

## INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

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Minister for Industrial Relations  
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The Hon I W West MLC  
Committee Chair  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

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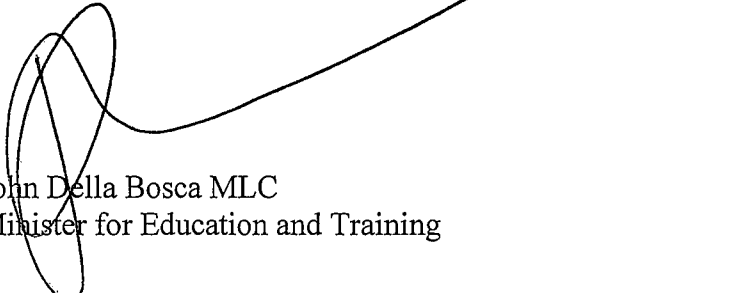
Dear Mr West

I write in response to your letter of 5 October 2007, regarding the Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Closing the Gap – overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage. I note that you have also written to the Director-General of Education and Training on this matter.

I am pleased to provide the attached submission to this Inquiry which provides details of the NSW Department of Education and Training's activities in relation to achieving its primary goal of reducing the achievement gap between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal peers by 2012.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

  
John Della Bosca MLC  
Minister for Education and Training

**ATTACHMENT**

**SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES INQUIRY:  
'CLOSING THE GAP – OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS  
DISADVANTAGE'**

**Prepared by: the NSW Department of Education and Training  
November 2007**

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## ***Introduction***

In NSW nearly 90 per cent of Aboriginal students are enrolled in government schools. In 2006, nearly 37,000 Aboriginal students were enrolled – nearly 23,000 were enrolled in primary schools, and more than 13,000 in secondary. Aboriginal student enrolments made up 5.0 per cent of the total NSW public school population.

In 2006, Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE NSW were 23,246.

The *Aboriginal Education Review (2004)* undertaken by the NSW Government highlighted the links between investment in education and training and improved returns in terms of economic, health and other social benefits. Page 13 stated that *Investments in education for Aboriginal people are particularly important as they impact directly or indirectly on key areas of disadvantage: unemployment, incomes, health and crime.*

In 2006 the Department of Education and Training released the NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008 as a response to the Review.

The Strategy has been designed to focus the work of schools, colleges, regions, TAFE Institutes and state office directorates towards achieving the primary goal that: *By 2012, Aboriginal students outcomes will match or better outcomes of the broader student population.*

The Strategy also links to *Two Ways Together: the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012* and incorporates actions relevant to the Council of Australian Governments Trial in the Murdi Paaki Region of NSW.

The *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008* was released by the Minister for Education and Training in September 2006. It was widely promoted across the NSW Department of Education and Training and to all key stakeholders.

The *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan* focuses on:

- partnership and consultation with Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal community members;
- increased recruitment of Aboriginal people into positions at all levels of the organisation; and
- professional development and network support strategies to build capacity and retain Aboriginal staff.

This submission provides information on programs managed by the Department of Education and Training which fall under the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry.

## ***Schools in Partnership initiative***

In 2006, the NSW Government provided \$65 million, over four years, in additional funding support for targeted Aboriginal education programs. The *Schools in Partnership* initiative is one of these targeted programs.

In 2006, 10 government schools (Phase 1 Schools in Partnership schools) with significant Aboriginal student populations were provided with additional funding

support to assist them to build capacity and strengthen partnerships with community members and other agencies. In 2007, a further 20 NSW schools (Phase 2 Schools in Partnership schools) joined the initiative.

Schools in Partnership assists schools to improve the literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes of all students. The principles of the initiative are drawn from the effective practice of school communities in which real improvements have occurred for Aboriginal students.

### ***Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy***

The *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* initiative is another of the targeted Aboriginal education programs for which the NSW Government has provided additional funding support.

The *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* provides funding support to a small number of schools. These schools have a significant number of Aboriginal students enrolled.

