



SELECT COMMITTEE ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
IN THE COMMUNITY

**SUBMISSION NUMBER 0028**

*DATE: 1 July 2002*

*TABLED: 2 July 2002*

*RECEIVED FROM:*

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*Central Australian Congress*

*Taking Control: Improving Secondary*

*Indigenous Education in Central*

*Australia.*

# Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

On behalf of the

Project Steering Committee

## Taking Control: Improving Secondary Indigenous Education in Central Australia

Report  
of the  
Secondary Indigenous Reference Group  
Alice Springs Community Consultation Project

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June 2001

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCO	Aboriginal Community- controlled Organisation
ACPO	Aboriginal Community Police Officer
AHHS	Anzac Hill I-ligh School
AHW	Aboriginal Health Worker
AIATSIS	Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AIEW	Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker
AITAP	Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program
AMSANT	Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARO	Aboriginal Resource Officer
ASSPA	Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness (Committees)
ASYAS	Alice Springs Youth Accommodation Service
ATAS	Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AVTS	Australian Vocational Traineeship Scheme
CAAAPU	Central Australian Aboriginal Alcohol Programs Unit
CAAC	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
CAACCA	Central Australian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
CAALAS	Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CA.EPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (Australian National University)
CAO	Combined Aboriginal Organisations (Alice Springs)
CARIBPC	Central Australian Regional Indigenous Health Planning Committee
CAT	Centre for Appropriate Technology

CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
CLC	Central Land Council
CRCATH	Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health
DETYA	Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLAEP	Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers
GYC	Gap Youth Centre
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
IAD	Institute for Aboriginal Development
IEB	Indigenous Education Branch (within NTDE)
KODE	Koorie Open Door Education
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
NATSIS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (1994)
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NT ACC	Northern Territory Area Consultative Committee
NTDE	Northern Territory Department of Education
NTETA	Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority
NTOCPE	Northern Territory Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment
NTOE	Northern Territory Open Education
OLSH	Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (High School)
PHC	Primary Health Care
PI	Principal Investigator
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SEWBC	Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre
SIRG	Secondary (aged) Indigenous Reference Group

TAFE	Technical and Further Education
THS	Territory Health Services
VEGAS	Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## **Executive Summary and Recommendations**

This is the Final Project Report of a six-month study undertaken in Alice Springs, commissioned and funded by the NT Department of Education. The research was managed by Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, and directed by a Steering Committee representing Alice Springs Aboriginal community organisations and government agencies.

The purpose of the study was to identify options for community-controlled secondary education, and to propose a strategic way forward, taking account of existing programs and obtaining information to support the development of an independent secondary Indigenous school.

The consultations were undertaken by the member organisations and agencies on the Steering Committee, with support from a Principal Investigator appointed by Congress, Bob Boughton, and two part-time Aboriginal Researchers seconded from their organisations, Leshay Maidment and Margaret Mary Turner. The consultations were supplemented with a review of relevant literature and policy documents, and some quantitative analysis of local and regional data on school participation and retention levels.

At the conclusion of the consultations, consensus within the Steering Committee was reached on twenty four (24) recommendations, set out below. These were signed off by participating organisations, along with a suggested process for implementation. This Report was then formally presented to the NT Department of Education Secondary Indigenous Reference Group for the Southern Region at its meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

## **Recommendations**

### **Community leadership and control**

1. Establish an independent and autonomous Central Australian Aboriginal Education Forum charged in the first instance with ensuring that the findings and recommendations of this report are implemented within the next five years, so that the diversity of secondary education needs within the Aboriginal community are recognised and met.
2. Seek the assistance of the Native Title Holders Prescribed Body Corporate to coordinate a process to identify ways of involving the Native Title Holders of Alice Springs more in providing educational leadership to young people living and studying in their lands, including
  - ensuring that the views of the custodians of the traditional law in this region are properly represented and heard within the proposed Aboriginal Education Forum;
  - ensuring that all education providers acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal laws and customs of this region, and include this as an integral part of their curriculum

### **An Aboriginal-controlled High School?**

3. Support Yipirinya School Council to obtain the funds necessary and any other support it requires to introduce over time an appropriate two-way secondary program for language speaking and other students not currently accessing secondary education, including students in outstations serviced from Alice Springs. This should entail some investigation of the 'middle school' option.
4. Support Central Land Council in its efforts to help its constituent communities address the problem of lack of secondary education programs in bush communities in Central Australia, including

- Resourcing a major regional consultation comparable to the town-based consultation carried out for this project;
- Taking note in any developments of secondary education that resource allocation is not focused on Alice Springs at the expense of regional needs, and that the 'urban drift' of young people out of their home communities is not encouraged due to lack of education options in their home communities;
- Working in partnership with groups such as the Warlpiri Triangle and the Western Macdonnells communities to develop bush-based secondary programs;
- Facilitating a partnership between Ingkerreke Outstation Resource Council and Yipirinya Council to develop education centres for the outstations immediately north and west of Alice Springs.

### **The Alternative Programs**

5. Undertake a brief community-driven evaluation of the 'alternative' programs undertaken for Aboriginal youth over the last decade in Alice Springs, with particular reference to the issues raised in this consultation, including:
  - The value of intergenerational learning programs;
  - The total numbers of youth accessing these programs;
  - Staff-student ratios including whether or not 'special education' staffing formulas should apply
  - Their sustainability
  - Their per capita cost
  - Their outcomes; and
  - Potential avenues for increased cooperation and collaboration among the different programs and centres.

At the conclusion of this process, NTDE and/or DETYA to provide resources to allow the various alternative learning centres to engage in a joint 'strategic planning exercise to establish five-year plans.,

### **Strengthening Community Capacity to Improve Existing Schools**

6. Seek DETYA support under its ASSPA program to fund the Aboriginal Education Forum to undertake a project to research, develop and implement an education program for Aboriginal parents and students about their rights and responsibilities in relation to secondary education, including the NT Education Act, the education provisions of international human rights instruments and the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act. This project should build on the experience of the HREOC/LkD

Tracking Your Rights Program, and the findings of the HREOC Inquiry into Rural and Remote Schooling.

7. Support local Aboriginal education leaders to undertake study tours under VEGAS to investigate at first hand the following alternative secondary education models:
  - Victorian KODE schools in Woolum Bellum, Glenroy and Nfieldura, Vic.
  - Nyangatjatjara College, Yulara, and its associated campuses at Mutijulu, Imampa and Docker River (NI).
  - Ngaanyatjarra Council Education Committee proposal re Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board based in Warakurna, WA
  - Pitjanjatara Yankunytjara Education Committee - SA DETE joint planning and management model, Anagu Education Services, AP Lands, SA.
  - Gumal Mirnuwarni, Roebourne WA
  - Wiltia, Adelaide, SA
  - Murri School, Brisbane, Qld.



- Other schools and models as considered appropriate
8. Establish ongoing links with international indigenous education networks with a view to ensuring local Aboriginal organisations leaders have a good understanding about new developments internationally in Indigenous education

### **The Economics of Education**

9. Seek DETYA and/or NTDE support to undertake a thorough and rigorous economic study of secondary education resource-allocation in Alice Springs and central Australia, with a view to identifying the quantum of educational funding inequity between indigenous and non-indigenous youth which results from the current very low levels of secondary participation and retention, as outlined briefly in this Report.
10. Initiate with NTDE and DETYA a detailed exploration of the possibilities of applying the Framework Agreement model to the solution of the problems in secondary indigenous education.

### **Secondary Education Workforce and Curriculum**

11. Undertake in partnership with the AIEW network and the ASSPA's a review of the roles and functions of AIEWS, including consideration of the option of outposting some AIEW positions to local Aboriginal organisations, and other strategies to strengthen their advocacy role within schools.
12. Contract Tangentyere Jobshop to undertake a 3 month project to coordinate the development of an Indigenous employment strategy to increase numbers of Aboriginal people employed in professional, para-professional jobs, technical and general jobs in secondary education system, the strategy development process to be supported by the following Commonwealth and NT agencies: DEWSB; DETYA; NTDE; and NTOCPE
13. Develop in partnership with NTDE and the independent high schools a strategic plan of teacher, assistant teacher and ancillary staff professional development to improve the quality of teaching in secondary programs for Indigenous students. This program should include
  - Basic cross cultural and anti racist training
  - Exposure of teachers, AIEWs and Assistant teachers to the programs, services and employment opportunities available to their students through Aboriginal organisations
  - Post-contact Central Australian history workshops, with specific reference to the continuing impact of colonisation on the local population
  - Introductory courses in Central Australian languages
  - ESL and EFL strategies for students who are speakers of Aboriginal languages and dialects, including Aboriginal English
  - Scaffolding literacy techniques
  - The findings of this study
14. Building on the findings of the research into Aboriginal adult education curriculum frameworks undertaken by LAD's Research Centre, on the Intelyapeyape Project and on the draft NT Education Indigenous Languages and Culture Framework, establish a project to research and develop a regional secondary Aboriginal education curriculum, reflecting Aboriginal cultures ' languages, history and politics, to eventually be taught through an Aboriginal-controlled process whether within or outside mainstream schools

### **Student Accommodation**

15. Seek the support of the Alice-in-Ten Committee to finalise community consultations in regard to the accommodation needs of Indigenous secondary school students, as proposed by the Office of Aboriginal Development, while taking note of the work already completed in 1998 by Aboriginal Hostels Ltd .

### **Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

16. Support CAAC Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre (SEVfflC) to access funding to allow it to:
  - Organise exposure to its services for all AIEWs and selected secondary teachers, and develop a referral protocol with them to ensure more Indigenous high school students can access their programs.
  - Work with schools to devise ways they can become more sensitive to family issues, and support students to deal with the trauma, distress and dysfunction affecting many Aboriginal families
  - If appropriate, jointly develop with trained secondary teachers specific materials for schools to use to help students:
    - i. learn how better to cope with family trauma including bereavement; and
    - ii. play more effective leadership roles within the school community.
17. Seek assistance from AITAP to allow CAAC Youth Team and Alice Springs Indigenous Youth Conunittee to organise focus group discussions with secondary age indigenous youth on findings and recommendations of this Report, and in particular to:
  - Identify the best ways for the proposed Aboriginal Education Council to ensure young people are consulted in an ongoing way, and have input into planning and decision making
  - Consider the best way to teach young people how to deal with racism; and
  - Identify options for young women who have children which will allow them to continue with secondary education
18. Invite the CAAC Youth Team and the Alice Springs Indigenous Youth Committee to submit ideas for strategies to deal with peer pressure to leave school, as per the resolution of the Central Australian Youth Summit

### **Education for What? A Regional Approach to the School-to-Work Transition**

19. Seek support from DETYA, the Dusseldorf Skills Foundation, the NT ACC and the Enterprise & Career Education Foundation to undertake an action research project in Central Australia with Aboriginal organisations and providers of vocational education and training (VET) with the aim of developing a more coordinated and targeted VET profile in the region for post-compulsory school-age youth, with courses and programs specifically based on the identified employment and economic development needs of Aboriginal organisations and communities
20. Work with the Alice Springs Aboriginal Organisations to develop a strategy to facilitate pathways for Indigenous school leavers into Aboriginal organisation jobs and careers at all levels, building on the experience and resources of existing programs e.g. CLC cadetships and GYC Mentoring

Program. This could include a coordinated approach linking AITAP, VEGAS, mentoring etc to help current Yr 9-10 students get through to Yr 12 and/or employment and further study.

#### **A Higher Community Profile for Education**

21. Organise joint public acknowledgement by local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (e.g. Mayor) community leaders of successful secondary students to demonstrate that school success is a valued community objective.
22. Support CAAC to seek approval of this secondary schooling consultation study as an in-kind research project of the CRC ATH, with a view to seeking CRCATH assistance with dissemination of the findings throughout its networks in Indigenous Education and Health, and possible support in implementing those recommendations which have the potential to improve community health.
23. Undertake a more thorough consultation with CDEP participants and social welfare recipients, in partnership with Tangentyere and Arrernte Council, to identify 0 The views of this group on ways to improve secondary schooling for their families; and
  - Ways that CDEP participants can assist schools and alternative learning centres to deliver a better service to Indigenous students
24. CLC Media Unit **to** be asked to advise on a publicity strategy to support the findings and recommendation of this Report and its implementation, with assistance from Irrkerlantye media students.

## **Introduction. Origins of this Project**

Over the last ten years, Alice Springs Aboriginal organisations regularly called for action to remedy the poor secondary schooling outcomes that 'mainstream' schools achieve for Aboriginal secondary students in Central Australia. In 1991, the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) undertook detailed research into this problem and recommended a range of actions (Dunbar, 1994). In 1996, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), concerned at the impacts poor education outcomes had on community health, called for a Commonwealth inquiry, and a consultation undertaken by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health discovered widespread community concern (Tsey, 1999). That same year, 1996, Tangentyere Council initiated their own education program at Basso's Farm town camp lease to cater for young town campers who were dropping out of secondary school. This project, known as Detour, became a major initiative the next year, using resources provided by NT Education, DETYA, THS and Tangentyere (Duman & Boughton, 1998). Around this time, the Central Und Council (CLC) began its own investigations in relation to the need for secondary schooling in some of the communities it represented. In May 1997, IAD's Director, Donna AhChee, wrote to the Department seeking urgent discussions on what could be done to improve the situation.

At the end of 1998, with concern in the community still growing, a community forum at Yipirinya School passed a series of resolutions calling for action to improve education provision to Aboriginal students, including investigating the need to "set up an Aboriginal Education System (with) an independent secondary school" (Vadiveloo, 1999, p 22). In June the following year, a program of action based on these resolutions circulated to all the local organisations, seeking their endorsement, and was also put to the NT Education Department Regional Director's Secondary Indigenous Reference Group (SIRG). In August 1999, this committee adopted these recommendations as part of its terms of reference, and a meeting attended by local organisations decided to seek funding to explore the independent school option. Following a submission from Tangentyere and Yipirinya, SIRG agreed to an offer from the then Director of the NTDE Indigenous Education Branch to support an initial investigation. An open tender was called for an investigation, and this was eventually awarded to CAAC as the managing agency in October 2000.

Meanwhile, the growing concerns of the community prompted governments also to pay some attention to the issue. At the Commonwealth level, a major review in 1995 found serious deficiencies nationally in the implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (Australia. Commonwealth, 1995), drawing particular attention to low retention among secondary school students. A new national strategy adopted at the same time included this as a priority area (MCEETYA (Ministerial Council on Employment, 1995). In September 1998, the Senate initiated an inquiry to find out why the recommendations of previous inquiries had not been implemented and/or resulted in major improvements. In February 1999, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) initiated its own inquiry into rural and remote schooling, with a specific focus on Indigenous education issues. The Senate Inquiry published its report in March 2000, while the HREOC Inquiry produced four separate reports between March and May 2000.

