

## **Improving the effectiveness of transitioning from education to the workforce**

- 6.1 The positive effect that education has on an individual's economic outcomes, particularly employment and income, has been well established. Results from the 2006 Census show that Indigenous peoples aged 15 years and over with higher levels of schooling were more likely than those with lower levels of school attainment to be in full-time employment.<sup>1</sup>
- 6.2 This report has discussed in earlier chapters the extent to which many areas of Indigenous disadvantage are interrelated. Statistics indicate that Indigenous Australians have higher levels of unemployment compared to non-Indigenous Australians.
- 6.3 More specifically, a large gap is evident in labour force participation rates for people aged 15-64 is evident when comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous rates. In 2006, 57 percent of the Indigenous population in this age group was participating in the labour force compared with 76 percent of the non-Indigenous population. In addition, labour force participation rates for Indigenous peoples declines with remoteness, with a 57percent participation rate in major cities compared with 46 percent in very remote areas.<sup>2</sup>
- 6.4 The data collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that the high offending levels in Indigenous communities correlate with high unemployment rates.

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1 Appendix 2, *A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia*, p. 299.

2 Appendix 2, *A Statistical Overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Australia*, p. 297.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2002 data reveals that Indigenous people who had been charged with an offence were around twice as likely to be unemployed as the rest of the Indigenous population.<sup>3</sup>

- 6.5 The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) was critical of the lack of support available to Indigenous youth transitioning from education to work. In its submission NAAJA commented:

Increased employment opportunities in Aboriginal communities could assist in developing social norms and behaviours that lead to positive social engagement. The lack of genuine employment opportunities for Aboriginal people generally, and young people in particular, is manifest. There are no clear pathways to post-school employment in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities.<sup>4</sup>

- 6.6 This chapter discusses the current Commonwealth and State and Territory Government strategies that are in place to assist Indigenous Australians to transition more effectively from education and training to the workforce. It also examines some of the community enterprises and non-government organisations (NGO) which are working to provide employment opportunities for Indigenous youth. However Indigenous youth face a number of obstacles when transitioning from education to employment and the chapter concludes with a discussion of education needs, work readiness skills, driver licences and the availability of employment in local areas.

## Government initiatives

- 6.7 Through Closing the Gap the Commonwealth Government funds a number of initiatives to assist Indigenous youth to transition into employment. Some transition programs are administered through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) or the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), while others provide funding to local community enterprises to deliver services.

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3 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 1.

4 NAAJA, *submission 15*, p. 6.

## Commonwealth Government and COAG

- 6.8 The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has identified employment as one of its targets for Closing the Gap. The target is to 'Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018.'<sup>5</sup>
- 6.9 The *Prime Ministers Report on Closing the Gap 2011* stated that there was some progress being made in relation to increasing the percentage of Indigenous Australians employed in the 15-64 age group:
- In 2008, 53.8 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged 15-64 were employed compared to 75 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians in the same age group. While this gap is relatively wide there are some positive developments in this field. For example, between 2002 and 2008 the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15-64 with a job rose from 48.2 per cent to 53.8 per cent and the unemployment rate for Indigenous Australians aged 15-64 decreased from 23 per cent to 16.6 per cent.<sup>6</sup>
- 6.10 DEEWR has direct responsibility for four of the six Closing the Gap targets and informed the Committee of the need to increase the number of Indigenous enrolments and commencements with higher education in order to improve the transition of Indigenous people from education to employment.
- Indigenous students are significantly under-represented in higher education and face distinct challenges. The statistics show that despite comprising 2.5 per cent of the total resident Australian population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education students comprised less than one per cent of all enrolments in 2008 and 1 per cent of commencements.<sup>7</sup>
- 6.11 The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions is an intergovernmental agreement that aims to increase participation of young people in education and training, assist young people make a successful transition from school to further education, training or full-time employment, and increase attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications of young people aged 15-24, including Indigenous young people.<sup>8</sup>

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5 FaHCSIA, *submission 79*, p. 7.

6 *Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2011*, p. 17.

7 DEEWR, *submission 63*, pp. 4-5.

8 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 5.

- 6.12 DEEWR is supporting the Commonwealth Government's contribution to the National Partnership through two new programs, Youth Connections and School Business Community Partnership Brokers to be delivered across 113 designated service regions over a four year period.<sup>9</sup>
- 6.13 The Youth Connections program provides an improved safety net for young people who have disengaged from education through the provision of individually tailored case management and support to help young people re-connect with education and training.<sup>10</sup>
- 6.14 The School Business Community Partnerships Brokers objective is to facilitate stakeholder engagement, build community capacity and infrastructure and drive the Commonwealth Government's education reform and social inclusion agendas to improve education and transition outcomes for all young people.<sup>11</sup>
- 6.15 DEEWR commented it was aware that it had to work 'closely with state and territory governments to implement these programs, including reducing overlap and duplication between programs and assistance, and making it easier for young people to access the assistance they need.'<sup>12</sup>
- 6.16 In February 2010 the Commonwealth Government hosted a Business Leaders Forum to share ideas on Indigenous employment strategies. In a media release the Minister for Employment Participation Senator Arbib commented:
- This event provides an excellent forum for business leaders to come together to network, share ideas and knowledge, and show their commitment to increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. Representatives from Indigenous businesses, major banks, top law firms, major retailers, large mining and resource companies, transport organisations and media and communications companies will join government to share their ideas and successes.<sup>13</sup>
- 6.17 DEEWR administers a number of programs that assist Indigenous young people exiting the criminal justice system with initiatives to help maximise employment opportunities. In the Northern Territory, a Job Services

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9 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 5.

10 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 5.

11 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 5.

12 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 6.

13 Ministers' Media Centre, Senator the Hon. Mark Arbib, Media Release, 23 February 2011 <[www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Arbib/Media/Releases/Pages/Article\\_100223\\_110807.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Arbib/Media/Releases/Pages/Article_100223_110807.aspx)> accessed 14 April 2011.

Australia provider works closely with the local high school and also the Alice Springs Correctional Centre. The provider has engaged with local high school principals to identify and work with young people who are either at risk of dropping out of school or leaving school without a further education or employment option.

- 6.18 In addition the provider has engaged with Northern Territory Families and Community Services (FACS) to discuss how together they can provide support to young people returning to Alice Springs after they have served their custodial period in the Don Dale Juvenile Centre in Darwin.<sup>14</sup>
- 6.19 Another initiative administered by DEEWR is the National Green Jobs Core program. DEEWR stated that:
- The Government will invest up to \$82.5 million in National Green Jobs Corps. Commencing on 1 January 2010 and finishing on 31 December 2011, National Green Jobs Corps will offer 10,000 places for unemployed Australians aged 17 to 24 years to gain a combination of environmental work experience, skills development and accredited training. National Green Jobs Corps will help equip young Australians with the skills to fill employment opportunities in emerging green and climate change related industries. The program will provide additional participation opportunities for young people who struggle to engage with and remain in education or training.<sup>15</sup>
- 6.20 DEEWR is responsible for the Innovation Fund Projects. The Innovation Fund is a competitive grants program designed to address the needs of the most disadvantaged job seekers through funding projects that will foster innovative solutions to overcome barriers to employment which these job seekers face.
- 6.21 The objective of the Innovation Fund is to fund innovative place-based solutions to address barriers to employment for groups of the most disadvantaged job seekers. Round One of the Innovation Fund has two projects which are directed specifically at ex-offenders, while Round Two of the Innovation Fund has one project directed at ex-offenders.<sup>16</sup>
- 6.22 Remote Service Delivery National Partnership is supported by FaHCSIA. One of the five aims of the Partnership is to 'increase economic and social

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14 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 7.

15 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 9.

16 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 9.

participation wherever possible, and promote personal responsibility, engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.<sup>17</sup>

- 6.23 FaHCSIA supports the Infrastructure and Youth Programs in Central Australia. This component aims to provide learning and recreational activities and infrastructure to support young people, while building community capacity through training and employment opportunities. Approximately \$6.5 million was spent on 15 projects across communities in the Northern Territory over 2008-09.<sup>18</sup>

## State and Territory governments

- 6.24 The Committee received submissions from a majority of state and territory governments that outlined policy and program initiatives that aim to improve the effectiveness of arrangements for transitioning from education to work.

