

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into indigenous training and employment outcomes

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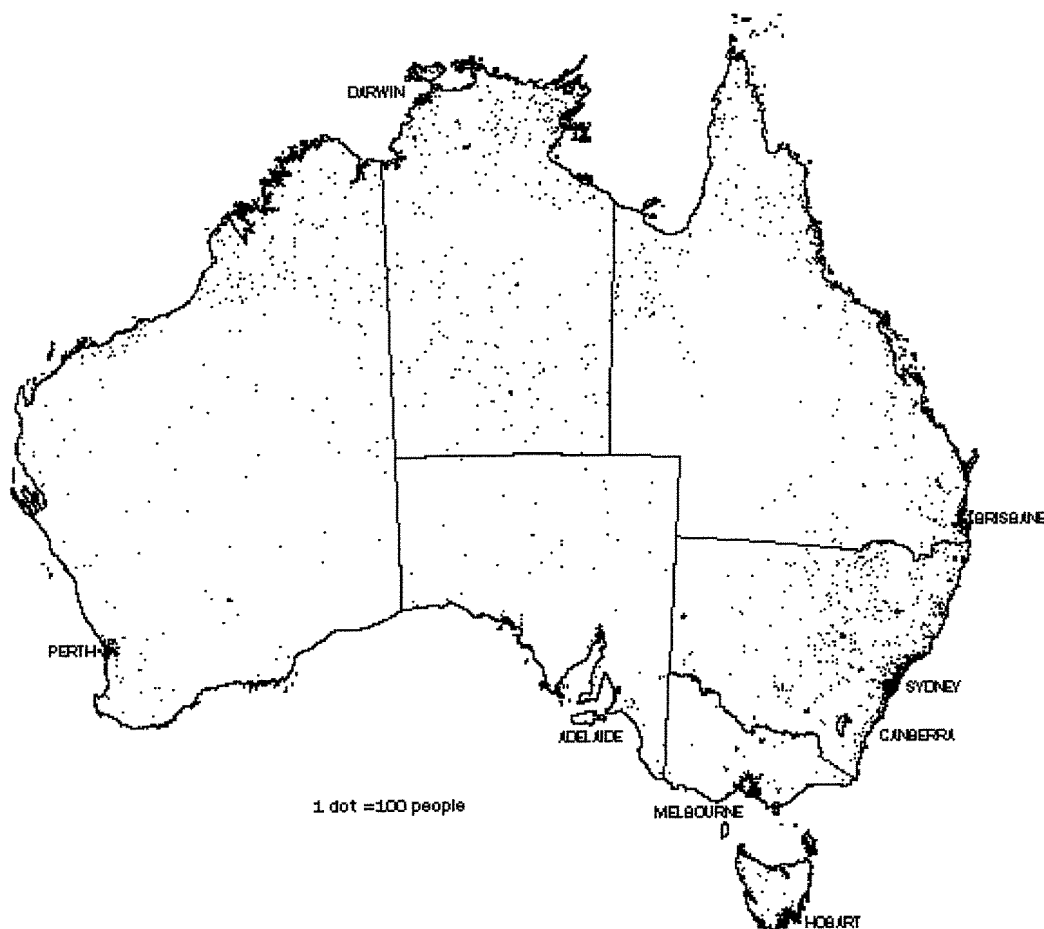
Indigenous population in New South Wales

New South Wales has the largest Indigenous population of any state in Australia, with a population of 135,319, or 29 percent of all Indigenous people, compared with Queensland (126,035 or 27 percent), Western Australia (66,069 or 14 percent) and the Northern Territory (57,550 or 13 percent.) (ABS 2001 Census data)

The percentage of Indigenous Australians who live in New South Wales has grown from 8 percent in 1901, a hundred years ago, to 26.5 percent in 1991, 28.5 percent in 1996 and 29.4 percent in 2001. In the last 10 years, therefore, the population of Indigenous people in New South Wales has virtually doubled, rising from 75,020 to 135,319.

