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18 JAN 2010
Submission No 43
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**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS':

INQUIRY INTO THE HIGH LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT OF INDIGENOUS
JUVENILES AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

RESPONSE TO THE INQUIRY

Prepared by: the NSW Department of Education and Training,

January 2010

INTRODUCTION

The NSW Government is committed to improving educational outcomes for all Aboriginal¹ students and the NSW Department of Education and Training is working towards achieving the goal that Aboriginal student outcomes will match or better outcomes of the broader student population.

The NSW Government's various commitments under the NSW State Plan, *Two Ways Together* (the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan, 2003-2012), the Department of Education and Training's *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy*, *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009- 2012* and *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009-2011* all focus on honouring this commitment and consequently on strengthening Aboriginal peoples and communities.

The link between poor education outcomes and encounters with the juvenile and criminal justice systems is indisputable. There is a strong correlation between expulsion from school and incarceration in the juvenile justice system in relation to Aboriginal young people. Aboriginal juveniles and young adults are over-represented in both the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems, and there is an educational achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

The NSW Department of Education and Training recognises that improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal children and young people cannot be achieved in isolation from the work being undertaken in other key human service delivery areas such as health, housing, juvenile and criminal justice, employment and economic development.

Furthermore, student outcomes are influenced by many factors including other family members' educational experiences and the capacity of the education system to engage and support students to develop their individual strengths. Poor nutrition and poor health status, complex family issues resulting in violence or abuse, poor housing or overcrowding, poverty and unemployment are all factors which impact on a student's capacity to engage in and succeed at learning. In the area of housing for example, NSW has a mix of urban, regional and remote housing needs, and particular housing problems are experienced by its highly urbanised Aboriginal population. A lack of access to good quality, affordable, appropriate housing, impacts negatively on the educational, health, and other social and economic outcomes of Aboriginal peoples, and can ultimately contribute to Aboriginal people experiencing a disproportionate number of encounters with the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

It is widely acknowledged that despite the valuable work of many enlightened educators and policy makers undertaken throughout the last twenty to thirty years in NSW, and despite the fact that there have been improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal students, the overall rate of improvement has been far too slow and not

¹ A person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which s/he lives. In referring to Aboriginal people, this submission is referring inclusively to all Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islander people and, in so doing, is referring inclusively to all Indigenous Australians.

consistent state-wide; past approaches have failed to universally and unequivocally ensure that Aboriginal peoples have access to a fair, just and equitable society.

Because a lack of social and economic equity persists for Aboriginal people, the NSW Government recognised that adopting a whole-of-government approach was the most effective way to address Aboriginal disadvantage. This approach is embodied in *Two Ways Together*, the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan, 2003-2012. The NSW Department of Education and Training contributes to this approach through the work currently being progressed in NSW under the NSW State Plan and the *Two Ways Together* and *Keep them Safe* frameworks.

Persisting inequity for Aboriginal people is also the reason why the NSW Government undertook a review of Aboriginal Education in 2003-2004. (Information on the Review is detailed in this submission under the heading: The NSW Department of Education and Training – The Bigger Picture Context.)

As a result of the Review, the Department has focused its efforts on accelerating progress in bridging the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and is maintaining its focus on meeting the needs of current and future generations of Aboriginal children and young people in partnership with Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities.

Both the *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy* and the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012* stress the core responsibility of all staff in contributing to this process.

Working with local communities is fundamentally important and the Department (which comprises Regions, schools, TAFE Institutes and state offices) recognises that a 'one-size fits all' approach is not effective. It is therefore working with all levels of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. and Aboriginal communities to develop plans and strategies which best address locally perceived and identified education and training needs.

The Department knows that it must provide, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, education and training which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally and experientially relevant to its students, their families and communities. Innovation in NSW schools and TAFE colleges is alive and well and the majority of NSW's educators are committed, involved, professionally challenged and keen to both develop their skills and expand their capacity to support Aboriginal learners.

By working with the community to provide a quality, engaging, culturally relevant and appropriate education, the NSW Department of Education and Training believes that Aboriginal students will be more likely to pursue further education and training, be better equipped to secure meaningful and rewarding employment and be less likely to encounter the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is therefore strongly committed to working with agencies, such as the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice and the

NSW Department of Corrective Services, in order to ensure better targeted, more appropriate service delivery to support and strengthen Aboriginal communities. A number of the Department's activities relating to juvenile and criminal justice are detailed later in this submission.

The NSW Department of Education and Training's commitment to working across agencies to better support Aboriginal learners is also reflected in its decision to create within its Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate, the position of Aboriginal Education Consultant, Social Inclusion. This officer's duties include forming positive and effective relationships with other parts of the Department, other agencies, such as Juvenile Justice, and external peak bodies such as the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., with a view to ultimately improving Aboriginal educational and life outcomes.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is changing the way it does business in relation to Aboriginal education and training and is supporting Aboriginal learners to achieve equity in educational outcomes. The Department is committed to ensuring all Aboriginal children and young people in NSW succeed educationally, socially and economically.

THE NEW SOUTH WALES CONTEXT

NSW has the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of all Australia's states and territories, comprising approximately twenty-nine per cent of the total Australian Indigenous population. Seventy-seven per cent of Aboriginal people in NSW live in major cities or inner regional areas, and fifty-three per cent live in the corridor encompassing the major cities of Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong².

Similar to other states and territories, the Aboriginal population for NSW is a young population with forty per cent being less than fifteen years of age. The NSW Aboriginal population is younger than the NSW non-Aboriginal population and NSW Aboriginal population growth is double that of the general population. It is estimated that the Aboriginal population of NSW will grow by thirty-five per cent between 2006 and 2021, implying an average growth rate of almost two per cent per year during the next fifteen years. In comparison the annual growth rate of the total NSW population in 2006 was estimated to have been 0.9 per cent.³ The young Aboriginal population of NSW in particular is expected to continue growing. This population growth is anticipated to impact on service delivery in NSW not only in the area of education and training but in all human service delivery areas.