### Queensland

- 6.25 In 2006 the Queensland Government introduced a 'compulsory participation' requirement meaning that all young people must participate in 'learning or earning':
- for two years after they complete compulsory schooling (i.e. completed year 10 or turned 16 years of age) or
  - until they turn 17 years of age or
  - until they complete a Queensland Certificate of Education (or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement), Senior Statement or a Certificate III or IV vocational qualification.
- 6.26 These changes are based on national and international evidence that young people who complete 12 years of education have greater opportunities for further education and sustainable employment. Queensland Government agencies have also implemented several initiatives to address barriers to access and improve outcomes for young people, including Indigenous young people, transitioning from education to work. Programs operate to address specific educational need of Indigenous young people depending on the needs of the region. Examples of programs are provided below:

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17 FaHCSIA, *submission 79*, p. 11.

18 FaHCSIA, *submission 79*, p. 18.

- The Taking Big Steps program is a culturally specific and inclusive transition program developed primarily for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in North Queensland which seeks to increase young people's awareness and understanding of issues associated with moving from a rural and remote community to regional or urban areas for secondary education.
- Student learning pathways, which include vocational education and training, school-based apprenticeships, traineeships and work-readiness programs.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Toward Employment Scholarship Scheme which encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete Years 10, 11 and 12 or alternate school-based training and provide scholarship recipients with financial support for expenses related to education and training.
- The Get Set for Work Project to address young people's learning needs for those who leave or are at risk of leaving school early.
- Western Cape College Work-Readiness Program to help Indigenous students prepare for an employment pathway through hands-on activities that utilise skills in the areas of building and construction, landscaping and maintenance and hospitality.
- The Palm Island Senior Phase Program which provides a vocationally oriented curriculum, focusing particularly on literacy and numeracy, for the young people of Palm Island.
- The Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts provides training to aspiring Indigenous performing artists and assists them in establishing their careers.
- Indigenous Vocational Education and Training Initiatives which have funded two Indigenous registered training organisations to provide training in the areas of alcohol (and other addictions) management, community services and community development.
- The Justice Entry Program which provides pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members wishing to pursue careers in the criminal justice system.<sup>19</sup>

6.27 The recently released Queensland Government's *Positive Dreaming, Solid Futures - Indigenous Employment and Training Strategy 2008-2011*, provides a new framework for the delivery of employment and training services to

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19 Queensland Government, *submission 91*, p. 14.

Indigenous people in the state. The strategy is designed to address a number of priorities aimed at improving outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders in the area of vocational education and training.

## **New South Wales**

- 6.28 The New South Wales Government submission outlined what the state was doing to support economic development and employment for Indigenous Australians. Its comments were prefaced with statistics showing that New South Wales has the highest number of Indigenous Australians out of all the states and territories.
- 6.29 While approximately 32 percent of the New South Wales Aboriginal population lives in Sydney, it is clear that many New South Wales regional towns are experiencing significant immigration of Aboriginal people (Taree, Armidale, Lithgow, Griffith, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Broken Hill particularly) drawn mainly from western and northern areas of New South Wales.
- 6.30 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.
- 6.31 Addressing Aboriginal economic development is one of the seven priority areas identified under the New South Wales Aboriginal Affairs Plan, Two Ways Together and New South Wales agencies are developing a New South Wales Aboriginal Economic Development Policy.<sup>20</sup>
- 6.32 The New South Wales Department of Education and Training's has identified 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, and
  - targeting specific population groups for increased participation and implement workforce re-entry initiatives.<sup>21</sup>

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20 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, p. 24.

21 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, p. 26.



## Victoria

- 6.33 The Victorian Koori Early School leavers and Youth Employment program aims to divert young Aboriginal people from the Youth Justice System. It addresses the key risk factors for young offenders, focussing on the lack of engagement in school or other learning opportunities. This program aims to divert young Koories aged 10-20 from the youth justice system once they have entered it, by supporting and re engaging young Koori people into vocational education or employment.<sup>22</sup>
- 6.34 The Frontline Youth Initiatives Grant Program aims to engage Koori children and youth at risk of contact with the criminal justice system in socially and physically healthy alternatives to offending. Projects considered for funding under Frontline are primarily community based initiatives that promote healthy and pro-social lifestyles for children and youth, thereby reducing contact with the criminal justice system.
- 6.35 Since inception approximately 670 young Koories have been involved in the Frontline program, with more than 1,000 community members involved in associated activities. A 2008 survey sample of 283 participants engaged in nine projects indicated that Frontline delivered positive impacts for participants, including:
- one in four returned to education or training programs
  - eight per cent secured new ongoing employment
  - of 31 young people with prior negative contact with the criminal justice system, only five had further contact, and
  - none of the 'at-risk' youth participants had negative contact with the criminal justice system during their engagement with Frontline projects.<sup>23</sup>

## Western Australia

- 6.36 At the time of the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health (WAACH) Survey, school attendance in Western Australia was compulsory through to the end of the school year in which children turned 15 years of age. The school leaving age in Western Australia has since changed and young people are now required to be engaged in school, employment,

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22 Department of Attorney-General, Victoria, *submission 75*, p. 3.

23 Department of Attorney-General, Victoria, *submission 75*, p. 5.

apprenticeships or traineeships, or another approved option until the end of the year they turn 17.<sup>24</sup>

- 6.37 The Western Australia Aboriginal School Based Training (ASBT) Program provides Aboriginal students in Years 10-12 with opportunities to start training in school to access practical work experience, gain a qualification, and go on to further education, training or employment. Certificate I preparatory programs are followed by an assessment of students' work readiness at the end of Year 10.
- 6.38 Students are then offered school-based traineeships or apprenticeships, or full-time traineeships or apprenticeships. Group training organisations are contracted to coordinate Year 10 Certificate 1 programs, employ students entering into apprenticeships or traineeships, and arrange mentoring and other support for the participants.<sup>25</sup>

## South Australia

- 6.39 Within South Australia's Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), the Aboriginal Education and Employment Services has taken the lead role in developing an integrated pathways program that links DECS secondary transition programs to Aboriginal specific projects to support post secondary training, higher education and pathways leading to employment. The work plan identifies a special project trial during 2009 in Port Augusta and the Northern Suburbs of Adelaide centred on a model known as the 'WORKABOUT Centre'.
- 6.40 The Centre aims to engage Aboriginal community in educational and employment pathways, building relationships between education, industry, organisations, and Aboriginal communities to create a culture of sustainable employment and retention in the work force. The Centre implements mentoring, counselling, tutoring and work-readiness strategies that provides intensive culturally inclusive support to Aboriginal young people from the commencement of secondary schooling into post school pathways.
- 6.41 'Playing the Job Game' is an Aboriginal secondary education work-readiness program, which develops individual skill sets and career aspirations for Aboriginal secondary students focusing on local economic development and industry skill shortage areas.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Department of Education Western Australia, *submission 81*, p. 7.

25 Department of Education Western Australia, *submission 81*, p. 8.

26 South Australian Government, *submission 82*, pp. 9-10.

## Tasmania

- 6.42 The Tasmanian Government's submission outlines a project that is part of the Youth at Risk Strategy. Project U-Turn is a diversionary program for young people aged 15-20 years with a history of motor vehicle theft, or who are at risk of becoming involved in motor vehicle theft. The core component of the program is a structured ten-week automotive training course in car maintenance and body work, delivered in a workshop environment. Other components of the program include: case management and personal development; links to employment and further education; recreational activities; literacy and numeracy education; road safety education and post-course support. Project U-turn is not specifically for Indigenous young offenders, however a number of participants report Aboriginality.<sup>27</sup>
- 6.43 The Justice Mentoring Service is a pre and post release program that aims to assist Aboriginal prisoners with their reintegration. Mentors typically begin working with participants around their housing, employment and general support needs three months before their release and this continues for six months post release.<sup>28</sup>

## Northern Territory

- 6.44 The Department of Education and Training (DET) offers VET (Vocational Education and Training) in The Middle program to middle year students, to provide entry into Certificate 1 Qualifications.
- 6.45 DET offers the Get VET get a future program, to provide training from Certificate 1 to Certificate 3 qualifications to students in Urban, Remote and Regional areas. In 2010 DET expanded the successful Work Ready program to three remote communities. DET coordinate a cross-sectoral team of industry engagement and participation officers and managers to facilitate work placement for students in all Territory schools.<sup>29</sup>
- 6.46 The Northern Territory Government also supports TRY (training for remote youth) whereby funding applications are sought from communities for specific programs for disengaged youth. The program funds both accredited and non-accredited training.
- 6.47 FRF (flexible response funding) applications are sought from communities for specific programs. The program funds both accredited and non-

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27 Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania, *submission 90*, p. 8.

