leadership Program will provide "250 boarding school and university scholarships and structured study tours for Indigenous students from remote areas" and the Youth Mobility Program "will assist young Indigenous people who, with the support of their communities, choose to relocate to capital cities or major provincial centres to take up employment and training opportunities."
- 4.1.2 AEU policy does not support Government funding to private schools. Notwithstanding this, AEU members working in the public education system, many in remote communities have a unique insight in to those students who attend boarding schools and the issues that they face. In particular, members report that those students who are unsuccessful in the boarding environment return to their home communities and do not re-engage with the schooling system. This has become such a phenomenon that some schools have allocated teachers with the specific responsibility of re-engaging returned students with the education system.
- 4.1.3 This policy is based on an assumption that boarding schools will produce better educational outcomes than those being produced currently, in spite of a recent trend of students completing senior secondary education in remote area schools. This assumption is not based on any data. Anecdotally, there have been a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who have been successful in a boarding environment, but again, anecdotally, these students are in the minority.
- 4.1.4 The AEU believes that without a well supported public education system within the local community, those students who attend school outside of their communities will achieve limited success, as, for many remote area students the city is a culturally unfamiliar environment and boarding schools are just as unfamiliar. Without massive levels of support, many students are left to flounder.
- 4.1.5 The AEU is concerned that the accountability expectations placed on non-Government providers should be the same as those placed on Government providers. For example, the AEU has been informed that a study undertaken by

Education Queensland through the COAG project in Cape York has revealed that there have been few outcomes for those Cape York students attending boarding schools, in spite of hundreds of thousands of dollars expended. To date, the AEU is not aware of the public release of this document. We believe that this document should be released in to the public domain, along with any other information that governments have in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending boarding schools. As this project was allegedly undertaken through the auspices of COAG, we believe that the Senate Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education should request the release of this document from the appropriate sources.

- 4.1.6 At the time of writing, there have been no guidelines produced by DEST in relation to these two programs, which makes it very difficult to analyse the potential impacts that that these programs may have. We are aware, however, of the support systems and structures that are required in order for remote area students to succeed in urban environments and hope that the Government has factored these arrangements in to its planning around the roll out of these programs.
- 4.1.7 Whilst we do not support the notion that these programs will result in ‘another stolen generation of Indigenous children’ as some Aboriginal commentators have been quoted as mentioning in the media, we believe that there are a range of issues around student support that need to be factored in to these types of funding models in order for them to succeed.
- 4.1.8 We are also aware of a number of successful State Government sponsored models of residential colleges, such as the Wiltja program in South Australia and the Spinifex College precinct in Mt Isa, and believe that the expansion of these models should be explored.

### ***Recommendations – Youth Leadership and Youth Mobility***

- I. That the financial and academic accountability provisions required by Government schooling systems are applied to all private schools and other institutions in receipt of funding under the Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs, and that these outcomes are made public.
- J. That Indigenous Youth Leadership and Indigenous Youth Mobility Programs be evaluated independently following 12 months of implementation.
- K. That DEST, in conjunction with State and Territory Governments, explore options for Government sponsored residential colleges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

## 4.2 *10 Point National Agenda for Schooling*

4.2.1 In the discussion paper “*Indigenous Education: Achievement through Choice and Opportunity – Australian Government Indigenous-specific funding for the 2005-2008 quadrennium*” (DEST 2004) the Department outlines the Australian Government’s approach to Indigenous education as being driven by the following principles:

- *“Re-directing resources to programs which demonstrably improve outcomes;*
- *Provide greater weighting of resources towards Indigenous students of greatest disadvantage – those in remote areas; and*
- *Improve mainstream service provision for Indigenous students, particularly those in metropolitan areas”* (p. 2).