Addressing barriers to Aboriginal students achieving successful educational outcomes is a challenge for all communities in NSW. Consequently, the reasons that Aboriginal learners perform statistically poorly in the education and training system are multi-faceted and include issues such as poor attendance, higher levels of suspension and a lack of engagement. In many circumstances, Aboriginal students do not have an understanding or awareness of what their own particular learning needs are in relation to their cultural backgrounds and experiences and expectations.

Addressing issues such as overcrowding, high unemployment and access to health and education services, is a challenge and the NSW Government requires the support of the Commonwealth to address these issues in an holistic way.

In NSW, the majority of people do not question the ready availability of access to early childhood education programs, for example, and that it is well established that children who have access to, and attend, good quality early childhood education programs have a head start at school. However, many Aboriginal families and communities do not have access to, or do not access, these services. This is one area impacting on the capacity of Aboriginal students and communities to engage successfully in education and training systems and broader issues must be considered when formulating future directions for NSW Aboriginal communities similar to other Aboriginal communities throughout Australia.

² *Two Ways Together* Report on Indicators 2007, NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, p.2

³ Indicative New South Wales Indigenous Population Projections 2006 to 2021, *NSW Aboriginal Housing Office*, 2008

Traditionally, Aboriginal families have taken responsibility for nurturing and educating their children, particularly in the early years. In many contemporary Aboriginal families, this reality has not changed, despite the nature of the individual family's geolocation and/or socio-economic circumstances.

The NSW Department of Education and Training and other human services providers, systemically, need to respond differently in the way early years programs are communicated, planned and delivered, so as Aboriginal families do not feel that their cultural and family rights are overridden, de-valued or removed.

Most importantly, Aboriginal families and communities themselves must be engaged as active participants in every stage of the planning, implementation and evaluation of particular strategies.

The NSW Aboriginal population is highly mobile and this impacts on the capacity of many Aboriginal families to establish and subsequently sustain educational and economic stability and success.

Nearly ninety per cent of NSW Aboriginal students are enrolled in government schools making up five per cent of the total NSW public school population and while Aboriginal students represent a high percentage of enrolments in remote and community-based schools, the majority of Aboriginal students attend regional and urban schools where most of their peers are non-Aboriginal.

In order for NSW to achieve its goal of bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student performance, it needs to particularly prioritise: early childhood education; quality teaching⁴; support for Aboriginal students with disabilities; school retention and completion; and, pathways to training, employment and higher education. The setting of targets, the development and implementation of plans and the allocation of resources is being undertaken with a much more intense focus on the needs of Aboriginal students.

The fact that funding from the Commonwealth Government has not always proportionately reflected the high number of Aboriginal people who reside in NSW has affected the implementation of priorities under the *NSW State Plan* and the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012, *Two Ways Together*.

Traditionally, provision of Indigenous education funding by the Commonwealth Government was subject to criteria that disadvantaged NSW. For example, as the majority of NSW Aboriginal school students reside in metropolitan locations, they have been ineligible to attract the more generous rural and remote weighting formulae peculiar to supplementary assistance. In addition, grants for metropolitan

⁴ The NSW Quality Teaching model provides a framework to focus attention on, and provide consistent messages about, pedagogy in public schools. The model can be applied across all Key Learning Areas from Kindergarten to Year 12. The NSW QT model identifies three dimensions of pedagogy that have been linked to improved student outcomes: **Intellectual quality** refers to pedagogy focused on producing deep understanding of important, substantive concepts, skills and ideas; **Quality learning environment** refers to pedagogy that creates classrooms where students and teachers work productively in an environment clearly focused on learning; **Significance** refers to pedagogy that helps make learning meaningful and important to students.

Aboriginal school students were no longer eligible for indexation between 2005 and 2008. Other states and territories with greater numbers of Aboriginal school students living in rural and remote areas have been able to attract rural and remote supplementary assistance.

The issues for the NSW education and training system are similar to those for other systems. For example, attracting and retaining quality teaching staff is an issue for all systems in all communities, urban, regional and remote alike.

Commonwealth funding for government schools is now provided through the National Education Agreement, with Specific Purpose Payments for schooling being the primary vehicle for the Commonwealth to provide funding to assist the states and territories to deliver schooling. Whatever impacts this change in the delivery of funding may ultimately have, the fact remains that NSW has the highest Aboriginal population in the nation, with eighty per cent of its Aboriginal students not attending schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students. And because of this last fact, NSW has traditionally had access to less Commonwealth funding, per capita, for Aboriginal education and training than any other state or territory based on the previously favoured geo-location Commonwealth funding model.

For NSW to target its identified Aboriginal education and training priority areas, which is essential if the educational achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students is to be closed, and if ultimately, encounters with the juvenile and criminal justice systems by Aboriginal juveniles and young adults are to decrease, then access to increased mainstream Commonwealth funding is crucial.

THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – THE BIGGER PICTURE CONTEXT

The NSW Department of Education and Training is committed to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. It has developed, and is in the process of implementing, a sustainable, broad-ranging, multi-faceted and long-term strategy to ensure that Aboriginal student educational outcomes match or better those of all students in NSW. Moreover, the Department is committed to doing this in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people at all levels.

The NSW Review of Aboriginal Education, conducted in 2004, is of fundamental importance in this context. The Review gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative data from Aboriginal communities and organisations, educational leaders, teachers, parents and students along with representatives from a range of key interest groups. The data and information gathered highlighted many examples of good practice as well as ineffective practice in the delivery of Aboriginal education and training in NSW.

The *Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education* contained a total of seventy-one recommendations in nine key areas. The majority of these Review recommendations have been actioned, informing the Department's initiatives in Aboriginal education and training in the period since publication of the Review's Report. Fifty-five of these Recommendations have been completed and the remainder, with the exception of one, are ongoing and continue to be actioned.

Much of 2005 was devoted to Departmental planning. In 2006, the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008* (now updated for 2009-2012), which outlines the Department's commitments and action plan for responding to the recommendations emanating from the Review, was introduced. 2006 also saw the implementation of the *Schools in Partnership* (SiP) initiative and the development of the *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* (TASS) and the *Targeted School Initiative* (TSI). Both TASS and TSI have been incorporated into the *Schools in Partnership* initiative for 2010-2012. The Department also began working towards the progressive development and implementation of Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) for all Aboriginal students in NSW government schools, with over twenty-one thousand PLPs for Aboriginal students currently being implemented throughout NSW.