The *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* schools have demonstrated an existing commitment and willingness to use innovative practices to improve the learning achievements of their Aboriginal students.

### ***Targeted School Initiative***

The *Targeted School Initiative* is an Aboriginal education program for which the NSW Government has provided additional funding support. It provides targeted support and funding to five schools to address issues impacting on Aboriginal student outcomes.

The initiative aims to develop genuine partnerships with Aboriginal parents, communities and interagency group as well as improve outcomes for Aboriginal students at the school.

### ***Two Ways Together***

*Two Ways Together*, the NSW Government's 10 year plan to improve the lives of Aboriginal people and their communities requires government agencies to work together with Aboriginal people to ensure that services are accessible and culturally appropriate. Improving levels of Aboriginal achievement at school is one of the areas targeted by the Government under *Two Ways Together*. The Department of Education and Training has the lead responsibility for three of the *Two Ways Together* initiatives: *Kids Excel*, *Youth Excel* and *Aboriginal Student Scholarships*.

#### ***Kids Excel***

*Kids Excel* is a whole of government early intervention strategy which seeks to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in communities where there are significant issues in early school disengagement and poor school outcomes. *Kids Excel* aims to improve attendance; improve academic outcomes; improve social, emotional and cognitive development outcomes; and improve student, parent and teacher perceptions of school social environment for Aboriginal children 0-12 years of age.

There are three *Kids Excel* sites in which the program is being implemented, in five public schools.

*Kids Excel* has been funded for a four year period. From 2005 to 2008 \$7 million is allocated to participating schools.

### ***Youth Excel***

*Youth Excel* is the secondary school support strategy being implemented across nine targeted high schools where there are significant issues in early school disengagement and poor school outcomes. *Youth Excel* assists Aboriginal students, aged between 13-18, in these high schools, to maintain a connection to learning and to improve their educational outcomes.

*Youth Excel* is funded for a four year period. From 2005 to 2008 \$4.6 million is allocated to this initiative to provide services such as student learning centres, student mentoring, links to employment and higher education.

### ***Aboriginal Student Scholarships***

In 2005, 2006 and 2007, 160 Aboriginal students in Years 9 to 12 were awarded individual scholarships valued at \$1,000. Scholarships are awarded annually and aim to improve retention in the later years of schooling and in vocational education and training courses, and to encourage further efforts to excel at school. The scholarships are expected to be awarded again in 2008.

### ***Preschools serving Aboriginal communities***

The Department operates 100 preschools in NSW government schools. Eleven of the preschools are designated specifically for Aboriginal children and a further thirteen are located in Aboriginal communities. In 2006, 422 Aboriginal children attended the Department's 100 preschools. Aboriginal preschool students made up more than 11 per cent of the total number of students enrolled.

### ***Priority Schools Programs***

A total of \$21 million has been allocated to 573 schools serving the highest concentrations of students from low socio-economic status families. Over 11 per cent of the students attending these schools are Aboriginal. Funds are targeted to support schools to develop programs that improve literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes of students.

### ***Priority Action Schools Program***

\$16 million supports 80 schools serving the communities of highest need to undertake a range of innovative approaches in relation to building organisational capacity, creating professional learning communities and leading the learning through ongoing school improvement. Over 13 per cent of students attending these schools are Aboriginal.

### ***Country Areas Program***

The Country Areas Program is designed to redress the effects of geographic isolation on the learning outcomes of students. Over 17 per cent of enrolments in the Country Areas Program schools are Aboriginal students. In 2007 a total of \$6.8 million has been used to support 220 schools and eight distance education schools.



### **School Attendance**

NSW government schools make a return of absences at the end of each semester. This information goes to the Data Management area within the Planning and Innovation Directorate. The data is disaggregated by school, term, year, region, school grade, school levels and gender. From Semester 1, 2006 the return now includes data on Aboriginal students.

