

AEC

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION COUNCIL (NSW) INC.
ABN 87 588 237 557

OVER FORTY YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

The Aboriginal Education Council (NSW) Inc, (AEC), a volunteer charity, has been involved in Aboriginal Education for over 40 years. The AEC is pleased to present the following comments as we believe that the links between effective education and employment of Aboriginal students are critical.

Indigenous employment in local schools: The AEC initiated the training and employment of Aboriginal Aides (Assistants) in schools in the 1960s. This was a most successful program which led to many of the Indigenous Aides undertaking further training which led to further employment eg, teaching.

The AEC supports the concept of schools as community centres where such things as pre-schools, community nurse and other community support personnel are based attached to the local school. This would lead to greater co-ordination of effort and more effective educational and support programs. The employment of local Indigenous people in these "full-service" schools would have many benefits:

- the provision of links between the school and the local community
- the provision of role models for students
- the provision of local employment
- the development of individual self-esteem
- provide more support for the local economy
- career paths for Indigenous people

The employment of people in these centres must be for longer than one year. The use of short-term contracts can be counter-productive as those who have been trained can be lost to the system, continuity can be shattered and dissension can arise in the community.

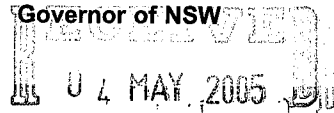
An essential part of these education centres is the on-going training and development of those employed.

Education: Education from pre-school to employment is a critical factor in this issue. The provision of pre-school programs, especially language development, is critical. The provision of support and incentives for Indigenous students in both primary and

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secondary schools will prove to be most beneficial. (The AEC's current Secondary Incentive Scholarship program has been well supported in the schools in which we have been able to provide the Scholarships.) Vocational Education and Training Programs, provided in conjunction with local employees, are also essential items in any future programs.

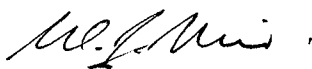
Community Employment Programs: Employment programs developed on a co-operative basis between local Indigenous and Non-Indigenous communities have been and will continue to be most successful. We refer in particular to the programs of this type implemented in such places as Moree (NSW) as examples that should be replicated in other areas.

Working With Communities: Programs specifically established to bring communities working together in educational and employment programs have great potential. Such programs provide the opportunity for co-operative endeavour and greater understanding between communities. Developments in such programs currently in Western New South Wales by the NSW Department of Education and Training should be looked at by this Inquiry.

Utilising Sporting Heroes: Many talented Indigenous men and women are held in high esteem by Indigenous youngsters. They see them as great role models. However, like all professional sporting people, the question arises as to what do they do when their sporting career is over? The provision of special educational programs for Indigenous sporting greats to enable them to move into another career when their professional sporting life is over would have many benefits for the person themselves and also again as role models for younger students.

Need for a Multi-sectored Approach: The development of Indigenous education and employment requires input from many sectors. It cannot be left to Education and Employment alone. Health, DOCS, Juvenile Justice etc all have a role to play if worthwhile gains are to be achieved. The issue must also generate positive co-operation between Federal and State bodies to ensure the most effective implementation of funding and expertise towards positive developments.

The AEC welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this Inquiry into Indigenous Employment and hopes that co-operative and genuine actions will result.



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for
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President