The promotion of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework, the release of the Department's *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008* (now updated for 2002-2011) and the increase in funding for Aboriginal Languages Programs in schools, the provision of state-wide targeted training in numerous literacy and numeracy programs, the mandating of Aboriginal Cultural Education for all staff and providing priority of access to Aboriginal children in the Department's 100

preschools, are also noteworthy elements in the Department's suite of interventions aimed at improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Taken together, these initiatives and programs represent an extensive, multi-pronged yet strategically integrated and interrelated approach affecting state offices, regional offices and TAFE Institutes as well as individual schools and TAFE campuses.

THE NSW ABORIGINAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGY

The NSW Department of Education and Training has developed, and is implementing, a sustainable and broad-ranging plan, the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012*, to ensure that Aboriginal student education and training outcomes match those of all students in NSW. The Strategy has been designed to focus the work of schools, colleges, regions, TAFE Institutes and state office directorates towards achieving the goal that Aboriginal student outcomes will match or better outcomes of the broader student population.

Moreover, the Department is committed to achieving its goal in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people at all levels. It should be noted that the approach taken to doing business with Aboriginal people in NSW under the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs Plan, *Two Ways Together*, is a community-oriented, consultative process in which communities articulate their needs to Government, rather than vice versa. A number of strategies and approaches adopted by the Department of Education and Training invoke an Alternative Service Delivery (a Canadian coined term) model, in that they focus very firmly on engagement with community and the development of community partnerships as key elements of effective education service delivery. The Strategy and *Two Ways Together* are underpinned by the principles which characterise Alternative Service Delivery.

The Department understands that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to improving educational outcomes must be avoided, given that different communities may identify different needs. One example of a community-tailored approach is the 'ensuring school readiness' objective of the *NSW State Plan Priority F1: Improved health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people*, in which the strategic focus is implementation of a pilot project in four Departmental preschools providing transport where required for young Aboriginal children in order to facilitate attendance.

Therefore, within the Strategy, programs are being targeted to communities where there is particular potential to improve school retention and completion rates and that experience early school disengagement and poor school outcomes for Aboriginal students. Programs such as the *Schools in Partnership* initiative, and the *Norta Norta* Program focus on improving engagement, attendance, retention, and literacy and numeracy achievement with the view to achieving educational success for Aboriginal students.

THE ABORIGINAL HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009 – 2011* aims to achieve increased participation and retention of Aboriginal staff in its workforce and to thereby help improve outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Employing more Aboriginal people in schools, TAFE Institutes and regional and state offices provides a greater diversity of role models for young Aboriginal students. The visibility of such role models encourages young Aboriginal students to see and hear the value of learning and achievement from Aboriginal people and the life opportunities available to them. Greater Aboriginal representation in the teaching workforce contributes to the development of teaching and learning practices that recognise and meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

The *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009 – 2011* focuses on recruitment, participation, professional learning and network support strategies along with promotion and communication initiatives. Professional development and leadership opportunities for Aboriginal staff are given a focus, as well as partnerships with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. and local Aboriginal communities.

It is informed by the *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy* and the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012*.

REVIEW of the NSW JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The NSW Government announced, in July 2009, that it would be conducting a review of the NSW juvenile justice system aiming to improve policy and practice in an effort to better rehabilitate young offenders and reduce their reoffending rates.

This review, the first in sixteen years, will focus on groups of young people overrepresented in NSW's juvenile justice system, including young Aboriginal people who can represent more than half of those serving a custodial sentence.

The Review is currently ongoing and it is anticipated that a final Report of the Review will be tabled in NSW Parliament in the first quarter of 2010.

THE JUVENILE and CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS & EDUCATION and TRAINING in NSW

The NSW Department of Education and Training is a partner in a number of cross agency initiatives under the *NSW State Plan* which target children and young people at risk of becoming, or who already may be, involved with the criminal justice system. Aboriginal children and young people and families, although not specifically targeted, do make up a proportion of clients.

- Working with the Department of Juvenile Justice, NSW DET is engaged in work to reduce the reoffending rate of young offenders through initiatives such as the Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project, Youth Conduct Orders and the Juvenile Offender Compact. The *Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project* targets children and young people aged between 10 and 25 at risk of doing harm to themselves and/or others and who have complex needs. *Youth Conduct Orders* are currently being trialled in Courts in a number of areas as an alternative to dealing with cases under the Young Offenders Act. The *Youth Conduct Order* can include strict limitations on a juvenile's movement and behaviour, including curfews, school attendance requirements and non-association orders which limit their contact with potential negative influences, such as gang members.
- Given the higher levels of Aboriginal contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems throughout the state but particularly in regional and remote areas, the NSW Department of Education and Training is working to improve post release VET pathways for Aboriginal inmates and detainees.
- The NSW Department of Education and Training manages a School for Specific Purposes, also known as Education and Training Units (ETUs), in each of the seven Juvenile Justice Centres across NSW. The Department also manages an education and training unit located within Kariong Juvenile Correctional Centre, which is managed by the Department of Corrective Services.

Staffing for each education and training unit includes an Aboriginal Education Officer (AEO) to support Aboriginal young people in custody. Juvenile Justice Centres and the Juvenile Correction Centre have established strong connections with their local communities and regularly organise visits by local Aboriginal elders and other cultural groups to speak with the detainees.

The Schools for Specific Purposes or ETUs provide educational services to students aged between 10 and approximately 18 years. All young people are assessed for literacy and numeracy competency prior to enrolment. Upon enrolment an education plan is developed for each student. Literacy and numeracy are taught explicitly and are also delivered in the context of all key learning areas.

Through their education plans, the students work towards the outcomes in NSW Board of Studies primary and secondary syllabuses. Students may be supported by adjustments made to teaching and learning activities to enable them to achieve syllabus outcomes. Students who are identified as requiring remediation

or additional support may access the Life Skills outcomes in the Years 7-10 syllabuses.