4.2.2 The AEU is concerned that there has been a significant focus from the Federal Government on the top two principles, and very little negotiation with State and Territory Governments about how they intend to meet the possible funding shortfalls, due to the redistribution of funding. The Minister and DEST have issued a directive through Federal Legislation which may prove to impact heavily on the capacity of States and Territories to fund Indigenous projects, many of which are based on the employment of Indigenous people. This is particularly pertinent in States like New South Wales, who numerically have the highest population of Indigenous students, with few remote areas and allocate a large percentage of their IESIP funding to the employment of Indigenous staff.

4.2.3 The AEU believes that States and Territories should direct funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, but is concerned about the top-down approach the Commonwealth government has applied. No one could argue that there is a need to focus efforts on areas of greatest need. Indeed, the AEU has argued that more resources should be targeted at areas where the greater need exists, but it is the substance of the Minister’s arguments which are flawed. In the “*Taking Schools to the Next Level*” speech (November 2003), where these announcements were first mooted, the Minister states:

*“All Indigenous Australians face significantly greater challenges than Australians from other cultures. But are the disadvantages faced by Indigenous students who live in Arnhem Land or Cape York or the Kimberly(sic), in environments characterised by alcohol abuse, domestic violence and limited access to mainstream infrastructure, greater than those faced by Indigenous students in our large cities? I think they are.”*

4.2.4 The basis of this argument is of course that the ‘real disadvantaged’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in the northern part of Australia, and the ‘others’ have lesser needs. This is a divisive argument that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have resisted for decades. No one can doubt that between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations the statistics show that people who indeed do live in the remote northern communities suffer great disadvantage, but those who are living in urban and rural communities also suffer in the same sorts of environments that the Minister outlined above. A walk through any inner

city or country location where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live is all it takes to realise this.

4.2.5 The AEU therefore believes that the Government's logic is flawed in the measurement of relative disadvantage between Indigenous groups (i.e. urban and remote) rather than between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups in the same geographic locations.

4.2.6 The Minister's solution to alleviating this disadvantage that is most concerning. He states:

*"This will mean that more indigenous (sic) specific resources will be targeted at remote regions where the greatest educational disadvantage exists."*

Thus, whilst the Minister recognises that "unacceptable disadvantage" remains for "all Indigenous Australians", he will not allocate enough resources to target this disadvantage in a structural and global way by increasing resources overall. Instead, his reform is to shift resources from Indigenous students and families in urban and regional areas to remote areas.

4.2.7 The Minister's proposal, based on the above mentioned Commonwealth Grants Commission Indigenous Funding Inquiry, omits to note that the inquiry found:

*"Most of the organisations and people who contributed to the Inquiry argued that addressing the large gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is more important than redistributing existing funding by reference to differences in need between groups of Indigenous people. They thought we should estimate the total level of resources required to provide Indigenous people with services comparable to those received by non-Indigenous people" (p 3).*

And further, that:

*"Indigenous people in all regions have high needs relative to the non-Indigenous population. An important question is whether new methods of distribution should be applied to existing programs and funds. Any change in methods of distributing existing resources means that some regions would lose funding and others would gain. Large redistributions risk losing the benefits of investments made over long periods of time, including those in developing organizational capacity and people. The real costs of redistribution may be high" (p. xvi).*

4.2.8 The AEU finds this policy to be of particular interest, given that this Government has argued strongly against the redistribution of funding from those 'least disadvantaged' elite private schools to the 'most disadvantaged' government schools. We agree with the Commonwealth Grants' Commission's contention of the potential high impacts of the costs of redistribution of funding.

*Recommendation – National Agenda for Schooling*

- L. That the Federal Government immediately abandon its principle of re-directing valuable and much needed resources from one group of disadvantaged group to another and consider either a large injection of funding to all disadvantaged Indigenous groups or a redirection of funding from those most advantaged in society to those who are least advantaged.