The attendance data informs the development of regional attendance action plans. Schools with below average attendance are required to develop a school attendance action plan. If the data identifies that the attendance of Aboriginal students is an issue initiatives are put in place to support the regular attendance of Aboriginal students at school.

Aboriginal School Liaison Officers support the attendance of Aboriginal students at school. Aboriginal School Liaison Officers are non-school based teaching service personnel who work as part of regional student services teams. During 2006-2007 11 Aboriginal School Liaison Officers worked across the state, appointed to regions on the basis of need. Following appointment and special training they are authorised as attendance officers as described in Section 122 of the *Education Act (1990)*.

Services provided by Aboriginal School Liaison Officers include working with individual Aboriginal students of compulsory school age who have a history of truancy and other chronic non-attendance issues, providing support to the families of these students, liaising with schools and Aboriginal communities, implementing local initiatives, liaising with police Local Area Commands to support Joint Anti-Truancy initiatives and assisting schools to develop programs to encourage the regular attendance of Aboriginal students.

In addition to Aboriginal School Liaison Officers who work specifically to support the attendance of Aboriginal students, there are 84 Home School Liaison Officers across the state who support the attendance of all students, including Aboriginal students.

### **Aboriginal Student Leadership**

The Department views Aboriginal student leadership as an important element of future directions in addressing disadvantage in Aboriginal communities.

The Department funds a number of regional and state wide student leadership programs for Aboriginal students. The State Student Representative Council Conference in August 2007 focused on the theme *Get Connected – Take Action!* The conference and follow up at regional level helped increase understandings of how students can improve links between their schools and local communities for the Aboriginal students involved. Ten Aboriginal students take part in each State Conference. Two Aboriginal students are selected each year through an Expression of Interest to be part of the NSW State Student Representative Council.

### **Student Mentoring Program**

Mentoring programs provide support for vulnerable young students by matching them with older students, community members or teachers.

The Penpal program started in 2004 as an initiative to improve Aboriginal literacy involving rural and remote schools with a high Aboriginal student population. Law firms in the Sydney region write to the students and send them a letter and a book four to six times per year.

### ***School-Link Program***

School-Link is a joint initiative of the NSW Health and the Department of Education and Training to improve the mental health of young people. The School-Link program aims to provide training to schools counsellors and mental health workers in the assessment and management of students with depression and related disorders. It also facilitates the access of young people with these disorders to appropriate support, and supports the implementation of programs which support the enhancement of mental wellbeing.

In 2006-2007 Phase 2 of the School Link training program specifically addressed the issue of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may have mental health problems.

### ***MindMatters***

The MindMatters mental health initiative for school communities has been extended with resources and activities developed and modified to assist secondary schools, families, parents, care givers and community agencies to develop a collective and community development approach to social and emotional health and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Feeling Deadly not Shame – A MindMatters Approach was implemented in schools from 2006-2007.

### ***Drug Education***

The *Healing Time* resources were developed specifically for Aboriginal students. The resources assist teachers to work with Aboriginal communities to address drug issues within an Aboriginal cultural framework.

*Healing Time: Stage 4* was distributed to secondary schools with Aboriginal education assistants in 1999. *Healing Time: Stages 2 and 3* was distributed to all NSW primary schools in 2002.

Comparison of student responses to a survey before and after the pilot of *Healing Time: Stages 2 and 3* indicated that the students gained knowledge about tobacco as a result of participating in the program. Further, students indicated that lessons would help them later on with decisions on whether or not to smoke.

As part of a current project, School and Aboriginal Community Alcohol Project, a study of the extent of utilisation of the *Healing Time* resources in NSW government schools is being conducted.

### ***Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme – In-Class Tuition – Schools***

The In-Class Tuition program is an element of the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme funded by the Commonwealth and is designed to accelerate the literacy and numeracy achievements of those Aboriginal students not yet meeting the National

Benchmarks. The In-Class Tuition targets individual school students as they work as part of a class. In-Class Tuition tutors work alongside students in classrooms to support them to participate in lessons being taught by the class or subject teacher. New South Wales has a policy of priority employment of Aboriginal people who qualify as tutors.