There is a strong emphasis on students working towards their School Certificate, Higher School Certificate, TAFE credentials or vocational pathways. *School to Work* programs are also offered. NSW TAFE plays a large role in the provision of vocational education programs to students, with many students combining school and TAFE delivered subjects as part of their School Certificate or Higher School Certificate.

Planning for the re-integration of a detainee from custody to the community is a key component of each detainee's case plan. The planning process may involve a range of agencies including Juvenile Justice, Health, Education and Training, and community support services depending on the detainee's needs.

Education personnel are involved in the transition process if the detainee is a student at the ETU and/or is planning to return to an educational setting in the community upon release. This planning process also enables the involvement of relevant regional and school based education staff to support the transition process.

Staff from the Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate's Schools Team have met with Principals of Education and Training Units within the Juvenile Justice System to offer support in relation to literacy and numeracy skills development for young Aboriginal offenders, and in relation to providing delivery of courses in Aboriginal Studies and culture.

Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate Schools Team staff have also addressed staff at Juvenile Justice Education and Training Units seeking their advice as to what type of support they need in meeting the education and training needs of young Aboriginal offenders.

The Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate's Numeracy Consultant is working with teachers in Juvenile Justice Centres to implement strategies to address the learning needs of younger students in relation to the Learning Framework in Number. Eventually, the Numeracy Consultant will be working across all Juvenile Justice Centre schools in implementing Numeracy in the Trades, Financial Literacy (*Mudjari'elo* – Surviving Tomorrow in Dhawarral language- see below for detail) and Life Skills.

- o Youth Drug Court:

The Youth Drug and Alcohol Court was established to address the needs of young offenders between 14 and 18 years of age who have alcohol and other drug problems. The aim of the court is to divert young offenders from further drug use and reoffending by providing specialist assistance in a number of areas.

The Department of Education and Training provides an officer who participates on the Joint Assessment and Review Team of the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court. This officer assesses the educational and vocational needs of the young people referred to the program and assists those accepted into the program to find appropriate education, training or employment. The officer also oversees

educational and vocational programs delivered to the clients at the Liverpool premises by TAFE NSW.

While the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court does not specifically target Aboriginal young people, there have been a significant number of Aboriginal clients. For these clients, Aboriginal community resources are accessed in order to provide culturally appropriate support. TAFE NSW is currently providing an Aboriginal teacher who has played an important role in supporting the learning needs of all clients, including Aboriginal young people.

o Counselling:

- The Department's school counsellor/student support workforce:

The Department's approach to building its school counsellor/student support workforce involves equipping school counsellors to respond more appropriately and effectively to the needs of Aboriginal students by increasing their skills with information and training.

Increasing the number of Aboriginal school counsellors is a long term strategy and while the Department encourages and welcomes applications for school counsellor training from Aboriginal people, the pool of Aboriginal teachers who also have a degree or post graduate diploma in psychology as part of their training is not large. Hence, the number of applications received from eligible Aboriginal people is small.

In order to redress this situation, the Department is implementing a more effective and longer term strategy in the promotion of teaching as a career for Aboriginal people (for example, by teacher education scholarships for Aboriginal people to train as primary and secondary teachers). Then, as well as encouraging Aboriginal teachers to train as school counsellors, the Department will also encourage more Aboriginal teachers to take up executive student support roles, for example, Year Advisors. The increase of Aboriginal staff in these positions will more likely enhance the student support workforce to meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

- The NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Department of Health have jointly promoted building the professional capacity of staff in areas of mental health through the *School-Link Initiative*. This initiative strengthens links between TAFE and schools with NSW Health, provides training programs for mental health workers and TAFE and school counsellors, and supports the implementation of prevention and early intervention programs in schools for students at risk of developing mental health conditions/issues.

School-Link Phase 3, Mental distress and wellbeing in Aboriginal young people, provides all school counsellors with an understanding of mental health issues faced by Aboriginal students and practical strategies useful to address issues facing those students.

A one day course for NSW government school counsellors on working with Aboriginal students and communities was trialled in Illawarra South East region during 2007. From August 2008, this course was available to all regions. Subsequently, all other regions provided their school counsellors with cultural awareness training relevant to their local Aboriginal communities.

- The *Aboriginal Offenders Action Plan for TAFE NSW Provision and Post-Release Pathways 2008-2012* was jointly developed by the NSW Department of Education and Training (TAFE NSW) and the NSW Department of Corrective Services to ensure the provision of quality programs, educational services and pre and post-release education pathways for Aboriginal offenders in NSW. (Whilst this plan targets adults caught up in corrective services, the NSW Department of Education and Training believes there is scope for it to be used as a template by the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, adapted for use in relation to younger offenders.)
- The Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate develops state-wide strategies and provides support to the Aboriginal Education and Training Units across TAFE NSW. Each Unit has a team of Aboriginal Coordinators appointed geographically, who consult with communities, develop networks of communication and establish partnerships to devise, monitor and evaluate courses and activities targeted for Aboriginal peoples that are appropriate to their specific needs and culture. In addition, interaction with Aboriginal students is a daily function of the TAFE NSW network of on-campus Aboriginal Student Support Officers. (While the roles of Aboriginal Coordinators and Aboriginal Student Support Officers are highlighted here, it must be acknowledged that a broad spectrum of support structures are provided by both schools and TAFE campuses to Aboriginal learners of all ages, and that **all** Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff are responsible for supporting Aboriginal learners to succeed in education and training.)
- There are two key documents that the NSW Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate has been involved in developing, which establish procedures for TAFE staff working in Juvenile Justice. The first document provides information on administrative and risk management issues and is titled '*Procedures for TAFE NSW Provision in Juvenile Justice Centres*', first published in 1994; revised in 2007. The second document is a resource for TAFE teachers working in Juvenile Justice Centres and is titled '*Time Wize: A resource for TAFE NSW teachers working in juvenile justice centres*', first published in 1997; revised in 2009.

pdf versions of these documents can be accessed electronically by placing the cursor on the images below and double clicking the left mouse button:



JJProc07.pdf (1
MB)



TimeWize_4.2.09.p
df (257 KB)

- The NSW Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate is in the process of liaising with representatives of the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice's Aboriginal Strategic Co-ordination Unit, with a view to identifying projects and strategies to improve vocational education and training needs of Aboriginal detainees with the view to reducing recidivism.
- In addition to programs provided by the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, the NSW Department of Education and Training delivers education and training programs, such as the Aboriginal Cultural Arts Program, through the education and training units attached to all detention centres located throughout NSW. NSW Department of Education and Training programs also include remedial, general and vocational education, literacy and numeracy, personal development and TAFE, school certificate and higher school certificate courses.