## 5. Terms of Reference 3

**The accountability requirements applying to funding arrangements under IEDA and IESIP programs, with reference to**

- a) **the new framework of performance monitoring and reporting on educational outcomes;**
- b) **the new financial reporting arrangements.**

5.1 The AEU supports measures to promote and increase accountability in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education; however, we are concerned about any initiative which imposes punitive measures, rather than seeking to implement curative measures with providers in a collaborative fashion.

5.2 The DEST information paper on *Indigenous Education Funding (2005-2008)* (DEST 2005) outlines the new accountability measures required to “*meet the following conditions of funding:*

- *The introduction of school attendance benchmarks.*
- *To commit to performance measures and targets and to monitor results.*
- *To measure outcomes at the remote, rural/provincial and metropolitan level, rather than just as aggregate State level data which often masks large regional variations.*
- *To provide an annual statement that details how the funding provided by the Australian Government to school systems is being spent on improving educational outcomes.*
- *To transparently report their expenditure on Indigenous education in order to ensure that all the money provided actually gets to the intended recipients” (p. 2).*

5.3 The AEU believes that many of the ‘new’ accountability measures were already in place in the under the old IESIP bi-lateral agreement making process between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. For example, the AEU believes that areas such as committing to performance measures and targets and monitoring those results were the purpose of the bi-lateral IESIP agreements, and that attendance and other measures such as literacy and numeracy benchmarks were already included in the agreements. The annual statement of funding expenditure has also been a requirement of the old agreement making process.

5.4 We believe that reporting by geographic location is a good initiative as it enables analysis of data at a micro level; however, we cannot support a measure that may use data to compare groups of Indigenous students in order to remove funding from one group and allocate it to another. Again, we would prefer an overall increase in funding, rather than redistribution.

5.5 There are a range of concerns that the AEU believes will not be adequately addressed through these reporting systems. These include, the use of IESIP funding

- for the long term employment of Indigenous peoples in State and Territory education systems, the diminishing numbers of Indigenous teachers in the public education system and the large numbers of Indigenous students who are still not able to access any form of education, particularly in the Early Childhood and Senior Secondary Schooling areas.
- 5.6 The AEU has long been concerned about the use of IESIP funding to meet what we believe are systemic employment responsibilities. We are aware for example that most States and Territories use IESIP to employ vast numbers of Indigenous peoples such as staff in central Indigenous Education units and AIEWs. Under the current accountability arrangements, this is allowed as it advances the objective of increasing Indigenous employment. We believe that staff employed under long term arrangements from the IESIP fund source should be transferred to State and Territory fund sources. This would free up vast amounts of money that could be spent on projects. It will be interesting to determine through the ‘transparent reporting’ element, how reliant States and Territories are on Indigenous-specific funding for Indigenous employment.
- 5.7 The important aspect of this element for the AEU is not that these areas are only reported on, but that the Commonwealth work with the States and Territories to develop a strategy to ensure that long-term IESIP funded employees are funded securely through State and Territory education systems.
- 5.8 Following on from this is the issue of the low numbers of Indigenous teachers employed in schooling systems. The *2003 National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* cites that in 2003, there were 1360 Indigenous teachers in Australia, representing 0.8% of all teachers (p.21). These cross-sectoral issues involve the higher education system, employers and funding bodies such as the Commonwealth. It is not clear in any of the strategies outlined by the Federal Government, including under the performance and accountability framework, how targets might be increased and improved upon. The AEU believes that the number of Indigenous teachers should broadly reflect the numbers of Indigenous students in the schooling system, which is 4.7% of all enrolments in the Government schooling sector.
- 5.9 The AEU has further identified the issue of the lack of access to any form of schooling by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly in the Early Childhood and Senior Secondary Schooling areas. Whilst we acknowledge that a lot of work has been done in areas such as the Northern Territory through the provision of mobile preschools and improvements to access through implementation of recommendations from the Secondary Schooling Review, we believe that more needs to be done across the whole of Australia.