The following map shows the distribution of the Indigenous population in Australia and New South Wales.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics)



The relative size of the Indigenous population of New South Wales can be seen, together with the marked concentration of Indigenous people on the

coast of New South Wales, particularly in Sydney and the coast north of Sydney.

Viewing the geographic distribution of Indigenous people by *ATSI*C region, the *ATSI*C region with the largest Indigenous population in Australia (based on Census usual residence count) is Sydney (37,775) followed by Brisbane (34,809), Coffs Harbour, New South Wales (32,122), Wagga Wagga, New South Wales (20,966) and Perth (20,966).

Several of the most rapidly-growing regional Indigenous populations in Australia are in New South Wales. The fastest-growing Indigenous populations by *ATSI*C regions are Coffs Harbour, New South Wales (which increased by 30 percent between 1996 and 2001); Brisbane (28 percent); Queanbeyan (which includes areas of New South Wales, ACT and Jervis Bay Territory) and Roma, Queensland (both 23 percent); and Tamworth, New South Wales (20 percent.) High Indigenous population growth is mainly associated with more urbanised areas.

Within New South Wales, the Indigenous Areas¹ with the highest Indigenous people counts are Lake Macquarie (Coffs Harbour *ATSI*C Region) (3,416), Dubbo (Wagga Wagga *ATSI*C Region) (3,358), Wollongong C (Sydney *ATSI*C Region) (2,659) and Wyong A (Coffs Harbour *ATSI*C Region) (2,536). The Indigenous proportion of the total population of these areas ranges from 1.5 to 1.9 percent except in Dubbo, where Indigenous people constitute 9.1 percent of the local population.

Within Sydney, the most populous *ATSI*C region, the most populous Indigenous Areas are on the southern outskirts, including Wollongong C (2,659), Kiama A/Shellharbour C (1,412), Liverpool C (2,030), Campbelltown surrounds (1,262) and Bankstown C (1,218). Blacktown C includes 12 Indigenous Areas and an Indigenous population of 6,062; Campbelltown includes 6 Indigenous Areas, and 3,582 Indigenous residents; and Penrith takes in 6 Indigenous Areas and 3,426 Indigenous residents).

The Indigenous population of Australia has a much younger age structure than the general population, with a median age of 21 years in 2001 compared to 36 years for the total population.

The NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training

The NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training oversees policy and planning initiatives and fosters partnerships between key stakeholders in the NSW training system. The Board is a key source of advice to the NSW Minister for Education and Training on state and national vocational education and training priorities.

¹ *Indigenous Areas* are medium-sized spatial units generally based on Statistical Local Areas and comprise one or more Indigenous Locations. *Indigenous Locations* are single *Collection Districts* or aggregations of *Collection Districts*, the smallest census unit.

The Board has undertaken an unparalleled consultation program throughout New South Wales that has allowed Board Members to be informed by people at all levels across regions, communities and industries in the state. Board Members have visited many Aboriginal communities right across the state and listened to their needs and concerns about education and training.

The Board is passionate about improving the education and training opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous people in New South Wales. To do this, there are a number of imperatives that need to be addressed in bold and innovative ways:

- Developing and delivering education and training in partnership with Aboriginal people to ensure they own it
- Developing a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal people across the education and training system
- Providing flexibility in the vocational education and training system to develop new and customised vocational education and training services to meet the diverse and different needs of different Aboriginal people and communities
- Directly linking vocational education and training to work and enterprise programs and opportunities
- Establishing new partnerships with business and industry to support education, training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people
- Expanding vocational education in the compulsory years of schooling, including appropriate accredited VET and school based traineeships, as a key strategy to retain and engage young Aboriginal people in education and training.

Education and training in partnerships

Education and training services need to be developed and delivered in partnerships that give “ownership” to Aboriginal people and communities and better meet their diverse needs.