One such numeracy program is *Mudjari'elo*, which means 'surviving tomorrow' in Dharawal. The Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate developed this program to support the numeracy skill development of students in Juvenile Justice Centres. *Mudjari'elo*, to be piloted in Dorchester School, located in Reiby Juvenile Justice Centre in Campbelltown, focuses on financial mathematics and numeracy in the trades. Whilst the program will be trialled in Juvenile Justice Centres, it is intended to support all Aboriginal students in years 8 to 12.

- Two other programs which could be useful in a Juvenile Justice context are:

- a. *SistaSpeak*

The *SistaSpeak* program was initially developed in 2005 as a pilot by the Office for Women of the Premier's Department, the Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate and Streetwise Communication. It is a program tailored to address the specific needs of Aboriginal girls in years 6 and 7. It focuses on self-esteem, safe families, culture, leadership and economic independence. Feedback and evaluations from the participants, mentors, facilitators and observers suggests that the *SistaSpeak* pilot program fulfilled the general aim of the workshops to increase the self-esteem of the Aboriginal young women, and to strengthen their sense of identity, culture and connection to the community in which they live.

- b. *The Dreamtime to Fulltime T Tree* program

The Dreamtime to Fulltime T Tree program, which was piloted at Buninyong Public School in Dubbo in 2008, has had remarkable results with a group of Year 3-6 boys who had behavioural difficulties and were, in some cases, heading towards suspension. The T Tree program was devised by Aboriginal cultural consultant, Rick Powell, along with the school and community.

- School Attendance/Retention Strategies:

Aboriginal Education and Training is one of the six priority areas identified in NSW Department of Education and Training's *Office of Schools Plan 2009 – 2011*. The implementation of strategies to improve Aboriginal student attendance and retention rates is one of the measures listed to ensure the successful participation of Aboriginal students in education.

Student attendance rates for Aboriginal students in NSW government schools have been collected separately since 2006. Data from this period indicates that there is a gap of approximately 7% between the attendance rate for Aboriginal students and that of the general school population. As with the general population Aboriginal primary school students attend more regularly than secondary students and girls attend more regularly than boys.

However, as detailed in the Statistical Compendium accompanying the NSW Department of Education and Training's Annual Report 2008, there was an improvement in the attendance rate of Aboriginal students in NSW government schools in the period 2006-2008, going from 84.5% in 2006 to 85.0% in 2008 (an increase of 0.5 percentage points). There was no change in the "all students" attendance rate during this period, which remained static at 91% for this period.

It is important to note that improving Aboriginal student attendance is critical to improving Aboriginal student education outcomes and ultimately, Aboriginal student life outcomes, and central to this process is the way in which individual schools work in partnership with their local communities.

The NSW Department of Education and Training knows that schools must provide, in full collaboration with Aboriginal people and communities, a school education which promotes quality teaching, is engaging, and is culturally and experientially relevant to its students, their families and communities. The Department believes that Aboriginal students will be more likely to attend school and to remain at school, when these practices and procedures are actioned.

The *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012* and the *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy* support schools to develop and implement strategies to effectively and meaningfully engage with and work with their communities.

Reports from schools indicate that wherever they work successfully, hand-in-hand with their local communities, Aboriginal student attendance and retention outcomes improve, as do other outcomes.

Schools have a range of strategies to encourage regular attendance. Some examples include:

- using phone intervention programs which establish prompt telephone contact with parents when students are absent from school without explanation. Prompt communication with parents by telephone, email or text message has been shown to be highly effective in reducing truancy.
- referring students to the school's learning support team or student welfare team to help identify the issues impacting on attendance and to devise appropriate strategies to manage these issues
- referring to the Home School Liaison Program students of compulsory school age who will be supported by trained attendance officers.

Home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers work with students of compulsory school age who have unsatisfactory attendance and provide support to the parents of these students. These officers assist in overcoming a range of family and school related concerns which may prevent regular attendance. They work with the parent and student, school executive, school counsellors, regional student welfare consultants and relevant community agencies to address these concerns.

The NSW Wood Special Inquiry into Child Protection (2009) identified chronic school non-attendance as a risk of harm factor. In response, among a range of initiatives, the NSW Government will employ an additional 25 home school liaison officers and 15 Aboriginal student liaison officers to work with children at risk of poor educational progress because of their habitual non-attendance in the compulsory school years. The role of the Aboriginal student liaison officers will be to develop locally identified solutions to the non-attendance of Aboriginal students and to improve their connections to education.

In consultation with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (NSW AECG) the additional Aboriginal student liaison officers have been allocated to those regions in the state which were identified as having the greatest need. They will commence work at the beginning of the 2010 school year.

- The role of mentoring, healing and diversionary programs:

Over the years, the NSW Department of Education and Training and Aboriginal community organisations have operated a range of diversionary programs which target Aboriginal young people at risk of disengaging from education who may be at risk of becoming caught up in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. These programs are particularly labour intensive, requiring appropriate levels of funding in order to remain productive and effective.

Connecting young offenders, and those at risk of offending, to Men's or Women's Groups, for mentoring or for buddy system linkages is a positive and proactive measure and mentoring has proven, time and again, to successfully impact on young people particularly when coupled with vocational and job skills training.

As there is a tendency for young offenders to identify with other young offenders and so potentially become part of a distinct social group which is separate to or, in many instances, replaces the family construct, the role of Elders and mentors is particularly significant in guiding, counselling, and supporting young people to lead productive, honourable and meaningful lives.

The NSW *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012* and the *Aboriginal Education and Training Policy* support schools and TAFE campuses and colleges to develop and implement strategies to effectively and meaningfully engage with and work with their communities. The participation of Elders and other highly respected members of the community is implicit in many successful school and TAFE programs which aim to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students. Mentoring is one way in which Elders and community members are involved in schools and in training settings.

