Mr Barry Wakelin MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Wakelin

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. I attach, for the information of your Committee, details of the vocational education and training (VET) initiatives and programmes managed by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) which contribute towards improving training outcomes and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government is strongly committed to addressing and supporting the needs of all students, including Indigenous Australians and ensuring the national training system is well positioned to meet the needs of business, industry, individuals and the community.
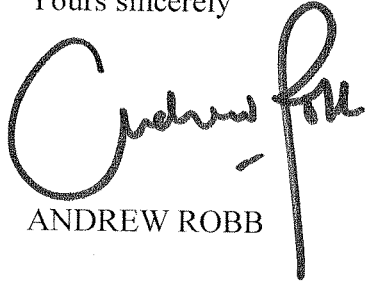
Indigenous participation in VET has improved over the last five years. In 2005, 62,700 Indigenous Australians participated in publicly funded VET. This is 11.8% higher than in 2001. The proportion of VET students who are Indigenous is also high. In 2005, 3.8% of all VET students were Indigenous compared with their population share of 2.4%. Although Indigenous participation rates are high, low completion rates continue to be an issue. The total number of qualifications completed by Indigenous VET students declined 10.2% from 7,400 in 2001 to 6,700 in 2004.

One of the objectives of Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010 Shaping Our Future is 'Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared'. The Strategy has been agreed to by all State and Territory ministers with responsibility for Training. This objective is restated in the 2005-08 Commonwealth-State Funding Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce (the Agreement). The requirements of States and Territories to meet their obligations under the Agreement are detailed in the attachment.

Against this background DEST is undertaking a range of whole of Government initiatives. These initiatives include an Indigenous Mainstreaming Taskforce which is working with mainstream programme areas to ensure improved educational outcomes for Indigenous people. The Department is also involved in Shared Responsibility Agreements. These Agreements detail what communities, governments and others will contribute to achieve long term changes in Indigenous communities. Further details of these initiatives are also in the attachment.
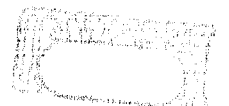
I trust that you and your Standing Committee find the attached information of interest and useful for your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW ROBB

Encl.

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS IMPROVING TRAINING OUTCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS IMPROVING TRAINING OUTCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

## SUMMARY

| VET programmes and activities | |
|---|---|
| **Programme/Activity** | **Funding** |
| Joint Indigenous Funding Pool | $23.3 million (2006-8) |
| Pathways to Employment Project | $3.5 million (2005-6) |
| Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme (8 Indigenous projects) | $3.1 million (over 2002-8) |
| Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme | $14.2 million (2005-6)* |
| Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme | $56 million (2006-7)* |

| Other Training – Related Initiatives | |
|---|---|
| **Training Initiative** | **Funding** |
| Industry Training Strategies Programme – Indigenous Regional Projects | $1.7 million (2006-7) |
| VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People | $4 million p.a. |
| National Skills Shortages Strategy | $325,710 p.a. |
| Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme | $1.3 million p.a.* |
| Australian Flexible Learning Framework – Indigenous Engagement Project | $776,400 p.a. |

| Other Indigenous Programmes/Projects | |
|---|---|
| **Programme/Project** | **Funding** |
| Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme | $23.1 million (2004-9) |
| Increasing Vocational Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Students | $3 million (2004-5) |
| Supplementary Recurrent Assistance | $129 million (2007) |
| Away-from-Based Mixed Mode assistance | $23 million (2005) |
| ABSTUDY (VET component) | $35.8 million (2005/06) |

* Indicates total programme funding. A funding breakdown by Indigenous numbers is unavailable.

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS IMPROVING TRAINING OUTCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

## VET PROGRAMMES AND INITIATIVES

### Introduction

The Australian Government is contributing almost $5 billion to the States and Territories under the *2005-2008 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce* (the Agreement) to support their training systems.

The Agreement aims to improve the outcomes for Indigenous Australian in vocational education and training (VET). The Agreement, and the associated bilaterals, require States and Territories to:

o  provide additional training places in regional and remote locations for Indigenous Australians;

o  achieve an overall increase in participation of Indigenous Australians at higher qualification levels specifically at Certificate III and above;

o  establish a Joint Indigenous Funding Pool of approximately $23 million over the 2006-2008 period to maximise education and training outcomes for Indigenous students; and

o  report on strategies and performance measures for each strategy in VET Plans.

### Partners in a Learning Culture – The Way Forward

Partners in a Learning Culture - the Way Forward, the revised Blueprint for Indigenous Australians, is the nationally agreed strategy for action to improve training opportunities and employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians in VET. The Blueprint was due to expire in 2005 however the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education has reaffirmed the priorities set out in the revised Blueprint. There is no current plan to review the Blueprint further and it continues to be the current document which guides training planning and delivery.

The strategy includes six priorities: building the capacity of the VET sector through Indigenous involvement; creating more pathways for Indigenous Australians from school to training and employment; improving funding frameworks; ensuring the development of culturally appropriate products and delivery, links to employment; and growing VET sector partnerships.