28 Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania, *submission 90*, p. 10.

29 Department of Education, Northern Territory, *submission 104*, p. 1.

accredited training. Pre Employment/Pre-apprenticeship program. This training is specifically targeted at direct employment pathways. The program funds both accredited and non-accredited training.<sup>30</sup>

## Local and NGO employment initiatives

- 6.48 The connection between unemployment and a heightened risk of offending is well established and the real challenge is to work out how to make employment opportunities accessible to Indigenous Australians.
- 6.49 The Committee received evidence from several witnesses who either had innovative solutions in place or were in the process of developing Indigenous run businesses that would provide positive employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.
- 6.50 A Tasmanian example of successful local employment initiative is the meenah mienne (which means 'my dream') mentoring program which builds supportive local networks by fostering mentoring relationships between disadvantaged young Aboriginal people, who are already - or are at high risk of being - in juvenile detention, and Aboriginal mentors and cultural practitioners in Northern Tasmania. The project is part funded by FaHCSIA under an agreement between two tiers of government and the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.
- 6.51 The program offers young Indigenous people opportunities to reconnect and engage with members of their community as well as offering the chance to 'discover alternative pathways into education and employment.'<sup>31</sup>
- 6.52 The meenah mienne submission stated that the preliminary results of this approach have been encouraging. Since becoming operational less than a year ago, three young Aboriginal 'buddies' have pursued employment and further educational opportunities. Further, more than 20 young Aboriginal people referred from local schools (high-risk students) and the Ashley Youth Detention Centre are voluntarily and actively participating in the program.<sup>32</sup>
- 6.53 Demand for the meenah mienne mentoring program from high risk juvenile Aboriginals has far outstripped mentor capacity at this early stage

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30 Department of Education, Northern Territory, *submission 104*, p. 2.

31 FaHCSIA, *submission 79*, p. 20.

32 Meenah Mienne, *submission 16*, p. 2.

in the program. The meenah mienne submission stated that 'Additional mentors are currently being trained.'<sup>33</sup>

- 6.54 The Youth Justice Aboriginal Advisory Committee, South Australia, also supported the contribution that Aboriginal mentors can play in addressing and supporting complex needs within families. This can also provide business and employment opportunities for Indigenous people.

We have an example, which is the MAYFS Taikurtinna Maltorendi program, a holistic family case management service; prioritising the employment of Aboriginal mentors for one-on-one support for young people, and also family mentors.<sup>34</sup>

- 6.55 The Inala Men's Shed program being run by the Queensland Police Service is a 'mentoring program that aims to link young people with a group of volunteer men who are retired tradespeople who can act as role models around life and work skills.'<sup>35</sup>
- 6.56 Banbai Business Enterprises (BBE) management of the Wattleridge<sup>36</sup> Indigenous Protected Area is an example of how local land management can generate employment and provide economic independence.
- 6.57 The Wattleridge Indigenous Protected Area has at least 15 rare or endangered plant species and 12 rare or threatened fauna. It is managed by the traditional owners, who are undertaking major pest management and fire management strategies, and managing the cultural heritage sites on it. The community is also developing a native plant propagation nursery, training people in horticulture, and establishing seed banks and restoring degraded land through revegetation.<sup>37</sup>
- 6.58 The owners of Wattleridge are aiming to make the property educationally and financially viable, and are developing small businesses to help promote culturally significant employment and generate additional funds for conservation. They are upgrading cabins, building walking tracks, viewing platforms, and developing interpretation signage to foster eco-

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33 Meenah Mienne, *submission 16*, p. 5.

34 Sharen Letton, Youth Justice Aboriginal Advisory Committee, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 20 May 2010, p. 4.

35 Queensland Police Service, *exhibit 24*, p. 1.

36 Wattleridge is a botanically diverse bushland with high biodiversity values on outcropping granite country on the New South Wales Northern Tablelands near the small town of Guyra (between Armidale and Glen Innes).

37 Janet Hunt, *submission 22*, p. 2.

tourism. They plan for this tourism venture to grow and provide income, employment and further infrastructure development.<sup>38</sup>

- 6.59 The Guyra Central School allows two of its Aboriginal students, one in Year 11 and the other in Year 9, to spend time each week with BBE doing the Conservation and Land Management Certificate IV course as an incentive to stay at school and complete Year 12 and Year 10 respectively. This cooperative approach between school, TAFE and community enterprise is having multiple benefits for the area.
- 6.60 As a result of Banbai Business Enterprises:
- ... crime rates have dropped, drug and alcohol use has reduced and young people "at risk" are being given opportunities to contribute, learn and gain longer-term opportunities for further education or employment.<sup>39</sup>
- 6.61 A review of the people who have worked with Banbai Business Enterprises since its inception reveals that the organisation has employed 43 people over the ten year period. Only one was non-Indigenous.<sup>40</sup>
- 6.62 Another example of a successful employment initiative is Aboriginal Connections (AC) which was created as an independent company in 2003, wholly owned by Guri Wa Ngundagar Aboriginal Corporation (GWNAC). AC is a registered business in New South Wales and is overseen by a Board of Directors. Two of the three board members are Indigenous Australians and of the 47 employees, 76% are Indigenous.
- 6.63 AC has operated for the past six years specialising in the construction of public housing, schools and other state and federal government capital works projects. AC also builds for the private sector market. The company is strongly focused on providing training and employment for Indigenous Australians. AC's mission is to unite effective quality training outcomes with the construction of quality housing for both the Indigenous and mainstream building markets. AC is currently looking at expanding its operations in order to create new employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians in New South Wales.<sup>41</sup>
- 6.64 The Committee heard from three organisations who called themselves the Partners and have significant experience in working with young Indigenous offenders. The Partners have agreed to collaborate and offer a

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38 Janet Hunt, *submission 22*, p. 3.

39 Janet Hunt, *submission 22*, p. 2.

40 Janet Hunt, *submission 22*, p. 3.

41 Aboriginal Connections, *submission 49*, p. 3.

potential solution to the growing issue of Indigenous people remaining in the criminal justice system. Ultimately, the aim of the program would be to demonstrate that there are better ways forward in life that individuals are capable of achieving, and that there are career opportunities available to them.<sup>42</sup>

- 6.65 Under the program, the Partners would recruit and train eligible young Indigenous offenders to undertake contact centre work on behalf of participating business-to-business (B2B) clients while serving their prison or detention term, with a view to offering them permanent employment and a structured career path upon their release.<sup>43</sup>
- 6.66 The Partners believe their 'proposed initiatives will significantly grow employment opportunities to reduce young Indigenous people's involvement with the criminal justice system; and support the diversion of these Indigenous people from re-offending'.<sup>44</sup>
- 6.67 Training and employment programs were discussed at a public hearing in Fitzroy Crossing that focussed on jobs in the Kimberly region. One example was provided in relation to a junior ranger program:
- ... we work with young people and then we work with our sister organisation, the Kimberley Land Council, and try to get those young people employed in productive work such as Indigenous ranger employment. So we have the two-week program that we run and then, looking at that longer term relationship, our ongoing intervention into that young person's life. We have done that for eight or nine years.<sup>45</sup>
- 6.68 The Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) informed the Committee about the Central Land Council Ranger program which provides employment opportunities for local Indigenous people. Ranger programs use traditional and modern land management practices to restore and protect important ecosystems. CAYLUS highlighted the fact that this type of work is often suited to Indigenous people living in remote areas as the 'work undertaken by Rangers involves living and working in Indigenous areas, and understanding local ecological and environmental factors.'<sup>46</sup> Recently, CAYLUS assisted the Central Land Council in

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42 Execlior, Message Stick, Nallawilli, *submission 70*, p. 3.