The success of Indigenous vocational education and training achievement must be driven at the local level with respect to community decision making. Aboriginal communities need to be effectively engaged and supported in their capacity to be involved in decision making to ensure programs reflect and respect cultural, social and economic aspirations. It is also vital that programs are sustainable and continue to be supported to allow them to achieve their goals where real outcomes may not be seen for 5 years or so.

The Board has worked actively to understand changing environments so as to forge new partnerships and learning pathways within a framework that is responsive to changing economic and social needs. It engages with individuals and communities, and across government agencies and industries at community, regional and state levels to link skills development with economic growth and enterprise development.

The Board commissioned two major regional demonstration projects during 2001 to 2003 focused on Indigenous communities and individuals. These

projects were the Armidale based *Pathways for Indigenous People in Education, Training, Employment and Business* and the Lismore based *Bringing Vocational Education and Training to Cellulose Valley*.

The *Pathways* project focused entirely on linking education and training with employment for Indigenous people in the New England region. The *Cellulose Valley* project had a broader regional development focus, within which it also developed a number of micro models with advice from an Indigenous Reference Group. Both of these projects established highly effective networks across Indigenous communities and among Indigenous representatives and leaders in government, business and education sectors.

Among the key themes arising in these projects were the need for:

- Indigenous people to be more involved in driving policy for the education, training and work experiences of their people at local, regional and state levels
- greater investment to encourage more Indigenous people to become teachers, trainers and educational decision makers in schools, TAFEs and universities
- Indigenous mentors to support young Indigenous people in their aspirations for learning
- cultural training for staff working with Indigenous students and clients
- additional support for Indigenous students in traineeships, apprenticeships and structured workplace learning.

The Armidale-based project *Pathways for Indigenous people in vocational education, training, employment and business* included the creation of a new nationally-recognised business planning and management course, establishment of a new Indigenous Business Enterprise and a mentorship program for participants. The project:

- Developed a sustainable Indigenous network across the New England region including communities, business, government agencies and school, VET and higher education sectors
- Provided accreditation for Indigenous people who participated in the pilot to deliver training in community, institutions and workplace settings
- Created demand for delivery of the course in workplaces where Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff work with Indigenous clients, such as the new Juvenile Justice Centre at Inverell.

The Lismore based *Indigenous Nursing Initiative* as part of the *Cellulose Valley* project:

- delivered a prevocational course for the Assistant-in-Nursing Certificate III for Indigenous students
- provided Enrolled Nurse Training on the North Coast with the NSW Health Department for local Indigenous people
- developed a sustainable partnership with the North Coast Institute of TAFE, Northern Rivers Area Health Service and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- achieved positive outcomes for the 14 project participants including 3 employed fulltime as Enrolled Nursing Trainees with the Area Health Service, 2 employed fulltime in the Children's Ward and Palliative Care Unit, 2 undertaking a nursing degree at Southern Cross University and 2 undertaking the Aboriginal Health Workers Course at TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute.

It is vital that the partnerships that are developed between stakeholders to develop and deliver vocational education and training are supported to generate new ideas and options for service delivery. One important way of building this capacity is through the training of partnership members in corporate governance and business development processes.

The BVET funded *Linking TAFE NSW with Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP)* project addresses the training needs of Indigenous people participating in CDEP throughout New South Wales. The project is delivering Indigenous Organisation Training (IOT) to CDEP staff in Aboriginal communities through TAFE NSW Institutes. The training will enable Aboriginal communities to plan for and manage the skills training they need to ensure the success of CDEP projects and hence to improve the education and training and material life of Aboriginal communities.

The IOT program is facilitating CDEP management to develop the necessary skills to run the CDEPs in a professional and accountable manner. It provides professional development for Aboriginal people to produce business plans, run CDEPs as effective business ventures and generate increased business and training opportunities for their communities.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) trial of shared service delivery in the Murdi Paaki region is also using training to support the Community Working Parties that have been established across the region to identify priorities for the communities and to develop innovative solutions across all levels of government to address those priorities.

