

## CHAPTER 7

### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

7.1 Much of the literature on Indigenous education focuses on the schools sector, where most Indigenous people begin and end their formal education. However, the post-secondary education sectors have seen increases in participation by Indigenous students over the last ten years. A number of witnesses in the inquiry identified issues relevant to vocational education and training, and to higher education.

7.2 A critical factor is the relatively poor level of participation of Indigenous people in senior secondary education. About 30 per cent of young Indigenous people currently complete secondary education, and the level of transfer directly into tertiary education remains low. This suggests two things: that Indigenous people will continue to participate in post-secondary education at relatively low levels; and that there will remain a significant level of demand for adult education, particularly at the preparatory level, among the mature age Indigenous population.

#### **Vocational education and training**

7.3 There have been particularly noteworthy increases in Indigenous participation in the VET sector in recent years. As one recent report states, the situation in the VET sector 'has changed from one of severe inequality between Indigenous students and other Australians with respect to access and participation in VET to one where equality in participation was reached by 1994'.<sup>1</sup> Between 1990 and 1998 the number of Indigenous students participating in recognised vocational education and training increased by almost threefold, from around 15,000 to almost 45,000. Indigenous students represented almost three per cent of the total VET sector student population in 1998, which was higher than the proportion of Indigenous people in the total Australian population (around two per cent).<sup>2</sup>

7.4 VET sector participation by Indigenous students in 1996 exceeded the levels for non-Indigenous students in all age groups except those aged 18 to 20. The growth in participation by Indigenous people aged 25 years and over was particularly strong between 1986 and 1996. Since 1996, however, there have been significant increases among the teenage Indigenous population, with annual growth rates of almost 25 per cent.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the concerns frequently raised about the educational participation of young Indigenous Australians, levels of VET participation among Indigenous people aged 15 to 24 are now higher than among all young Australians.

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1 Chris Robinson and Paul Hughes, *Creating a sense of place: Indigenous peoples in vocational education and training*, NCVET, Kensington Park, SA, p. 8

2 *ibid.*, p. 7

3 *ibid.*, p. 11

7.5 Indigenous students, however, enter the VET sector with much lower levels of schooling than non-Indigenous students. In recent years the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has been narrowing. Increasing proportions of Indigenous VET students now have a year ten level of schooling or higher. There is a high degree of labour force attachment among Indigenous VET students, with around 46 per cent in employment. Indigenous VET students also tend to be concentrated in rural and remote areas. In 1998 less than 30 per cent were living in capital cities compared to 56 per cent of all VET students.<sup>4</sup>

7.6 The type of study undertaken by Indigenous VET students was significantly different to that undertaken by non-Indigenous VET students. Indigenous students were over-represented in TAFE multi-field education, and in arts, humanities and social science subjects. TAFE multi-field education consists mostly of courses providing a general secondary education, basic functional skills in specific areas, or technical skills across a number of fields of study. In terms of the stream of study, Indigenous students were more than twice as likely to be enrolled at the preparatory level but only half as likely to be enrolled at the para-professional or professional level.<sup>5</sup>

7.7 The level of participation was also different. Indigenous students were less likely to enrol in a Diploma or Associate Diploma level program. They were more likely to be enrolled in a course leading to a qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). However, Indigenous students tended to be concentrated in the lower AQF levels.<sup>6</sup>

7.8 About two per cent of apprentices and trainees in 1998 were Indigenous. This was roughly equivalent to the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian population, and was a notable improvement on earlier levels of participation.<sup>7</sup> However, some differences in age participation still exist. Indigenous teenagers and young adults aged 15 to 24 years were far less likely to participate in apprenticeships or traineeships than other young Australians. Nearly half of all Indigenous apprentices and trainees were aged 25 years or older, compared to less than thirty per cent of all apprentices and trainees.

7.9 Indigenous VET students experienced higher withdrawal and failure rates than other VET students. Indigenous apprentice and trainee completions, however, made up 2.6 per cent of all completions in 1998. This was a good outcome given that Indigenous apprentices and trainees were about 1.9 per cent of the total. Indigenous apprentice and trainee completions were more likely to be at the lower AQF levels.<sup>8</sup>

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4 *ibid.*, pp. 14-16

5 *ibid.*, pp. 18-21

6 *ibid.*, pp. 21-22

7 *ibid.*, p. 25

8 *ibid.*, p. 35

7.10 The unemployment rate of Indigenous TAFE graduates was considerably higher than that of non-Indigenous graduates. The NCVER report found some improvement in employment prospects as a result of TAFE participation, although the figures suggest that these improvements were relatively slight. The most significant employment outcome was a conversion from part-time to full-time employment.