43 Execlior, Message Stick, Nallawilli, *submission 70*, p. 3.

44 Execlior, Message Stick, Nallawilli, *submission 70*, p. 3.

45 Wes Morris, Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 30 March 2010, p. 61.

46 Central Australian Youth Link-Up Services, *submission 27*, p. 8.

community negotiations to implement a ranger program in the Papunya community in 2010.<sup>47</sup>

- 6.69 The Central Land Council (CLC) received \$5.1 million from the Aboriginals Benefit Account<sup>48</sup> to improve and expand an Aboriginal ranger program which has successfully developed and established ranger groups in seven remote locations across Central Australia over the past five years.
- 6.70 The success of this ranger program has generated further employment opportunities as the CLC ranger groups have also undertaken contracts with the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service and the mining industry for work including track maintenance, fencing and camp-ground development.<sup>49</sup>

### Committee comment

- 6.71 The Committee is encouraged by the recognition throughout Australia of the value of mentoring programs for Indigenous people. Mentoring programs are proving to be an effective way of facilitating change. The Committee believes that Indigenous mentors will provide part of the solution to improving both education and employment outcomes for Indigenous people.
- 6.72 The evidence regarding the Indigenous employment initiatives that the Committee received was encouraging. The success of these local enterprises demonstrates the commitment of individuals and communities often working at the local level and able to achieve positive change for Indigenous youth.
- 6.73 The Committee was impressed with the successful education and employment outcomes of the Banbai Enterprises as it encouraged Indigenous students to stay in education for longer and it developed Indigenous employment in a regional part of Australia. The Committee recognises the hard work and leadership undertaken by Banbai

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47 Central Australian Youth Link-Up Services, *submission 27*, p. 9.

48 ABA grants are awarded to projects to open up new opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory by providing the funding essential to getting new initiatives off the ground and backing established ventures to expand and develop. The ABA receives financial compensation from the Australian Government equal to the value of the royalties generated from mining on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. It was established under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

49 The Hon. Jenny Macklin and the Hon. Warren Snowdon, joint media release, 2 July 2010, <[www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/central\\_oz\\_5mboost\\_2july2010.aspx](http://www.jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/pages/central_oz_5mboost_2july2010.aspx)> accessed 31 May 2011.



Enterprises to make this work by developing partnerships with the local school and TAFE.

- 6.74 The Committee encourages all new and developing Indigenous initiatives that support employment opportunities for Indigenous youth to develop strong partnerships with stakeholders in order to provide the additional support that will be required to achieve success.
- 6.75 Indigenous Ranger programs are another successful employment example of local employment initiatives that capitalise on Indigenous cultural knowledge. Often these programs are carried out in regional and remote areas, where employment opportunities are limited. The Committee was encouraged to learn that the Central Land Councils Ranger Program had lead to further employment opportunities with the Northern Territory Government.
- 6.76 The Committee notes that the Commonwealth Government have funded \$245.5 million until 2013 for the Working on Country program with the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water Population and Communities. Working on Country supports the Indigenous ranger programs.

## **Obstacles to employment**

- 6.77 While there is substantial investment from Commonwealth and State and Territory governments in employment and transition to employment programs, Indigenous workforce participation rates remain low. There remain substantial obstacles to placing Indigenous youth in employment, and to assisting them to retain jobs in the long term.
- 6.78 The following section examines some of these significant obstacles, such as educational attainment, work readiness skills, holding a driver licence, and the availability of types of employment.

## **Education**

- 6.79 Statistically Indigenous Australians have lower education attainment levels than non-Indigenous Australians. The correlation between education and employment is well understood demonstrating that the higher the level of education achieved by an individual the more likely they are to obtain employment.

- 6.80 The Committee received substantial evidence that low educational attainment is an obstacle to gaining employment. The need to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians was discussed in chapter 5 of this report.
- 6.81 While the participation rates of Indigenous people in the labour force have demonstrated a gradual increase over the past twenty years, the rates remain well below the non-Indigenous participation rates.

### **Apprenticeships and Traineeships**

- 6.82 The Committee was advised that Apprenticeships and Traineeship Programs specifically targeted to Indigenous youth are being delivered by most states and territories around Australia. Some of these apprenticeship programs are school based which has proven successful in keeping young people engaged in school whilst at the same time teaching young people a trade under the guidance of an apprenticeship program.
- 6.83 Project Murra is funded by the Commonwealth Government and is being conducted in the Illawarra region of New South Wales. It encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth who are entering the last two years of secondary school to enter a traineeship which, when successfully completed, offers them the chance of employment in either the New South Wales Police Service or the New South Wales Ambulance Service.
- 6.84 The Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ ACT highlighted Project Murra as an example of a successful Indigenous apprenticeship and training program, and also an important partnership between the police and the Indigenous community.
- The program is expressly about ‘school retention, keeping Aboriginal students at school to complete their HSC, it’s about careers, it’s about helping Aboriginal students move from school into a career and it’s also about building linkages between the police and the Aboriginal community.’<sup>50</sup>
- 6.85 The tangible benefits of such a program are many and the intangible benefits, such as improved self-esteem, connections established in the workforce and the work experience itself, are equally important:
- At the completion of the traineeship students will have gained a Higher School Certificate, a University Academic Index needed to gain entry to university, and a Certificate three in vocational and study pathways from TAFE NSW. They will also have obtained

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50 Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ ACT, *submission 66*, pp. 14-15.

one hundred days paid employment with the NSW Police Service over the two year period.<sup>51</sup>

- 6.86 There are a number of other states and territories programs aimed at increased school retention rates for Indigenous youth, and providing practical employment skills. The New South Wales Department of Education and Training have identified key strategies relating to the improvement of economic opportunities for Aboriginal people including providing more school based apprenticeships and traineeships.<sup>52</sup> The New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) also indicated that further support was required to improve retention outcomes for these Indigenous Apprenticeship and Training Programs. The New South Wales BVET supported The Way Ahead program involving 27 Aboriginal mentors who support Aboriginal trainees and apprentices throughout New South Wales.<sup>53</sup>
- 6.87 The Western Australian DET have The Aboriginal School Based Training (ASBT) Program that provides Aboriginal students in Years 10-12 with opportunities to start training in school to access practical work experience, gain a qualification, and go on to further education, training or employment.<sup>54</sup>
- 6.88 The Commonwealth Government also has an Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP) which supports Indigenous young people, aged 16-24 primarily from remote areas, who wish to relocate to one of seventeen IYMP host locations to undertake postsecondary education and training options to gain the qualifications needed for sustainable employment, in their home community or elsewhere. IYMP provides safe and supported accommodation, mentoring and other practical support to help young Indigenous people access and complete university or vocational education and training, including apprenticeships.<sup>55</sup>
- 6.89 The Committee notes the value of apprenticeships as a mechanism to assist transition youth from education to employment and to provide entry to the workforce in an environment that incorporates mentoring as well as work training. Many states and territories provide school-based apprenticeships and training programs in order to facilitate the transition from education into work for Indigenous young people.

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51 Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, *submission 66*, p. 14.

52 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, p. 26.

53 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, pp. 23-24.

54 Western Australia Department of Education and Training, *submission 89*, p. 9.

55 DEEWR, *submission 63*, p. 8.

- 6.90 The Commonwealth Government funds the Australian Apprenticeships Access Program that provides vulnerable job seekers who experience barriers to entering skilled employment with nationally recognised pre-vocational training, support and assistance. The Access Program is delivered locally by brokers and providers who work closely with employers to deliver training that meets industry needs. The program is provided at no cost to participants and assists them to find and keep an Australian apprenticeship, or to enter employment or further education or training.<sup>56</sup>
- 6.91 To be eligible to participate in the Access Program, a person must be a registered job seeker who meets a number of conditions, including being an early school leaver, a person with a disability or a sole parent. While the program is not specifically aimed at young Indigenous people, an additional eligibility requirement is the referral of a person to the program by a Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) officer.
- 6.92 As part of the Australian Apprenticeships scheme, DEEWR also provides a *Making Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships your business resource kit*. The resource kit has:
- been designed to provide a range of practical resources to assist Indigenous employment and training service providers in improving access of Indigenous people to Australian Apprenticeships. It is also relevant to service providers who support Indigenous Australians in other employment and training situations.<sup>57</sup>
- 6.93 The kit provides extensive information to potential employers about a range of matters, including the importance of developing cultural awareness, engaging with Indigenous communities through networking and partnerships, and the value of mentoring Indigenous trainees to enhance retention.