Strategic partnerships with industry

Strategic partnerships with industry and business can have a very positive impact on education, training and work outcomes for Aboriginal communities and people. For example the success of the Moree Aboriginal Employment

Strategy was based on a strategic partnership with local industry. A similar Aboriginal Employment Strategy is currently being established in Dubbo.

Strategic partnerships with industry are being developed at Alexandria Park Community School as part of innovative strategies to build on the interest in sport of young Aboriginal people in the Redfern/Waterloo area. The Sydney Kings basketball team is centred at Alexandria Park for training and a range of activities at the school are linked to this partnership. There is potential to explore and develop innovative curriculum programs that use the interest and involvement in sport as a relevant and engaging context for literacy and numeracy learning. Six school based traineeships have recently been established for senior students at Alexandria Park Community School including two in Sport and Recreation.

There is great potential to form new strategic partnerships with industry and business to support training, work and enterprise outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities in New South Wales.

Recommendations

1. That the importance of Indigenous cultures being affirmed, valued and respected in the administration, planning and delivery of effective vocational education and training be recognised.
2. That partnerships between Aboriginal groups, industry, training providers and across government agencies are recognised as critical to maximising the outcomes and benefits for all participants.
3. That Indigenous mentoring strategies be developed to support young Indigenous people in all aspects of their learning and work.
4. That the capacity of local and regional partnerships to generate new ideas and options for vocational education and training service delivery be developed.

High expectations and customisation of vocational education and training

Another critical foundation for quality education and training for Indigenous people is the demonstrable effect of high expectations. High expectations drive high achievement and personal best performance and have been consistently shown as a factor in educational achievement. Higher expectations also tend to stimulate elevated career aspirations. This can lead to better employment and career outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Developing a culture of high expectations across the education and training system means believing that all students are capable of learning; it means refusing to set limits on students' potential; and it means accepting that trainers and educators should enlist the support of students to improve educational achievement.

The VET system nationally and in New South Wales, has achieved participation rates for Indigenous people at significantly higher rates than for non-Indigenous people and compared with other sectors such as schooling, higher education and adult and community education. While making up around 2% of the Australian people, they comprise an estimated 4.1% of total VET students². While there is a high representation of Indigenous people in VET, they tend to undertake training at the lower level qualifications³.

VET providers need to develop innovative and flexible vocational education and training services such as delivery in the community, delivery in juvenile justice centres, and mobile skills centres to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities and people.

For example, the Aboriginal Housing project encourages a focus on development and recognition of trade skills in Aboriginal communities, and links this with personalised learning and support for employment.

Under this program, funded jointly by the Commonwealth and NSW Government through the Community Development Employment Projects (CEDP), Aboriginal apprentices are being engaged to build 487 houses in 22 communities around the State, including Bourke, Brewarrina, Wilcannia, Menindee, Moree, Mulli Mulli and Cabbage Tree Island.

The apprentices are employed by the CDEP coordinating organisation for the community and managed by a local licensed builder. Training is delivered in a distinctly different pattern to that applying in traditional apprenticeship training programs. The first six months is primarily 'do and show' and priority continues to be given to the skills being initially developed through practical application, with theoretical aspects being introduced once the skill has been mastered on the job. There are two new projects starting in 2004 – in Collarenebri and Toomelah-Bogabilla.

Vocational education and training needs to be delivered when and where it is needed. Often this will be in Aboriginal communities, as illustrated in the Aboriginal Housing project mentioned above.

The differences between communities also needs to be recognised and built on. For example in the Murdi Paaki COAG trial the Dareton/Wentworth community has identified "Healthy Ageing" as the key priority for the community. Vocational education and training services need to be customised around the immediate skills needs of that community. This may mean delivery in 'non-traditional' VET areas rather than 'traditional' areas. So rather than providing VET in Schools courses in the traditional areas of hospitality and retail, options in health and aged care need to be developed for that community.