7.11 The VET sector was said by many witnesses in the inquiry to be an extremely important area for Indigenous people. A submission from the Australian Education Union quoted research showing that ‘Indigenous school students have a better perception of TAFE than of schools’.<sup>9</sup> This submission also noted, however, that VET pathways for Indigenous students were mainly non-vocational, with two thirds completing ‘catch-up or pre-vocational programmes’.<sup>10</sup>

7.12 An Indigenous educator in Adelaide reflected on his own background.

My experience in TAFE demonstrated quite clearly that TAFE seems to be at the higher level of education and the first port of call for many of my people. The statistics show quite clearly that both enrolment, participation and graduation rates amongst Indigenous people in the TAFE system seem to be much higher than in any of the other education sectors. What is highlighted through various reports is a return to education by Indigenous people.<sup>11</sup>

7.13 The Committee visited and received submissions from several VET sector providers. The Southbank Institute of TAFE in Queensland described some of their activities to the Committee in their submission. The Institute has a Faculty of Indigenous Australian Peoples. The faculty has been operating for 17 years and offers diploma and certificate level courses in vocational access, tertiary preparation, welfare, justice studies, art and community management. The faculty has an even mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, and enrolls about 550 Indigenous students each year.<sup>12</sup>

7.14 The Institute saw good support services as essential to the successful participation of Indigenous people in the sector.

A growing number of individuals are talented and strong in their identity and so able to negotiate systems without added support. However, the majority still need the extra support available through dedicated courses, Indigenous support units, tutoring, Abstudy etc.<sup>13</sup>

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9 *ibid.*, p. 154

10 Submission No. 24, Australian Education Union, vol. 2, p. 154

11 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 95

12 Submission No. 23, Southbank Institute of TAFE, vol. 2, p. 108

13 *ibid.*, p. 110

7.15 The need for good support services was emphasised by witnesses from vocational institutions in Geraldton, Port Adelaide and Kalgoorlie. The Kalgoorlie College of TAFE also highlighted the importance of industry involvement as well as the need for funding for mentor programs for Aboriginal people. An Aboriginal mining training program run jointly by the Kalgoorlie TAFE and Curtin University had been well received because it met the needs of industry. More than 50 per cent of students had accessed full-time employment. Many had been long-term unemployed when they started. The mining industry was involved in accreditation panels for the university and gave the university the prerequisites for students to get into the industry. The industry also participated on interview panels and helped to place suitable people. Mentoring was said to be an important form of support for Indigenous students. However, the current mentoring system was voluntary and was not as effective as previously, when it used to be a paid system.<sup>14</sup>

7.16 A recent publication from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs documents the findings from case studies of Indigenous New Apprenticeships. The case studies included traineeships in tour guiding, essential services maintenance, the construction industry, television and radio production, and education. The findings suggested that the policies of flexibility underlying the National Training Framework could be compatible with Indigenous specific traineeships, and that Indigenous communities and enterprises would benefit significantly from the establishment of an Indigenous oriented infrastructure within the VET sector responsible for nationally recognised Indigenous traineeships. Principles of good practice identified in the study included 'embedded' training involving community members in planning and development, comprehensive training support, culturally relevant course materials leading to nationally recognised qualifications, committed advocacy on the part of trainers, and structured continuing evaluation.<sup>15</sup>

7.17 The Committee was also told of other VET sector programs. Some of these programs are described in more detail in the curriculum chapter. While programs such as these are important initiatives, there continue to be problems in the provision of VET programs, particularly in smaller regional centres and remote areas. Lack of appropriate facilities, infrastructure and staff were said to be the principal barriers to improving access to VET programs. In small towns such as Brewarrina, for instance, there was said to be a strong demand for VET programs but only limited facilities. One suggested option was to combine the school and TAFE in order to create a better critical mass of staff and resources, although differing award conditions for staff would need to be resolved. In more remote areas the major problems were a lack of good telecommunications infrastructure, poor housing and facilities for staff, and the costs involved in placing staff in remote communities. Funding models based on employment outcomes were also said to limit access to VET programs for those communities in very poor labour markets.