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56 DEEWR, *Apprenticeships Access Program*  
[www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/PreVoc/AAAP/Pages/default.aspx) accessed 5 May 2011.

57 Employment and Training Outcomes Pty Ltd, *Making Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships your business*  
[www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/documents/IndigenousAABusinessKit.pdf](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/documents/IndigenousAABusinessKit.pdf)  
 accessed 6 May 2011.

## Committee comment

- 6.94 The Committee is encouraged by the current focus that states have on school-based apprenticeships and training and encourages the continuation of funding for these programs into the future. However the Committee urges more collaboration between schools, TAFE and industry to engage Indigenous youth in apprenticeships and training in order to assist with a smoother transition from education into work.
- 6.95 The Committee sees value in the Australian Apprenticeships Access Program as it provides vulnerable job seekers with additional training and support, but is disappointed that the program lacks a focus on engaging with young Indigenous people. The Committee recommends that the Australian Apprenticeship Access Program should provide specialised assistance for Indigenous youth seeking an apprenticeship, and specialised financial incentives for potential employers. The Committee notes that additional financial incentives are currently provided to employers who take an adult apprentices or apprentices with a disability.
- 6.96 Additionally, the Committee recommends DEEWR stipulate that successful bidding for Access Program contracts is dependent on businesses being able to demonstrate the ability to provide culturally appropriate support for Indigenous job seekers.
- 6.97 The Committee is encouraged by the *Making Indigenous Australian Apprenticeships your business resource kit* as it provides information to potential employers about how they can develop culturally appropriate support for Indigenous apprentices. However the Committee is concerned that the kit will have little impact, unless accompanied by specific financial incentives for taking on Indigenous apprentices.
- 6.98 The Committee notes the commitment in the 2011-12 Australian Government Budget to improve the effectiveness of apprenticeships, through a National Trade Cadetship available to school students and mentoring assistance for eligible apprentices.<sup>58</sup> This mentoring support is important to ensure apprentices stay motivated to complete their training, and can deal with the challenges of transitioning into the workforce. Further funding has been allocated to maintain the Apprenticeships Access Program.<sup>59</sup>

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58 *Building Australia's Future Workforce: trained up and ready for work* Australian Government Budget 2011-2011, pp. 14-15.

59 *Building Australia's Future Workforce: trained up and ready for work* Australian Government Budget 2011-2011, p. 17.

- 6.99 The Committee considers these initiatives will be of particular benefit to Indigenous apprentices, provided the mentors are appropriately selected and trained. However, greater early assistance is needed to increase the uptake of apprenticeships by Indigenous students, and the uptake of Indigenous apprentices by employers.

### **Recommendation 20 - Apprenticeships**

- 6.100 **The Committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations provide greater assistance and incentives to increase the uptake of Indigenous apprentices through:**
- **providing specific financial incentives for employers to take on Indigenous apprentices**
  - **including Indigeneity as one of the eligibility criteria for the Australian Apprenticeship Access Program, and**
  - **ensuring that the Australian Apprenticeship Access Program contract providers are able to demonstrate the ability to provide culturally appropriate support and successful outcomes for Indigenous job seekers.**
- 6.101 The Committee supports the suggestion of funding Aboriginal specific positions within job service agencies throughout Australia. The Committee believes there is value in qualified Indigenous people working for job service providers to engage with schools and promote apprenticeships and employment opportunities for Indigenous students.
- 6.102 The Committee agrees that extra support is required for some Indigenous students to transition into work. Initiatives such as the promotion of school based apprenticeships and traineeships are important and can assist with the transition from education to work by inspiring, engaging and connecting Indigenous students with the workforce before they leave school.

### **Work readiness and practical training**

- 6.103 Work readiness programs assist people to prepare for employment. This may include accessing birth certificates, tax file numbers and setting up bank accounts. It may include mentoring in workplace standards and expectations, and social skills. In Indigenous communities, work readiness

programs can be particularly beneficial for youth who are not familiar with the workforce and who have not had family members engaged with the workforce.

- 6.104 The Youth Drug and Alcohol Court, New South Wales, highlighted the importance of providing work readiness support for Indigenous people trying to find work or re-engage with the education system. In its submission it commented:

It is quite often the case that Aboriginal young people involved in the criminal justice system come from an entrenched background of reliance on welfare. Telling a young person to 'get a job' is pointless when it's a foreign concept. By actually having an individual caseworker who can help the young person look for work, take them to the interview, explain to them the basics of having a tax file number and bank account details can make an enormous amount of difference. The caseworker also gives them the support if any problems should arise with the employer.<sup>60</sup>

- 6.105 The Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians referred to the need for practical supports, including employment skills, to assist Indigenous youth in their transition from detention to the community.

Therapeutic supports such as interpersonal skills and counselling programs and multi-systemic interventions are considered the most effective ways of reducing the risk of reoffending among chronic young offenders, yet findings from the Queensland Commission's research show that Indigenous young people are more likely to view practical supports (for example, employment and training, sporting activities and mentoring) as helpful in their transition to the community than therapeutic supports (for example, counselling and drug and alcohol support). This finding suggests that Indigenous young people may engage in therapeutic post-release programs more readily if those programs also include a significant practical component such as sporting, employment and training programs and mentorship activities.<sup>61</sup>

- 6.106 The Courts Administration Authority (CAA), South Australia supported the need for practical training that leads to employment opportunities.

... it is evident to the CAA through the experience of dealing with young defendants in the Youth Court and in the juvenile detention

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60 Youth Drug and Alcohol Court, New South Wales, *submission 2*, p. 2.

61 Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians, *submission 59*, p. 23.

centres, that there is a real need for these young people to receive practical training that leads directly to employment and/or apprenticeships such as welding, brick-laying, forklift driving. The benefits of acquiring trade skills leading to employment, a stable income and lifestyle, greater self esteem and social inclusion, are self evident.<sup>62</sup>

- 6.107 The Committee notes that many of the local and NGO employment initiatives discussed earlier in this chapter include a strong focus on mentoring and providing practical experience in developing work routines and appropriate workplace behaviours.
- 6.108 While a number of organisations and businesses do conduct work readiness or employment transition type programs, BoysTown and Rio Tinto have been particularly successful in their community initiatives to assist Indigenous youth secure employment.

## BoysTown

- 6.109 BoysTown discussed the success they are experiencing using the social enterprises model that is assisting Indigenous young people to develop the skills required to transition into long term employment. The BoysTown submission urges the Government to consider expanding social enterprise programs to assist Indigenous youth to gain employment in a supported environment.

In our submission we have highlighted the success we are experiencing with social enterprises, which is an intermediate labour market strategy that we believe is effective in assisting Indigenous young people to transition to employment. In terms of Indigenous youth unemployment, figures that we access show that in 2008 about 22.5 per cent of Indigenous young people were unemployed compared to 10.2 per cent for all youth and six per cent for all-age unemployment.

Those figures indicate that there is a considerable need to expand social enterprise-type programs and intermediate labour market programs in general through partnerships of government-corporate organisations to make these programs more accessible to Indigenous young people.<sup>63</sup>

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62 Courts Administration Authority, *submission* 69, p. 3.

63 John Dalgleish, Boystown, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, pp. 65-66.



- 6.110 BoysTown explained that this social enterprise model is based on an emerging trend in the UK and Europe. The model aims to provide long term unemployed and marginalised people with a transitional period of paid employment in a genuine work environment, combined with supervision, coaching and mentoring to assist them in making a successful transition to the mainstream labour market.<sup>64</sup>
- 6.111 BoysTown described to the Committee the biggest obstacle that arises for a number of employment programs is that the programs are often not long enough to facilitate positive change.
- So the issue in dealing with young people is that you have these time-limited programs where we know that to get the change to prepare a young person who has had a range of abusive experiences for open employment takes much longer than what these programs are funded to do.<sup>65</sup>
- 6.112 By being a Job Services Australia provider, BoysTown is able to get the Job Services placement officers to meet with young people as soon as they come into the programs and work with them to get an understanding of what the young person is like and then move them into their own sustainable employment.<sup>66</sup>
- 6.113 BoysTown commented that 'that the government should really be a collaborative partner with the sector and with the community in terms of researching and evaluating initiatives that may have an impact, because there is no one answer.'<sup>67</sup>

## Rio Tinto

- 6.114 Rio Tinto Iron Ore (Rio Tinto) outlined to the Committee the work readiness programs it runs in the Pilbara in Western Australia. Rio Tinto commented that :

Work readiness programs have been run or supported since 2008 in several Pilbara communities including Paraburdoo, Tom Price, Nullagine, Onslow, Roebourne, Karratha and South Hedland. Programs are also run in Broome / Dampier Peninsula. Last year programs were run or supported in Karratha, Roebourne, Tom

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64 Boystown, *submission 6*, p. 10.