In the NT, a Parliamentary Accounts Committee Report in August 1996 found that participation in education by secondary-aged Aboriginal young people across the NT was only 57.8%, compared with 90.48% for the non Indigenous population. In remote communities, the situation was said to be even worse (Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, 1996). Following a major internal review in September 1998, NT Education established an Aboriginal Education branch, and in March the following year, the Secretary commissioned an independent Territory-wide review of Indigenous education, led by Bob Collins. This Review found that while there was there was "a widespread desire amongst Indigenous people for improvements in the education of their children", there was also "unequivocal evidence of deteriorating outcomes", and "substantial evidence of long-term systemic failure to address this situation." The secondary system was singled out for particular attention, and recommendations made for far-reaching change across all sectors (Northern Territory. Department of Education, 1999). These recommendations have now led to a new Strategic Plan for Indigenous Education in the N.T.

### **Aims and objectives**

Against this background, the tender documentation for this project required the consultant (i.e. CAAC) to facilitate community consultations in Alice Springs about the provision of secondary education, with four specific objectives, or tasks:

1. Provide appropriate information in an accessible format to Indigenous participants in the community consultation thus enabling identification of preferred options for community-controlled secondary education and reach consensus about preferred option
2. Identify a strategic way forward that takes into account the flexible programs presently operating in Alice Springs
  - a. Irrkerlentyere Learning Centre (Centralian College)
  - b. Akaltye Centre (Centralian College)
  - c. Alice Outcomes (Alice Springs 1-high School)
  - d. Yarrenytye Aritere Learning Centre (Gillen Primary).
3. Obtain information to support the development of a proposal for an independent secondary Indigenous school in Alice Springs
4. Develop an implementation plan for recommendations.

Assisting the community to clarify and document its views on the independent school was a major focus of the study, but several other issues were also raised, including:

- Providing information to inform project participants and help them to identify options for community-controlled secondary education
- Examining and taking into account existing 'flexible' programs already provided by the Department, some of them in partnership with community organisations.
- Development by SIRG of long-term strategies to increase access and participation

While none of these issues necessarily contradicted the original impetus to move towards establishing an independent secondary school, they considerably broadened the scope of the project. At the same time, the scope was also narrowed somewhat by the tender documentation, which expressly proscribed any consultations across the whole region, confining the project to the town of Alice Springs.

## **Methodology**

Reflecting on developments over the last decade, one cannot help but be struck by the enormous amount of activity and concern expressed about Indigenous secondary education both by government and by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The tragedy is that this has not translated as yet into programs able to reverse current trends towards increasing educational inequality in the N.T., and elsewhere. The challenge of this project was to develop a response capable of doing just that, if only at a local level. The strategy adopted was to resource the community-controlled organisations to engage with government agencies in a joint action-research process of evidence-based policy and program development, implementation and evaluation. This strategy, it was hoped, would consolidate and strengthen the capacity of the community itself to deal with and solve the problems identified.

This methodology grew out of the Principal Investigator's experience in the CRC ATH Indigenous Health and Education Program (Boughton, In press) and in previous research projects undertaken in collaboration with the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, 1997b). Put simply, the model combines community development strategies with more conventional research techniques, so that the research project consolidates, develops and resources existing networks of leadership within the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, making it possible for them to operate on more equal terms with government agencies. A fundamental feature of this model is that community controlled organisations play a central role. This implements a major recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which concluded that community-controlled organisations were the key to effective self-determination (Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, 1997a).

The process aimed to allow 'the community' to develop its own position on what sort of provision should be made for young Indigenous people who are currently not participating in secondary education, or, if they are participating, are doing so with much less engagement and success than their non-Indigenous counterparts. However, the 'Aboriginal community' is not a straightforward concept. It includes individuals, families and incorporated organisations. It is divided along age, gender, linguistic, religious and other axes; it does not have a clear geographical boundary; and it has no clear mechanisms for expressing 'its' opinions. The Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are an attempt to incorporate disparate groups of people in such a way that they can deal with government and each other more effectively. But part of the challenge of this project was that the demise of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations (CAO) forum in the 1990s had left 'the community' with few if any mechanisms by which such organisations can simply and easily come to a common position.

### Project Steering Committee

Because membership of SIRG, the body commissioning the study, included several major organisations, there was already in place, via the SIRG Project Sub-committee, a forum through which some of the key organisations could work together on this issue. Through this Project, the Steering Committee was able to extend its membership to become more inclusive of the major organisations in town, especially those with an interest in the issue. A key role of the Project Manager, Congress, was to provide leadership to this committee, which it did through a senior Aboriginal manager, Donna Ah Chee, who took on the role of Chairperson. Donna and her organisation also undertook day-to-day management and support of the consultant researcher and the project administration.

Project Steering Committee meetings were well-attended, and eventually grew to include representatives of six community-controlled organisations:

Central Australian Aboriginal Congress  
Central Land Council  
Institute for Aboriginal Development  
Ngarte Nhkwekenhe  
Tangentyere Council  
Yipirinya School Council

High school ASSPA Committees and AIEWs were represented by a high-school Aboriginal & Islander Education Worker (AIEW). NT Education provided two further representatives, one a senior secondary college AIEW, the other the Executive Officer of its Secondary Indigenous Reference Group. There was a representative of DETYA and, right at the end of the project, of ATSIC. With ten major stakeholders in Aboriginal education attending, it became a significant representative body. The Committee met ten times during the project, and participation ranged from a high of 100% down to a low of 10%. A total of twenty-three (24) individuals took part in these meetings, of whom fifteen ( 63% ) were Aboriginal people. The average attendance was nine (9).

**Table 1. Steering Committee Attendance by Organisation**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Meetings</b>
CAAC	10
Yipirinya	10
NT Education	10
Tangentyere	8
CLC	6
LAD	5
AIEW network	4
Ngarte Nfikwekenhe	3
DETYA	2
ATSIC	1

The Committee signed off on a work schedule proposed by CAAC, then reviewed progress at each meeting through discussion of written reports. Between meetings, committee members themselves undertook essential project work. This included: • Advertising the existence of the investigation; • Reporting back to the management of their own organisations; • Organising and assisting with the conduct of consultations and interviews within those organisations with staff, community leaders, clients and constituents. The development and resourcing of the Steering Committee was a significant aspect of the methodology, and made a major contribution to the development over time of a community-wide consensus on the issues under investigation. Full details of membership and attendance are provided in Appendix 1.

### Literature Review

Over the six months of the project, the Principal Investigator (PI) reviewed a significant sample of the relevant research literature. Highlights were circulated to Steering Committee members, and summarised in the written reports. The major sources were: • The CRC ATH Indigenous Health and Education Program resource database • Australian Education Index; • Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) on-line database.

Relevant government publications included the recent investigations by Senate Employment Education and Training Committee, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the NT Review of Aboriginal Education. Additional publications of relevance were obtained from DETYA and NT Education. A full list of the sources consulted is provided at the end of this report. In addition to these, the internet was used to assist with identifying and examining models of Indigenous-controlled secondary education programs interstate and overseas (See Appendix 2. A Websurfing Guide to Indigenous-Controlled Education).

### Community consultations

The aim of the consultations was not simply to find out what people thought, but to establish an informed consensus among the participating organisations which would encompass and reflect the diversity of views, needs and interests in the community. The action-research methodology adopted to achieve this can be conceived in terms of a series of cycles or 'feedback loops', whereby initial investigations led to conclusions or proposals which were then tested through further investigations leading to more developed conclusions. Within this model, the community ceases to become the object of research, but instead participates actively in a research and development process to create its own new knowledge and understandings. For example:

Data on retention was analysed to produce some quantitative analysis which was then discussed with people to produce more qualitative data;

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<sup>1</sup> This is a collection of some 600 references identified by the PI in his time as the Education Research Fellow of the CRC ATH, and made available to this project by the Menzies School of Health Research.



- The research literature was examined for potential reasons for non-retention, and these reasons were included in questionnaires and discussions which produced more detailed and locally-validated analyses;
- Views expressed in consultations with one organisation were fed back to another organisation as part of their consultation, and the views of all organisations discussed further in Steering Committee meetings, leading to further clarification;
- Representatives from one or more organisations took part in consultations with other organisations, and in examining programs in which they themselves had not previously been involved;
- Reports on meetings and interviews were where possible fed back to the participants, leading to further comments and clarification;
- On the basis of reports and presentations from the PI and the Aboriginal Researchers, the Steering Committee suggested new directions the research should take.

The question arises in any community consultation as to how representative the sample has been. To ensure maximum representativeness the following strategies were employed:

- Advertising the project through community organisations and government agencies
- Holding meetings with both elected Boards and staff within the organisations
- Randomly sampling a percentage of Indigenous parents of Yr 6-7 students in government schools
- Inviting community organisation staff, school principals and other educators to nominate parents and community leaders to be approached

Input from individuals from the community was organised at a number of levels, as follows:

- Initial brief contact, either by phone or in person, where the project was discussed
- Discussion in meetings called for other purposes
- Detailed structured discussion either in individual interview or focus group meeting convened specifically for this purpose
- Ongoing involvement in meetings to direct the project and formulate final community consensus.

The main 'instrument' utilised in the community consultation was an interview schedule, designed to stimulate open-ended discussion and debate. A copy is attached at Appendix 3. In addition to these structured consultations, more opportunistic consultations were undertaken by having the Project included as an item on the agenda of a range of community meetings, and through one-on-one and small group conversations between members of the Project Team and people from the community. The original qualitative data is contained within the records of interviews and discussions, and minutes of meetings. In addition to the Steering Committee meetings listed above, thirty documented meetings and discussions were held over the six months the Project ran, as set out Table 2, below.

Table 2. Community meetings, discussions and interviews held by Project Team

Date	Community Participants	Project Team Members
7/11/00	AIEW Network (10)	Bob Boughton
16/11/00	NTDE Cluster Principals (12+)	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
17/11/00	CLC Director (1)	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
20/11/00	DETYA field staff (5)	Bob Boughton
29/11/00	CAAC Director (1)	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
05/12/00	NTDE IEB Forum	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
06/12/00	NTDE IEB Forum	Bob Boughton
07/12/00	CAAC Staff Forum (13)	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
11/12/00	IAD Staff (4)	Leshay Maidment
16/01/01	CAAC Youth Team (5)	Bob Boughton
22/01/01	IAD Staff (1)	Leshay Maidment
23/01/01	Tangentyere Executive and staff (13)	Bob Boughton, Mike Bowden
23/01/01	Senior Aboriginal educator (1)	Bob Boughton
25/01/01	Tangentyere Job Shop Staff (3)	Bob Boughton
31/01/01	Tangentyere Housing Office Staff (7)	Bob Boughton
1/2/01	Models Workshop (30+)	All Steercom members
8/3/01	Yiririnya President & staff (2)	Bob Boughton
12/3/01	GYC/Alice Outcomes staff (9)	Bob Boughton
13/3/01	Irrkerlantye staff & participants (10)	Bob Boughton, Margaret Mary Turner
14/3/01	Tangentyere Exec Sub-committee (7)	Bob Boughton
15/3/01	CLC Directorate staff (2)	Bob Boughton, Philip Watkins
16/3/01	CAAC Cabinet & Senior staff	Donna Ah Chee, Bob Boughton
23/3/01	CAAC Cabinet (10)	Bob Boughton
23/3/01	Yipirinya Council (9)	Bob Boughton
28/3/01	Ngarte Mikwekenhe Committee (7)	Bob Boughton, Margaret Mary Turner
28/3/01	Yarrentye Arltene Learning Centre staff and participants (15)	Bob Boughton
30/3/02	IAD staff (2)	Leshay Maidment
6/4/01	Yipirinya Council members (3)	Bob Boughton, Margaret Mary Turner
10/4/01	Ingkerreke members (6)	Philip Watkins, Margaret Mary Turner
16/5/01	Alice Springs Native Title Holders	Dona Ah Chee, Philip Watkins, Bob Boughton

A database of people who contributed included 131 individual Aboriginal people by the conclusion of the project. However, it was not always possible to gain detailed information, and we estimate as many as 200 more members of the community contributed by discussing the issues with members of the Project Team, without their names or other details being recorded. For example, we did not record the names of young people who attended the Youth Summit workshops where issues that the Project Chairperson

raised in her keynote address were discussed. In addition, most Steering Committee members reported holding their own 'informal consultations' with students, co-workers and family members.

#### Input from other sources

Further input was also obtained from approximately fifty (50) non-Indigenous people, mainly professionals working in education and in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. These included:

- Non-indigenous participants in meetings of the Project Steering Committee and the Secondary Indigenous Reference Group
- School principals and teachers
- Non-indigenous advisers in the Alice Springs community-controlled organisations
- Education researchers and policy workers
- Senior Commonwealth and NT government officials interested in the project.

The tables below set out some characteristics of our sample. Out of the 131 Aboriginal community participants for whom we recorded details, 72% were women, reflecting the overwhelming participation of women within the education and community services sector, as paid employees and as volunteers. People associated with the organisations and agencies represented on the Steering Committee made up 81% of our participants. Eighty percent were associated with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, as staff or committee members, while the remaining were either 'nonaligned' parents and/or worked for government agencies. Nine community-controlled organisations took part in the consultations through participation by staff and/or committee members. Over fifty percent of the participants came from three organisations, CAAC, Tangentyere and Yipirinya.

**Table 3. All participants by Aboriginality**

<b>Aboriginality</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Aboriginal	131	74.4
Non Aboriginal	45	25/6
Total	176	100.0

**Table 4. Aboriginal participants by gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	94	71.8
Male	37	28.2
Total	131	100.0

**Table 5. All participants by affiliation**

<b>Type of affiliation</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Steercom organisation	106	81.9
ACCO	105	80.2

### Quantitative data

The policy and literature review, the community consultations, and the input from outside experts was supplemented by some original analysis of quantitative data collected by NTDE, ABS and other agencies. The main sources were NTDE's enrolment data, of which we gained access to August 2000 age/grade figures, an age/grade series from 1988 - 1998, and some data on completions and outcomes in the southern region for 2000, and for previous years. We also used published ABS data including the Population Census and the annual Schools collection. Unpublished ABS community profile data and a THS experimental population data series for the NT, by age, gender, Aboriginality and region was made available through the Menzies/CRCATH database.