### Joint Indigenous Funding Pool

The Agreement established the Joint Indigenous Funding Pool (JIFP).

The Australian Government is providing $3.8 million per annum (indexed) to the JIFP over the 2006-08 period. These funds are distributed to jurisdictions based on the Indigenous Working Age Population in each State and Territory. States and Territories have agreed to match the funding provided to them bringing the total funding for this initiative to $23.3 million over three years.

The JIFP strategically targets funding to maximise education and training opportunities and improve VET outcomes for Indigenous students, particularly in regional and remote locations. The JIFP also aims to provide funding stability over the 2006-2008 period for VET providers who train Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government expects each State and Territory to manage the implementation of the JIFP in their jurisdiction. States and Territories are expected to run a competitive process against agreed national eligibility criteria to identify providers who have a proven track record in delivering successful training outcomes to Indigenous Australians.

**Pathways to Employment Project**

The Pathways to Employment Project (PEP) aimed to identify the VET required by Indigenous people participating in a number of targeted Community Development Employment Projects (CDEPs) in order to move to 'off-CDEP' employment or take up small business opportunities. DEST managed PEP under a Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in 16 sites throughout Australia. Total project funding was $3.5 million.

Project activity concluded in all sites towards the end of 2006. The Department is currently finalising reporting commitments to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations as required under the Memorandum of Understanding.

**Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme**

The Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme aims to generate quality Australian Apprenticeship opportunities in priority areas considered critical, challenging or under-serviced. It does this by funding Group Training Organisations to run discrete projects in priority areas.

The Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme currently has seven projects specifically aimed at encouraging and improving participation of Indigenous Australians in Australian Apprenticeships.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the success of these projects is largely due to dedicated project officers who provide extensive pastoral care and assist participants in overcoming significant hurdles. Another contributor to success is building local community partnerships with Indigenous communities, schools, Registered Training Organisations, industry groups, Australian Technical Colleges and other Government agencies. Raising the profile of Indigenous Australian Apprentices among host employers through marketing strategies has also proved effective.

Two Group Training Organisations participating in the Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme have won State Training Awards in the Northern Territory and South Australia. Mr Nicolas Bevington, employed by Top End Group Training, won the Australian School-based Apprentice with a disability award at the 2006 Group Training Association Queensland and Northern Territory Awards. Miss Amina Sherif, also employed by Top End Group Training won the Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year award at the 2006 Northern Territory Training Awards. Mr Kadeem Warrior employed by Maxima Group Training Organisation in South Australia won the Indigenous Student of the Year Award at the 2006 South Australia State Training Awards.

Details of these seven projects which have an Indigenous component follow.

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**Top End Group Training**

Top End Group Training has a project to recruit Australian School-based Apprentices including Indigenous apprentices and Indigenous apprentices from remote communities. The value of contract is $874,280. Top End has achieved 218 commencements with 48 Indigenous students and 20 remote Indigenous students. Top End works closely with schools, parents, Registered Training Organisations, the Australian Technical College and various Government agencies. Top End facilitated a work ready programme in 2006/07 to assist with placement of workready students into industry. Top End won a number of awards at the Group Training Association Queensland and Northern Territory Awards and the Australian School-based Apprentices of the Year award at the Northern Territory Vocational Training Awards.

*Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme projects continued*

## Australian Training Company Limited

Australian Training Company Limited (ATC) has a project to place 70 students (with 75% being Indigenous students or Pacific Islander students) into Australian School-based Apprenticeships in New South Wales in the sport and recreation industry. The value of contract is $240,900. To date, ATC has achieved 36 eligible commencements (51% of their contracted commencement target), however 83% of these commencements are either Indigenous or Pacific Islander students. Nine trainees have completed their education component of their traineeship. ATC provides sound pastoral care with regular visits to host employers. ATC has been working in conjunction with career advisers in three geographic areas (Sutherland, Inner West and Bankstown) and held 'School Based Traineeship' information sessions.

## Central Area Region Training Scheme Inc

Central Area Region Training Scheme Inc (CARTS) has a project to recruit or progress to a higher level 65 Indigenous people into Australian Apprenticeships or Australian School-based Apprenticeships in the Swan and Wheatbelt Regions of Western Australia. The value of the contract is $160,050. CARTS have exceeded their commencement target of 65 Indigenous apprentices required under this project. The participants have achieved qualifications in a diverse range of fields and at this stage five participants have gone on to gain further qualifications. Some participants have stayed with the same employer and others have changed employment, either going on to successfully complete a higher level of qualification or a different type of Certificate II qualification. Due to their hard work and resources devoted to extensive pastoral care, this has been a very successful project.