In relation to TAFE NSW, it must be noted that all Aboriginal programs involve mentoring as a fundamental element of course delivery; mentoring is regarded as essential in the training of both young and more mature Aboriginal learners.

- Examples of student mentoring programs in schools include:

- **Beginning Well:** is an early intervention program which aims to help children settle into school easily. It is based on research which shows that children who make a good start to school are more likely to enjoy their education and achieve well.

Beginning Well provides opportunities for schools to work together with families, children and the community to ensure a more successful transition to school for children with identified behaviour difficulties.

The program supports children from three-and-a-half to five (3.5 – 5) years of age in prior-to-school settings and as they transition to Kindergarten.

- **Learning Assistance Mentoring Program: (LAMP)** supports children at risk of not making a successful transition from Year 2 to Year 3 at school. The six 'Cs' of LAMP outline the roles and responsibilities of mentors. These are: care, communication, content, confidentiality, commitment, cooperation.

- **Law Firms Encouraging and Assisting Promising Students:** A workplace learning program involving Year 9 students at risk of leaving school early.

- **Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training:** The Crisis Prevention Institute's Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training has been implemented within the NSW Department of Education and Training since the late 1990s.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training is one of a range of behaviour management supports available to schools. The philosophy of the training is to provide for the care, welfare, safety and security of individuals involved in aggressive or assaultive situations.

The training equips personnel with appropriate behaviour management skills to safely resolve situations where they may be confronted with anxious, hostile or violent behaviour.

There are a number of accredited instructors in regions who can provide Nonviolent Crisis Intervention training to school based and regional personnel. The training can be delivered as a one or two day program, depending on the requirements of personnel undertaking the training.

- Specialist support for students with disruptive behaviour:

- Behaviour Schools: Behaviour schools, tutorial centres and programs are specifically designed to deal with students who have behaviour difficulties and provide intensive support for these students.
- The aim of specialist behaviour programs is to successfully return students to school or to facilitate their participation in further education or employment. Strong links are expected to be maintained with the school at which the student is enrolled whilst the student attends a specialist program. Students are referred to these programs by principals following discussions with the student's parents or carers. NSW Department of Education and Training regional officers are responsible for establishing a placement committee and making placement offers to parents of referred students.
- Suspension Centres: These Centres are for identified students who are on long suspension (minimum of 5 days and a maximum of 20 days). The centres provide interventions within a range of regional supports for students with disruptive behaviour.

Suspension centres service a cluster of schools to provide intensive support for students on long suspension who are identified as most likely to benefit from an intervention to return them to school as soon as possible.

- Other education programs which involve mentoring include:

- The *Schools in Partnership* initiative (SiP) assists participating schools to improve the literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes of all students. The initiative was designed to assist schools with significant Aboriginal student populations to build capacity and strengthen partnerships with communities and other agencies. The program allows communities to develop strategies according to their needs, including personalised learning programs for every Aboriginal student, Aboriginal cultural education training for all staff, programs that help prepare students for Kindergarten and transition into high school, development of quality teaching strategies for Aboriginal students and the implementation of mentoring programs.

The most critical success factor to emerge has been the commitment to finding effective ways of involving and working with the staff, students and members of local communities, including Elders and other highly respected community members.

The SiP initiative is consistent with the NSW Government's commitment to ensure social justice for all citizens and its determination to make a difference for Aboriginal young people.

Implementation of the initiative:

- reflects the inherent right of all Aboriginal students to fair, equitable, culturally appropriate and significant opportunities to obtain a high quality education
 - enriches the life chances of Aboriginal students to achieve their full potential and
 - acknowledges that schools in partnership with their communities can and do make a difference.
- The *Norta Norta* Program is a supplementary program which provides targeted support to Aboriginal students to accelerate progress in student achievement. The focus of the program is to provide learning assistance in the key areas of literacy and numeracy to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

648 schools and 1,958 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were identified to receive *Norta Norta* Program funding in 2009. These students were at or below the national minimum standards for reading and numeracy in 2008 National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results for Year 3, 5, 7 and 9. Approximately 2,300 year 11 and 12 students were eligible in 2009 to receive assistance for the secondary component of the program. The total number of students to be supported by the program in 2009 was approximately 4,258.

The program funds schools to provide learning assistance for Aboriginal Year 4, 6, 8 and 10 students; tutorial assistance for senior students; independent Learning Hubs for students from K-12; tutoring/mentoring/leadership programs for students in middle and senior years.

- *Youth Excel* has operated in nine secondary schools where there are significant issues of early disengagement and poor school outcomes. Over the period 2005 to 2008, the program has assisted almost 800 Aboriginal students aged between 13 and 18 years to stay engaged in schooling and improve their educational outcomes. The focus of the program is to provide services such as student learning centres, student mentoring and links to employment and higher education.
- The "*Hands On*" program is a partnership involving the NSW Department of Education and Training, South Western Sydney Region and TAFE NSW South Western Sydney Institute, Aboriginal Education and Training Unit. The aim of the program is to re-engage young Aboriginal people who are at risk of disengaging from school education.

The program provides information and referral, case management, coordinated training programs and support services that aim to improve the employment and educational outcomes for young people.

The program also aims to create a 'no gap' educational pathway for Aboriginal students leaving school to further study in vocational education and training. The program identifies areas of interest for young people, areas in which they will be able to achieve and areas in which they will qualify and find employment.

The program links TAFE NSW, schools, parents and community Elders in a unique partnership model. The success of the Partnership has contributed to the strong and active involvement of all parties in the planning related to the pre-employment options available to the students as part of the program. Community Elders have a mentoring and support role to further motivate the students throughout the program. Preliminary evaluations have indicated that the link with the community, especially the Elders is another major component for the success of the program.

School students at risk of leaving school early are provided with vocational skills training.

From June of 2008 to April of 2009 the program organised seven pre-vocational courses. They included hairdressing; automotive; senior First Aid and a series of workshops which were aimed at exposing students to the variety of courses available within TAFE NSW South Western Sydney Institute.