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14 Site visit, Kalgoorlie TAFE

15 John Henry et. al., *Developing Best Practice with Indigenous New Apprenticeships*, REB Report 3/99, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra, 1999

7.18 The Committee was encouraged to see the improved level of Indigenous participation in the VET sector. The sector is of obvious importance in Indigenous education and training. This has been recognised with the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) to advise the ANTA board on training issues for Indigenous people. The fact that the sector appears to be attracting increased numbers of young Indigenous people is also important. The Committee remains concerned, however, at the limited affect on employment. The effect this has on access to resources needs careful monitoring. The Committee is also concerned at the level of access to VET sector programs in some rural and remote areas. While much has been done to improve access, as evidenced by increased levels of participation, these improvements do not appear to have been uniform. Improving access in rural and remote areas will depend to some extent on the provision of appropriate resources. However, there is much that could also be done to use existing resources more effectively, including a more efficient sharing of resources between the various educational sectors.

*Adult education and the independent sector*

7.19 Much of the growth in Indigenous participation in post-compulsory education has been among the mature age population. Low levels of previous educational attainment among this population have meant a strong demand for introductory, enabling and bridging courses. Many institutions are now providing these courses. However, other factors such as low socio-economic circumstances, extended family responsibilities and negative prior experiences of schooling (and sometimes of other government agencies such as legal and welfare systems) also need to be taken into account. The fact that many mature age Indigenous people are returning to education is a cause for celebration but should not blind us to the fact that they have particular needs and that returning to education is, for many, a difficult undertaking.

7.20 The independent Aboriginal community colleges have taken the lead in providing assistance to the most disadvantaged sections of this population. The Committee visited two independent community colleges, Tauondi College in Port Adelaide and the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs, and also received submissions from a number of colleges. The colleges are controlled and managed by Indigenous people and communities. They provide a varied program, including short non-accredited adult and community education courses, language and cultural programs, literacy and numeracy training, preparatory and bridging courses, and accredited VET sector programs. In recent years the colleges have been moving more towards providing formally accredited VET programs. Tauondi College, for example, began running VET sector programs in 1994.

7.21 The independent colleges often find themselves in an invidious position. They need to be able to address educational outcomes in order to justify continued funding and yet, because of the nature of their student population, they often need to be able to address non-educational issues before they can expect to achieve educational outcomes. This situation was put to the Committee by the principal of Tauondi College in Port Adelaide. 'Equally for adults – the population that we service – there

are some real social needs and human needs that cannot be met if you play to the tune of simply sticking to the indicators that are laid down or negotiated between a provider agency, a state government and a Commonwealth government'.<sup>16</sup> This was a theme that was repeated in submissions to the inquiry. The independent providers are often the first entry point back into education for the most disadvantaged section of the population, and the complex range of social and personal issues they need to deal with are insufficiently recognised by governments.

7.22 Nevertheless, recent research seems to indicate that the independent colleges can achieve good measurable educational outcomes. A survey of students who completed programs in four of the largest Aboriginal community-controlled colleges in 1997 found that 62 per cent of enrolments resulted in a pass. This was a much higher pass rate than among Indigenous VET sector students as a whole. The strong result was put down to the attractive learning environment and the extra support provided for students by the independent colleges. It was particularly impressive given the level of disadvantage of students at the independent colleges. Nearly 50 per cent of these students had not completed Year 10 compared to 28 per cent of Indigenous VET sector students as a whole. The study also noted, however, that students in the independent colleges withdrew from their courses at more than double the rate of other Indigenous VET sector students.<sup>17</sup>

7.23 Funding issues and the relationship between education departments and the independent colleges were raised with the Committee by a number of witnesses. The ATSI submission called for greater transparency in funding arrangements. Tensions between educational and social priorities may in part explain the conflicts that sometimes arise between the independent providers and some of the state and territory education departments. It is no excuse, however, for a lack of transparency in funding arrangements on the part of some education departments. This situation was observed by the Committee in Alice Springs in relation to the Institute for Aboriginal Development. Approximately \$2.6 million in Commonwealth infrastructure funding for the Institute had been held up by the Northern Territory government.