## **FINDINGS, DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The data from the four components of the methodology, namely the dialogue and debate within the Steering Committee, the literature review, the quantitative data analysis, and the community consultation have been brought together and analysed in this section of the Report under a series of themes or topics. In most cases, the analysis leads directly to one or more recommendations, which in each case are actions on which the Steering Committee has reached consensus. In some cases it is clear which organisations and government agencies will need to work together to implement the recommendation, but in some cases this was still being debated at the time this Report was drafted. In general, the implementation model proposed is one where a partnership arrangement will first need to be negotiated between one or more Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and one or more government agencies at either NT or Commonwealth level, to allow the action to proceed. This is summarised in a Draft Implementation Plan at the end of the Report, as required by the Project Brief.

### **Secondary education access, participation and retention in the Alice Springs region**

For the purposes of this study, any young person enrolled in a secondary program of any kind is considered to be accessing and participating in secondary education. In fact, this does not measure participation in the educational sense, because someone can be enrolled but not attending. This, however, is the way ABS calculates education participation rates, measuring the percentage of a population which is enrolled in some form of education. To find this rate, one needs to know how many people are enrolled, and the total relevant population. So, for example, if there are 100 secondary age students in a community, and 75 are enrolled in secondary schooling, this produces a 75% participation' rate. Educators are more used to referring to this as the 'access' rate.

We already know from the census and other research that secondary participation rates in the Aboriginal community are much lower than for the Australian population as a whole, and it is a major national policy goal to reduce this gap. The *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey* (NATSIS) found that the participation rate of Indigenous 16 year olds was 57 per cent, compared with 80 per cent for all Australian youth; and for Indigenous 17 year olds the rate was 31 per cent compared with 60 per cent for all Australian youth. A more recent paper said that the overall national secondary Indigenous participation rate in secondary schooling has risen from 54% in 1986 to 60% in 1996, but still fell well short of the non-Indigenous rate of 84% (Buckskin, 2000). There is considerable national variation and it is well established that the NT has a lower rate than any other state. The 1996 NT Legislative Assembly Report accepted evidence that participation by secondary

aged Aboriginal young people across the NT was only 57.8%, compared with 90.48% for the non-Indigenous population.

While it is possible to determine how many young people are enrolled in high schools in Alice Springs, working out participation rate is at the regional or local level is not straightforward, because it is very hard to determine what exactly is the size of the secondary age population. For example, the NTDE figures show there were 1400 Indigenous students enrolled in the Southern Region in August 2000 in grades 7-12, plus ungraded and secondary-age enrolments. But how do we count the ones who are not enrolled? One way of approaching the problem is to try to get accurate figures on the total numbers of young people in each age group, but this is affected both by mobility and by the small size of the sample. Because people move between town and bush communities the population in town varies dramatically over time. For example, data from a large bush community serviced from Alice Springs show that at any one time up to 20% of the population are absent - either in town or in other communities or outstations. Mobility of people whose 'normal' address is within Alice Springs is no less significant, especially on town camps. The only exhaustive count is the census, but for an area the size of Alice Springs, the numbers of Indigenous people for each year of age are too small to provide reliable data. The best estimate for one age cohort, i.e.. the 12-19 age group, using 1996 Census data, is set out in Table 6, below.

**Table 6. Alice Springs Indigenous Population 1996**

(Source: Unpublished ABS Alice Springs Profiles Data)

Age	Males	Females	Persons
12	20	32	52
13	26	38	64
14	22	27	49
15	29	29	58
16	21	23	44
17	20	31	51
18	30	38	68
19	23	26	49
Total:	191	244	435

However, to arrive at a total for the same age cohort in 2000, we would have to use data on people who were younger in 1996, namely people who were aged 8 - 15. The total in this age cohort in 1996 was around the same, i.e. 432. But when this is compared with the available data on enrolments in Southern Region High Schools (excluding St Phillips and NTOE) for the same age cohort, the figure is *higher*, at 696. This occurs because these enrolment figures include Tennant Creek High School and Yirara College, both of who draw their enrolments from outside Alice Springs. For confidentiality reasons, NT Education did not provide the Project with individual High School data needed to correct for this.

Other data sources suggest that the ABS figures are an underestimate, which would also help to explain the higher participation rate. But it is worth noting that the age cohort immediately behind the one we have considered, i.e. children and young people who in 1996 were aged 0 - 7, was 40% larger than this one we are considering now, at 606. If this is accurate, then the number of Indigenous

secondary-age students in this region is set to increase dramatically over the next few years. To summarise:

- Official statistics on population probably under estimate the numbers of secondary age students in Alice Springs at any one time, because of mobility patterns and the difficulties of collecting accurate data;
- There is a significant growth trend in the young Aboriginal population, the peak of which is only just starting to reach high school age;
- Publicly-available enrolment figures for Southern Region High Schools include several hundred young people who do not live in Alice Springs, and so do not allow us to measure participation rates accurately.

There are other ways to estimate secondary school participation rates, for example, by comparing the numbers who were enrolled in primary school in previous years with the numbers now enrolled in secondary school. This is not foolproof, because people move out of the area, and some parents send children away to secondary school. But it does give some sense of the trend. If we consider the population in Years 7-12, and Ungraded/secondary age prograMS2 , excluding Yirra and Tennant Creek altogether, we get a figure of approximately 400 Indigenous students. Tracing backwards, and assuming no one repeats, we can compare this figure with the numbers enrolled in Grades 1-6 in 1989. While these are still estimates, they suggest there are approximately 150 - 200 secondary-age young people normally resident in Alice Springs who are not participating in secondary schooling. A slightly higher estimate (250) is obtained if we take the largest 1998 enrolment for a single grade (which was in Transition) as the upper limit of participation, and project this forward into high school. Some of these will be in VET programs or employment, leaving the remainder outside the system altogether. One has to conclude from this that it should not be a huge problem to address the needs of what is really not a very large group of young people.

However, we were constantly told during the consultations that it makes little sense to think of the secondary age 'problem' simply in terms of young people whose residential address is within Alice Springs and its immediate environs, because there are always large numbers of Indigenous young people in town whose 'official' residence is elsewhere, but one of the reasons they are here is because of the lack of secondary education provision in their home communities. At Yarrantye Arltère camp, for example, it was reported to us that 'town-based' non-attenders link up with other young people who have dropped out of Yirra but not returned to their home communities, and are in effect homeless.

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<sup>2</sup> Ungraded and secondary-aged enrolment figures count secondary-age students who have finished primary school, but have not been enrolled in the standard Yr 7 - 12 secondary curriculum, usually because they are judged to have insufficient English language literacy and numeracy.

It is for this reason that we have concluded that the problem is a regional rather than an Alice Springs one, and the problems of low school participation in town cannot be solved in isolation from the problems in the surrounding communities. The solution is to establish regional targets for participation in secondary education. However, before this can be done sensibly, there is a need to engage with the Aboriginal leadership in the bush communities in the way that this project has done with the town-based leadership. This is a task which the Steering Committee concluded could best be undertaken by Central Land Council. See recommendation 4., below).

## **Retention and outcomes**

It might be argued that the existing range of schools and programs provides, in theory at least, an adequate range of options for secondary-aged Indigenous youth in town, such that the problem is not really one of access, at least not in the urban area. The programs are there, and in fact the participation figures above imply that most young people do enrol in secondary schooling at some stage. However, this only serves to highlight a much more serious problem, namely that almost none of these young people remain in schooling for as long as they could or should. This is the problem of school retention. As a consequence, not many Indigenous students leave school with a recognised Year 10 or Year 12 certificate, which is the problem of outcomes. Once again, this is an Australia-wide issue, with Indigenous retention and completion rates for year 10 and Year 12 much lower than non-Indigenous rates. There has been enormous work done on this in recent years, and the figures are well known, including the fact that the situation in the NT is more serious than in any other state or territory (Australia. Commonwealth, 1995; Schwab, 1999). The Collins Review said Indigenous students had a Year 8-12 retention rate of 14%, compared with 80% for non-Indigenous students. The NTDE preliminary estimate for 2000 put these figures at 23% and 59.4%.

Secondary retention is measured by an index known as the Apparent Retention Rate. This measures the percentage of students who start Year 7 who are still enrolled in Year 10. It is an 'apparent' rate, because only the numbers are used, not names, so we do not actually know whether we are talking about the same students. Movement between regions and interstate obviously has an effect, especially in a place like Alice Springs where families have a history of sending children away to school, while at the same time there is a lot of in- and out- migration. With this caution in mind, data provided by NTDE allow us to see how very serious the problem is in this region. Figures were only available from Year 8 - 12. This leads to an over-estimate of the retention from the start of high school (Year 7), because we do not know how many students did not transit from Year 7 into Year 8. Even so, these figures show that the number of students enrolled in Year 12 in 1998 were less than one fifth of those who had enrolled in Year 8 in 1994. This was nevertheless a significant improvement on previous years. The cohort which enrolled in Year 12 in 1996 was less than one tenth the size of the one that had been in the corresponding Year 8 class in 1992.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication 15101101 with Jill Totham and John Yick, NTDE.

**Table 7. Year 8 - 12 Retention 1996 - 1998, NTDE Southern Region.**

(Source. Original calculations from unpublished NTDE data.)

Retention Rate Yr 8 - 12	
Yr 12 1998	17.7%
Yr 12 1997	15.5%
Yr 12 1996	7.4%

However, for reasons explained in a recent study by Schwab (1999), this figure is not measuring the actual retention rate. This is because a large number of Indigenous students in NT schools do not make the transition from primary to the 'mainstream' secondary curriculum. Instead, they are moved into 'ungraded' programs, where they are not counted for the purpose of calculating retention. When these students are counted, the retention levels fall below 5%, i.e. less than 1 out of every 20 Indigenous students who complete primary school will go on to complete year 12. The current Year 7- 12 curriculum thus fails to provide an educational pathway for over 95% of its Indigenous clients. Even if we only take retention to Year 10, which is the basic prerequisite for entering the lowest VET level post secondary course, the figure is still very low, something less than 20%.

Many community members we spoke to were well aware of this problem. When asked what they knew about the outcomes Indigenous students were getting from high schools in Alice Springs, people said things like "There are not many positive outcomes" and "There are very few students who achieve good outcomes." Hardly anyone knew more than one or two students who had completed Year 12. They also knew lots of young people who had dropped out before completing Year 10. Some people also knew that problems here were worse than in other states and territories. Organisation leaders were particularly concerned about the lack of young people with sufficient education to take on positions in their organisations, or undertake post-school study to qualify them to do this work. One other consequence which people pointed out on several occasions was that there are many more applicants than are required for the low wage low skilled jobs. Another was that organisations are forced to consume scarce resources in providing staff with in-service training to upgrade basic skills, or allowing time off for staff to undertake VET-accredited courses which include adult basic education.

The basic problem is this. While young Aboriginal people make up over 50% of the population in the region, and this is reflected now in primary school enrolments, by Year 10 they represent less than 20% of enrolments. Most of their friends and peers have by this stage dropped out altogether, though a small proportion continue in the nongraded programs. By year 12, all but a tiny minority have left, and the numbers completing a recognised year 12 qualification are miniscule. This is the reality which underlies the low participation rate - a fundamental lack of fit between the school system and the needs and aspirations of its Indigenous clients. The community knows this; our consultations show that the majority of Aboriginal people in the community believe that the existing school system is failing badly in its efforts to meet the educational needs of most secondary-age young Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. While most people we consulted said that families, parents and young people themselves have to take some responsibility for this situation, they were adamant that the secondary school system should be doing much better than it is. The situation is producing widespread



dissatisfaction, frustration, anger and distress in the Aboriginal community, and many people blame the education system for the community's inability to solve many other social problems, including poor health, high unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse, and youth alienation. The solutions, they believe, lie in making some major changes, and the remainder of this section of the report considers what these might be.

### ***Community leadership and control***

For over two decades, Aboriginal education research literature and policy documents have highlighted the importance of Aboriginal leadership in effective education provision. Greater involvement of Aboriginal people in decision-making about their children's education was a major objective of the National Aboriginal Education Policy adopted in 1989. It should also be noted that one of the six 'key elements' of the most recent NT Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2000 - 2004 calls for "Indigenous parents and communities (to) share responsibility with government for educational outcomes". This was further reinforced in this study by the views of all stakeholders, both from government and the community. Yet almost every Aboriginal person who took part in this consultation expressed the view that schools and the education system were still not listening to them and not taking enough notice of their views about what needed to be done.

This Project itself has played a role in overcoming this problem within the Alice Springs region, by mobilising community members to articulate their views and make recommendations for change, thereby helping to create a collective leadership from within the community willing to accept responsibility for this work. The most significant indication of success is that the Project Team, which included the Principal Investigator, the Research Assistants, and the members of the Steering Committee, was able to reach out to over 200 Aboriginal people in the Alice Springs region, the majority of them playing leadership roles in the community's own organizations, and engage with them in systematic discussion and reflection about secondary education and what needs to be done to improve it. The people participating have come from diverse backgrounds, reflecting different sectors and groups within the community. Almost all these discussions took place in groups, stimulating substantial debate about the nature of the problems and possible solutions. The record of these discussions and interviews provide an invaluable guide to the community's perceptions and aspirations, which should now inform developments within secondary education over the next five years. Another indication of success is that this process has remained under the control of the community, via the leadership of its own community-controlled organizations. The outcome is the development of a more informed and cohesive regional education leadership drawn from within these organizations, able to do what the 1990 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody proposed:

The only chance for improving education as a social resource for Aboriginal people will come as a result of Aboriginal people deciding for themselves what it is they require of education and then having the means of determining how that end is to be achieved. (RCIADIC, V.4, Ch 33, para 1.9).

This process of local leadership development began well before this project; in fact, it dates back at least to 1969, when the Uniting Church helped establish the Institute for Aboriginal Development, which grew to become a major community-controlled adult education provider and research institution servicing the region. The establishment of Yipirinya School Council in 1978 helped develop a new set

of leaders from among people living on the town camps. More recently the ASSPA and AIEW programs have introduced more Aboriginal leadership into mainstream schools, while particular campaigns such as the Traegar Park case in 1991 have also played a role. The most recent contributions to this process have included the work of Tangentyere, Ngarte Mikwekenhe and the Gap Youth Centre in partnership with NT Education schools to promote three innovative Community Learning Centres, described below. What this consultation Project has done is to help six of the key local organisations focus together on problems in secondary education provision, and access some resources to develop their own understandings and solutions.