### ***Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme – TAFE***

TAFE NSW Institutes are providing supplementary tutorial assistance for Aboriginal students undertaking qualifications at Certificate III and above through the Commonwealth Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme. This assistance encourages Aboriginal students to complete vocational education and training courses at higher levels, and provide them with relevant qualifications leading to good employment prospects.

### ***Aboriginal Early Language Development Program***

This program is now implemented in 24 schools to improve the language and literacy skills of Aboriginal students in the early years of school. An Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher develops and produces appropriate resources in consultation with the local Aboriginal community that supports the implementation of the program.

### ***Aboriginal Languages Programs in Schools***

These programs operate to enable Aboriginal communities to preserve, teach and utilise traditional language and provide opportunities for Aboriginal students (and non-Aboriginal students) from Kindergarten to Year 12 to learn an Aboriginal language. In 2006, more than \$100,000 was provided to support Aboriginal Languages Programs in 25 schools including the employment of an Aboriginal Language Teacher and the development of resources. In 2007, funding to support Aboriginal Languages Programs in schools has almost tripled, with nearly \$300,000 allocated due to community demand.

### ***Aboriginal Languages Programs in TAFE***

TAFE NSW Institutes are currently delivering the following Certificates I in local Aboriginal Language to communities in rural and regional New South Wales:

- Dhurga – Illawarra Institute, Moruya campus
- Wiradjuri – Riverina Institute, Narrandera campus
- Gamilaraay – New England Institute, Tamworth campus.

Certificates II and III in Aboriginal Language/s are now being developed in response to demand.

This suite of qualifications aims to provide Aboriginal learners with Aboriginal language competencies critical to sustaining Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity and heritage.

### ***Schools as Community Centres Program***

The Department operates 51 Schools as Community Centres projects across NSW. Schools as Community Centres is a school based program that aims to reduce the impact of disadvantage for children entering school by providing integrated services for families in communities where indicators of disadvantage are high.

The focus of the program is prevention and early intervention support for families with children birth to eight years with a particular focus on the years prior to school entry.

A number of the Schools as Community Centres projects operate in communities with high Aboriginal populations providing a range of collaborative initiatives for Aboriginal families with young children including transition to school programs, playgroups, early literacy initiatives, parenting information and support, parenting courses and health and nutrition programs.

Data collected from 45 Schools as Community Centres projects in Term 3, 2006 indicated that 888 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families participated in Schools as Community Centres project initiatives across NSW. A total of 70 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adults were employed in Schools as Community Centres project initiatives and there were 87 separate partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to implement Schools as Community Centres project initiatives.

### ***Taste of TAFE Programs for 15-19 Year Olds***

Taste of TAFE programs are designed specifically for Year 9 and 10 students who are considering a career in a trade or technical area. They allow students in Year 9 and 10 to get hands on experience in a range of vocational areas such as hospitality, construction, metals and engineering, nursing and retail.

Young Aboriginal students can participate in any of these general Taste of TAFE programs but there are also Taste of TAFE programs specifically designed for young Aboriginal students.

### ***Links to Learning***

*Links to Learning* is a Community Grants Program which assists young people aged 12 to 24 years who have left school early, or who are students at risk of leaving school early, and provides them with a range of opportunities to remain in or re-enter mainstream education and training.

In 2006, more than 540 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people attended Links to Learning activities either in the six targeted programs specifically for Aboriginal youth or in the general projects.

### ***Aboriginal Employment Programs***

The Department's Aboriginal Community Programs administers three funding programs to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal people with an emphasis on vocational training, job placement and enterprise development in NSW:

- Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program
- New Careers for Aboriginal People Program, known as NCAP
- Aboriginal Enterprise Development Officer Program, known as AEDO.

This financial year the three Aboriginal employment programs are allocated a total of \$4.2 million.