## Maxima Group Inc

Maxima Group Inc has a project to increase the number of Indigenous Australian Apprentices in Adelaide metropolitan and adjacent rural regions of Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu Peninsula, Murraylands, Riverland, Mid North, Barossa and Adelaide Plains. This includes placing and supporting 30 Indigenous students into Australian School-based Apprenticeships and 47 Indigenous people into Australian Apprenticeships. The value of the contact is $404,140. Maxima has secured 36 commencements, with 21 (58%) indigenous. Maxima had three out of five nominations for Indigenous Student of the Year at the South Australian State Training Awards. One of these nominations won the award. The success of this project is clearly linked to the dedication of two project officers who have worked hard to assist project participants overcome significant hurdles. Maxima is now the largest employer of Australian School-based Apprentices in South Australia. This is supported by Maxima staff having gained the trust and support of the local Indigenous communities, continued attendance at Indigenous committees and forums and ongoing work with business often through difficult times.

*Group Training Australian Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme projects continued*

### Eastern Victorian Group Training Incorporated

Eastern Victorian Group Training Incorporated has a project to place 189 Australian Apprentices in the dairy industry in the Gippsland region, including school-based, mature aged, Indigenous and people with disabilities and promote the dairy industry to students and mature aged people; obtaining active involvement from host employers; identifying 'champion' dairy farmers for the project; and establishing 'learning groups' of key stakeholders. The value of the contract is $374,880. While the project struggled to reach commencement targets due to severe drought conditions and difficulty placing apprentices with employers, it was successful in ensuring greater community awareness of the dairy industry.

### Apprenticeships Western Australia

Apprenticeships Western Australia has a project to research traditional trades Australian Apprenticeship opportunities in skill shortage areas in the Kimberley, Goldfields and Pilbara regions of Western Australia, and recruit 63 Australian Apprentices which will include Indigenous Australians or members of other equity groups. The value of the contract is $251,557. Staff have put considerable ground work and effort into raising the profile of Group Training and Australian Apprenticeships in the Kimberley, Goldfields and Pilbara regions, and nine Australian Apprenticeships (three Indigenous) have actually commenced with host employers and a number of employers have expressed interest in taking on Australian Apprentices early in 2007.

### Sydney Training and Employment

Sydney Training and Employment (STE) has a project to provide 150 Australian Apprenticeship opportunities, including for equity groups, in the Sydney, Illawarra, Southern Highlands and Goulburn geographic areas in the metals, engineering and electrotechnology industries. The value of the contact is $512,754. One hundred and one commencements have been achieved to date (five Indigenous). STE is maintaining positive relationships with industry bodies that will assist with the continuing success of the project. Local community partnerships are proving to be an effective way to recruit potential apprentices. The pre-vocational training STE is running has been very successful with employers lined up to take on all the people in the current class.

## Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Programme provides funds to assist enterprises (or Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that have obtained enterprise support) to provide workers with English language, literacy and numeracy training integrated with vocational training. It aims to assist existing employees with low literacy levels to improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills so they can better participate in employment and training activities. Funding is available across all industry sectors.

Although WELL does not have a specific Indigenous focus or target, Indigenous enterprises can apply for WELL funding to provide training for their employees. Indigenous employees of other organisations can also benefit.

More than $14 million is available under the Programme each year to train a minimum of 18,000 workers. In 2005-2006 Programme expenditure was $14.259m and 18,025 students, of whom 6.14% were Indigenous, were assisted under the Programme.

In responding to a recent evaluation of WELL, on 22 January 2007, Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training, announced a $74.9 million extension of the programme for four years from 2007-2011.

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### Numbala Nunga Nursing Home

The Numbala Nunga Nursing Home aged care workplace provides a good example of a successful WELL project involving Indigenous people. Located in the north-west of Western Australia, this nursing home provides care to elderly Indigenous people with culturally specific needs and employs a significant number of Indigenous staff. The purpose of the training conducted under the WELL project was to improve the standard of documentation, for example patient records, in the facility. Approximately 25% of participants were Indigenous. Due to the remote location of the nursing home the trainer was flown in from Perth and the training delivered in a one-week block. The Western Australian DEST State Office has received feed-back from the Accreditation Agency that the standard of documentation in the facility has improved considerably, and that this project is being used as a model for the delivery of training in other remote areas.

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### Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme

The objective of the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Programme (LLNP) is to improve eligible job seekers' English language, literacy and numeracy skills to assist them to secure sustainable employment or to participate in further education and training. It is recognised that gains in language, literacy and numeracy skills will also improve the quality of participants' daily lives.

LLNP provides up to 800 hours per participant of language, literacy and numeracy training and is designed to lead to a measurable improvement in these competencies of participants.

The LLNP currently has over 1,000 Indigenous jobseeker commencements each year. Almost all of these commencements are in the literacy and numeracy stream of the programme. In 2006-07 a record $56m will be provided under the Programme.

The LLNP has been strengthened to include Complementary Training services to allow more flexibility for Providers to create courses that are parallel to the core

delivery of the initial, basic and advanced streams of training. Complementary Training is intended to target disadvantaged client groups, including indigenous people, young males, people with disabilities, isolated female clients, and/or cases of age-based workforce exclusion.

## OTHER TRAINING – RELATED INITIATIVES

**Industry Training Strategies Programme - Indigenous Regional Projects**

The Indigenous Regional Projects aim to establish and trial initiatives that address difficulties experienced by Indigenous Australians living in regional communities in accessing and participating in VET in general, and Australian Apprenticeships in particular.