There were significant gaps and shortcomings in what was done. For example, we did not have formal meetings with seven major town-based organizations, namely CAAMA, CAALAS, CAACCA/Aranda House, CAAPU, Arrernte Council, Pitjantjajara Council, and NPY Women's Council. Nevertheless, some people involved in the leadership of these organizations had input through their involvement in one or more of the organizations which have participated. As this Report was being written, the Steering Committee was seeking ways to discuss it at the Combined Aboriginal Organisations meeting, which will ensure that all major organizations will have had at least some input. Another shortcoming has been the preponderance of women over men in the groups which have discussed the project. This reflects in part the gender balance on many committees, and the greater involvement of women generally in education. Thirdly, we were not able to recruit a trained interpreter to our research team until well into the project, and she was only one of five people working on the consultations. This means we may not fully have canvassed the views of people for whom English is not their first language. Fourthly, young people tend not to be well-represented in the senior staff and board level of organizations where our consultations focused, so we did not hear from many students themselves. However, in the closing stages of this project, the organisation managing this project, CAAC, co-hosted with the Central Australian Indigenous Youth Committee an Indigenous Youth Summit (funded from another source), which was attended by around 300 Indigenous youth, drawn from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Willowra, Harts Range, Mutitjulu, Santa Theresa, and Blackstone (WA). The majority of participants were under 20 years old, and many were of secondary school age. Our Steering Committee Chairperson gave a keynote address on education issues, and several workshops took up the issues she raised. As a result, several resolutions were passed which have now taken into account in this Report. A full set of the resolutions is attached at Appendix 4.

While attendance and participation in the Steering Committee was good, the development through the Steering Committee of a coherent and stable Aboriginal leadership team had to overcome some challenges. The Principal of Yipirinya resigned from the school at the beginning of December and was not replaced until February, which curtailed Yipirinya's capacity to contribute. Early in the project, conflict among some organisations on other issues tended to undermine their capacity to work together on this issue. As the Project was being completed, IAD lost its Deputy Director, an experienced educator and education researcher who had responsibility for leading their input to this project. At various times, some of the organisations did not have senior Aboriginal leaders available to represent them, and some organisations, including ATSIC and Ngarte Mikwekenhe only finalised the representation late in the life of the project. Finally, as in every area of activity in the Alice Springs Aboriginal community, family illness and death undermined peoples' capacity to participate regularly.

Nevertheless, the project demonstrated that key organisations in the community are willing and able to unite and work together to help solve the crisis in secondary education. Every organisation which participated named education as a number one priority and expressed the view that all organisations needed to work together on this. The absence of a body charged with this responsibility, and able to bring the different community-controlled organisations together was noted on numerous occasions. While noting that there were significant differences in the two sectors, a number of contributors to the debate contrasted this situation with the primary health sector, where AMSANT has played such a role.

The first and most important recommendation of this Report therefore sets out to build on the work done to date, by institutionalising a new level of Aboriginal leadership within education planning and decision making in Central Australia<sup>4</sup>.

**Recommendation 1.**

Establish an independent and autonomous Central Australian Aboriginal Education Forum charged in the first instance with ensuring that the findings and recommendations of this report are implemented within the next five years, so that the diversity of secondary education needs within the Aboriginal community are recognised and met.

The formation of this body requires some thought. As the Collins review demonstrated, previous attempts at creating an NT-wide Aboriginal Education Consultative Group had serious problems. Some of these had been documented much earlier when IAD undertook its pioneering study of secondary schooling (Dunbar, 1994). The question was raised by NT Education as to why a separate Aboriginal Forum is required, and whether it might not be preferable to continue simply along the lines provided by SIRG, where the organisations and the Department's and non-government schools Principals and senior officials meet together. This ignores the fact that

4 reconciliation' and 'partnership' have to be built slowly over time. Only ten years ago (April 1991) the then NT Minister for Education justified the closure of Traegar Park School on the grounds that an urban Aboriginal school was "a travesty", and was taken to court by parents and the ASSPA Committee on the grounds of racial discrimination. The parents lost their case, and the school was transferred to the Catholic system. As part of the same 'rationalisation', Yirara College, until then a public school, was transferred to the Lutheran Church, once again against significant opposition from sections of the

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<sup>4</sup> For the purpose of this recommendation, it was agreed by participating Aboriginal organisations, at a meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2001, that Central Australia be defined to encompass the nine regions covered by the Central Land Council.

Aboriginal community, including IAD which sought instead to have the school transferred to community control. Even more recently, in 1999, the Department's decision to close down its bilingual program was vigorously opposed by large sections of the community. There is therefore a legacy of conflict which cannot simply be swept under the table, and which still prevents full and frank discussion in joint forums.

In any event, the Aboriginal community has a right to formulate its own views about its requirements from the education system independently of the processes by which the Department comes to its views. This position was put strongly in the 1998 Kalkaringi Statement of the Combined Aboriginal Nations of Central Australia, and reiterated by many participants in the consultations. While ultimately what happens should reflect the best thinking from both sources, as well as from the Commonwealth, there remains a need for the community to have its own independent processes and sources of advice and decision-making. This will be the function of the proposed Forum.

Because this Forum will operate on the land of the Arrernte Custodians of the Alice Springs region, there will need to be protocols negotiated to ensure that its establishment has their support. In the first instance, this means, negotiations have to be held with the people on whose land this body will be established. This accords with an issue raised by many people, who told us that education should be discussed and debated in ways which recognise the original people of this region, acknowledging the ongoing presence of their own pre-existing education systems, which continue to provide important knowledge about how people should live and behave.

#### Recommendation 2.

Seek the assistance of the Native Title Holders Prescribed Body Corporate to coordinate a process to identify ways of involving the Native Title Holders of Alice Springs more in providing educational leadership to young people living and studying in their lands, including ensuring that the views of the custodians of the traditional law in this region are properly represented and heard within the proposed Aboriginal Education Forum; ensuring that all education providers acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal laws and customs of this region, and include this as an integral part of their curriculum.

### **An Aboriginal-controlled High School?**

At the outset of this project, several participating organisations were already committed at a leadership level to supporting the development of an independent Aboriginal community-controlled secondary school. However, during the consultations, individuals and groups were asked a series of questions on this option, and the diversity of responses was striking. As this evidence began to accumulate, the Steering Committee accepted that the Aboriginal community did not have a unified position, and began to work towards formulating a strategy which all stakeholders could support, and which would not create divisions among different groups, by appearing to support the interests of one group at the expense of another.

Taking the views that tended not to support the establishment of an independent school firstly, they usually included one or more of a number of points. There was significant concern that an independent school might exacerbate existing divisions between black and white, given that the community aimed for greater reconciliation. Students who attended such a school might not learn to mix effectively with people from the dominant culture, and, in a slightly different point, would not learn the skills needed to survive in that culture, especially employment skills. People who took these views tended to be opposed in principle to the establishment of the school, not only for their own children and grandchildren, but for

any children. Many more people, however, expressed a more pragmatic view. They thought that an independent school would be unlikely to attract the resources of a mainstream school, and felt that this would allow governments to avoid their responsibilities, and blame the problem back on the community. For their own children and grandchildren, they wanted a better education through the government system or the existing private schools, especially the Catholic high school, which was seen to be having some good results. However, they did not oppose the establishment of an independent school if that was what some people wanted, especially people for whom English was not their first language, and whose children were thought to have little chance in the mainstream schools because of this. Some people referred to the example of the 'old' Yirara, which when it was a government school, enrolled some language speaking young people from the town camps.

On the other hand, similar numbers ' of people actively wanted to have the independent option, and this was more true among people for whom English was the second or sometimes third language. Some but not all these people lived or had lived on town camps, in surrounding outstations or in nearby communities, including Ltentye Aperte (formerly Santa Teresa). Note however, that some families with that background opted for the Catholic or government school system, or Yirara, or to send their young people away, and would not necessarily use an independent school. Both the Central Land Council and some outstation families wanted an independent high school, but were worried about the effect on their communities if it was built in town.

The strongest support for the independent school came, as might be expected, from Yipirinya School Council, and from Tangentyere Council Executive members who had also been associated with Yipirinya's establishment. Yipirinya's President was one of the most outspoken proponents, and said that it did not matter what government decided, or what other organisations said, Yipirinya Council would set up its own high school regardless. Like the first cited group, this was the expression of an 'in principle' argument, namely that Aboriginal young people should get an Aboriginal education, one firmly grounded in their own law, languages and cultures. However, this view was not confined to language speakers, or to people closely associated with Yipirinya, and was echoed by some young people, and by some Aboriginal educators and leaders working in more urban settings as well. A few people suggested that students should be able to enrol both in the mainstream, and in the independent school, taking appropriate curriculum from each. Some Yipirinya Council members thought their school should also offer courses to non-Aboriginal students, in Aboriginal languages and culture.

The consultation having revealed the diversity of opinion, the challenge was to produce a recommendation which reflected this. In the end, this came down to whether or not Yipirinya should be supported to develop its own high school programs, and the consensus was that it should, with the proviso that further consultations needed to be held with bush and outstation communities to ensure their needs were also met.

**Recommendation 3.**

Support Yipirinya School Council to obtain the funds necessary and any other support it requires to introduce over time an appropriate two-way secondary program for language speaking and other students not currently accessing secondary education, including students in outstations serviced from Alice Springs. This should entail some investigation of the 'middle school' option.

**Recommendation 4.**

Support Central Land Council in its efforts to help its constituent communities address the problem of lack of secondary education programs in bush communities in Central Australia, including:

- Resourcing major regional consultation comparable to the town based consultation carried out for this project;
- Taking note in any developments of secondary education that resource allocation is not focussed on Alice Springs at the expense of regional needs, and that the 'urban drift' of young people out of their home communities is not encouraged due to a lack of education options in their home communities;
- Working in partnership with groups such as the Warlpiri Triangle and the Western Macdonnell's communities to develop bush-based secondary programs;
- Facilitating a partnership between Ingkerreke Outstation resource Council and Yipirinya Council to develop education centres for the outstations immediately north and west of Alice Springs.

**The Alternative Programs**

The Project Brief indicated that the 'strategic way forward' needed to take account of 'the current flexible programs' currently on offer in Alice Springs, including:

- Irrkerlantye Learning Centre
  - Akaltye Centre
  - Alice Outcomes
  - Yarrentye Arltere Learning Centre.

By the time the project began, the Akaltye Centre at Centralian College no longer operated, so we only dealt with three of these. The distinctive feature of these programs is that they offer education to secondary-age Indigenous students via a partnership between local Aboriginal organisations and NT Department schools. Irrkerlantye Learning Centre is a partnership between Ngarte Mikwekenhe, Tangentyere Council and Centralian College. Alice Outcomes operates as a partnership between Alice Springs High School, the Gap Youth Centre and ASYAS. Yarrentye Arltere Learning Centre is a partnership between Yarrentye Arltere Housing Association, Tangentyere Council, the Institute for Aboriginal Development and Gillen Primary School. Each one offers an alternative program to secondary-age Indigenous students in locations away from schools, with Departmental teaching staff 'outposted' to these locations. Some small amount of support and assistance is also provided by NTDE Regional office staff.

Figures provided by NTDE show 91 Indigenous students enrolled in NTDE programs through these centres as at March 2001. It was not possible to obtain an age breakdown, but the majority are of secondary school age.

Table 8. Enrolments in Selected Alternative Programs, 2001.

(Source: NTDE)

<b>Program</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>
Irrkerlantye	38
Yarrentye Arltere	16
Alice Outcomes	37
Total	91

Education programs for secondary age students are only a small part of what happens in these locations, which are more akin to community centres, providing a range of activities for whole families. While teenagers may be engaged, for at least part of most days, in 'school' work, other young people and adults do post-secondary courses in subjects such as Art and Horticulture, child care is provided for younger children, some primary-age students do primary-level school work, and other adults prepare meals, provide transport, deal with welfare problems or just gather for social interaction. This has led people associated with these centres to develop a more 'holistic' view of their overall function, beyond the original DETOUR project's aim of encouraging secondary students to reenter education. At Irrkerlantye for example, the fundamental focus is on intergenerational learning and community development, towards outcomes which, as they say, "are as much about community wellbeing and achievement as well as (they are) 'educational'."5

These centres have proven very popular with the families they serve, and there is a high level of involvement. The PI, for example, visited Irrkerlantye Learning Centre, several times during the project, and on each occasion there were approximately 100 people, from very young to quite elderly, in and around the centre. Yarrentye Arltere, while newer and not so well-developed, also has high community participation. Unlike school, these centres are very 'Aboriginal' places. Non-Aboriginal people are in the minority, and in two of the three centres, local languages are a major medium of communication, even though non-Aboriginal teachers are still mainly working in English. All three centres have formal structures and employment practices which place

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.5 Pers.comm., Irrkerlantye staff member. For a detailed account of this program by one of the teachers working in it, see Traves (2000), which makes clear that under the community's growing leadership, this program is now significantly different from the original DETOUR concept.

Aboriginal people in charge of much of what happens, even though the education programs are under NTDE control.

The resources of this consultation project did not allow for extensive analysis of these programs. All that was possible was to observe them in operation, to hold interviews and discussions with some of the people associated with them, and to examine some of the written material available about them. Moreover, each program has its own history, clientele and dynamic, so it is difficult to draw conclusions about such programs as a group. However, in terms of our specific brief, to examine ways to improve secondary education outcomes for Indigenous students through more communitycontrolled options, the following observations suggest that while they are clearly fulfilling a need, the contribution which this model of provision can and should make to the overall region-wide problem of non-participation and non-completion of secondary education needs more evaluation:

- The total number of secondary age students they reach is still quite small;
- Secondary age students appear to make up a minority of the people attending (not enrolled) these centres on a daily basis;
- Some of the parents and grandparents who utilise and lead these centres prefer to send their own secondary age children to more 'mainstream' schools, including Yirara, St Johns (in Darwin) and the Alice Springs High Schools;
- Of the parents and young people we interviewed overall, very few who were not directly involved with these centres had any knowledge of their existence;
- The majority of children and young people attending these centres are either doing pre-secondary or post-secondary programs;
- The people most closely involved with delivering the school education component of the program consider the centres are seriously under-resourced for what they are trying to achieve; and
- To date, few students have completed Year 10 or Year 12 through these programs.

In other respects, however, these programs must be judged a major success. One of the most important outcomes has been the partnership between the Department, its schools, and the community organisations. In fact, the SIRG, and therefore this project itself, grew from the joint management committee established for Irrkerlantye's predecessor, the DETOUR program on Bassos' Farm town camp lease. Secondly, these programs have shown that young people who would previously simply have withdrawn altogether from education at the earliest opportunity, including some of the most difficult to reach e.g. chronic petrol sniffers, can be encouraged back into education when there is strong community support. Thirdly, these programs like almost no others in Alice Springs, except Yipirinya School Council, have engaged Aboriginal adults in planning and delivering education programs to their own young people. Fourthly, these centres have many other benefits for the communities they service, beyond providing education to young people.