65 John Dalgleish, Boystown, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 68.

66 John Dalgleish, Boystown, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 70.

67 John Dalgleish, Boystown, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 76.

Price, Broome / Dampier Peninsula and Perth. This year the list includes Carnarvon.<sup>68</sup>

6.115 Rio Tinto explained that '[t]he work readiness programs are usually run in collaboration with the Pilbara (or other) TAFE, as well as other stakeholders such as potential employers, Job Service Providers and CDEP or organisations acting on their behalf.'<sup>69</sup> They typically last for three to four months, and are conducted once or twice per year at a particular location. They are designed to equip unemployed Aboriginal people with a set of basic vocational skills, life coping skills, and workplace coping skills.

6.116 Rio Tinto considers it important to mentor the people enrolled in its Work Readiness Program and, in parallel with the coursework, teach workplace and life coping skills.

... I am talking about issues like driving licences, overcoming drug and alcohol problems, teamwork, giving people the opportunity to develop their self-esteem, and basic financial management and financial planning.<sup>70</sup>

6.117 Where possible Rio Tinto feeds the work readiness program graduates into so-called "Rotation" programs that run at some of the operational sites. The programs at Dampier and Cape Lambert are the most developed. Work readiness program graduates are taken into these programs on a probationary 6 month contract. This provides them with the opportunity to work in a number of entry level roles in order to build up work experience and develop the related coping skills. It gives them time to get an understanding of potential longer term career opportunities in the mining industry and decide whether they want to continue working for Rio Tinto in the long term.<sup>71</sup>

6.118 Rio Tinto commented on the success of its work readiness programs:

Approximately 210 work readiness program trainees have graduated (or exited work readiness programs early to take up employment) and 150 have entered employment.<sup>72</sup>

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68 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, p. 1.

69 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, pp. 1-2.

70 Andrew Burrow, Rio Tinto, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 30 March 2010, p. 63.

71 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, pp. 1-2.

72 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, p. 2.

## Driver licences

- 6.119 Failure to meet minimum driver licence requirements of potential employers was the most significant contributor to work readiness program graduates not getting employed, particularly in the early years.<sup>73</sup> This suggests that the lack of a driver license, or an accumulation of fines relating to driving without a licence, is a significant obstacle for Indigenous youth when seeking employment.
- 6.120 For many Indigenous people in remote or regional areas, a number of factors make obtaining a driver's licence a difficult process. These factors include lower levels of literacy, unpaid fines, limited access to driving mentors, and limited road and transport infrastructure.
- 6.121 In general, literacy levels for Indigenous people decrease as remoteness increases. The percentage of Year 9 Indigenous students in very remote locations who do not achieve the national minimum reading standard ranges from 61.2 percent in Queensland to 88.3 percent in the Northern Territory.<sup>74</sup> Norman Clarke, of the Queensland Indigenous Licensing Program, told the Committee that due to literacy and numeracy issues, some of his Indigenous clients 'cannot understand the test paper when they do it'.<sup>75</sup>
- 6.122 To obtain a learner driver's licence, individuals need to demonstrate a sufficient understanding of the road rules, which is gained usually by reading the road user's handbook relevant to their jurisdiction. A number of jurisdictions make the handbook available in languages other than English to assist people from non-English speaking backgrounds. To date however, no jurisdiction has developed a road user's handbook in an Indigenous language.
- 6.123 In Western Australia, individuals seeking to obtain a learner driver's licence who may have difficulties reading English are able to listen to audio recordings of the Handbook for Western Australian Road Users.<sup>76</sup> However, the audio recording is only in English and listeners require access to the internet and the capability to download large files.

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73 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, p. 2.

74 Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs *National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) 2009*, Table 9.R6, <[www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/NAPLAN2009-GeoIndig-Reading.pdf](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/_resources/NAPLAN2009-GeoIndig-Reading.pdf)> accessed 2 September 2010.

75 Norman Clarke, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 27.

76 Western Australia Department of Transport, *Drive Safe Guide* <[www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/20425.asp](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au/licensing/20425.asp)> accessed 29 July 2010.

- 6.124 A similar resource is available in South Australia where individuals can download the Driver's Handbook<sup>77</sup> in a LexiFlow<sup>78</sup> format, increasing access to people with literacy support needs. Again, access is limited by computer and internet use.
- 6.125 In some areas of Queensland and Northern Territory, a bilingual interactive computer game is available that has customised video footage of local roads and local Indigenous-language audio recording accompanying the English recording.<sup>79</sup>
- 6.126 Another disadvantage for Indigenous people is the high level of driving offence fines that Indigenous youth are more likely to have accumulated, and not been able to pay. Outstanding traffic fines impact on decisions to award licenses, which means that many 'Aboriginal people have no chance of gaining a licence, and so they do not even apply'.<sup>80</sup> This creates 'a vicious circle'<sup>81</sup> whereby driver licences remain out of reach for many Indigenous youth and is a clear obstacle to gaining employment.
- 6.127 The Noetic Review noted that:
- Fines and infringement notices are the most commonly used response to regulatory offences committed by children and young people. ...The accumulation of fines can follow a young person into adulthood and prevent them being able to register vehicles and obtain driving licenses.<sup>82</sup>
- 6.128 Largely in response to broader community concern about the number of road-related fatalities, most jurisdictions now require learner drivers to complete a minimum number of log-booked hours prior to obtaining their provisional licence.<sup>83</sup> However, Indigenous community members are often

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77 South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, Special Education Resource Unit, *Driver's Handbook*, <[web.seru.sa.edu.au/Visual%20Tools.htm](http://web.seru.sa.edu.au/Visual%20Tools.htm)> accessed 28 May 2010.

78 LexiFlow software converts materials saved in PDF format into an electronic 'talking Flash' presentation.

79 *Driving our Future*, <[www.drivingourfuture.com.au/](http://www.drivingourfuture.com.au/)> accessed 3 November 2010; 'The Centre for Indigenous Literacy', *The Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation*, <[www.alnf.org/programs/indigenous-literacy.php](http://www.alnf.org/programs/indigenous-literacy.php)> accessed 3 November 2010.

80 New South Wales Sentencing Council, *The Effectiveness of Fines as a Sentencing Option: Court-imposed Fines and Penalty Notices: Interim Report 2006*, p. 25.

81 Catholic Bishops of Broome and Darwin, *submission 8*, p. 13.

82 Noetic Solutions Pty Ltd, *A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System*, 2010, pp. 111-112.

83 This number is different in each jurisdiction where such a requirement exists: in New South Wales, 125 supervised hours must be log-booked; in Victoria, learner drivers under the age of 21 must gain 120 log-booked hours; in Queensland, 120 supervised hours must be log-booked;

unable to meet the requisite log hours due to a lack of qualified driving companions or mentors, and the limited road infrastructure that is available in some communities.

- 6.129 Magistrate Tonkin of Townsville advised the Committee that the lack of driving mentors was limiting young Indigenous people's capacity to gain their driver's licence.<sup>84</sup>
- 6.130 In New South Wales, the Road Transport Authority has developed a resource for individuals or groups interested in establishing driver mentor programs, *Guidelines for Community-based Learner Driver Mentor Programs*.<sup>85</sup> While the Guidelines are comprehensive, they do not identify appropriate funding sources, nor does the New South Wales Government specifically provide any funding for driver mentor programs.
- 6.131 The Committee heard that in some remote communities there is simply insufficient road infrastructure to enable a learner driver to fulfil the requisite log-book hours. A Queensland magistrate noted the impossibility of achieving 100 log-book hours on an island that contains merely 200 metres of road.<sup>86</sup> In some areas of the country, such as Aurukun, roads are completely inaccessible for parts of the year.<sup>87</sup>
- 6.132 A number of witnesses offered their support for a 'limited' or 'remote' licence that would be easier to obtain than a 'full' licence and permit people to drive in regional and remote locations.<sup>88</sup>
- 6.133 This view was echoed by Andrew Burrow, Rio Tinto, who stated that he endorsed the concept of 'a regional driver's licence ... applicable for people working in rural areas where you do not have the complications of driving in a major city'.<sup>89</sup>
- 6.134 Serene Fernando raised concerns about lack of available transport options in some parts of Australia inhibits the accessibility to employment.