The programme objectives are to provide a range of services including advice, assistance, research and promotional activities to stakeholders such as peak employer associations, Australian Apprenticeships Centres and Registered Training Organisations, Group Training Companies, Indigenous agencies and Indigenous communities. These services support and expand Indigenous Australians' participation in training and skills development which will help them participate in further training, particularly through an Australian Apprenticeship pathway or take up employment.

Most of the 2005-06 projects are complete. These projects have assisted in improving the access and participation of Indigenous Australians in VET. A summary of the successful outcomes during 2005-06 follows.

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**Indigenous Transition Pathways Training**

The City of Playford had a project to engage or re-engage 60 to 75 Indigenous young people located in Elizabeth, South Australia in VET by meeting the participant's needs and optimising pathways to locally available employment opportunities. The Centre's 'Celebration of Successes' was supported by about 150 local Aboriginal young people and families demonstrating the shared ownership, commitment to, and valuing of, the centre by the community. 80 young Indigenous Australians have participated in a range of comprehensive transition pathway options, linking vocational learning to employment. The value of the contact was $154,220.

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**Pathways to Employment**

Queensland Rural Industry Training Council had a contract to deliver the new Pathways Certificate I in Rural Production to prepare 100 Indigenous participants for wider employment opportunities. The project targets 25 participants in four locations: Central Queensland coast, the Gulf and Western and South Western Queensland. The Queensland Rural Industry Training Council has linked with Job Network Providers, CDEP communities and the Australian Agricultural College Corporation to deliver the Pathways Certificate I in Rural Production. Over 100 participants have completed Certificate I in Rural Production and many have secured employment or started businesses in rural industries experiencing thin labour market conditions. Several participants who completed have also gone on to further training with most undertaking a Certificate II in Rural Production. The value of the contact was $303,050.

*Indigenous Regional Projects continued*

**Towards a Sustainable Community**

TAFE WA Central in association with Argyle Diamond Mine had a project to identify leaders/mentors from Indigenous, regional and corporate communities who will each define, in their own terms and from their own perspective, the key features of a sustainable community. The project put into operation a trial of the model of a 'Sustainable Community' that had been previously developed, within the East Kimberly Region of Western Australia. The project identified strategies to assist with the development and integration of cultural awareness between people from Corporate, Regional and Indigenous Communities and provided a means of establishing a 'sustainable community'. The value of the contact was $232,622.

**Integrating the Certificate of Applied Learning with CDEP**

East Gippsland TAFE had a project to enhance the educational opportunities provided to at least eight Indigenous participants through the development of Individual Learning Plans. The project developed, managed and delivered an individualised learning programme for Indigenous Australian participants currently undertaking CDEP with the Ramahyuck Centre. There was collaboration between East Gippsland TAFE, and Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation. The value of the contact was $98,391.

**Indigenous Hearing and Mentoring Strategy**

Top End Group Training has a project to adopt a multi-faceted approach to improve retention outcomes for Indigenous Australian Apprentices that address the effects of conductive hearing loss. The project verified a diagnostic questionnaire as a valid indicator of auditory processing difficulties as a result of conductive hearing loss, developed trialled and documented new recruitment and selection approaches for Group Training Organisations attracting Aboriginal applicants to Australian Apprenticeships. A listening survey was administered to adult groups and 25 responses were used in the evaluation of the listening survey. Several Australian Apprenticeships Centres and Group Training Organisation staff undertook training on the implications of hearing loss and potential recruitment and referral strategies. The value of the contract was $159,170.

*Indigenous Regional Projects continued*

## Partnered Delivery of Training and Assessment

Jobs Australia had a contract to enable the Cairns Regional Community Development and Employment Corporation (CRCDEP) to become an RTO by partnering with Jobs Australia and another RTO in North Queensland. This will support the delivery of culturally appropriate training and assessment services to the local Indigenous community. The CRCDEP is successfully operating as an RTO. It has a training coordinator and a number of qualified trainer/assessor staff. CRCDEP is operating with a compliant AQTF system and has a current partnering agreement with Jobs Australia. CRCDEP has a training plan and has acquired state government funding to support the delivery of training and assessment services to more than 80 CDEP participants. The value of the contact was $44,830.

## Improving Participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Community Services

Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council had a project to improve the participation of Indigenous Australians in Australian Apprenticeships in the community services and health industries by undertaking research on Indigenous participation trends and how to attract and retain Indigenous Australians; identify characteristics of projects that have improved Indigenous participation rates; identifying opportunities for regional projects; and customising, promoting, trialling and distributing resources to better attract Indigenous Australians. The *What's the job?* information kit has been produced to attract Indigenous Australia's to eight community services and health occupations. 1,000 copies of the kit have been distributed to stakeholders including VET in School Coordinators, Career Advisors, RTOs, Regional Industry Career Advisors and Local Community Partnerships. Due to demand for the kit an additional 1,000 copies were printed during February 2007. The value of the contact was $190,883.