These positive outcomes need to be consolidated and built upon, as one part of solving the problem of non-participation by specific groups of young Aboriginal people in secondary schooling. Most importantly, given the number of Aboriginal adults they have mobilised to seek solutions to this problem, they provide one of the best 4 experiments' currently being undertaken nationally to solve what remains a fairly intractable set of problems. Recognising their experimental nature, it is vital that the lessons learned, as well as the problems be properly identified, documented and analysed by the community. One shortcoming is that these lessons do not appear to being shared among more than a



few of the people involved, mostly the more senior staff in the Department and the organisations involved. There is much that could be gained from more collective work by more of the people involved, sharing experiences and perhaps other resources as well, even though they work with distinct groups within the community.

**Recommendation 5.**

**Undertake a brief community-driven evaluation of the ‘alternative’ programs undertaken for Aboriginal youth over the last decade in Alice Springs, with particular reference to the issues raised in this consultation, including:**

- **The value of intergenerational learning programs;**
- **The total numbers of youth accessing these programs;**
- **Staff-student ratios including whether or not ‘special education’ staffing formulas should apply**
- **Their sustainability**
- **Their per capita cost**
- **Their outcomes; and**
- **Potential avenues for increased co-operation and collaboration among the different programs and centres.**

**At the conclusion of this process, NTDE and/or DETYA to provide resources to allow the various alternative learning centres to engage in a joint ‘strategic planning exercise to establish five-year plans.**

**'In-School' Alternative Programs**

In addition to these 'off-campus' models, three schools provide non-mainstream programs for secondary-age Indigenous students. Yirara College, run by the Finke River Mission of the Lutheran Church, provides an alternative curriculum for students who board at the school, who do not have sufficient English language literacy, numeracy and/or primary education background to undertake the mainstream secondary curriculum. A small number of their students do enrol and attend 'mainstream' secondary education in town (currently through OLSH) while continuing to board and receive tuition support at Yirara. Yipirinya School Council, independent and Aboriginal community-controlled, runs a post-primary program for a similar group, but has no boarding facilities. Anzac Hill High School (AHHS) has recently established a Learning to Work Unit for students aged 15 and over, to upgrade their literacy, numeracy and IT skills, support them in work placements and deal with home life and personal issues.

Again, we have not been able to evaluate the contribution these programs make in any detail. However, in terms of enrolments, they reach a significant number of students, as Table 9 below illustrates.

**Table 9. Enrolments in 'on-campus' alternative programs.**

(Source: Unpublished NTDE data)

Program	2001		
	M	F	Total
Yipirinya Post Primary Program	17	12	39
Yirara College	110	100	210
AHHS Learning to Work Unit	?	?	8
Total			257

Figures from NTDE for selected High Schools in the Central Region, which included Tennant Creek, but excluded St Phillips in Alice Springs, classified 277 Indigenous students classified as 'Ungraded' or 'Secondary-age', rather than in a Year Level, as at August 2000. The above figures suggest that over 200 of these would have been in Alice Springs schools, of whom around 80% would have been Yirara students.

The point to be made is that there is already a substantial system of provision for Indigenous young people for whom 'mainstream' education is not appropriate, and between the alternative programs and the 'Ungraded' options in schools, there are in the vicinity of 300 students in such programs. Excluding the Yirara students, because they come from bush communities, there are perhaps 140 students in these programs.

There is a third set of programs which Indigenous secondary-age students can access within the mainstream high school system, which are what might be termed 'enclave' programs. Here, students are enrolled in mainstream subjects, but they have their own teachers and programs for part or all of their studies. Alice Springs High School Future Directions Project (formerly AVTS) offers a modified, flexible 'standalone' Year 11-12 program for students who are not willing or able to do their Year 11-12 studies at the Senior Secondary College, Centralian. The current Future Directions Indigenous enrolment is 35, but these student numbers are absorbed into the overall enrolments for mainstream high school programs, as are students in the other enclave programs. Centralian College is considering offering something similar in the near future, and was previously providing some support to Year 11-12 students through its Akaltje Centre. Anzac I-lill High School has been running a Principal Directed Pilot Project which works with parents and traditional owners to support Indigenous students to do alternative projects to achieve mainstream curriculum outcomes. OLSH has a well developed pastoral care and support program to assist students in year 10-12 to complete the mainstream curriculum.

In summary, there are already three models operating which provide for the special needs of Indigenous secondary age students in Alice Springs, namely:

- Separate Learning Centres outside the schools
- Special programs inside schools for students unable to undertake the 'mainstream' secondary curriculum; and
- Enclave programs to support mainstream enrolled students.

But this by no means exhausts the range of government and community initiatives developed over the last decade or more in Alice Springs to offer direct and indirect support to Aboriginal students to stay on at high school. It would not be an overstatement to say that there is a virtual industry growing up around helping secondary-age Indigenous young people. Programs and projects we have identified, in addition to the ones already listed, and which aim to respond partly or entirely to the needs of Indigenous youth are listed below.

- LAD's Tertiary Preparation Course
- LAD Post-secondary VET courses targeted to young people
- CAAC's Youth Team Programs
- CLC Cadetships Program
- CARIHPC- CAISAN Substance Abuse Policy Youth Initiatives
- NTDE's AITAP Program
- NTDE Scaffolding Literacy Project
- NTDE's Mind Matters Program (a Commonwealth initiative)
- NTDE Star Services Behaviour Modification Program
- NT Police Adolescent Diversionary Program
- ASYAS Youth Refuge, Crisis Accommodation and Counselling

- GYC Mentoring Program and Reconnect Program
- DETYA programs specifically supporting HS students, e.g.:
  - ASSPAs
  - VEGAS projects
- ATAS tutors and homework centres
- THS's Youth Policy and various community welfare support services
- Alice Springs Town Council Youth Network

It is unlikely that this list is exhaustive, and there is need for a more thorough 'stocktake'. From the point of view of the Aboriginal community, it seems reasonable to ask for some closer investigation of who benefits from these arrangements, given that high school participation and retention rates continue to remain well below those of non-Aboriginal students. Is it certainly not impossible that these arrangements might collectively operate more to institutionalise current patterns of inequality than to change them. This issue needs more consideration once the Aboriginal Education Forum is established.

### *How many flowers can bloom in a desert?*

While some people say that we should 'let a hundred flowers bloom', the Aboriginal organisations may need to consider whether this strategy is in the long term strategic interests of the community as a whole. A multiplicity of small-scale programs, each with its own location, resources, and management structure could have negative as well as positive outcomes in the long term. Large secondary schools have not become the favoured model for non-Aboriginal society without reason. One of the major considerations is cost, in that once education progresses beyond primary level, the resources consumed by equipment, libraries, and a diverse range of well-qualified teachers to cover a full range of subjects increases exponentially. Staying small can therefore contain students within very limited education horizons, those that can be reached on limited resources.

Secondly, while it is sometimes argued that small autonomous groups fit best with traditional Aboriginal forms of organisation, and help minimise inter family and inter 'tribal' conflict, the opposite tendency, towards regional and even national 'consolidation', has driven some of the most progressive changes in this region in the last thirty years. Large organisations have many difficulties, not least with continuing to reflect community views adequately, but without Tangentyere, Yipirinya, CAAC or Central Land Council, to name just four, it is hard to imagine that the Alice Springs Aboriginal community would today be negotiating with the NT and Commonwealth governments on how best to improve education provision. Moreover, a desire to avoid getting involved in internal community disputes is not necessarily a sign of cultural health. It was put to us on several occasions in the consultations that community and family disputes often originate from wounds caused by the 'divide and rule' strategies of the colonial authorities in past times e.g. between so called 'half-caste' or 'coloured' people and 'full-bloods', terms which still have some currency in the community. In fact, many people see helping the community to heal these wounds as one of the major unmet responsibilities of the education system (See Social and Emotional Wellbeing, below).

### **Strengthening Community Capacity to Improve Existing Schools**

As explained above, a large number of participants in the consultations focused on things which could and should be done to improve the education experience of Indigenous young people in whatever system or program they were in, but in particular on what might be done to improve the existing high schools in Alice Springs. While many of these suggestions will be familiar to those who work in Aboriginal education, and some are already an accepted part of practice, it is nevertheless

significant that people raised these things with us. In the first instance, it validates locally what research in other states and internationally has also found. Secondly, it gives local support to those educators and officials who are already attempting to do things along these lines. Thirdly, it indicates that significant numbers of people within the community are prepared to put forward ideas and contribute to educational decision making, who at present are not doing so. And fourthly, it indicates that, despite whatever improvements have been made in recent years, the perception of the community is that there is still much that needs to be done. System and school managers would therefore be well-advised to take on board what is being said, and to work with the proposed Aboriginal Education Forum to establish ways to bring these people and their ideas into the process of planning and decision-making. In this respect, community involvement in *leading the reform process* is as important as what is actually done.

A major recurring theme was that parents, even those with considerable education and work experience, and students also, had insufficient knowledge and confidence about their rights and responsibilities vis a vis the education system. For a variety of reasons, including their own experiences of schools in more repressive times, adults find it difficult to approach schools and education system officials on an equal basis. Vvble the proposed Forum will create a structure to mediate the relationship on a macro-level, it is necessary to develop the capacities of individuals and families to utilise this and other avenues of influence, e.g. ASSPAS, more effectively. The response to this issue from the Steering Committee is to propose an adult community education program targeting parents and young people.

**Recommendation 6.**

Seek DEETYA support under its ASPA program to fund the Aboriginal Education Forum to undertake a project to research, develop and implement an education program for Aboriginal parents and students about their rights and responsibilities in relation to secondary education, including the NT Education Act, the education provisions of international human rights instruments and the Racial Discrimination Act. This project should build experience of the HREOC/IAD Tracking Your Rights program, and the finding of the HREOC Inquiry into Rural and Remote Schooling.

Familiarity with alternative models

A related issue raised in the consultations, resulting directly from the discussions of the research undertaken into what was happening in other regions, states and territories, was the need to develop more awareness of alternative models of provision. The project brief required us to provide information to the community in an accessible form, and to canvass alternative models with them. One of the best attended meetings during the project was a workshop held on some of these alternative models, the overheads from which are reprinted as Appendix 5 to this report. As a result of this, it was felt in particular that community leaders needed to see for themselves wherever possible some of the different models, and to interact with Aboriginal people from other places so as to improve their capacity to exercise informed leadership in community decision making about education.

**Recommendation 7.**

Support local Aboriginal education leaders to undertake study tours under VEGAS to investigate at first hand the following alternative secondary education models:

- Victorian KODE schools in Woolum, Bellum, Glenroy and Mildura, Vic.
- Nyangatjathara College, Yulara, and its associated campuses at Mitutjulu, Imampa and Docker River (NT)
- Ngaanyatjarra Council Education Committee proposal re Ngaanyatjarra Lands School Board based in Warakurna, WA

- Pitjanjatarra Yankunytjara Education Committee – SA DETE joint planning and management model, Anangu Education Services, AP Landa SA
- Gumal Mirnuwarni, Roebourne, WA
- Wiltja, Adelaide, SA
- Murri School, Brisbane, Qld
- Other school models as considered appropriate.

The Models Workshop stimulated community interest in what was being done internationally in Indigenous education. Increasingly, through events such as the World Indigenous Education Conference, leaders from local organisations have begun to develop some familiarity with the international debate about Indigenous education, but as yet this has been limited to very few people. During the workshop, material on experiments in Canada and the US proved particularly interesting, including the development of Education Framework Agreements and independent Indigenous Education Boards. The Forum could continue the education process done through this project if strategies to link into these international networks were adopted. This might include accessing or establishing some travel scholarships or other mechanism for funding educators, community leaders and youth to travel overseas.

#### Recommendation 8

Establish ongoing links with international Indigenous education networks with a view to ensuring, local Aboriginal organisations leaders have a good understanding about new developments internationally in Indigenous education.

### **The Economics of Education**

The brief also asked us to consider the financial and administrative implications of various models. In terms of the independent school option, advice was obtained from NT Education, from DETYA, from the NT Independent Schools Association, and the NT Christian Schools Network, who are also developing their own independent Aboriginal schools in the Top End. However, the detailed work, it was agreed, should be left to a second stage project, one which looked at a detailed business plan for such a school, and which DETYA indicated their willingness to fund Yipirinya to undertake. In this initial exploratory phase, the Project has encouraged people to focus more on the larger scale financial and economic issues or resource allocation to Indigenous education in this region, rather than on the specifics of financing one or more particular models. This is seen as essential background information and analysis for considering which models to support and what resources might be mobilized to implement them.

Education is the largest single expenditure item in NT government outlays, accounting in 1998-9 for \$404m, 15.4% of total expenditure (Source. NT Regional Statistics, ABS.), while an NTDE official cited a figure to us of \$90million as the amount currently being spent in Indigenous education. The Commonwealth IESIP Program pumps over \$10 million annually into Indigenous education in the NT, which may or may not be absorbed into the above amount. More is spent in education than is spent in health. With less than one in ten of the Indigenous students who enter the system exiting with the best qualification it is able to provide, the question need to be asked as to whether the overall pattern of resource allocation within the system is the correct one. It is one thing to respond to the clamour of unmet demand by developing small local responses, but whatever benefits undoubtedly flow from such programs, they may do little in the long run to reverse the structural inequality in the system as a whole. To do this it is necessary to look at the 'big picture.'

Research by Dr. Gerald Burke from the Monash University Centre for the Economics of Education and Training has quantified the different levels of investment which government (and therefore taxpayers) make in the education of children and young people as they progress from primary through junior secondary to senior secondary school, and on to university or VET/TA.FE colleges. Obviously, for each additional year in which a child or young person remains in the system, the amount invested in his or her future increases, because of the cumulative effect. By the time a young person completes Year 12, they have had \$78,000 invested in their education, a little less if they do not qualify for Austudy or Abstudy. However, what is perhaps less obvious is that the annual amount also increases, especially in high school. Sixty percent of the above total is spent in the high school years, and over half of that figure is spent in the last two years (Burke, 1998, p. 16).

The key point is that only the young people who stay in the system benefit from this level of investment by society in their future. The earlier you leave, the less is invested in you. Therefore, one consequence when an education system 'fails' people is that they no longer attract this public subsidy. If this happens to one social group on a systematic basis, which is what Collins found was happening to young Indigenous people in the N.T., then that social group effectively misses out on its entitlement to the contribution which taxpayers agree to make to the education of the next generation. However, it is unlikely that this leads to any real 'savings', because of the extremely high costs both to government, but more importantly to the community, of the ill health, unemployment, marginalisation and in many cases imprisonment, which are all, according to a substantial body of research, the entirely predictable outcomes of missing out on education. This study has not had the resources to do more than raise this issue for discussion. It should be possible, given the right tools, to calculate some actual figures to enter into this equation. A very basic and simple modelling exercise, outlined in Appendix 6, suggests that if the Central Australian Indigenous community had a high school retention rate equal to the non-Indigenous rate (60%), its young people would be the beneficiaries of **an additional \$45 million** in education investment over a five year period.