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in South Australia, 50 hours must be log-booked; while in Western Australia, 25 log-booked hours are needed.

84 Stephanie Tonkin, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010.

85 Road Transport Authority, *Guidelines for community based learner driver mentor programs*, <[www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/mentorprogram.pdf](http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadsafety/downloads/mentorprogram.pdf)> accessed 24 May 2010.

86 Stephanie Tonkin, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 23.

87 David Glasgow, Family Responsibilities Commission, *Committee Hansard*, Cairns, 7 May 2010, p. 16.

88 Denis Reynolds, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 30 March 2010, pp. 7-8; Andrew Burrow, Rio Tinto, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 30 March 2010, p. 64; Stephanie Tonkin, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 23.

89 Andrew Burrow, Rio Tinto, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 30 March 2010, p. 64

An issue such as travel to the nearest town where employment is when they have no transport options restricts them from entering the workforce.<sup>90</sup>

- 6.135 There was concern, however, that a remote area licence was not an acceptable solution:

I do not agree ... about getting a licence just to run around your own area sort of thing. Once they get a licence they should drive the same as you and I – into town to do shopping and whatever. ... You will run into more strife because a licence to just drive around the place is a licence to give them permission to go into town, wherever.<sup>91</sup>

- 6.136 Driver licenses may be required either to access work, particularly in regional n remote locations, and it is also a prerequisite of many of the types of employment in these areas.

- 6.137 Rio Tinto highlighted the importance of having a driver's licence in order to get work in the mining sector.

In addition to the lack of relevant skills, workplace experience and adequate education (particularly beyond year ten), the lack of driving licences is a serious obstacle to young Indigenous people trying to get into the mining industry workplace. Although the minimum driving licence requirements have started to be relaxed for specific roles at certain of Rio Tinto's operating sites, the majority of the available jobs (particularly at its inland mine sites) still require at least a C Class and preferably a HR licence.

The obstacles facing youngsters from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to getting a full C Class licence are significant and include:

- High cost
- Lack of access to licensed driving instructors and roadworthy vehicles, and
- Long licensing process timeframe (typically 3 years in WA, depending on individual circumstances).<sup>92</sup>

- 6.138 Rio Tinto outlined how difficulties obtaining a driver license impact on employment opportunities, and can contribute to offending rates.

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90 Serene Fernando, *exhibit 12*, p. 3.

91 Barry Abbott, Ilpurla Aboriginal Corporation, *Committee Hansard*, Darwin, 6 May 2010, p. 86.

92 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, p. 2.

Many young people can't get a job because they haven't got a drivers licence. Because they haven't got a job they can't afford to get a licence particularly if their family is unable to pay the practical tuition costs and / or provide the access to a suitable vehicle and supervising driver. Boredom and peer pressure inevitably lead many youngsters down a path of anti-social behaviour (including driving and licensing related infringements) that can lead to incarceration. We understand from our contacts at the Roebourne Regional Prison that in the order of 60% of the inmates have driving and/or licensing related convictions.<sup>93</sup>

6.139 Consequently a significant component of the Rio Tinto work readiness programs includes assistance with:

- driver theory training
- practical driving instruction, and
- resolving licence suspensions and unpaid fines issues.

6.140 The Committee noted the awareness in some state jurisdictions of the lack of driver licenses as a contributing to risk factors for offending. Kylie O'Connor from the Department of Attorney-Generals, South Australia stated:

... it is one of the key protective factors for a community – the number of people who have drivers licences and who therefore can facilitate and move people around within that community. Drivers licences help facilitate employment and a whole range of other outcomes, as we know. Also, driving offences can lead to not being able to acquire your licence for some time. We have some young people who cannot acquire their licence because of traffic offences and driving offences but would possibly benefit if they could acquire a licence and maintain it.<sup>94</sup>

6.141 Ms O'Connor stated that driver licences was an area that was being investigated into by state and Commonwealth agencies:

It is a policy area that we are working on with the Commonwealth government, with DEEWR, at the moment and with the employment services. I am aware that a number of the

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93 Rio Tinto Iron Ore, *submission 110*, p. 3.

94 Kylie O'Connell, Attorney-General's Department, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 20 May 2010, p. 25.

employment services have also cited this as a major problem – as a barrier along the pathway to gaining employment.<sup>95</sup>

### Committee comment

- 6.142 The Committee recognises the importance of the driver's licence component of the Work Readiness program. Assisting Indigenous people to obtain driver's licences is critical in relation to improving Indigenous disadvantage. Once one family member has obtained their licence and are employed the flow on effect can be very positive for other family members.
- 6.143 Gaining a driver's licence can open doors to new prospects such as access to continuing education and employment opportunities. This is important in regional and remote Australia where education and employment opportunities are dispersed and public transportation may not exist or may be very limited.
- 6.144 The Committee is of the view that state and territory governments have the capacity to increase the opportunity for Indigenous people to obtain driver licences in the short term, which will increase their employment options. An immediate effort should be devoted to achieving this by developing jurisdictionally-specific handbooks produced in multiple media forms with due consideration to the literacy needs of Indigenous communities.
- 6.145 In addition, the Committee considers that the introduction of regional and remote driver licenses would greatly assist Indigenous youth in continuing their education and training, and in securing employment in local areas. It would go some way to addressing the contributory impact of traffic offences and unpaid fines on Indigenous youth incarceration rates (this is discussed further in chapter 7).

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95 Kylie O'Connell, Attorney-General's Department, South Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Adelaide, 20 May 2010, p. 25.



## Recommendation 21 – Driver licences

- 6.146 **The Committee recommends that the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, in partnership with relevant state and territory governments, establish:**
- **specific learner driver resources in multiple media formats that appropriately meet language and literacy needs of local Indigenous communities, and**
  - **a remote and regional learner driver licensing scheme to assist people in remote and regional areas to obtain learner and provisional licences.**

## Availability of employment

- 6.147 The Committee understands the complexities around improving employment prospects for Indigenous Australians, particularly for regional and remote communities. Indigenous people's participation in the labour force is often affected by the limited employment opportunities available to Indigenous people in some regional and remote areas.
- 6.148 Over time, the Closing the Gap focus on education attainment will have a positive flow on effect which will lead to increased employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. However the availability of work in regional and remote areas where there is a high Indigenous population remains a challenging issue.
- 6.149 Serene Fernando, an academic from ANU commented that building local capacity for mainstream employment for young Indigenous people should be an important priority for the Commonwealth Government. She commented that the Government should:
- Provide the landscape for these high risk Indigenous youth to obtain legitimate employment rather than transitional employment programs such as the work for the dole schemes which often subjects participants to menial tasks, such as mowing the lawn and picking up rubbish around the community that rarely has proven to move participants into real mainstream employment.<sup>96</sup>
- 6.150 The Queensland Police Commissioner explained concerns about the types of employment available in remote communities.

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96 Serene Fernando, *exhibit 12*, p. 3.

For the isolated communities, I think the elephant in the room is the economic future. Most of the employment is government funded. Do we keep doing that year after year after year? Clearly there are links to other issues and that has been stated many times – the links between the criminal justice system, health, education and all of those other things.<sup>97</sup>

- 6.151 In March 2011, Australia's unemployment rate had decreased to 4.9 percent<sup>98</sup> which presents a difficult environment for Indigenous job seekers who face a range of obstacles when transitioning to employment. However there are certain industry sectors, such as mining and tourism, which are well placed to invest in Indigenous transition and work readiness training in order to recruit and meet their own workforce needs.
- 6.152 The inquiry has revealed a number of workforce areas where greater Indigenous representation and leadership is sought – namely in police services, the Australian Defence Force (ADF), education and other government service sectors.
- 6.153 Under the 2011-12 Commonwealth Government Budget, the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program, which is available to assist job seekers attain basic skills, has been expanded.<sup>99</sup> In addition, six month wage subsidies can be provided to employers who take on the long term unemployed.<sup>100</sup> These initiatives are part of a \$227.9 million package over four years to provide incentives for employers and support participation in training for the long-term unemployed, of which around 17 percent are Indigenous people. A further \$6.1 million over four years is being provided for Jobs Services Australia to pilot the provision of culturally appropriate mentoring support for Indigenous job seekers when they commence work.<sup>101</sup>
- 6.154 The Committee urges mining and tourism sectors in particular, to take advantage of these services and, as a measure of their social responsibility, to invest in Indigenous transition programs and employment training.

