



10 August 2011

Dr Anna Dacre
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Dr Dacre

Inquiry into Language Learning in Indigenous Communities

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) represents the interests of 96 Independent Schools within South Australia. We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, as outlined in the terms of reference on *Language Learning in Indigenous Communities*.

1. The benefits of giving attention and recognition to Indigenous languages

With so many Indigenous languages critically endangered, it is imperative to support the learning of Indigenous languages. Most of the Indigenous languages were traditionally oral languages, therefore provision of support for written documentation will be required to ensure accurate interpretation and use. This will necessitate the employment of Indigenous Elders and Councils to supervise and assist in this task.

2. The effectiveness of current maintenance and revitalisation programs for Indigenous languages

Current maintenance and revitalisation programs need to be further developed to ensure appropriate recording of languages. Indigenous Elders and leaders, should be invited to work closely with Information Technology specialists in the development of materials to preserve the languages and to teach the languages to young people. The regulation of the teaching profession using registration should facilitate this strategy. This could cause significant issues in some areas of Australia as there are very few Indigenous language speakers available. Another area of concern is the accurate transfer of "spoken" languages into written language without losing correct pronunciation and meaning.

3. The educational and vocational benefits of ensuring English language competency amongst Indigenous communities

To engage positively with and achieve successful outcomes through the schooling sectors within Australia, it is essential that Standard Australian English is used competently within Indigenous Communities. In particular, academic and business pathways require a high level of spoken and written mastery of Standard Australian English. Students studying at boarding schools, day schools in urban areas and university or TAFE colleges will be at considerable disadvantage if they cannot communicate effectively in English.

4. Measures to improve education outcomes in those Indigenous communities where English is a second Language

To address the improvement of education outcomes in Indigenous Communities where English is a second or additional language consideration should be given to appropriate training of teachers working in these areas. There are several good quality training programs available, such as the "*Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms: Language in Learning Across the Curriculum*", that will build the capacity of teachers. Strategies which have proven successful in ESL and New Arrival communities can also be implemented to improve educational outcomes.

The place of Languages in the education programs of schools is currently a focus of debate as the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) progressively develops the Australian Curriculum. The place of Language Learning in Indigenous communities should be an integral element of this debate.

Please contact me at the AISSA Office should you require further information.

Yours sincerely



Garry Le Duff
Executive Director.