Senior staff from CAAC pointed out during our consultations that a similar argument was accepted by the Commonwealth in relation to 'cashing out' remote community medicare entitlements, which people cannot access because there are no bulkbilling GPs in these communities. The amount which was calculated was then put 'on the table', along with the NT budget for expanding PHC services, to produce a combined fund to improve PHC service provision. Similarly, in Cape York Queensland, the state and Commonwealth governments have been prepared to consider Framework Agreements as a method of structuring negotiations with the Aboriginal community on improving service provisions and to fund the investigations, such as the one above, to provide participants in these negotiations with a proper evidence base. In the province of Manitoba in Canada, this methodology has specifically been developed in relation to education provision.

**Recommendation 9.**

Seek DETYA and/or NTDE support to undertake a thorough and rigorous economic study of secondary education resource-allocation in Alice Springs and central Australia, with a view to identifying the quantum of educational funding inequity between indigenous and non-indigenous youth which results from the current very low levels of secondary participation and retention, as outlined briefly in this Report.

**Recommendation 10.**

Initiate with NTDE and DETYA a detailed exploration of the possibilities of applying the Framework Agreement model to the solution of the problem in secondary indigenous education.

## Secondary Education Workforce and Curriculum

The most constant theme in the community consultations was the perceived lack of understanding and support within the secondary system for the specific needs of young Indigenous people and their families and communities.

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6, This was 60.2% in 1998, according to Table 1 in Schwab (1999, p. 6)

This was identified at every level, from Departmental management, through to Principals, teachers and ancillary staff. The evidence was overwhelming that the Alice Springs Aboriginal community feels seriously alienated from the secondary system. This is a 'chicken-egg' phenomenon, in that the more that young people fail in this system, the more alienated the community as a whole feels from the system, and the less able they feel to take action to remedy things. Many parents, we were told, do not push their teenage children to attend, because they had such bad experiences of school themselves, and can therefore see little benefit coming from it. This is validated by the research literature, which demonstrates that one of the most significant determinants of school retention and success is having one or both parents with higher-than-average school and post-school qualifications.

Another part of this cycle is the very low proportion of Aboriginal staff working in the secondary system. There are no secondary-trained Aboriginal teachers working in Alice Springs high schools, and the Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWS) are virtually the only point of overlap between the school staff and the community. This places AIEWS in an invidious position, one in which they struggle to maintain support in the community, while they also struggle to be heard within the schools. The consultations revealed considerable dissatisfaction within the community about the role the AIEWS do play, especially as advocates for the students and the community. One suggested remedy was to take the AIEWS out of the school hierarchy, where they do not have a high status, and make them directly accountable to the community and students, through a local Aboriginal organisation or their ASSPA committee.

### **Recommendation 11.**

Undertake in partnership with the AIEW network and the ASSPA's a review of the roles and functions of AIEWS including consideration of outpostting some AIEW positions to local Aboriginal organisations, and other strategies to strengthen their advocacy role within schools.

However, AIEWS are only a tiny minority of the secondary education workforce, and the focus on them during the consultation reflects the fact that these are the staff that the community at least knows, and does deal with regularly. The deeper problem is the lack of Aboriginal employment in the school system overall, and almost every respondent wanted more Aboriginal people to be employed in the school system, as a way of making schools better reflect and understand the community they are serving. This is also one of the clearest findings in the research literature. The conclusion from this study is that there is a need for a more strategic approach to this problem, one which can draw on the considerable experience which local organisations have of what they call 'Aboriginalisation', namely processes over time to increase the proportion of Aboriginal staff in an organisation. This will involve preparing a detailed regional plan, with targets for specific occupation groups and specific schools to be reached within a specific time frame, with strategies identified to create pathways from the community into school-based employment, and different agencies and organisations given responsibility to play their



part in achieving this. Initial investigations by the Steering Committee members discovered support for such a strategy from within government agencies.

**Recommendation 12.**

Contract Tangentyere Jobshop to undertake a 3 month project to coordinate the development of an Indigenous employment strategy to increase numbers of Aboriginal people employed in professional, para-professional jobs, technical and general jobs in secondary education system, the strategy development process to be supported by the following Commonwealth and NT agencies: DEWSB; DETYA; NTDE; and NTOCPE.

An Aboriginalisation strategy will over time increase the capacity of the secondary education system to understand and respond better to the needs of its Indigenous students, but this does not mean that more could not be done immediately by people working within the system. Most people in the community consultation could identify one or more teachers or ancillary staff who had demonstrated a much better understanding than the 'norm'. Most people were also able to suggest many ways in which they would like people working in the system to improve the way they relate to the community and its young people. The Steering Committee has agreed that these suggestions are best translated into action through a strategic and targeted program of professional development which is designed in collaboration with the organisations which have contributed to this project.

**Recommendation 13.**

Develop in partnership with NTDE and the independent high schools a strategic plan of teacher, assistant teacher and ancillary staff professional development to improve the quality of teaching in secondary programs for Indigenous students. This program include:

1. Basic cross cultural and anti racist training
2. Exposure of teachers, AIEWs and Assistant teachers to the program, services and employment opportunities available to their students through Aboriginal organisations
3. Post-contact Central Australian history workshops, with specific reference to the continuing impact of colonisation on the local population
4. Introductory courses in Central Australian languages
5. ESL and EFL strategies for students who are speakers of Aboriginal languages and dialects, including Aboriginal English
6. Scaffolding literacy techniques
7. The finding of this study

There were a range of issues raised in relation to curriculum, and these reflected both the diversity of the community itself, but also the different levels of experience among our informants of the education system. The most constant theme was that students did not find curriculum 'relevant.' Perhaps the best way to convey what was meant is the phrase used by one informant, that mainstream schools require Indigenous students to 'leave their life at the door.' Parents and young people themselves do not think that schools teach them what they need to know, especially what they need to know to deal with the lives they are living right now. In fact, as people more closely associated with schools know, many teachers strive to make their courses and subjects relevant to their students' lives, but the perception from the outside is that they are not succeeding.

At another level, many people felt that an Aboriginal 'view of the world' was rarely presented. Some people spoke of the history that was taught, which paid insufficient respect to the Aboriginal history of this region, but taught a more 'whiteman's view.' A strong point was often made about the lack of Aboriginal languages in the curriculum even though this has actually been addressed in the new draft NT Curriculum Framework. The point here is that whatever input there has been from the local community in this process - and some people said it had been minimal - there is a perception that the Department and the schools need to work more with the local organisations to ensure that the secondary curriculum more accurately reflects what people want their children to learn. One way to do this would be to build on the work which IAD has undertaken with the support of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health, developing an Aboriginal curriculum framework for adult education in this region.

**Recommendation 14.**

Building on the findings of the research into Aboriginal adult education curriculum frameworks undertaken by IAD's Research Centre, on the Intelyapeyape Project and on the draft NT Education Indigenous Languages and Culture Framework, establish a project to research and develop a regional secondary Aboriginal education curriculum, reflecting Aboriginal cultures, languages, history and politics, to eventually be taught through an Aboriginal-controlled process whether within or outside mainstream schools

## **Student Accommodation**

During the consultations, a small number of people raised issues relating to secondary student accommodation. Some Yipirinya Council leaders wanted their school to be able to provide accommodation for students from communities and outstations beyond Alice Springs to attend the school, and were particularly interested in the Nyangatjatjara College model. Some Ngarte Mikwekenhe leaders believe that secondary students who live in town may need hostel or group home accommodation to be able to complete their studies, because there is not a suitable environment in their own homes and camps for study. Tangentyere Council representatives supported this latter view. Financing accommodation for students whose normal residential address is in Alice Springs would not be possible via Abstudy without some special provisions being invoked, since the normal practice is to fund only students who live too far from a centre to travel daily. Some of these issues were already canvassed in a 1998 AHL Report (Aboriginal Hostels Ltd., 1998), which also examined needs of tertiary students. On the other hand, the Yirara Principal took the view that there were already sufficient options, at least for young people under 16, while some outstation families along with Central Land Council's representatives expressed concern about providing more facilities in town which might increase 'urban drift.' When the Project was in its last weeks, staff from the NT Office of Aboriginal Development approached the Secondary Indigenous Reference Group to seek their views on a proposal to get assistance from the Alice In Ten Committee to carry out a further investigation of the student hostel issue. The Project Steering Committee supported this in principle.

**Recommendation 15.**

Seek the support of the Alice-In-Ten Committee to finalise community consultations in regard to the accommodation needs of Indigenous secondary school students, as proposed by the Office of

## **Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

The issue of the social and emotional wellbeing of secondary age Indigenous youth was a recurring theme in the community consultations. This had a number of aspects. In the first instance, it was said that schools were not sufficiently sensitive to the social and emotional issues which Indigenous students have to deal with in their daily lives. This included high levels of alcohol and substance abuse in their communities and homes, domestic and community violence, and the impact of illness and death. The research literature has little on this, but Gray (1991) provided some important data on mortality of parents in NSW that showed that large numbers of young Aboriginal people experience death of a parent. By the time they reached the 15-19 age group, 30% of Aboriginal young people in his study had lost at least one parent. This, as he points out, can be extremely disruptive of their education, and of their emotional and economic security:

Right through the teenage years, parental death and proceeding parental illness is a constant accompaniment to the process of growing up Aboriginal. (Gray 1991, p.373)

This is no doubt that high mortality among immediate and extended family and the community is a factor in the lives of Alice Springs students, and impacts on attendance, performance, and retention. The point was regularly made in the consultations that many teachers, and the education system as a whole, fail to 'see' these issues, because they have little direct experience of the community life as it is actually lived by the majority of Aboriginal people. Many people identified this as a major reason for the low retention rate.

We were also told that school experiences themselves are a source of social and emotional distress, ranging from direct racism from teachers and students, to feelings of 'shame' when student are unable to perform as expected, or behave in ways which turn out to be inappropriate according to the norms of school culture. High schools in particular were seen as stressful places for young Aboriginal people, and some parents said their children had found it very difficult to make the transition from primary school, which was more supportive. Similar views are reported in the research literature. A recent national report, noting that the suicide rate in indigenous communities may be 40 per cent higher than for non-indigenous people, and the majority of indigenous people who suicide are under 29 years of age, said that "possible connections between the pressures, difficulties and disappointments of schooling and youth suicide have not been explored sufficiently..."

For both reasons, the emotional and social pressures in the community, and those experienced within the school, the community expects better support from schools for young Indigenous students. The best way to do this is for schools to develop partnerships with the community's own initiatives, such as the Tangentyere Council Family Wellbeing Program, and the CAAC Youth Program within its Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre. The Central Australian Youth Summit resolutions provide a number of useful leads in terms of the directions in which this work might go, and since the Congress Youth Team within its Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre was the lead agency supporting the Indigenous Youth Committee to hold this summit, we have included two further recommendations in this section to generate ongoing work on education issues with youth.

### **Recommendation 16.**

Support CAAC Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre (SEWBC) to access funding to allow it to:

- Organise exposure to its services for all AIEWs and selected secondary teachers, and develop a referral protocol with them to ensure more Indigenous high school students can access their programs.

- Work with schools to devise ways they can become more sensitive to family issues, and support students to deal with the trauma, distress and dysfunction affecting many Aboriginal families
- If appropriate, jointly develop with trained secondary teachers specific materials for schools to use to help students learn how better to cope with family trauma including bereavement; and to play more effective leadership roles within the school community.

**Recommendation 17.**

Seek assistance from AITAP to allow CAAC Youth Team and Alice Springs Indigenous Youth Committee to organise focus group discussions with secondary age indigenous youth on findings and recommendations of this Report, and in particular to

Identify the best ways for the proposed Aboriginal Education Forum to ensure young people are consulted in an ongoing way, and have input into planning and decision making

Consider the best way to teach young people how to deal with racism; and

Identify options for young women who have children which will allow them to continue with secondary education

**Recommendation 18.**

Invite CAAC Youth Team and the Alice Springs Indigenous Youth Committee to submit ideas for strategies to deal with peer pressure to leave school, as per the resolution of the Central Australian Youth Summit

**Education for What? A Regional Approach to the School-to-Work Transition**

Without secondary education, employment prospects are very poor. Analysing the NATSIS data, Hunter (1996) found that Indigenous people who have completed Year 10 or 11 increase their chances of employment by 40 per cent, while a post-secondary qualification

increases employment chances by 13-23 per cent. Education also reduces the likelihood of arrest, which itself significantly reduces the probability of employment. On the basis of a detailed examination of the determinants of Indigenous employment outcomes, the same writer concluded:

Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for indigenous employment. Indeed, the influence of education dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables. (Hunter1997, p. 189)

However, not only does education greatly increase an individual's chance of employment, it is absolutely essential for the community's own capacity to maintain a functioning economy which produces the goods and services which make for a reasonable quality of life. In Alice Springs, for example, 42% of the non-indigenous population has a post-school qualification. Table 10, below, compares this with the Indigenous population in the town, where the corresponding figure is only 12.4%. Just to reach a situation of parity would require over 500 more qualified Aboriginal people in the town. This creates a situation of dependency, where many functions essential for the Aboriginal community's well-being cannot be performed by its own members. Even if every qualified Aboriginal person worked in their own community organisations, they would still face a serious shortfall. Several organisation leaders raised this issue at length with us during the consultations.

**Table 10. Alice Springs Post-school qualifications, 1996.**

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Census of Population and Housing

## Indigenous profiles, Alice Springs (unpublished)

Total Alice Springs population, age 15 +, with a qualification	5906
Indigenous	229
% of Non-indigenous population with a qualification	42.0%
% Indigenous population with a qualification	12.4%
Indigenous population as % of total population (15+)	12.0% 1
Qualified indig popn as % of total qual popn (15+)	3.9%
Number of qualifications needed to reach parity	545

A few years ago, secondary schools began experimenting with offering VET subjects as part of their curriculum, as one way to try to bridge school students into employment and further study. This was seen as particularly relevant to Indigenous students, because the VET system already enjoys 'preferred provider' status within Aboriginal communities, as evidenced from the fact that this is the only sector of education out of primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, VET and higher education where the Aboriginal participation level, nationally not only matches but actually exceeds the non-Aboriginal participation rate. While this to some extent results from the large numbers of early school leavers who return to education via VET, it also demonstrates that VET courses do better than others in attracting and retaining community support. The introduction of VET in Schools has accelerated this trend, with increasing numbers of high school Aboriginal students electing to do VET courses as part of the secondary studies.