## Independence through Initiative

Merrimans Local Aboriginal Land Council had a project to provide vocational skills to a minimum of 10 Indigenous people within the Wallaga Lake Aboriginal community in NSW as part of a project to establish and run a small business to service the needs of the local tourism industry. The value of the contract was $27,830.

## Aboriginal Pathways Programme for VET and Employment

Colony 47 Inc and Mersey Skill Training had a project to provide a "mentoring/career coach" blend of service in which participants are initially mentored and progress to being career coached, building other supports and mentors around the participants as they progress through the programme. 31 participants from Southern Tasmania and 23 North/North West Tasmania were provided with the mentoring/career coaching services. At the conclusion of the project six participants had secured VET in school placements, 16 had enrolled in accredited TAFE courses and six had obtained an Australian Apprenticeship. A number of participants were also on TAFE waiting lists or waiting to hear back about job placements. The value of the contract was $229,932.

*Indigenous Regional Projects continued*

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**Remote Area School Based Apprenticeships**

Charles Darwin University had a project to provider remote area students in the Northern Territory with the opportunity to embark on an Australian School-based Apprenticeship in retail which will be undertaken in a community based business such as food outlets, local government arts/crafts and tourist ventures, schools and CDEP. The project has met with significant obstacles - the Oenpelli School was severely damaged by Cyclone Monica which resulted in the school being closed for an extended period and commitments to cultural events impacted on attendance. Achievements include two participant obtaining an Australian School-based Apprenticeships and seven participants are in the process of being signed up to Australian Apprenticeships in Oenpelli. All participants have improved their self esteem, their social skills and their literacy and numeracy levels. The value of the contract was $109,780.

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**Mentoring Skills Strategy in Five Areas**

Jobs Australia had a project to implement a mentoring skills strategy in NSW (2 regions), SA, NT and WA. The strategy includes: promoting the strategy and gaining commitment from employment service agencies; training 10-15 Indigenous mentors and at least one representative from each key employment service organisation in each region; improving key employability competencies of 10-15 Indigenous job seekers in each region; and providing training to key employment service organisations to strengthen their commitment and ability to obtain Australian Apprenticeships and employment opportunities for Indigenous clients and providing a mentoring awareness program to the broader stakeholder community. Outcomes included participating organisations have implemented operational strategies to better deal with barriers effecting the participation and retention of Indigenous Australians in training and employment. This will achieve ongoing outcomes for Indigenous Australians. 64 mentors have been trained to assist Indigenous Australians achieve better training and employment outcomes. At the conclusion of the project, the following outcomes were achieved for Indigenous participants attending the pre-employment component of the strategy and assessed as "work ready": four had been placed in Australian Apprenticeships; three had enrolled in nationally accredited training; and seven had secured employment.

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The 2006-07 Indigenous Regional Projects funding allocation of $1.7 million is directed towards innovative projects that focus on increasing and improving VET outcomes for Indigenous Australians living in regional communities and providing them with appropriate skills development opportunities which lead to sustainable employment outcomes. Negotiations have commenced for 11 proposals. ·

**VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People initiative**

The Australian Government provides funding assistance for the establishment or expansion of training facilities for Indigenous training provision through the VET Infrastructure for Indigenous People (VIIP) funding. The objective of the VIIP Programme is to provide capital funding to assist in, and enhance the delivery of, training to Indigenous people. Funding of $4 million pa has been used to construct or refurbish buildings, purchase and outfit mobile training units or purchase essential training equipment.

A review of Infrastructure funding was undertaken in 2006 by the Department. From 2007 new administrative arrangements concerning Guidelines and funding processes will be implemented to improve Skill Centre funding for Indigenous people.

The Programme is a nationally competitive process with a current annual allocation of $4 million. It is targeted at not for profit private organisations, however, there is flexibility within the Guidelines for TAFE institutions to access funding if the need is justified.

Examples of recent projects which have a positive and successful outcome for Indigenous communities are below.

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**Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation**

Yarnteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation recognised that current training was inaccessible to students and did not cater for an increasing demand for courses. They applied for funding to purchase a building and fit it out as a training centre. Funding was provided to increase the number of courses delivered in the region, especially in areas of skill needs; offer courses which were at a higher level; provide training that was more accessible to Indigenous students; and offer pathways to employment or further education.

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**Ngaanyatjarra Council**

Ngaanyatjarra Council identified that students in very remote communities were required to travel to major centres for training. This was a significant distance and required periods away from their community and family. Ngaanyatjarra Council sought to resolve this issue by constructing accommodation facilities in Warakurna, Blackstone, Kirrikurna which will be used to house visiting lecturers and deliver culturally appropriate training. This will provide opportunities for Indigenous people to access higher levels of training, employment and additional training courses in surroundings which they are comfortable.