7.24 This was said to be due to a dispute over the land on which the Institute was sited. The Institute had been told that it would need to give up this land and co-locate with another institution before the Northern Territory government would approve the funds to be made available. Whatever the merits of the case, such an attitude seems to fly in the face of all recommendations made over the last ten years regarding self-determination and community control of educational decision making. Representatives from the IAD made it quite clear to the Committee that they were

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16 Mr Bill Wilson, *Hansard*, Port Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 137

17 Deborah Durnan and Bob Boughton, *Succeeding Against the Odds: The outcomes attained by Indigenous students in Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges*, NCVET, Kensington Park, SA, 1999, pp. ix-xi

opposed to the proposed move.<sup>18</sup> On February 11, 2000 the Northern Territory government released the funds to the IAD without explanation.

7.25 While there are obviously a range of views on specific issues such as this one, there is no excuse for a lack of transparency in funding arrangements. Lack of transparency in funding was raised by a number of other witnesses, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

### **Recommendation 23**

**7.26 Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the ANTA Act be amended to ensure that capital works funding for independent education providers goes directly to institutions.**

7.27 Adult education also has an important role to play in community development and self determination for Indigenous peoples. The Committee considers that adult education has received insufficient attention from policy makers given its importance to the Indigenous community.

### **Recommendation 24**

**7.28 The Committee recommends that all governments recognise in their policies, educational structures and funding allocation, the central role that adult education providers and their programs play in Indigenous development.**

### **Higher education**

7.29 As in the VET sector, higher education has seen some significant improvements in levels of Indigenous participation and outcomes in recent years. Between 1988 and 1996 the number of Indigenous higher education students more than doubled, from 3,000 to 7,500, while the number of award course completions trebled to nearly 1,000.<sup>19</sup>

7.30 Unlike the VET sector, however, levels of participation by Indigenous students in higher education remained well below those for all students. While there were absolute gains in participation, these occurred at a time of overall expansion in the higher education sector, resulting in little improvement in the relative position of Indigenous students. The level and type of study being undertaken also differed. Indigenous students tended to be concentrated in lower level qualifications and in particular fields of study. Substantial numbers of Indigenous higher education students were also undertaking enabling or non-award courses.

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18 Ms Donna Ah Chee, *Hansard*, Alice Springs, 6 August 1999, p. 247

19 Chris Robinson and Lionel Bamblett, *Making a difference: The impact of Australia's Indigenous education and training policy*, NCVER, Kensington Park, SA, 1998, p. 19

7.31 Many witnesses emphasised the importance of good support structures in post-compulsory education. The evidence suggested that curriculum was less of an issue but that culturally appropriate support was crucial. Special financial assistance through the Aboriginal Student Assistance Scheme (Abstudy) was also seen as essential. There has been strong support over the years for the retention of Abstudy as a separate financial assistance scheme, and vigorous opposition to any attempts to incorporate it into other financial assistance schemes.

7.32 In Adelaide the Committee spoke to representatives from the National Union of Students. Ms Nicole D'Antoine is an Indigenous economics student at the University of Adelaide and is the sole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student representative on the NUS in Australia. Ms D'Antoine stressed the importance to Indigenous students of good support structures in universities.<sup>20</sup> In her own instance, Ms D'Antoine was the only Indigenous student studying for a Bachelor of Economics at the University of Adelaide. Although coming from a family background where education was highly valued, she still found it a difficult situation. Many Indigenous higher education students are faced with similar situations, particularly in those areas of study where Indigenous students have not been well represented in the past. The NUS have set up a student support network for Indigenous students providing peer support on such issues as living away from home and undertaking university study.

7.33 The submission from the National Union of Students highlighted the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support units.<sup>21</sup> Many Indigenous people, including those in metropolitan areas, live considerable distances from higher education institutions. University study often means moving away from home. Indigenous support units provide a crucial role in helping Indigenous students make the transition to university life.

