

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

April 2016



Pathways and strategies to support Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs)

AEWs are critically important in the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students and contribute to outcomes related to attendance and wellbeing. AEWs also play a role in forging relationships between students' families and schools, engaging parents in their child's education. Some pathways/strategies to support this objective include:

- The provision of leave to attend residential schools and school teaching practicums.
- The provision of paid leave for the purposes of attending residential courses that are associated with study that is either to support the training of ATSI staff become teachers, or who are training in allied educational courses (where allied courses may be, but are not limited to, programs such as social welfare with a school focus, librarian courses, TAFE teacher aide courses).
- AEWs in 'hard to fill locations' are targeted to become teachers, where appropriate, as this will not require their leaving home, or transferring to another location. This assists in the retention of family and community relationship.
- In selected diocese, AEWs are encouraged to undertake practicums in adjoining regions to assist with networking and to support their exposure to other groups of students, such as those with a CALD background.
- Additional support is provided for transitioning AEWs/teachers to obtain their religious education certification.
- Some diocesan schools also participate in AIME programs or provide other support programs, such as the high school retreat for ATSI students in Armidale diocese. Entering the teaching profession is encouraged as a career choice at such workshops.
- Catholic education also employs Aboriginal Education Consultants to varying degrees. In NSW, Catholic education employs Aboriginal Education Consultants in all of its eleven dioceses.

Transition to school, and other support, for the 0–4 cohort

- Engagement with preschools occurs at the Principal levels and is supported by the AEW. Where required, engagement also occurs in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language.
- Engagement occurs with relevant mothers groups. For example, the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters.
- In the Sydney diocese, a pilot transition program is underway with the following features: there are currently 13 Aboriginal students in kindergarten; 11 children have participated in the transition program in 2015; the school provided a designated room and employed a specialist Early Childhood teacher.
- Early analysis of the data captured by the pilot program is highly encouraging. It indicates that by end of Term 1 2016, the average reading level of the children was on par with previous years students at the end of four terms of schooling. Social and emotional gains were made through familiarity with school environment. Relationships have been built between school, parents and community.

Improved participation in quality early childhood education

The National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education supports improved participation in quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school. It has a particular focus on the improved participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children. This \$660 million programme plays an important role in improving the educational outcomes and economic participation of these children. The National Catholic Education Commission welcomes the Government's investment in early childhood education. However, this funding is currently set to cease at the end of 2017, which will have a significant effect on jurisdictions' provision of universal access, especially to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Catholic education supports the continuation of this National Partnership but acknowledges that it also raises broader issues of federal financial relations.

Attraction of ATSI teachers

In general, it would be worth noting the recommendations arising from the evaluation of the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSI) project, once it is publicly available. More specifically, Sydney diocese currently has two Aboriginal Interns in Primary schools, at the completion of successful Internships applicants will gain a permanent position. This internship program is open to final year STEM, primary (mathematics), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders initial teacher students. Successful interns are supported through placements and mentoring programs.