### **Quality Teaching Indigenous Project**

The *Quality Teaching Indigenous Project* is jointly funded through the *Australian Government Quality Teacher Program* and the Department of Education and Training. This project funds 21 schools nominated by regions and endorsed by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group to participate in a program of teacher professional learning to embed Aboriginal cultural knowledge in teaching and learning. The 21 schools fall in the demographic group of 10 to 20 per cent of Aboriginal students in the school population.

An evaluation has been contracted to the University of Technology, Sydney to evaluate the impact of the professional development model on student and teacher learning. The timeline for the evaluation is 2007 to 2009.

### **Jim Anderson Scholarships**

Each year five scholarships of \$5,000 are awarded to Year 12 students who are attending a government high school or campus in the Blacktown local government area, the Londonderry State electorate or the former St Marys State electorate and are completing the Higher School Certificate. The scholarships are for students who are studying in 2008 at the University of Western Sydney or at a TAFE NSW college. One of these scholarships is designated for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student.

Since the first Jim Anderson Scholarships were awarded in 2004, three Aboriginal students have been supported while they were undertaking tertiary study.

### **Arts Education Foundation Trust**

The Arts Education Foundation Trust has recently allocated a grant of \$7,500 to the Indigenous Dance Ensemble. This ensemble is coordinated by the Arts Unit and will perform as part of the 2007 Schools Spectacular.

### **Governance courses**

TAFE NSW Institutes are delivering culturally appropriate governance qualifications, known as *Managing Our Mob*, to members of Aboriginal organisations around NSW. They include Aboriginal Committee Training, *Certificate IV in Business (Governance)* and *Diploma of Business (Governance)*, and can be delivered flexibly or in the classroom.

This initiative supports community capacity building at all levels and enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of Aboriginal organisations.

### **Leadership courses**

TAFE NSW Institutes are delivering the *Certificate IV in Leadership* and *Diploma of Leadership* to members of Aboriginal communities. The courses aim to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to apply bicultural leadership practices in a range of settings involving Aboriginal communities, individuals and issues.

The courses aim to assist Aboriginal learners to develop skills to support community capacity building at all levels of administration, leadership, governance and advocacy for policy change. Learners also develop skills to facilitate change, develop organisational policies and provide strategic direction within their communities.

### ***Course in Aboriginal Cultural Education***

The TAFE NSW Course in Aboriginal Cultural Education targets non Aboriginal people and provides an understanding of traditional Aboriginal cultures and of the connection between history and current issues affecting service delivery to Aboriginal people.

The course promotes culturally inclusive work practices and increases responsiveness to Aboriginal people, communities and issues which makes it indispensable for anyone working with Aboriginal people.

TAFE NSW Institutes are currently delivering the course to staff in both schools and TAFE, as well as to over 4,000 staff in the Department of Environment and Climate Change. In 2006, 720 people enrolled in the course and in 2007 there have been 1,084 enrolments as at 5 November 2007.

### ***Environmental management***

TAFE NSW Institutes deliver qualifications which recognise and develop the skills and knowledge of Aboriginal People in relation to the land including:

- *Certificates II and III in Conservation and Land Management (Indigenous Land Management),*
- *Courses in Indigenous Site Recognition and Indigenous Site Management.*

These qualifications develop the skills required for Aboriginal People to provide advice and training to staff of energy suppliers (including Country Energy) who enter culturally sensitive areas.

Catchment Management Authorities have also expressed an interest in having this training provided for their staff.

### ***Remote communities***

TAFE NSW also delivers Horticulture programs to Aboriginal people in remote Aboriginal communities including Bourke, Wilcannia and Goodooga. The Horticulture programs provide onsite training for Aboriginal people to improve their local environment and use locally sourced materials.