7.34 A review of Commonwealth support funding for Indigenous higher education students was undertaken in 1996.<sup>22</sup> In 1997, the Higher Education Council examined the arrangements for the allocation of Commonwealth support funding. The Council found that performance-based support funding as a general approach was accepted by support staff. However, the Council found a level of uncertainty among support staff about the amount allocated to institutions, and the decisions made within institutions on allocation of funding for support programs.<sup>23</sup> This issue was commented on in the ATSI submission, which pointed to a lack of transparency in the internal processes used to allocate funds within universities.<sup>24</sup> ATSI recommended a formal agreement

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20 Ms Nicole D'Antoine, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, p. 112

21 Submission No. 25, National Union of Students, vol. 2, p. 188

22 Dennis Ham, *A Review of Support Funding for Indigenous Australian Students in Higher Education*, 1996

23 G V Stanley, *A Review of Institutional Use of Commonwealth Higher Education Funding for Indigenous Australian Students*, NBEET, Canberra, 1997, pp. xi-xiii

24 Submission No. 34, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, vol. 5, pp. 147-148



requiring higher education institutions to achieve transparency in their expenditure of Indigenous support funding.<sup>25</sup>

7.35 Financial assistance through Abstudy was seen as particularly important in the higher education sector. There was strong support in many submissions for the maintenance of Abstudy as a separate scheme. This has been a persistent theme in Indigenous education over the past ten years. ATSIC recommended to the Committee the maintenance of Abstudy as a separate scheme, and presented the Committee with a report it had commissioned on the impact of recent changes to the scheme. The report analysed the likely effect of changes to Abstudy which are due to come into effect in the year 2000. The report found that the changes are likely to advantage only a small proportion of the Abstudy student population and are likely to disadvantage a significant proportion of mature age students. The report drew attention to the importance in Indigenous education of the mature age student population.<sup>26</sup> In evidence to the Committee in Canberra, witnesses from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs drew attention to the fact that some Indigenous students would be better off under the new arrangements but acknowledged that partnered students over 21 years of age would be worse off.<sup>27</sup>

## Recommendation 25

**7.36 The Committee recommends that DETYA monitor and report on the impact of the changes to Abstudy to come into effect in 2000, and particularly their impact on mature age and rural and remote students.**

7.37 One important issue identified by some witnesses in the inquiry was the means of access into higher education, and the relatively low numbers of Indigenous students who make the transition from school into higher education. There were some comments from Roger Thomas, an Indigenous academic from the University of Adelaide, on the numbers of open access students at university.

... we are still having difficulties and experiencing lots of problems in terms of the very poor numbers of Indigenous students that are coming from year 12 into the university sector. ... There is a much higher percentage that comes through the TAFE system without year 12 and through preparatory type programs and then progresses on to undergraduate mainstream studies.<sup>28</sup>

7.38 It was suggested that open access students experienced more problems in adjusting to university life because of their low exposure to formal education, and the effects of other pressures such as family commitments. In 1998 all of the 141

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25 *ibid.*, p. 120

26 Wendy Brabham and John Henry, *Analysis of the Proposed Changes to Abstudy on Indigenous Students*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Canberra, 1999

27 Mr Tony Greer, *Hansard*, Canberra, 30 August 1999, p. 301

28 Mr Roger Thomas, *Hansard*, Adelaide, 27 July 1999, pp. 95-96

Indigenous students who enrolled in mainstream courses at the University of Adelaide gained entry through open access arrangements. Few if any would have completed Year 12. It was reported that data from previous years showed that students who had completed Year 12 did better at University than those who had not completed Year 12.<sup>29</sup>

7.39 A number of higher education institutions participated in the inquiry. They included the University of Newcastle, Edith Cowan University, James Cook University, and the Batchelor Institute. Programs provided by these institutions are described briefly here. Some of their evidence is also included in the chapters on teacher education and curriculum.

7.40 Edith Cowan University in Western Australia is the location of the Kurongkurl Katitjin ('Coming Together to Learn') School of Indigenous Australian Studies. The University (formerly the Western Australian College of Advanced Education) has been providing educational programs for Indigenous students for over 22 years. These include a teacher training program, a number of 'bridging' or 'enabling' courses, and studies in mainstream university disciplines. In 1998 there were 644 Indigenous students enrolled at the University. Most of these students (573) were enrolled in the Aboriginal University Orientation Course. There were also 71 tertiary degree students studying across several metropolitan campuses and a regional centre located in Broome.<sup>30</sup> A submission from one staff member commented on the positive contribution the University had made to Indigenous education through the provision of bridging courses but also pointed to some problems, including a lack of awareness of priorities and policies in Indigenous education among senior management.