As the Commonwealth Grant’s Commission identified in its *Indigenous Funding Inquiry* (2001):

*“First, the level of IESIP funds is small relative to total funding. Education providers are funded according to the actual number of Indigenous enrolments they attract, but not all Indigenous persons of compulsory school ages enrol at school,*

*especially in remote areas. IESIP funds, therefore, are not contributing directly to initiatives to lift participation in areas where it is below general standards. Actual IESIP funding will fall short of potential demand for IESIP funding for most providers, and the extent of any funding shortfall will vary between regions” ( p. 212).*

- 5.10 In line with the Commonwealth Grant’s Commission’s analysis of the ability to measure and thus fund adequately potential demand, the AEU believes that Governments are seriously underestimating the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who do not attend pre-school to the tune of some 9500 children (Kronemann, 2004). Whilst the accountability measures require providers to detail how funding is spent on improving outcomes, these outcomes can only be taken from those students who are already engaged in the schooling system. There is little or no work being done on firstly quantifying those students who are missing out on education through non-engagement with the system, nor any strategies proposed as to how to solve these problems.
- 5.11 In relation to quantifying where States and Territories spend their own and Commonwealth money, the Commonwealth Grant’s Commission (2001) found that of the five states<sup>1</sup> where data on State/Commonwealth expenditure was available, “less than one per cent of total schools education expenditure in those States was on supplementary Indigenous-specific programs” and that “about 60 per cent of the identified Indigenous-specific expenditure was sourced from the Commonwealth” (p. 212).
- 5.12 The AEU therefore believes that the Commonwealth determining where States and Territories are spending their IESIP funds is the first step in a long process of negotiation about how much money States and Territories actually allocate specifically to Indigenous education, how much they are reliant on Commonwealth funding to meet their Indigenous education objectives and how they might begin the process of weaning themselves off Commonwealth funds. Again, we believe that these processes need not be imposed from the top down and should be negotiated with State and Territory systems and their educational communities.
- 5.13 We therefore cannot support the punitive measures set out in the Indigenous Education Program Guidelines (DEST 2005- 2008) which state that:

*“The Department may impose sanctions on providers which fail to deliver a required Performance Report and Financial Acquittal within two months of the due date (i.e., by 1 August for reports due by 31 May). Sanctions may also be applied if the provider submits a report or acquittal which remains incomplete, inaccurate or otherwise unacceptable to the Department two months after the due date. The following sanctions may be imposed:*

- *two months after the required action date - a four percentage point reduction of the administration allocation (i.e., a 10% administration allocation becomes a 6% allocation); and*

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<sup>1</sup> New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and the ACT,

- *four months after the required action date - a further four percentage point reduction of the administration allocation (i.e., a 10% administration allocation becomes a 2% allocation).*

*The penalty will be applied at the second payment in the funding year, based on the funding received for the previous year covered by the report and acquittal. These sanctions will be applied unless the provider successfully applies to the Department for an exemption from reporting requirements. Exemptions will be granted only in the most exceptional and extenuating circumstances” (p. 6).*

We are concerned that the administrative sanctions imposed on providers will eventually have a ‘trickle down effect’ and reduce the level of services that providers with Indigenous students will be able to access.

### ***Recommendations – Accountability Requirements***

- M. That the Commonwealth work with the States and Territories to develop strategies, including under the accountability framework to immediately prioritise the training and employment of Indigenous teachers.
- N. That immediate priority in any accountability framework is given to the identification of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are not accessing schooling across all sectors and the development of strategies to ensure this access is increased.