### ***Environmental sustainability: turning waste water into resource water***

Since 2004, TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute has worked in partnership with the Malabugilmah community in the Clarence Valley, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Health, the Jana Ngalee Aboriginal Land Council and Ecotechnology Australia to build community capacity and improve the environment. Local Aboriginal people have undertaken training enabling them to develop the community's recreation areas, recover and resuscitate wetland areas and establish a state of the art waste water treatment and recycling system.

### ***Training for Aboriginal health workers***

TAFE NSW Institutes are delivering a *Statement of Attainment in Audiometry* to train Aboriginal health workers in regional NSW to screen Aboriginal children for otitis media. Hearing problems among Aboriginal children can lead to serious learning difficulties. This initiative will help to ensure early detection and treatment of this health problem and reduce its incidence.

### ***Alcohol and other drugs work***

TAFE NSW has developed a *Statement of Attainment in Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs Work* as part of the Board of Vocational Education and Training's Alcohol and Other Drugs Workforce Development Project – *Building the capacity of workers providing alcohol and other drugs services to Aboriginal communities in NSW*.

TAFE NSW worked in partnership with the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW on the development and delivery of the course. The course was delivered to 50 participants from government and non-government organisations in Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Port Macquarie and Sydney.

### ***Aboriginal family wellbeing***

TAFE NSW Institutes are delivering a customised accredited course in Parenting to young Aboriginal parents across NSW. The course helps young parents improve their own basic skills while gaining the skills and knowledge to help support their children's development and learning.

TAFE NSW also delivers the *Statement of Attainment in Supporting Aboriginal Families* which targets support workers and members of the Aboriginal community who work in the area of domestic violence.

### ***Certificate III in Vocational and Study Pathways***

TAFE NSW delivers the Certificate III in Vocational and Study Pathways to provide Aboriginal people with language, literacy, learning and social skills and knowledge for entry into a range of vocational and further study pathways. Graduates then meet the entry requirements for the NSW Police Service, the Department of Corrective Services and employment in other government agencies.

### ***School administrative support staff***

TAFE NSW Institutes are delivering Certificate III in Aboriginal Education Assistant and Certificate III in Education Support – Teacher's Aide Special across the State. These courses provide Aboriginal community members with the skills required to apply successfully for School Administrative and Support Staff positions. Graduates of the courses are identified for priority placement where appropriate.

### ***Aboriginal health care***

TAFE NSW provides the following courses specifically designed to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous people in the area of health care:

- *Certificates II, III and IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care,*
- *Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care.*

### ***Small business guides***

TAFE NSW has developed customised teaching guides in consultation with Aboriginal communities to ensure culturally appropriate and effective delivery of small business management courses to Aboriginal community members.

The guides also enable small business units to be incorporated into other courses for Aboriginal people such as arts, music and tourism. This initiative is designed to

support self-employment prospects for people in Aboriginal communities and increase the number of Aboriginal owned enterprises.

### ***Statement of Attainment in Mentoring***

TAFE NSW delivers a *Statement of Attainment in Mentoring* to Aboriginal community members across the State. The course develops the knowledge and skills required to work effectively in the role of a mentor in a range of workplace, education, custodial and/or community environments. The role of mentoring has particular relevance to Aboriginal education and employment.

### ***Post-release pathways into further education and training***

TAFE NSW has completed a project to improve vocational education and training provision for Aboriginal detainees and offenders, and establish post-release pathways from juvenile justice and correctional centres into further education and training. This initiative, based on a case management approach, will provide former detainees and offenders with pathways into further education and employment, and reduce the chances of reoffending.

### ***Housing and infrastructure construction***

To support the Aboriginal Communities Development Program administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, a Memorandum of Understanding was developed and signed between TAFE NSW and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs in July 2002.

The initial agreement related to the delivery of a housing and infrastructure construction program for Aboriginal people in 22 priority communities across NSW and provided an opportunity for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and TAFE NSW to deliver flexible and relevant training in construction and related disciplines.