7.41 Staff from the Umulliko Centre at the University of Newcastle provided a submission documenting the extent to which the University was meeting recommendations in Indigenous education. In general, they considered that the University had taken 'a serious and substantial approach to implementation of most of these recommendations'. Major steps that the University had taken included the setting of a two per cent Indigenous employment target across all employment fields, and the establishment of a Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training reporting directly to the Vice-Chancellor. The University had also implemented formal community management structures in each element of its Indigenous academic program.<sup>31</sup>

7.42 Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education provides a range of professional and para-professional courses in both the VET and higher education sectors. It has an enrolment of almost 2,000 students, the majority of whom are from remote areas of the Northern Territory and use English as a second (or subsequent)

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29 *ibid.*, p. 101

30 Submission No. 8, Ms Karen Mallard, vol. 1, p. 61

31 Submission No. 10, Umulliko Centre, University of Newcastle, vol. 1, pp. 86-87

language. About 15 per cent of enrolments are also from interstate. The Institute pointed to the importance of delivery in the community as well as to a need to broaden the experiences of students. This had led to the adoption of 'mixed mode' methods of delivery, where students were mostly based in their home communities and attended intensive workshops at one of the Institutes campuses several times a year. Most students were mature age, with very low levels of prior educational achievement.<sup>32</sup> On 1 July of this year the Institute became an independent organisation with a majority Aboriginal controlled council.<sup>33</sup>

7.43 James Cook University in north Queensland has a large, culturally diverse Indigenous population. It includes students from the Torres Strait Islands, traditionally oriented Aboriginal communities and relatively small but unsettled urban populations. A number of Indigenous students are enrolled in mainstream tertiary programs. A large proportion are also in university access courses run in a number of locations (including a prison). The University also runs a Remote Area Teacher Education Program in the Torres Strait. The direction of Indigenous tertiary students was described as 'still quite narrow'. They were predominantly enrolled in teacher education, health areas or law.<sup>34</sup>

7.44 Some institutions were running external study programs for Indigenous students. Organisations such as Open Learning Australia were investigating the use of on-line delivery to provide higher education courses in remote areas. These developments are described in more detail in the curriculum chapter. Some states were also implementing programs to encourage tertiary participation by Indigenous students. One example was the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program run by Education Queensland.

7.45 One of the recommendations of the Hughes report involved the establishment of eight Aboriginal Education Centres in higher education institutions. Under the Commonwealth Higher Education Innovations Programme, funding of \$10.3 million was provided in late 1996 and early 1997 for the establishment of six Centres.<sup>35</sup> A number of other centres have already been established and are now funded through the universities.

7.46 In general, the higher education sector has not been an area of substantial Indigenous involvement. However, it has become increasingly importance in recent years. While there have been significant gains in Indigenous participation over the past ten years, levels of participation still lag well behind those of the mainstream population. The higher education sector plays an important role in access to higher level skills and knowledge in areas such as health, education, administration and the

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32 Submission No. 36, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, vol. 5, pp. 204-210

33 Ms Ann Davis, *Hansard*, Alice Springs, 6 August 1999, p. 235

34 Professor Rhondda Jones and Professor Robin McTaggart, *Hansard*, Townsville, 4 August 1999, pp. 151-152

35 Submission No. 32, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, vol. 4, p. 57

legal system. These areas are all important to the social and economic advancement of Indigenous peoples. Low participation will continue to hinder the ability of Indigenous communities to develop and to negotiate with the wider community. The evidence suggests that appropriate, well resourced support structures are important to the success of Indigenous students in higher education. The evidence also suggests that Indigenous students access higher education in different ways to the mainstream population and that policies on higher education need to take this into account. In particular, the evidence suggests that for many Indigenous students higher education is part of a continuum of study that frequently begins with a return to education from very low levels of previous educational achievement. Other sectors such as VET and adult education play important roles in this process.

### **Recommendation 26**

**7.47 The Committee recommends that policy makers take into account the particular needs of Indigenous students in post-compulsory education and provide appropriate levels of support for these students.**

### **Recommendation 27**

**7.48 The Committee recommends that funding directed towards higher education institutions for the purposes of Indigenous education should be adequate to ensure effective and appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians.**