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**Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation**

Northern Star Aboriginal Corporation recognised that employment was available with a key industry in a rural region, however there was continuing high unemployment of Indigenous people due to lack of appropriate skills. To help provide employment opportunities, Northern Star worked in partnership with industry to identify relevant skill needs and address these through a mobile training unit. As they were not an RTO, Northern Star entered into formal arrangements with local RTOs to deliver the training. Funds were granted for the purchase of a vehicle and trailer. Costs for outfitting these with training equipment were provided by State and industry contributions. The delivery of training in a mobile facility enabled the flexible delivery of training in a number of centres. It was also identified as a cost effective method for delivering training in a remote region which enables people to remain within communities.

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**National Skills Shortages Strategy**

The National Skills Shortages Strategy (NSSS) supports innovative and strategic industry-led projects to address workforce skills development needs. The projects focus on increasing the engagement of all Australians in the national training system including the participation of Indigenous Australians. Some projects are specifically designed to increase the participation of Indigenous Australians in training and employment.

**Tourism Training Australia**

Tourism Training Australia is undertaking a project through the Australian Government's National Skills Shortages Strategy to provide basic hospitality skills training and workplace learning for participating Indigenous Australians in high end metropolitan and regional hotels; and producing a case study video for promotion of the industry to Indigenous Australians. The project has a contract for $325,710 (GST inc). The project commenced in March 2006 and is due to be completed in March 2007. The project targets entry level (younger), mature age and sole parent Indigenous Australians. Of those successfully completing the course, ten of the 15 in Sydney and six out of 13 in Cairns have secured positions in hospitality establishments. Where participants remain unemployed they are receiving follow-up support.

## The Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme

The Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme provides for pre-vocational training and support to assist disadvantaged individuals obtain and maintain an Australian Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment, further education or training. The programme provides training, which is nationally recognised, is based on labour market needs and is linked to an Australian Apprenticeship pathway. Indigenous Australians are eligible to participate in the programme and are referred by Job Network members, Centrelink and providers of other Australian Government programmes such as Youth Pathways, Partnership Outreach Education Model, Community Development Employment Projects and Indigenous Employment Centres.

The programme provides around $24.5 million is provided each year to support up to 9,500 eligible job seekers across Australia. Participants receive a minimum of 150 hours industry specific and generic training, up to thirteen weeks job search assistance and thirteen week post placement support to assist job seekers make the transition to work.

**The Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme 2006 Outcomes**

In 2006, 720 Indigenous Australians received training, support and assistance through the Australian Apprenticeships Access Programme representing a significant increase in participation from 2005. Of the 720 participants 16 were successful in gaining a full time Australian Apprenticeships, two part time Australian Apprenticeships, 32 were placed in full time Traineeships, 18 in part time Traineeships, 26 in full time employment, 11 in part time employment and 10 continued on to further training.

## Australian Flexible Learning Framework

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework provides the VET system with e-learning skills, professional development opportunities, products, resources and support networks to meet today's increasingly technological-driven learning environment.

The Indigenous Engagement Project forms one of the 14 Framework Projects. The Indigenous Engagement Project is collaboratively funded by the Australian Government and all States and Territories. Total project funds for 2007 are $776,400.

The key objectives for 2007 are to:
- build on successful projects and outcomes which will enable e-learning to become an integral part of the way in which the Indigenous sector accesses VET nationally;
- increase demand for e-learning, lead by Indigenous communities which will lead to improved employment outcomes, build business opportunities and develop and strengthen links with industry. The project will seek and encourage innovative proposals that allow Indigenous communities with limited access to mainstream training to participate in e-learning; and
- identify and encourage opportunities for Indigenous individuals and communities to participate in employment and community development projects which enhance the Indigenous community's e-learning capacity.

The Indigenous Engagement project aimed to contribute to improving employment futures for Indigenous people by advancing skills through e-learning. The project sought to strengthen the capacity of Indigenous organisations and communities by using e-learning to recognise and identify skills and qualifications needed to gain successful employment outcomes. All four funded projects have demonstrated how increased knowledge and skills are leading to increased participation in e-learning, with attainment of qualifications such as Business, Tourism and Front line Management to gain further employment and enhance and support their businesses.

Details of the four 2006 projects are below.

**Jobs for Our Mob: Indigenous e-learning for mining and construction skills.**

The objective of the Jobs for our Mob project was to establish an e-training centre which incorporated technology to identify and deliver the prevocational skills required for Indigenous people wanting to enter the mining, construction or engineering fields. The project aimed to assist Indigenous people from remote and very remote locations without developed work readiness skills to gain employment in these industry areas.

**Top End Groove: E-learning for cultural tourism**

The objective of the Top End Groove was to establish a cultural tourism business and training network spanning the north of Australia from the Kimberley region in Western Australia across the Northern Territory to North Queensland. The project aimed to develop and grow Indigenous and cultural tourism businesses through the use of technology and e-learning by enabling knowledge sharing, improving access to skills training and creating a central point for promotion and marketing Indigenous tourism.

*Australian Flexible Learning Framework projects continued*

**Homeland micro e-business: E-learning on very remote Indigenous communities**

The Homeland micro e-business project researched the use of communication technologies to meet the education and training needs of small Indigenous communities in very remote locations. As part of the research, training models were developed to build entrepreneurial skills which supported micro-businesses in three Indigenous communities in Arnhemland.