## 6. Terms of Reference 4

### **The effect of the proposed changes on current state and other systemic Indigenous programs, and future implications for the operation of ASSPA committees.**

- 6.1 Even though it is early in the implementation of the funding cycle, the AEU has been informed of a range of impacts that these policy changes will have on programs. There has been massive concern from school communities about the reduction in ITAS tutoring hours and the loss of incentive for schools to produce positive outcomes. Schools that have met benchmarks will not receive any funding, which may have a huge impact on a school's ability to maintain ongoing success.
- 6.2 Additionally the delays in finalising Agreements between the Commonwealth and State and Territory systems means that many programs that were funded in the last quadrennium have been put on hold until there is an indication of what this quadrennium's funding allocation will be. This has resulted in a lack of certainty for a range of people employed under various Commonwealth fund sources.
- 6.3 We are seriously concerned about the impacts of these policy changes on Indigenous employment outcomes, particularly in those systems where there is a huge reliance on Commonwealth funding for the employment of Indigenous peoples. For example, in New South Wales, in 2000-2001, there was \$34.4 million budgeted for its Indigenous-specific programs (\$19.4m from Commonwealth sources) and \$10.7 million of that money was planned to be spent on wages of Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs) (Commonwealth Grant's Commission, 2001). We have already mentioned concerns about this in areas such as TAFE Tasmania and IETA in Queensland, where substantial amounts of their IESIP budgets were allocated to the employment of Indigenous staff.
- 6.4 Programs valued by many school communities such as breakfast and nutrition programs which were formerly funded under ASSPA have not been able to be implemented for the beginning of the school year, which some members are contending has had an impact on attendance at this early stage. As one Aboriginal member stated recently at an AEU forum, *"breakfast programs may not seem like a strategic initiative to Minister Nelson sitting in his office in Canberra - I know they're looking for strategic initiatives now - but to us, out here on the ground, these programs have a huge impact on a kid's attendance and their ability to learn when they are here. They're not going to learn anything if their bellies are rumbling"* (Personal Communication, 2005).
- 6.5 Members have reported the serious inequity of these funding changes in areas like South Australia, where 85% of all Indigenous students live in urban or rural settings. The consequences of these funding changes mean that those 15% of students living in remote areas in South Australia will now receive approximately 50% of all Indigenous education funding allocated to the State.
- 6.6 The fact that this program identifies and funds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by their geographic location, does not take in to account the geographic mobility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.

Members in states such as South Australia and the Northern Territory report that just because a student is living in a rural or urban area, does not mean that they have not originated from a remote area and will not return to that remote area. Just because a student does not live in a remote area there is now an assumption that they are magically able to speak English as their first language rather than their third or fourth, and do not need the same level of support that they may have accessed when they were enrolled in their remote area school.

## 7. Terms of Reference 5

**The extent of consultation between the Commonwealth and the states and territories, schools and parents, especially ASSPA committees, and policies and details of changes to the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance ACT 2000).**

- 7.1 The AEU is concerned that the process of ‘consultation’ was instead a process of information distribution, as it is not clear how any of the consultative processes which DEST originally undertook have impacted upon the original ideas mooted in the DEST discussion paper *Indigenous Education: Achievement through Choice and Opportunity – Australian Government Indigenous-specific funding for the 2005-2008 quadrennium*.
- 7.2 We understand that very few ASSPA committees were aware that the consequences of these changes to funding were to culminate in the closure of their operations. We are perturbed that this method of ‘consultation’ is beginning to characterise the way this Government does business with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 7.3 We do not see how a process where the Government attends meetings to sell pre-conceived ideas is in any way a positive contribution to the policy development process. In fact, it flies in the face of all we know about protocols of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and contradicts the first objective of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (1989) - *Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Educational Decision-Making*.
- 7.4 It is with this in mind that we close this submission with a call to all Governments at National and State and Territory levels to reassert their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy through the implementation of its objectives in a way that maintains the intent and dignity inherent in the original document.
- 7.5 It is a sad indictment on all education systems that the 21 key goals of the NATSIEP remain but an aspiration for those of us working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, almost fifteen years after its ratification. We therefore believe that the goals of the NATSIEP are important enough to revisit in the context of the outcomes that have been achieved and those that are yet to be achieved.

### ***Recommendation - Consultation***

- O. That all levels of Government reassert their commitment to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in the context of what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved, and prioritise and fund programs appropriately.

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