² NCVET (2004) Equity in VET: An overview of the data for designated equity groups., p. 6

³ op cit p. 7

The profile of vocational education and training delivery, including VET in Schools, pre-vocational training, should be developed in areas of relevance to Aboriginal people and communities. This might include expanded options in areas such as Sport and Recreation, Health, Aged Care, Child Care, Arts and Media, and Environmental and Land Management.

Recommendations

5. That the role of high expectations in achieving education, training and employment outcomes and in supporting the broader aspirations of Aboriginal communities and community members be recognised.
6. That VET providers be encouraged to innovate and customise their delivery of vocational education and training services in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities to better meet their diverse needs.

VET linked with work and enterprise programs

The development and delivery of vocational education and training services for Aboriginal people must be directly linked with work and enterprise programs

The two-year Board funded project *Bringing Vocational Education and Training to Cellulose Valley*, was undertaken by Invest Northern Rivers, a body established to promote regional investment and development. During 2001 – 2003 the project developed multi-faceted strategies to position the training sector as a leading player in regional development.

Taking a whole of community approach the project has enabled existing businesses to expand, through improved recruitment and staff training processes, joined in pitches for attracting new businesses to the region and created new education, training and employment pathways for local people. It particularly targets Indigenous people, mature workers and young people.

A number of strategies were developed with project's Indigenous Reference Group. These include developing innovative pathways to meaningful employment as illustrated in the *Indigenous Small Business Skills and Mentoring Initiative*.

Consultation across the Indigenous Reference Group, ATSIC, Indigenous Economic Development Team, the NSW Land Council Far North Coast, Indigenous community leaders and Development Corporations identified that:

- Land Councils were becoming large businesses with control of substantial assets and resources
- Development Corporations vary from one area to another, but were potentially significant contributors to economic and employment growth within the indigenous community

- Many communities, Corporations and individuals had ideas and potential for economic or business opportunities
- CDEP activities without training do not provide career paths for participants
- Indigenous communities wished to develop business and entrepreneurial skills within their communities.

At the instigation of the Aboriginal Business Manager, Department of State and Regional Development, the project participated in the development of a Small Business Mentoring Program for Indigenous individuals who are currently operating a small business. This supports planned training.

Also as part of the small business initiative the Cellulose Valley project team visited the *Pathways for Indigenous People in Education, Training Employment and Business* project in New England. They identified the *Pathways* Small Business Course and the *Bookoola* Indigenous culture and therapy modules as suitable for delivery on the North Coast and are keen to see the course delivered through TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute.

The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) provide a good platform to link vocational education and training with work and enterprise programs. TAFE NSW and other VET providers should be encouraged to strengthen their partnerships with CDEPs and other Indigenous enterprises to realise the capacity of vocational education and training to support regional economic and skills development.

Recommendation

7. VET providers be encouraged to strengthen their partnerships with CDEPs and other Indigenous enterprises to realise the capacity of vocational education and training to support regional economic and skills development.

Strengthening Vocational Education Programs in the compulsory years of schooling to support Aboriginal students

The Board strongly supports expanding vocational education opportunities in the compulsory years of schooling, including accredited VET and school based traineeships, as a strategy to retain and engage young Aboriginal people in education and training and to support their successful transition to further learning, sustainable and satisfying work and economic independence.

There is a view that the attraction of VET courses in Stage 6 for Aboriginal students has to some degree slowed the decline of students completing the HSC. This view argues that providing students with access in both Stage 5 and Stage 6 may provide a greater facility for students to stay and complete their School Certificate and move through towards the HSC.

Recommendation

8. That vocational education programs be expanded in the compulsory years of schooling to facilitate the retention of young Aboriginal people in education and training and their successful transition to further learning, sustainable and satisfying work and economic independence.