An integral part of the project was the training and development of e-learning champions within the communities. The champions will help build the information communication technology skills of the community and support the delivery of the training programs.

**E-governance in Indigenous Communities**

The E-governance in Indigenous Communities project focused on delivering education and training in governance to Indigenous communities and organisations in regional and remote communities who do not have the same level of access to governance programs as groups in other locations. The project worked with communities in New South Wales and Western Australia through video conferencing and satellite based interactive distance learning technology and e-learning resources.

Through the Indigenous Engagement projects e-learning acted as a catalyst for:
- improving self confidence personal and skill development – one participant commented that they used to be shy but running an e-business shop had brought them out;
- drawing people back to education and employment – the Jobs for our Mob project designed entertaining interactive learning materials that provided a "hook" to convince people to take up training opportunities. Literacy barriers were more easily surmountable with the use of e-learning tools and improved literacy then became a by-product of learning;
- allowing people to stay in country – e-learning helped create access in isolated areas. The Homeland micro e-business project allowed people to set up businesses in small remote communities "so our children can have a future on our land"; and
- capturing the Indigenous story – people commented on the opportunities e-learning provided to raise awareness about Indigenous history and "tell it how it really is". A Top End Groove project champion said e-learning allowed them to "bring the bush and put it inside that little box".

## OTHER INDIGENOUS PROGRAMMES/PROJECTS

### Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme

During 2006 to 2009 the Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme (IYMP) will assist over 600 Indigenous young people aged 16 – 24 from remote areas. The budget for this programme is $23.1 million over 2004-05 to 2008-09. In 2006, 229 young people attended IYMP Testing and Assessment with 135 young people commencing training through the Programme. Those young people who attended IYMP Testing and Assessment but did not commence training are waiting to start their chosen course or have alternate pathways identified.

With the support of their families and communities, these young Indigenous people can relocate to Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba, Dubbo, Newcastle, Canberra, Shepparton, Adelaide, Perth or Darwin to take up post secondary school training and education that leads to employment opportunities in the trades and other areas of community need such as Nursing, Teaching, Accounting and Business Management.

Prior to commencing the IYMP, young people who are considered most likely to benefit from the programme are invited to the relevant host location to undertake IYMP Testing and Assessment. They undergo career planning, self-exploration, visual literacy, literacy and numeracy activities that identify gaps in learning. These activities inform the development of an IYMP Training Plan, which includes the most appropriate level for the young person to commence their training (e.g. Certificate I through to university level).

While in their IYMP host location, these young people receive safe and supported accommodation through Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL). They are also assisted with career guidance, facilitation into training, mentoring, maintaining contact with home and other support by IYMP Training and Employment Services Providers (TESPs).

Positive media coverage has come through project launches and articles about participants that showcase the opportunities the programme facilitates.

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### Employment at Woodside

Positive media coverage has come through project launches and articles about participants that showcase the opportunities the programme facilitates.

An example of this is a young man from remote Western Australia. He is studying engineering in Perth through the IYMP and has recently joined Woodside as a cadet. Woodside is Australia's largest publicly traded oil and gas exploration and production company.

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### Increasing Vocational Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Students

The Increasing Vocational Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Students (IVLOIS) initiative was funded as part of the 2001 Australians Working Together initiative. It aimed to provide vocational learning opportunities, linked to local industry options, for 2,300 Indigenous secondary school students across all States and Territories.

Projects were undertaken primarily by Local Community Partnerships during the 2005 school year, with some continuing into the 2006 school year. It had a total budget of $3 million.

36 projects operated across more than 100 schools. Through these, IVLOIS provided the means for young people of secondary school age to experience the world of work while they were studying. Projects included a focus on career exploration, work experience, computer learning programmes, work simulation and development of employability skills.

IVLOIS has ceased as a programme with most projects completed by December 2005. Some projects ran into 2006, with the final project being completed in December 2006.

An evaluation of IVLOIS is now underway to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the IVLOIS Programme nationally and individual IVLOIS projects. This evaluation will inform schools and Local Community Partnerships about how better to deliver and engage Indigenous students in vocational learning activities.

The final report of the evaluation is due on 30 April 2007.

### Supplementary Recurrent Assistance

Supplementary Recurrent Assistance provides supplementary per capita funding to eligible education providers across the preschool, school and VET sectors to assist those providers to accelerate education outcomes of their Indigenous students beyond those which could be achieved through mainstream and own source funding alone. The estimated total level of Supplementary Recurrent Assistance funding for 2007 is $129 million. This covers the preschool, school and VET education sectors.

### Away-from-Based Mixed Mode Assistance

Away-from-Based Mixed Mode assistance provides funding for travel, meals and accommodation while a student (or staff member) is away from their normal place of residence as part of a 'mixed-mode' course of study. A 'mixed mode' course is a nationally accredited course that is delivered through a combination of distance education and face-to-face teaching for students who are based in their home communities and undertake occasional intensive study periods on campus.

In 2005 Away from Base funding for the VET sector was approximately $23 million.