In 2007 a series of statewide meetings between staff from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and TAFE NSW led to a number of agreed recommendations that have been incorporated into a revised Memorandum of Understanding. The program will now be broadened to include a strategy to encourage the involvement of other agencies such as Indigenous Business Australia, the Regional Development Board and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, to assist with the development of business skills for both the communities and students. A strategy to attract students who have previously completed Certificate III qualifications back into further study will also be implemented.

### ***Partnership and consultation with Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal community members***

The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated has been a significant community partner throughout the development, promotion and implementation of the *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan*.

Under the *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan*, schools, TAFE Institutes, regions and state office directorates have the scope to tailor their implementation of the plan in consultation with Aboriginal staff and local Aboriginal communities.



Aboriginal people are involved in the selection of staff. In 2006, 756 Aboriginal people were members of various selection panels across all occupations within the Department including school based positions, public service positions and TAFE positions.

More Aboriginal staff are participating in the design, development and implementation of recruitment and retention initiatives to achieve the aims of the Plan.

### **Increased recruitment of Aboriginal people into positions at all levels of the organisation**

In line with the NSW Government's commitment to broadening the diversity of the workforce, the Department increased the level of participation of Aboriginal people in its workforce from 1.4 percent in 2005 to 1.7 percent in 2006.

Applicants for promotion positions are now required to address additional selection criteria demonstrating their understanding and capacity to lead, implement and support the Department's policies and programs for Aboriginal people.

A focus on promoting teaching as a career option for Aboriginal students has been successful. From the commencement of the 2004/2005 school staffing operation on 27 April 2004, until 15 October 2007, 181 teachers who have identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander have been permanently appointed as teachers in NSW public schools.

The number of teaching scholarships awarded to Aboriginal people to become secondary or primary teachers has doubled and at least 60 scholarships are now offered annually. Currently 166 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars are undertaking teacher training.

In 2007, 20 scholarships were awarded to selected final year teacher education students across four universities to undertake enhanced pre-service training prior to their appointment to NSW public schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments. Aboriginal mentors support the teacher education students to further develop their capacity to understand the issues facing Aboriginal communities and to support their engagement with these communities. Selection is currently being undertaken for the 2008 scholarship program.

In 2006, eight school administrative and support staff positions in schools with Aboriginal student enrolments were designated for Aboriginal people. In 2007, the number of identified positions has increased to 30.

To assist Aboriginal people in successfully applying for administrative and support staff positions, workshops (Yarn ups) are conducted in the local community with the support of Aboriginal staff. During the workshops the responsibilities of the advertised position and application procedures as well as interview skills are discussed.

## **Professional development and support strategies to build capacity and retain Aboriginal staff**

To facilitate the provision of support initiatives for Aboriginal staff across the Department of Education and Training, 16 Aboriginal staff selected from schools, TAFE Institutes, regional and state offices have been recently trained to deliver mentoring training.

Each year newly appointed Aboriginal teachers receive support at the school, regional and state office level. They participate in an orientation workshop which offers professional guidance to meet the NSW Institute of Teachers accreditation requirements, an opportunity to share programs and curriculum ideas with experienced teachers as well as a chance to network with other staff members from similar backgrounds.

Newly appointed Aboriginal teachers benefit from mentoring and personalised support through regular telephone and email contact with Aboriginal project officers in the Human Resources Directorate. The use of video conferencing is also an important strategy being used for network and mentoring support.

Newly appointed Aboriginal school administrative and support staff are also offered a program of support which includes an orientation workshop designed and delivered by Aboriginal staff. They are also supported during their first year of employment through mentoring and have regular contact with Aboriginal project officers.

Principals and mentors of newly appointed Aboriginal teachers and school administrative and support staff attend the orientation workshops to enable them to gain an understanding of their Aboriginal colleagues and how to enhance cultural inclusiveness in partnership with the local community.

Currently, plans are underway for Aboriginal staff to be involved in developing:

- a human resource website for potential and current Aboriginal employees to obtain information on jobs, professional development, career planning and networks,
- induction resources tailored for newly appointed Aboriginal staff,
- individualised professional development, training and career planning, and
- a leadership and succession management strategy for Aboriginal staff.