The workshops covered areas including retail; horticulture; automotive industry; sign craft; animal care; carpentry and sport and recreation.

In total 62 students completed these courses from 18 local high schools.

- The TAFE NSW-aided *Centrelink Mentoring Program* involves a partnership between Centrelink and TAFE NSW's Social Inclusion & Vocational Access Unit and Western Sydney Institute Mt Druitt College, and the NSW Department of Education and Training's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate.

It was initially developed in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which identified a lack of knowledge of and access to available services and resources within and outside of correctional centres as a contributing factor to Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The training involved is relevant to a range of educational settings in community, government and vocational sectors and can be used to support the work of Aboriginal people in Land Councils, Education Support, Community and Government services, enterprises and business initiatives, as well as Health and Welfare Organisations.

Training takes into account different learning styles, life experiences and cultural values and norms of Aboriginal people. As far as possible, content, methods, process and outcomes of the program are determined by Aboriginal people.

The program utilises participants' individual, informal or expert knowledge of their environment to ensure a meaningful context for both content and method.

The program's primary aim is to develop the self-esteem and efficacy first and foremost of mentees, and secondly of mentors.

- *Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery (IPROWD) Project:* In April 2008, a partnership was established between TAFE NSW and NSW Police to develop a bridging course that would provide Aboriginal students from western NSW with the academic pre-requisites to enrol as student police: the Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery project (IPROWD). 13 Aboriginal students enrolled in the Course and all graduated in December 2008. Six students went on to study at the Police College, Goulburn, three of whom remain. The remaining three have deferred their studies. The majority of IPROWD students have found employment. A second IPROWD course commenced at Dubbo in April 2009. IPROWD was due to commence at Tamworth in July 2009. The mentoring of students is an integral element of this program and involves community members, teaching staff and Aboriginal staff in TAFE NSW Institutes.
- In January 2008, a partnership was formed between Lake Illawarra Local Area Command (NSW Police), TAFE NSW and Warrigal Employment to establish school-based traineeships in policing for Aboriginal students in Years 11 and 12. *Murra* provides participants 100 days paid employment in the Lake Illawarra Local Area Command. At the same time, students complete Certificate 3 level training as part of their Higher School Certificate to qualify for entry into the NSWPF College as student police. Students are assigned NSWPF police mentors as they work through the Traineeship. 17 students have participated in *Murra*, with 8 commencing in this two year program in 2008 and a further 9 commencing in 2009.
- *The Way Ahead – Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program for Aboriginal People* was initiated in 2004 to improve the commencement and retention outcomes of Aboriginal apprentices and trainees in NSW. The program managed by the Department of Education and Training's New Apprenticeships Centre (DETNAC) involved promotion of the opportunities of Apprenticeships and Traineeships to Aboriginal People, mentoring support for Aboriginal apprentices and trainees, pre-employment training where necessary and facilitation of connection with Australian Apprenticeship Centres, Employers and Registered Training Organisations.

The Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) has supported *Way Ahead* since June 2006 following the closure of DETNAC by the Commonwealth to ensure its continued success and full operational implementation. 27 Aboriginal mentors are supporting

Aboriginal trainees and apprentices throughout NSW. The structured mentoring support is designed to ensure that Aboriginal apprentices and trainees are able to cope with the personal, social and cultural pressures that so often occur for Aboriginal Australians commencing and remaining in employment. Aboriginal apprentice and trainee numbers are continuing to grow strongly.

ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

While approximately thirty-two per cent of the NSW Aboriginal population lives in Sydney, it is clear that many NSW regional towns are experiencing significant in-migration of Aboriginal people (Taree, Armidale, Lithgow, Griffith, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Broken Hill particularly) drawn mainly from western and northern areas of NSW.

Many of these regional towns are characterised by low levels of Aboriginal employment, low education outcomes, poor health outcomes and higher levels of engagement with the criminal justice system.

The NSW Government plays a leading role in promoting economic development for all Aboriginal people in NSW and has a continued focus on creative employment and economic development activities, not only in urban areas, but specifically in regional and remote locations due to increasing Aboriginal populations and high levels of disparity across a range of outcomes.

Addressing Aboriginal economic development is one of the seven priority areas identified under the NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan, *Two Ways Together* and NSW agencies, through the Aboriginal Inter-agency Economic Development Working Group, are developing a NSW Aboriginal Economic Development Policy. The NSW Department of Education and Training is a member of this Working Group.

The NSW State Plan, which has as its primary objective the better delivery of government services to the NSW community, focuses strongly on the imperative to strengthen Aboriginal communities and to ensure that Aboriginal peoples and communities have an equitable share of the growth in the prosperity of NSW.

The NSW Government acknowledges that the many significant barriers limiting Aboriginal people's access to employment opportunities are the responsibility of a

range of government departments and therefore, that these barriers need to be addressed through a coordinated and holistic approach.

Priority F1 of the NSW State Plan: *Improved health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people*, aims to address the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples and communities in a holistic manner across five diverse objectives: safe families; education; environmental health; economic development and building community resilience.

With regard to the economic development objective, the Government's focus is on increasing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, by:

- Establishing, as of 30 June 2008, 12 Job Compact agreements in regional and urban locations (Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Blacktown/Mt Druitt, Campbelltown/Macarthur, Eastern Sydney, Redfern/ Waterloo, Tweed Heads, Illawarra, Dubbo, Newcastle/Hunter, Cobar (Mining)) to generate local employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. These Job Compacts seek to identify how government agencies, the private sector, industry groups, employment services, training providers and Aboriginal communities can work together to overcome local barriers and facilitate greater employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Compacts were developed in a flexible manner so that they relate to location or industry specific circumstances. Signatories made the commitment to take action to improve the participation of Aboriginal people in the local workforce, and to undertake steps to develop and maintain Aboriginal cultural awareness within their organisation. A number of Job Compact signatories also committed to specific actions to support employment related strategies.

Whilst the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs has lead agency responsibility for the economic development objective of Priority F1, the NSW Department of Education and Training is signatory to the Overarching Job Compact Memorandum of Understanding and is working with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other signatories to overcome the barriers restricting Aboriginal people from accessing employment opportunities and to directly assist the employment of Aboriginal people locally.