### ABSTUDY

The Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme (ABSTUDY) helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to stay at secondary school or go onto further studies.

ABSTUDY provides a means-tested living allowance and some supplementary benefits for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander full time students undertaking accredited VET courses at a registered VET provider. Part time students may be eligible for one or more supplementary benefit.

ABSTUDY Supplementary benefits for full and part time VET students include:
- fares for students who have to move away from home to study;
- rent assistance for students who rent privately (including secondary school boarders);
- remote area and pharmaceutical allowances;
- incidentals allowance for tertiary and mature-age secondary students;
- pensioner education supplement; and
- assistance with fares and meals and accommodation costs for students who have to undertake part of their course away from their normal place of study, such as a field trip, residential school or clinical placement.

The estimated ABSTUDY VET expenditure for the 2005-06 financial year was $35.8 million.  In the fortnight ended 30 June 2006, 3,317 recipients of ABSTUDY were supported for VET sector study.

## WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

### Indigenous Mainstreaming Taskforce

To give effect to the whole-of-government focus on making mainstream programmes (ie non-Indigenous specific programmes) contribute better to improved outcomes for Indigenous people, the Department has established an Indigenous Mainstreaming Taskforce. The Taskforce is working with mainstream programme areas to ensure all programme managers, their programmes and programme elements apply appropriate focus, flexibility and effort to contribute to improved educational outcomes for Indigenous people.

Based on Taskforce recommendations the Department has established an Indigenous Flexible Funding Pool which draws on mainstream programme funds to respond more flexibly to whole of government Indigenous priorities at both the community and regional levels including Shared Responsibility Agreements and Regional Partnership Agreements brokered through Indigenous Coordination Centres.

### Shared Responsibility Agreements

Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) detail what communities, governments and others will contribute to achieve long-term changes in Indigenous communities.

The Department of Education, Science and Training is the lead agency in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) whole-of-government site in Murdi Paaki in New South Wales. As such, DEST is involved in numerous SRAs, both in Murdi Paaki, and in other areas of Australia. Nineteen SRAs have been entered into in the Murdi Paaki region. This figure includes six regional SRAs, and 13 local SRAs, and represents approx 47% of all SRAs entered into in NSW to date.

While each Murdi Paaki Agreement varies in its content, its general character remains consistent:
- they are the result of community consultation at the local and/or regional level through the region's CWPs and the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA);
- their content represents the principal means of recognising each partner's rights and responsibilities; and
- they provide a practical basis for cooperation and collaboration between Indigenous communities and governments, by mapping out how governments (Local, State, Australian) and Indigenous communities will work together to improve services for Indigenous Australians.

The development of SRAs in Murdi Paaki is one element of a holistic and coordinated approach which emphasises governments and Indigenous communities working together in collaboration to provide more flexible programs and services based on community identified priorities.

It is anticipated that Comprehensive SRAs will be progressed with a number of Murdi Paaki communities in 2007.

Details of DEST's engagement in Murdi Paaki Shared Responsibility Agreements as at 23 January 2007 follow.

DEST's engagement in Murdi Paaki Shared Responsibility Agreements as at 23 January 2007

| Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) | Description | DEST contribution (financial and in-kind support) |
|---|---|---|
| **Regional SRAs** | | |
| **Regional Priorities** (24 August 2003) | Identified regional priorities. | In kind support |
| **Information Technology (IT) support** (3 December 2004) | To provide a computer, including software, internet access and a printer, as well as IT training to the Murdi Paaki Community Working Parties (CWPs) (up to 16). | (OIPC Flexible Funding Pool $112,000) not included in the DEST total below. |
| **Secretariat and Administrative Support** (3 December 2004) | To provide secretariat and administrative support for Murdi Paaki CWPs. | $528,000 ($176,000 per year for 3 years) |
| **Regional Air Cooling** (6 April 2005) | Installation of evaporative air cooling units in a number of communities with community owned housing. The project incorporates training for local Indigenous people in fabrication and maintenance of the units. | In kind support |
| **Regional Assembly** (1 August 2005) | This SRA formally recognised the Murdi Paaki Regional Assembly (MPRA) as the principal regional structure in the Murdi Paaki region following the cessation of the ATSIC Murdi Paaki Regional Council. | $70,500 DEST contribution ($141,000 overall Aust Gov commitment) |
| **Murdi Paaki Partnership Project** (26 October 2005) | This regional SRA formally launched the Australian and NSW Governments' Murdi Paaki Partnership Project. Through the Project, eight full time (or equivalent) Community Facilitators will be employed to work in a paired arrangement with two communities each, to cover the 16 major communities in the Murdi Paaki region. | $333,000 |
| **Local SRAs** | | |
| **Bourke** | | |
| **Bourke Community Assistance Patrol (CAP)** (3 December 2004) | CAP will work with at risk people on the streets of Bourke at night, and will provide transport to a safe, non-threatening environment. | In kind support |
| **Bourke Education and Training Project** | The project will examine and implement flexible, innovative approaches to the use of existing resources, to improve educational outcomes (including attendance, retention and attainment) | In kind support |