### ***The Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial***

In 2002, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to trial working together with Indigenous communities in up to ten regions to provide more flexible programs and services based on agreed priorities with communities.

A Shared Responsibility Agreement for the Council of Australian Governments Trial in the Murdi Paaki region (Far Western NSW) was signed in August 2003 by the Trial partners: the Department of Education and Training for the NSW Government, the Department of Education, Science and Training for the Commonwealth Government and the Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council representing the 16 Murdi Paaki communities.

The Trial has been operating for five years and will conclude in December 2007. The Department is committed to the Murdi Paaki Trial until 31 December 2007 under the Council of Australian Governments Trial Agreement. A transition strategy is being developed where the Department will no longer be the lead agency and NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs will manage the partnerships formed to date through *Two Ways Together*.

The Murdi Paaki region was targeted as a Trial site because it has the poorest social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW in relation to most disadvantage and need indicators.

The Agreement provides a basis for cooperation and partnership between the Murdi Paaki Community Working Parties and government in sharing the responsibility for achieving measurable and sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal people living in the region.

A Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial Steering Committee meets every three months to provide overall strategic direction to the Trial. The Steering Committee is comprised of representation from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, NSW Department of Education and Training, NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly. The Steering Committee has developed a strategic plan, communication strategy and monitoring and evaluation framework.

The Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial Regional Group was established to provide operational advice. The Regional Group meets every month, and its role is to ensure that all Commonwealth and State Government agencies are engaging with Community Working Parties and their Community Action Plans.

Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial Shared Responsibility Agreements were developed to progress the key priorities of the Murdi Paaki region:

- improving the health and well being of children and young people,
- improving educational attainment and school retention,
- helping families raise healthy children, and
- strengthening community and regional governance structures.

All other Council of Australian Governments Trial sites except Murdi Paaki have been completed or responsibility handed to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. In late 2006, the Ministers for Education, Science and Training and Families, Communities and Indigenous Affairs agreed to continue the Council of Australian Governments Trial in the Murdi Paaki region until 31 December 2007.

The Steering Committee endorsed a transition strategy for the Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial to normalise existing Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial processes in future arrangements, and to ensure the continuity of engagement and participation by Murdi Paaki Aboriginal communities as key partners in decision making.

An initial evaluation of the Trial was undertaken by Urbis Keys Young in May 2005. Focus group interviews were held with six Murdi Paaki Community Working Parties. The final report *Community Governance in the Council of Australian Governments Murdi Paaki Trial Site* has been provided to all Community Working Parties and trial partners.

In 2006, the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination undertook an evaluation of all Trial sites across Australia. As the Steering Committee had already commenced an evaluation of the Murdi Paaki Council of Australian Governments Trial, the Steering Committee agreed to the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination conducting the government-to-government phase of the Murdi Paaki Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in collaboration with Trial partners.

The findings of the Murdi Paaki Trial evaluation are supportive, particularly in relation to community governance and leadership initiatives. The Murdi Paaki Trial is widely regarded nationally as the most successful of the eight Trial sites.

The Murdi Paaki Trial has demonstrated that effective governance structures which facilitate planning and action have led to improvements in educational achievement, reduced rates of crime, and improved health through reduced incidence of key community illnesses (data collated by NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, NSW Health, NSW Department of Education and Training and Department of Education, Science and Training working in partnership on education).

### ***Evaluations***

The Aboriginal Education Review was the major evaluation of Aboriginal education in NSW and was conducted over 2003-2004. The Report of the Review contains 71 recommendations which form the basis of the Department's *NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008* and the *Aboriginal Human Resources Development Plan 2006-2008*. For a copy of the Report please refer to the Department of Education and Training's website.

Longitudinal evaluations for *Two Ways Together* initiatives: Kids Excel and Youth Excel are also being planned.