In particular, the NSW Department of Education and Training has been involved in identifying regional skills shortages and has provided the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs with a comprehensive list of Aboriginal student enrolments in TAFE courses across the state.

The NSW Government is also addressing economic participation and welfare reform through the COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

The focus on economic development in relation to Aboriginal peoples and communities is also relevant to two other NSW State Plan priorities which are led by the NSW Department of Education and Training:

- Priority S5: 'More students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training'. A key strategy of Priority S5 relates to increasing vocational education and training opportunities for Aboriginal students by supporting more Aboriginal students to take up Certificate III courses.
- Priority P7: 'Better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies'. Priority P7 focuses on increasing the number of training courses for Aboriginal students in regional and remote locations as well as offering more apprenticeships and traineeships for Aboriginal people.

The NSW Department of Education and Training's *Corporate Plan 2008-2010* identifies key strategies relating to the improvement of economic opportunities for Aboriginal people. These include:

- offering a broader range of quality education and training options for students in the senior years
- providing more school based apprenticeships and traineeships
- targeting specific population groups for increased participation and implement workforce re-entry initiatives.

Desired outcomes of these strategies include:

- increased training places in regional and rural areas targeting skill shortage occupations
- more people commencing, participating in and completing apprenticeships and traineeships
- increased participation by targeted specific population groups.

The Corporate Plan links with the *NSW State Plan* and the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012*.

Actions within the Strategy which relate to improving economic opportunities for Aboriginal people include:

- increasing access and pathways to participate in education and training to meet skills shortages
- actioning the *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009-2011* to strengthen workforce planning, recruitment, career development, succession planning, professional development and mentoring
- engaging the corporate sector, industry, universities, key agencies and Aboriginal communities to support innovation and flexibility in state-wide, regional and local initiatives
- pursuing partnerships with government agencies, industry, employment providers and Aboriginal organisations to increase employment outcomes
- developing sustainable and productive relationships with Aboriginal communities, business and industry
- working with corporate partners and community organisations to increase the number of scholarships, mentoring and other leadership and participation programs to encourage Aboriginal students to complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training

- facilitating pathways for Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal community members to obtain qualifications through post graduate courses to teach Aboriginal languages
- creating opportunities to enable Aboriginal people to become accredited in Vocational Education and Training delivery
- developing effective programs to assist key transition points such as that from the later years of schooling to further education, training or workplace participation
- ensuring Aboriginal students access, participate in and complete Vocational Education and Training programs in schools
- increasing the number of Aboriginal students participating in and completing pre-vocational courses, traineeships, apprenticeships, cadetships and work placements.

The Strategy and the *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan* link directly to *NSW State Plan* and *Two Ways Together* initiatives and address the imperative of strengthening Aboriginal communities by implementing measures which focus on improving economic opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The NSW Department of Education and Training's actions in working to overcome the multiple disadvantages confronting Aboriginal peoples in NSW and in ensuring the economic strength of Aboriginal communities is reflective of the national Indigenous agenda.

CONCLUSION

While the NSW Department of Education and Training is primarily concerned with education and training imperatives and addressing the education and training needs of Aboriginal students, their families and communities in NSW, this work cannot be done without consideration of issues affecting other key service delivery areas such as juvenile and criminal justice, health, housing, employment and economic development.

As the Department's 2003 Review of Aboriginal Education acknowledged:

"There are well-documented links between investment in education and training and improved returns for individuals and society in terms of economic, health and other social benefits.

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." (p. 13, The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education, 2004)

"Interrelationships between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes are also generally acknowledged in international literature..."

Improvements in education reduce the risk of poverty and its associated negative impacts on health, social status and crime.

Improving economic circumstances through education also improves intergenerational outcomes through the impacts of increasing socioeconomic status on children's education...

The association between education levels and health is well observed in the literature and was summarised by Professor Tony Vinson in his report (2002)⁵ on public education in New South Wales." (p. 14, The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education, 2004)

"There is a close relationship between health and education outcomes for Aboriginal Australian children. Improvements in education outcomes appear to result in improved health outcomes and the converse also applies.

The most significant and undisputed finding of health transitions research is that the education levels of parents, and in particular of mothers, appears to have a powerful effect on reducing infant and child mortality...

There is agreement in the literature that poor health hinders many Aboriginal children's school attendance and restricts their ability to learn. Two health issues are identified in the literature as having the most detrimental effect on the education of Aboriginal children. These are otitis media (inflammation or infection of the middle ear) and poor nutrition...

There is clear evidence of a link between low levels of education and the probability of being involved in crime. Higher levels of education make a person less likely to be involved in risk-taking behaviours such as crime (partially by increasing income and reducing the incentive to commit crime).

Australian and international evidence shows the links between education and crime...

Research by Chapman et al (2002) and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research⁶ shows a very strong positive relationship between criminal activity and the extent of male youth long-term unemployment. They also produce evidence of a negative association between criminal activity and high school completions, and positive associations between criminal activity and unsuccessful senior high school participation...

...it is clear that improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal students would be of significant personal and societal benefit." (pp. 15-16, The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education, 2004)

While the NSW Department of Education and Training is working diligently to improve education and training and, ultimately, life outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in NSW, it recognises that for its actions to be maximised, productive partnerships between it and other key NSW human services and justice

⁵ Vinson, Tony. (2002). *Public Education in NSW: Report of the "Vinson Inquiry"*, NSW Teachers Federation and Pluto Press, Melbourne.

⁶ Chapman, B., Weatherburn, D. et al (2002). "Unemployed Duration, Schooling and Property Crime", *Crime and Justice Bulletin*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research No. 74, December 2002, p. 10.

agencies including community services, health and the juvenile and criminal justice systems must be maintained or established.

Case management of individual offenders must be a priority, particularly on release and, mentoring programs, hand-in-hand with other diversionary and early intervention strategies, must be implemented systemically and across agencies if offending and re-offending rates are to be reduced.

While so much more needs to be done, the NSW Department of Education and Training can demonstrate that it is actively targeting many of its education and training programs to support young Aboriginal people at risk of offending or re-offending.