However, there remains the question of how appropriate these courses are to the long term needs and aspirations of the community. Our consultations revealed some concern among parents and organisations that the VET option was not always leading students towards the most fruitful outcomes. While one response might be to encourage students to undertake more non-VET subjects, a better alternative, given the obvious suitability of the VET option for retention, is to develop a VET profile in the region which better reflects the kinds of studies that the community most wants its young people to undertake. This will result in VET being seen as of value in its own right, not a lesser option.

In 1993/94, Aboriginal organisations and VET providers in Central Australia took part in national research project commissioned by the Australian Committee on Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) to identify priorities for national VET curriculum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Report (Tranby 1994) set out the steps which needed to be taken to ensure greater regional coordination of VET provision with the needs expressed through indigenous peoples' own community-controlled organisations. The mechanism proposed, a national Indigenous Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) with regional 'branches' was not adopted by ANTA, partly because at that time there was a move afoot nationally to reduce rather than expand the number of federally funded ITAB'S. Instead, ANTA set up an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council to provide advice at a national level, and it was left to states and territories to develop their own arrangements for taking indigenous advice through the existing ITAB network. ITAB'S, however, are driven by their own industries which are dominated naturally, given the proportion of Aboriginal people in the population - by non Aboriginal interests. Therefore, the state and territory training profiles they develop, despite some input by Aboriginal organisations to some (e.g. Community Services and Health) tend to reflect the needs of the mainstream economy.

Moreover, national and state/territory driven priorities do not necessarily reflect the needs of a specific region like Alice Springs, and Aboriginal community economic and employment strategies need

to develop 'from the bottom up', rather than from the top down. While there has been considerable research into the regionally-specific needs of Aboriginal communities and their organisations, and there are specific regional planning processes in place via ATSIC, not much has been done yet to bring the results of this regional development approach into the planning processes of ANTA, the ITAB's and the State Training Authorities which determine VET profiles (Boughton, 1998).

A regional planning project is needed to establish more and clearer pathways for Aboriginal people in this region into, appropriate community-based employment and economic development activities. The project should seek ways to increase appropriate employment options for young Indigenous school-leavers beyond the current mainstream urban labour market. This would be an appropriate activity for a consortium of organisations, such as CLC, IAD, CAT and Batchelor to sponsor. Advice from NTETA's Alice Springs staff suggested that funding for such work might be accessed through DETYA's VEGAS program, the Dusseldorf Skills Foundation, the NT ACC and the Enterprise & Career Education Foundation.

Alongside the development of a more tailored profile of courses, organizations indicated strong support for other strategies to create pathways from school into employment. Over the years, several programs have been initiated which showed some promise, but there has never been a coordinated approach. There has been a tendency, within schools and other sections of the community, not to see work in Aboriginal organisations as 'real' jobs. Yet these organizations together make up one of the regions biggest employing groups, and they provide goods and services which are essential to community wellbeing. Increasingly, they are also seen as a base from which to generate new economic and enterprise options, especially ones such as eco-tourism which allow people to remain on their own country.

**Recommendation 19.**

Seek support from DTYA, the Dusseldorf Skills Foundation, the NT ACC and the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation to undertake an action research project in Central Australia with Aboriginal organisations and providers of vocational education and training (VET) with the aim of developing a more coordinated and targeted VET profile in the region for post-compulsory school-age youth, with courses and programs specifically based on the identified employment and economic development needs of the Aboriginal organisations and communities.

**Recommendation 20.**

Work with the Aboriginal organisations to develop a strategy to facilitate pathways for Indigenous school leavers into Aboriginal school leavers into Aboriginal organisation jobs and careers at all levels, building on the experience and resources of existing programs eg. CLC cadetships and GYC Mentoring Program. This could include a coordinated approach linking AITAP, VEGAS, mentoring etc to help current Yr 9-10 students get through to Yr12 and/or employment and further study.

**A Higher Community Profile for Education**

Ultimately, the community will only get from the education system what it wants to the extent that it is able to bring its own knowledge, talents and resources to bear on the system. Many people told us that education needed to have a higher profile, that more people in the community needed to hear about what was happening, and that this was the role of the community itself, to become advocates for

education. One example given was that young people who succeeded needed public acknowledgement, while many people also spoke of the need for more positive role models of Aboriginal people who had succeeded through education to go into schools.

This project has already had some success in raising the profile of secondary education issues to the level of regular agenda items in the deliberations of staff and executive meetings in a number of key organisations. One way of continuing this process is to undertake some public education now, and to distribute the findings of this report in other sectors. There is also a need to reach out in particular to the many people who did not take part in the consultations, especially those who themselves have not benefited from education and so are less likely to take part in the day to day work of the organisations. Our final four recommendations focus on specific ways to begin this process.

**Recommendation 21.**

Organise joint public acknowledgement by local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal (eg Mayor) community leaders of successful secondary students to demonstrate that school success is a valued community objective.

**Recommendation 22.**

Support CAAC to seek approval of this secondary schooling consultation study as an in-kind research project of the CRC ATH, with a view to seeking CRCATH assistance with dissemination of the findings throughout its networks in Indigenous Education and Health, and possible support in implementing those recommendations which have the potential to improve community health.

**Recommendation 23.**

Undertake a more thorough consultation with CDEP participants and social welfare recipients, in partnership with Tangentyere and Arrernte Council, to identify  
The views of this group on ways to improve secondary schooling for their families, and  
Ways that CDEP participants can assist schools and alternative learning centres to deliver a better service to Indigenous students

**Recommendation 24.**

CLC Media Unit to be asked to advise on a publicity strategy to support the findings and recommendation of this Report and its implementation, with assistance from Irrkerlantye media students.

**From Consultation to Negotiation: A Plan for Implementation**

The final task left to the Consultant and the Steering Committee was to devise a plan to implement the findings and recommendations set out in this Report. This was the subject of extensive discussion at the final meeting of the Steering Committee, where the consensus was that the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations needed to retain the initiative. The Steering Committee recognised that it was officially a sub-committee of the NTDE's Regional Directors Secondary Indigenous Age Reference Group (SIRG), with a mandate to oversight a *consultation* process. At the end of this project, the subcommittee will no longer exist, and there will be no more resources to employ staff or carry on meeting. Although the report goes to SIRG, and from there will be presented to NTDE's Executive Group, SIRG is only an advisory body, and it is entirely up to the Department what it does with the recommendations. The Department is the agent of the Minister and the government of the day, and whatever its staff think, it will not act unless it has Ministerial authority to do so.

There is also the issue of DETYA, and its role. Vvble they were represented on the committee, and while senior officials in Darwin and Canberra gave in principle support for the project, they are also not bound to take any action on the recommendations. They are the instrument of the Commonwealth Minister and government, and can only act if they see the recommendations as being within their government's policy framework, and they can access the funds required.

On the other hand, the Alice Springs Aboriginal Organisations have contributed substantially to the consultation, and the ideas and recommendations are based on their views. To ensure that they retain



the initiative, and that their recommendations are not left 'in limbo', the organisations themselves will need to take some responsibility for implementation, and not rely on either agencies to do so. This problem would be solved if the Commonwealth or the NT agree to fund the establishment of the proposed Aboriginal Education Forum, but this will not happen overnight. In the meantime, some interim mechanism needs to be established to continue the process this project has initiated.

It was decided to take this issue to a meeting of the senior managers and 'bosses' of the organisations which have supported this project, and to ask them to mandate one organisation, namely Central Land Council, to operate as an Interim Secretariat, until such time as the proposed Forum was established. The Secretariat would be empowered to continue to convene the committee which oversaw this project, and could co-opt people from other organisations, and from government agencies if they agreed, to help with its work. Its mandate, however, would be not from government, but from the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. With a general mandate to pursue the implementation of the recommendations, the Central Land Council should initiate, in partnership with relevant organisations, negotiations with NTDE, DETYA, or, for that matter, any other agency which the Report identifies as having a potential contribution to make.

The meeting was duly held on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and Central Land Council undertook to take on this role, on condition that

- a. The other organisations continued to make up a Steering Committee;
- b. The Steering Committee consist only of community-controlled organisations; and
- c. Funding for this work be identified and obtained within a period of six weeks.

Following that meeting, this Report was finalised to go formally via SIRG to the Assistant Secretary, Schools South. From there, it will be forwarded to the NT Education Executive Group, as required by the tender. This will allow the Department, as the body which commissioned the Report, to develop its own response. A copy will also be provided to DETYA, as requested by its senior officials. The next stage of the process should involve a tripartite meeting, of DETYA, NT Education, and the community's representatives, to negotiate a joint implementation plan.



## **Appendix 2. A Web-Surfing Guide to Indigenous Controlled Education.**

### Background

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in Alice Springs are investigating ways to improve participation and retention for young people in their community in secondary school. The project has been funded through the NT Education Department. As part of the project, they have been examining models from elsewhere in Australia and overseas for increasing community control of education. This 'websurfer's guide' was produced to facilitate people doing their own research. It is by no means exhaustive, and the author would be happy to hear of any suggestions for additions to the list. Please email them to Bob Boughton, [durn@ozemail.com.au](mailto:durn@ozemail.com.au)

### US Indian & Alaskan Native Info

- US Department of Education Office of Indian Education, <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/oie/>
- National Indian Education Association <http://www.niea.org/>
- For comprehensive Federal Policy on Indian Ed, go to <http://www.niea.org/POLICYSTM.htm#anchor125563>,
- Alaskan Native Knowledge Network <http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/new.html>

### Canadian Indian & Inuit Info

- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Peoples Chapter on Education <http://www.indigenous.bc.ca/v3/Vol3Ch5s1tosl.5.asp>
- Assembly of First Nations Education page <http://www.afn.ca/Programs/Education/Default.html>
- Manitoba Education Framework Agreement <http://www.mbchiefs.mb.ca/efa/index.html>

### Australia

- Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers <http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/FIAEP/>
- Guide to Indigenous Australian websites: <http://www.koori.usyd.edu.au/regjster.html>

### Victorian

- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI): <http://www.vaeai.org.au/>
- Korri 2000, including KODE initiative at <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/koorie>

### Queensland

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Unit, Education Queensland  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/tal/atsi>

### NT

Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Secondary College <http://www1.octa4.net.au/ncollege/dream.html>

### Appendix 3. Focus Group & Interview Questions

#### A. Protocol for Interviewers

**1. Explain:**

This interview/ focus group discussion is part of a study into what to do about Indigenous secondary education in Alice Springs. It is confidential - the names of people who help will not be used in any public document without their consent.

The data collected will be used to help Aboriginal organisations and NT Education Department work out how to improve secondary education for Aboriginal students in Alice Springs.

The research project is managed by a committee, which includes Congress, IAD, Yipirinya, Tangentyere, CLC, the AIEWs in schools, NT Education and DETYA.

**2. Ensure you have informed consent to proceed.**

Check that the person/people understand this explanation, and agree to the interview being noted and/or recorded.

**3. Collect details of each interview/focus group participant**

Name	Gender (m/f)	Age	Indigenous/non	Category – student, parent, recent ex-student, community leader*

- people can be in more than one category
- interview date

#### 4. Comments & reflections

(Fill this out at end of each session)

B. Questions. (These are *open-ended*; we want to encourage discussion).

1) What do you know about outcomes for Indigenous students in high schools Alice Springs  
(Here, the interviewer can prompt by discussing some of the data e.g. average 4 per year finish Yr 12;  
over half the indigenous students leave before finishing year 10)

a) Do you know many who have got through to Yr 12

i) What do you think helped them get through?

b) Do you know many who have finished Yr 10

c) Do you know many who have dropped out early?

i) Why do you think these young people dropped out?

2) The following are some reasons why Aboriginal students might drop out of school early. Please rate them according to how important you think they are.

1 = not important; 2 = quite important; 3 very important; 4 = most important.

Families can't afford to send them

Pressures at home

Language difficulties

No family support

No community support

Education isn't important to them

Peer pressure

Homelessness

Trouble with the law

Racism from teachers

Racism from other students

To look for work

To have kids

The work is too hard

The work is not relevant

- 3) What can schools do **to** encourage Aboriginal students not to drop out?
- 4) What are the problems that low school retention causes for the community?
- 5) What things can the community do to improve retention?
- 6) Would it be good to have an Aboriginal community-controlled high school in Alice Springs?

If answer is no, why not?

If answer is yes, or maybe, then:

a) Who would go to it?

*(Here the interviewer can prompt discussion, by mentioning some different groups who have problems with mainstream schooling eg language speakers, homeless kids..... )*

b) Who would run it?

c) Where should it be?

d) Who would teach in it?

e) Should it have a special curriculum, or teach the same as mainstream schools?

7) Do you have any other suggestions or comments to help solve problems for Indigenous young people secondary school?

## **Appendix 4. Draft Resolutions from the Youth Summit**

The following are the resolutions from the Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit, 25th -28th April 2001, Ross River Homestead

### **EDUCATION:**

#### **EDUCATION: *OURSELVES***

This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit recognises that there are many pressures we place upon ourselves that restrict our education options. Therefore we call upon Indigenous youth:

- to support each other to stay at school;
- not abuse drugs and alcohol that impede chances of success;
- not fight, tease or bully each other at school; and
- take some degree of responsibility for our own education and future.

#### **EDUCATION: OUR COMMUNITIES**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon our community to:

- advocate for Aboriginal cultural studies, languages and history to be incorporated into all school core curriculum;
- work with our community elders to get them to encourage us in our education and to promote to us the importance of education;
- encourage and support young men to stay in the education system to get more educated in the western system; and
- elders and community members to make themselves available to be actively involved in our schooling.

#### **EDUCATION: ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROL**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit supports the proposal for the establishment of Aboriginal Community Controlled Schools at all levels (primary, secondary and university).

#### **EDUCATION: NT EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon the NT Education Department to:

- develop programmes to employ more Aboriginal teachers;
- make Aboriginal cultural studies a core part of the school curriculum;
- ensure that all schools are fully funded to meet community requirements for space, libraries, computers;
- ensure that all teachers undertake cross - cultural training;
- make sure all schools have sport and recreational programmes;
- have Aboriginal languages part of the school curriculum;
- have more Aboriginal support staff, including liaison officers, in schools; and
- support Aboriginal elders and community leaders to have access to schools.