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97 Robert Atkinson, Queensland Government, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 9.

98 ABS 6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, March 2011  
<[www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6202.0)> accessed 6 May 2011.

99 Building Australia's Future Workforce: trained up and ready for work Australian Government Budget 2011-2011, p.17.

100 Building Australia's Future Workforce: trained up and ready for work Australian Government Budget 2011-2011, p.26

101 Budget: Investing to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Statement by the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, 10 May 2011.

### **Mining and tourism sectors**

- 6.155 The report has earlier mentioned both Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton for their work readiness and employment transition programs. The Committee is aware that there are a number of other industries who are committed to addressing Indigenous disadvantage and who make a substantial investment in local Indigenous communities through transition and training assistance.
- 6.156 The Committee considers that both the mining and the tourism sectors are well placed to provide these greater employment opportunities to Indigenous youth as the workplace is close to regional or remote Indigenous communities. At times these are also industry sectors which face challenges attracting a workforce due to their location.
- 6.157 The Committee urges mining and tourism sectors, in particular, as a measure of their social responsibility, to invest in Indigenous transition programs and employment training.

### **Education and Government service sectors**

- 6.158 Previously the report has discussed the important role of Indigenous education workers and the need to increase the Indigenous representation in teaching, early childhood and teacher's aide roles. There is a critical need for more Indigenous health workers able to work with local communities. In addition, government agencies suffer from a lack of Indigenous representation in key policy and service delivery areas.
- 6.159 The Committee is aware that many government agencies offer Indigenous cadetships and, as part of the cadetship, transition assistance and support is available. The Committee encourages the expansion of these cadetship positions across states and territories as well as Commonwealth agencies.
- 6.160 The Committee considers that every jurisdiction should be conducting intensive campaigns targeting Indigenous recruitment in the areas of health and education. Indigenous workers in these areas provide vital mentoring and leadership roles to other Indigenous young people, and warrant a substantial commitment and investment in transition assistance to facilitate entry to and completion of training.

### **Police services**

- 6.161 Police services already conduct some targeted training and recruitment programs for Indigenous people. For example the Queensland Police Service (QPS) has Indigenous traineeships as part of its Justice Entry

Program. It is a six month timeframe full time program during which trainees receive an allowance equal to that of a police recruit.<sup>102</sup>

- 6.162 Queensland Police Commissioner Atkinson commented that the program focuses on developing a pathway for Indigenous people into employment in the police service. From a policing perspective, he commented that 'it is really important that Indigenous people gain employment in police departments.'<sup>103</sup>
- 6.163 Similarly, New South Wales have an Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West Delivery (IPROWD) Project. In April 2008, a partnership was established between TAFE New South Wales and New South Wales Police to develop a bridging course that would provide Aboriginal students from western New South Wales with the academic prerequisites to enrol as student police. The IPROWD project enrolled 13 Aboriginal students in the course and all graduated in December 2008.<sup>104</sup>
- 6.164 This New South Wales Indigenous Police recruitment project has relied on strong partnerships between the Police, TAFE and the Indigenous community to help provide support as required.

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.<sup>105</sup>

- 6.165 The Committee considers there is scope for police recruitment campaigns to target Indigenous youth. The range of Indigenous entry assistance programs provided are commendable; however a survey of police recruitment websites across different jurisdictions suggests that there often lacks an active focus on Indigenous recruitment.
- 6.166 The Committee considers that the diversity and cultural awareness of the police service across jurisdictions could be enhanced by recruitment campaigns targeted to Indigenous people. Further, Indigenous recruitment campaigns should be culturally appropriate and emphasise

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102 Queensland Police Service, *exhibit 23*, p. 2.

103 Robert Atkinson, Queensland Government, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 4 May 2010, p. 10.

104 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, p. 23.

105 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *submission 43*, p. 23.

the positive leadership and community benefits of joining the police service.

### **Australian Defence Force**

- 6.167 The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is well placed to provide training and employment to young Indigenous people. First, the ADF offers training in leadership and workplace-specific skills that has benefits both for Indigenous recruits and their communities beyond their career in the service. Second, the ADF is in need of new recruits, while (as this report has shown) young Indigenous people are in need of workplace training, support and employment.
- 6.168 In its recruitment material, the ADF emphasises that Indigenous recruits make positive role models for other young community members. It also has a range of programs intended to support Indigenous recruits and to acknowledge significant Indigenous cultural events. The recruitment material acknowledges the significant contribution of Indigenous Australians to protecting the nation's interests for over a century.
- 6.169 In addition, the Aboriginal Legal Service for ACT/NSW in its submission called for the ADF to increase the provision of school-based apprenticeships and target these to Indigenous youth living in regional and remote areas:

Young people in Aboriginal communities in Queensland express significant interest in joining the Australian Defence Force (ADF). However, recruitment in rural and remote communities is not occurring. The provision of school based ADF apprenticeships would create real incentive to remain in the education system and provide continuity with attractive employment.

Given that the separation rate of members of the ADF is increasing, there is a match between its needs and those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to find employment. Significant advantages could be gained from the recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander juveniles and young adults into the Australian Defence Force.<sup>106</sup>

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106 Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, *submission 66*, p. 15.

## Committee comment

- 6.170 The Committee acknowledges the significant contribution that Indigenous Australians have made to the Australian Defence Force. The Committee understands that this is a sensitive issue as the commitment and sacrifice made by Indigenous people involved in Australia's Defence Force in the past went unrecognised for some period of time.
- 6.171 The Committee considers that the ADF has a social responsibility to support Indigenous Australians, given the historical neglect of Indigenous servicemen and women, and the important contribution they have made in past wars.
- 6.172 The Committee considers it important for the Australian Defence Force to raise its profile with Indigenous Australians and form innovative partnerships with Indigenous people, particularly in regional and remote areas, who are interested in joining the Australian Defence Force.
- 6.173 The Committee is concerned that current Australian Defence Force recruitment material is targeted at a narrow demographic. The Committee recommends that the Australian Defence Force redesign its recruitment material to provide more incentives for Australian citizens from diverse backgrounds (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people), and women to join.
- 6.174 The Committee notes that the Australian Defence Force has an Indigenous Recruitment Strategy that aims to recruit people from remote, regional and urban settings. However the Committee considers it opportune for the Australian Defence Force to look at strategic ways to recruit from regional and remote areas throughout Australia. The Committee suggests that the Australian Defence Force consider new initiatives for its Indigenous recruitment strategy such as a recruitment project modelled on the New South Wales Indigenous Police Recruitment Out West project.
- 6.175 The Committee notes the potential benefits of a school based Australian Defence Force apprenticeship scheme in regional and remote areas throughout Australia. A school based apprenticeship scheme would provide a mentoring role which could support Indigenous students both socially and academically. This would be beneficial in supporting Indigenous students to complete year 12 and would provide a clear and supported pathway through to employment.

**Recommendation 22 – Defence Force recruitment**

6.176 The Committee recommends that the Australian Defence Force:

- include in its training material an acknowledgement of the important contribution Indigenous people have made to the Australian Defence Force in past wars. All staff currently employed by the Australian Defence Force should be made aware of this contribution
- review its recruitment material to ensure it provides strong encouragement for Indigenous people to join, which particular reference to existing role models, for example NorForce
- consider new and innovative strategies for raising its profile with Indigenous people and for recruiting both reserves and permanent members from remote, regional and metropolitan Indigenous communities
- offer work experience for older students in the defence force, and
- increase the provision of school based apprenticeships throughout Australia and target apprenticeships to Indigenous youth in regional and remote areas.