#### **EDUCATION: TEACHERS**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon all teachers to:

- not bully, put down, verbally or physically abuse Aboriginal students;
- not bring their personal problems to school that then affect students;
- not treat Aboriginal students as being at a lower level in their teaching approach than they would treat non-Aboriginal students;
- recognise that Aboriginal students bring knowledge with them to the classroom;
- encourage Aboriginal parents to be involved in their children's education; and
- undertake cross-cultural education.

#### EDUCATION: SCHOOLS

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon schools (Govt, private and independent) to:

- involve Aboriginal culture and language in schools, including having an active role for elders and other high profile Aboriginal community members (sports and other celebrities);
- deal effectively with bullying and other forms of abuse (by both students and teachers) put into practise policies;
- involve Aboriginal curriculum and history in school teaching programmes;
- ensure that: ATAS, Homework Centres, A-RRO, Career Officers and other support staff, are all available and meeting Aboriginal community needs;
- not separate Aboriginal family and community members from each other and allow them to mix freely to provide mutual support;
- where supported by the community, provide a common uniform;
- ensure that there is adequate personal support including welfare support and support for young mothers;
- ensure adequate support is given by ALO's to Aboriginal students so they can attend events such as this Youth Summit;
- support ASSPA committees to independently work for Aboriginal concerns; and
- negotiate with Congress for AHW's to visit high schools.

#### **EMPLOYMENT:**

##### EMPLOYMENT.

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit identifies the following issues as blockages to Indigenous youth from gaining and retaining employment:

- lack of education opportunities;
- lack of training opportunities; particularly in remote areas;
- racism in the work place;
- having family responsibilities that keep you away from work;
- limited range of jobs within the community;
- limited exposure to Aboriginal role models;
- welfare dependency;
- lack of aboriginal owned businesses; and
- that there are many health and social problems that interrupt work.

Therefore we call upon:

- the Governunent and others to implement our Summit recommendations on Education;
- the Government to support comprehensive training facilities in communities;



- Governments and local industry to support the development of Aboriginal employment programmes in conjunction with the Aboriginal organisations, to create real jobs and break the welfare dependency cycle;
- our community, organisations and the wider community to confront racism in the workplace;
- employers to support flexible working conditions that allow for family and cultural commitments to be fulfilled;
- Government and ATSIC to support the establishment of Aboriginal owned businesses; and
- all of us to support each other and ourselves to achieve our goals and get and keep jobs.

## **LEGAL ISSUES:**

### **LEGAL: YOUTH RIGHTS**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit wants young indigenous people to have a better understanding of the Law and their rights by:

- schools providing education about legal issues;
- having Night Patrol and Legal Aide explaining rights so youth can understand them; and
- use of TV, radio and youth workers to explain rights.

### **LEGAL: MANDATORY SENTENCING**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls for the end to Mandatory Sentencing. We support the use of the following measures depending on the crime:

- diversionary programmes (including going out bush, sport programmes and camps);
- community service (including working for old people);
- warnings;
- paying damages for criminal expenses;
- working for the community where the crime was committed; and
- use of traditional law.

**LEGAL: RELATIONS BETWEEN POLICE AND INDIGENOUS YOUTH** This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit wants to see better relations between the police and youth. We believe this could be achieved by:

- Police coming to schools to see the youth are good;
- Police go through cross-cultural programmes and have these programmes reviewed in an ongoing way;
- having ACPO's more involved when non-Aboriginal Police Officers are dealing with Aboriginal Youth;
- having female Police present when female Aboriginal youth are being dealt with;
- there being more Aboriginal women (and male) Police Officers;
- greater communication between Night Patrols and the Police;
- Police run functions for Aboriginal youth; and
- Police to initiate a friendly manner with Aboriginal youth.

### **LEGAL: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit views domestic violence as a serious issue and calls for:

- more education in the community about Domestic Violence;
- counselling for partners and family;
- control of drunks in the community;
- use of traditional law in dealing with Domestic Violence;
- support for other ways in dealing with frustrations ( including anger management , counselling etc.);
- the addressing of the underlying causes of Domestic Violence (including the grog problem); and
- that offenders not be dealt with by jail, but rather through rehabilitation or camps or home detention.

## **ALCOHOL & DRUGS:**

### ALCOHOL & DRUGS: ALCOHOL RESTRICTIONS

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit supports the proposed trial of Liquor Restrictions in Alice Springs and calls on communities to work with the NT Liquor Commission to do the following:

• where restrictions exist, implement them properly; • introduce restrictions that apply to all communities; and • restrictions need to apply to everybody not just Aboriginal people. Restrictions need to include things like:

- no cartons only six packs;
- show license as proof of age to buy drinks;
- ban 5 Litre cask wine;
- put prices up;
- grog sales only at certain times;
- only drink in pubs not creeks;
- restricting hours of bottle shops; and
- write purchase's name against purchases where there is a limit on the number of purchases each individual is allowed.

### ALCOHOL & DRUGS: TREATMENT OPTIONS

The Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls on Aboriginal organisations to work with government to set up more treatment options for Aboriginal people including:

- treatment programmes in town;
- take drinkers, sniffers out bush;
  - organise diversionary activities: sports, hunting, swimming, excursions, camping etc.;
  - more power for ACPO'S;
  - more night patrols in the communities;
  - more money for programs to teach healthy lifestyles;
  - *"Heal hearts first to have healthy feelings"*;
- a place away from everyone when people go to camp and drink, to keep drunks out of communities; and
  - alcohol educators go to communities for regular visits.

## ALCOHOL & DRUGS: YOUTH ALCOHOL & DRUGS

This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit believes that the following measures need to be implemented to support youth to understand the impacts of alcohol on their health and lifestyle:

- teach young people about alcohol before they are old enough to purchase, including education in schools;
- take youth to dialysis to show effects of alcohol on health;
- provide extensive, culturally relevant, youth orientated education materials; including in language, that highlight the impact of alcohol on lifestyle, injury, health, family and accidents;
- provide education about standard drinks;
- give clear and consistent, honest messages about marijuana;
- provide meaningful activities for youth so that they don't become bored (including discos, school socials, talent quests, family nights, -especially for older youth not in Youth Centres);
- stop harassment of youth in public places, as this drives young people towards alcohol and drug misuse to deal with the stress they feel;
- the creation of employment opportunities that have been identified at this Summit;
- hold more Youth Summits out of town;
- explain to youth the destructive link between alcohol employment and education; and
- provide education and information about alcohol restriction: how they work and have worked in the communities where they have been implemented.

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH:

### EMOTIONAL HEALTH: YOUTH INPUT TO INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONAL

#### POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls on Indigenous organisations to support young peoples growth and development and provide opportunities to have input into policy decisions through:

- workshops and forums; and
- the Youth Summit becoming a regular event.

**EMOTIONAL HEALTH: INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT** This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon the community and Indigenous organisations to provide opportunities for the development of young peoples self-esteem and confidence through the provision of:

- a wide range of activities - painting, hunting, story telling etc.;
- sporting activities; and
- social activities.

**EMOTIONAL HEALTH: COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR YOUTH** This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon our community to recognise that young people place great value on families for their emotional well being and seek your:

- support;
- encouragement; and
- belief in us.

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH: CULTURE

This Central Australian Indigenous Youth Summit calls upon our community, Indigenous organisations and Government to recognise the importance that keeping culture strong has on young people's emotional health, through supporting and encouraging activities, programmes and projects that strengthen culture such as:

- country visiting trips to sites of significance-i.e. Sacred sites, burial grounds and birthplaces;
- exchange cultural values and traditions with tribal groups both nationally and internationally; and
- more Language courses at educational institutions (need to cover all languages not just local or more common languages.)

### Appendix 5. Models Workshop Overheads

OHP1.

## Increasing Independent Aboriginal Community Control of Secondary Education

International, Interstate and Local Models

OBP2

### Workshop Purpose

- \*To identify and discuss some international, interstate and local examples of alternative secondary education models for Indigenous students.
- \*The key feature of these models is that they seek to provide more independence and community control than is available through existing mainstream high schools and secondary colleges in Alice Springs.

01P3

### Workshop Outcomes

By end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- \* Explain to people why the secondary education project is being undertaken by Alice Springs Aboriginal organisations
- \* Describe examples from overseas, interstate and here in Alice where Indigenous people have taken more control of secondary education
- \*Discuss some key issues involved in evaluating these alternative secondary education models, especially their relevance to Alice Springs and Central Australia



OHP4

### **What Do We Know Already?**

- History of Aboriginal secondary schooling in Alice Springs
- Current retention and completion rates ,
- Collins Report:'Systemic Failure
- Widespread community concern
- Examples of independent community controlled education in Australia and overseas
- What makes an Aboriginal education provider and/or program
  - Independent?
  - Community-controlled?

OHP5

### **Key Issues**

- Rights-based vs deficit/welfare models
- Different concepts of equality Aboriginal education vs education for Aboriginal people
- Different levels of control & independence
- Education for what?

OHP6

### **International Models**

- International Standards
    - Treaties
    - Conventions
  - United States
  - Canada
  - New Zealand
- (not available at time of this workshop)

OHP7

## International Standards

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Draft Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples

OBP8

## UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All indigenous peoples also have this right and the **right to establish and control their educational systems** and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

Indigenous children living outside their communities have the right to be provided access to education in their own culture and language.

**States** shall take effective measures to **provide appropriate resources** for these purposes.

OHP9

## United States of America

- Domestic dependent nations with rights to self-government
- Tribal Colleges
- Federal responsibility
- 1972 Indian Education Act
- National Advisory Council on Indian Education to advise
- President
- National Indian Education Association
- Proposed Federal Policy

OHP10

### **Extract from Draft U.S. Federal Policy**

- Under treaties, statutes, and executive orders the federal government has the responsibility to provide education to American Indians and Alaska Natives and to transfer control of education to those tribes that seek it.
- Indian education rights are inherent in tribal sovereignty and are part of the government-to-government relationship and the trust relationship.

OHP11

### **Canada**

- 1972: Indian Control of Indian Education 'manifesto'
- 'Devolution' of administration of education on reserves to Aboriginal education authorities
- significant shift toward more Aboriginal control of education in 1994 when the Mi'kmaq Education Authority concluded an agreement with federal authorities for more autonomy
- Education a priority in settlement of some land claims.
- James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (1975) provided for the creation of the Kativik and Cree school boards ,
- The Kativik school board controlled by 14 Inuit communities has jurisdiction and responsibility for elementary, secondary and adult education for all people, including non-Inuit, living in the territory.
- It exercises a high degree of control over education, but still obliged to follow the Quebec provincial curriculum.



OHP12

### Canadian Royal Commission Findings

Aboriginal people must have the authority to organize their own education and to influence how their children are educated....

Education is a core element of jurisdiction in Aboriginal self-government. Aboriginal people must have the opportunity to exercise self-governance in education.. (to) resume control of their education in its entirety, passing their own legislation and regulating all aspects of education.

OHP13

### Models from other parts of Australia

- Victoria
- Queensland
- Western Australia
- New South Wales
- Other parts of NT

**NOTE: This is not a complete list. Information is still coming in.**

OUP14

### Victoria

- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI)  
Regional Koorie Education Committees
- Koorie Open Door Education (KODE) campuses in Glenroy, Morwell and Mildura
- One independent: Worawa Aboriginal College

0HP15

## Queensland

### Negotiating State-level Charter

- agreement between Education Queensland and representatives of Aboriginal community organisations
- Trialling school community agreements

### Independent secondary schools

- Murri School, Brisbane; trialling 2ndary to Yr 10.-Wadja Wadja, Worabinda; Yr 8 - 10Wangeddi, Cairns; Yr 8-12, with boarding -Shalom Christian College, Townsville; evolved form Eddi Mabo's Black Conununity School

0HP16

## Western Australia

### **Karrayili**, Fitzroy Crossing

- community-controlled independent; runs school based traineeships **Aboriginal Community College, Gnangara** -established 1979; 82 students, of whom 23 are secondary. **Karalundi Aboriginal Education Centre** -Christian community-directed independent, 60km north of Meekathurra. (One of several).

### **Barramundi**, Kunnunurra-annexe to Kunnunurra H.S.

### **Perth Community College**

- proposed Aboriginal State School

0HP17

## New South Wales

NSW AECG and DET have partnership agreement, *Securing a Collaborative Partnership into the Future* (May 1999)

No community controlled independent secondary schools

Year 10-12 one in Newtown, Sydney, folded after a few years

Christian community-directed independent in Taree \*Booroongen Djugun College, independent community controlled VET provider in Kempsey, works in partnership with Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre and local schools

0HP18

## Other Parts of NT

- Nyangatjatjara College
- Kormilda College
- Marara Christian School
- Warlpiri Triangle proposal - Area Schools based on language clusters ATNAC, Papunya

0HP19

## Nyangatjatjara Aboriginal Secondary College

- Opened July 1997
- Main college at Yulara
- eimampa, Mutijulu and Kaltukatjara (Docker River) campuses.
- College Board all-Aboriginal, 6 members, 2 from each community
- Target gp: 11/12 - 18/20 yr olds
- Gender segregated program
- Literacy/numeracy, Society & environment, Health, Technology, VET
- No bilingual program, but will include Pitjantjajara as a subject in 2001.
- Focus on preparing students for employment

0HP20

## Local Alice Springs Models

- Yipirinya Post-primary
- Irrkerlantye
- Yarrantye Arltere Learning Centre
- IAD Aboriginal Framework project; VET in Schools program
- Alice Outcomes: Gap Youth Centre, ASYASS & ASHS
- CAAMP
- ASHS AVTS
- Yirrara

## Conclusion: Levels of Control

- Recognition of sovereign rights to self-government

= An Indigenous education system

- Regional, state and community level agreements
- Community-controlled independent schools
- Community-managed government or church schools
- Community controlled organisations run programs in partnership with schools & education systems

## Appendix 6. Modelling education investment

These calculations are intended only to demonstrate that such an exercise is logically possible. They are based on the published work of Dr. Gerald Burke, and on personal communications between Dr Burke and the Principal Investigator. With slightly more sophisticated techniques, some of the assumptions could be made more realistic, and a much more accurate estimate obtained.

### Assumptions:

1. Central Region Indigenous population 1996 11,963
2. Current indigenous high school age population equals 50% of 5-14 cohort
3. All eligible students complete four years of high school, and then 95% withdraw. (In fact, of course, some do much less than four years.)
4. All retained students undertake two full years of senior secondary study
4. Investment per student in final two years of secondary school is equal to national average with Abstudy/Austudy included, i.e. \$23,420.

### Calculation

Central region population 5-14	3000	
Secondary age population		1500
Snr Sec students at 5% retention		75
If retention was 60%		900
Difference		825
\$ investment over 2yrs	\$19,321,500	
\$ investment over 5 yrs	\$48,303,750	

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