

# Our Children, Our Future –

Achieving Improved Primary and Secondary Education Outcomes for Indigenous Students

An Overview of  
Investment Opportunities  
and Approaches

A REPORT PUBLISHED IN COLLABORATION BY THE AMP FOUNDATION, EFFECTIVE PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL VENTURES AUSTRALIA



There has been tacit acceptance of the non-achievement of educational standards by Aboriginal children and young people.

The resultant acceptance of this lack of educational success has a cumulative effect. It is based on the belief that Aboriginal children and young people will never reach their full potential and if they fall behind society then welfare will protect them. Their low level of educational success is accepted as a normative expectation.

**This has to change.**

Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: Improving the Educational Experiences of Aboriginal Children and Young People

# Our Children, Our Future –

Achieving Improved Primary and Secondary Education Outcomes for Indigenous Students

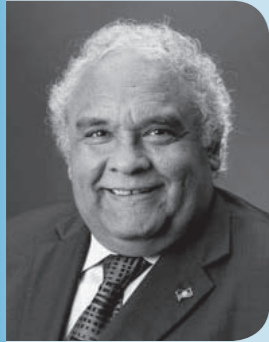
An Overview of Investment Opportunities and Approaches



social ventures australia  
investing in social change



## Foreward by Tom Calma



TOM CALMA  
TITLE

Access to education is a basic human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Most people now accept that education is the key to improving life chances and life choices. An education leads us to greater opportunities to participate in employment and in the wider society. This in turn can lead to other benefits such as improved emotional and social well-being and better access to services such as housing and health care.

Indigenous Australia has a population of over half a million people and it is growing. Unfortunately for this growing population, the education statistics paint an alarming picture. Indigenous youth remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia. In many parts of Australia they are disadvantaged in terms of access to appropriate and high quality education, and as a consequence many are not reaching the basic educational milestones. The extent of this disadvantage and the challenges and opportunities to overcome this disadvantage are well documented in this Report.

While at present there are large challenges, improvements can be made with appropriate policies, funding and partnerships between government, education providers and communities. Strategies and resources that are commensurate with this long-term challenge are urgently needed. Investment in Indigenous education needs to be significant, and at all levels. Recruitment programs, skill development and employment retention programs are required so that the Indigenous labour market increases rather than decreases. Every school community needs a quantum of Indigenous teachers so that liaison between the Indigenous home and school environments is managed by a large, enabled Indigenous workforce. Indigenous teachers and teachers' aides need to be well-resourced and provided with first class professional learning and development opportunities. The best and brightest non-Indigenous teachers need to be encouraged to work in remote Indigenous schools. Education facilities need to be of the same standard across the country. There is much work to be done.

This Report will assist you to understand the current challenges in Indigenous education. It will also clarify the role that the philanthropic sector can play in assisting to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational opportunities and outcomes. This is an important challenge and we must all work in partnership to make a difference. I hope you will lend your support.

I commend this report to you.

## About this Publication

This Report has been published in collaboration by The AMP Foundation, Effective Philanthropy and Social Ventures Australia. It is based on an earlier report on Indigenous education prepared for, and funded by, The AMP Foundation. The AMP Foundation has generously agreed to support the extension and publication of the earlier report for the benefit of the broader Philanthropic Sector.

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SVA has conducted a range of research in the area covered by this Report. It has prepared knowledge and information papers and in 2007 it conducted an Indigenous roundtable investigating Indigenous education and transitions to work. SVA’s work in these areas is ongoing.

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## Acknowledgements

The Authors are grateful to Chris Boys and Helen Stanley for the support that they provided in relation to the preparation of earlier versions of this Report. They also thank Dr. Jo Stubbings for editing this Report.

The publishing organisations are grateful to the following subject matter experts who have reviewed this Report:

- **Adrian Appo**, Ganbina
- **Dr Barry Osborne**, Adjunct Associate Professor James Cook University and Djarragun College Board Member
- **Jenny Samms**, Department of Planning and Community Development Victoria
- **Dr Nereda White**, Indigenous Unit, Australian Catholic University

The publishing organisations are grateful for the input provided by the Review Panel. The publishing organisations take full responsibility for the views expressed in this Report and note that any errors or omissions are their responsibility and not those of anyone consulted in the process of preparing the Report.

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# 1. Executive summary

For a number of years Australian Governments have sought to position Australia as the 'Clever Country'. They have promoted the importance of education and training as the foundation for our economic prosperity and future growth. In the case of Indigenous Australians, however, education and training arguably hold even greater significance as they provide the key to not only economic prosperity but also to social equality.

In Australia today Indigenous students at all levels experience worse education outcomes than non-Indigenous students.<sup>2</sup> Indigenous students demonstrate lower school attendance, retention and achievement than non-Indigenous students across all age groups and all States and Territories.<sup>3</sup> Indigenous post-school qualification, labour force participation and employment rates are also lower than those of non-Indigenous Australians<sup>4</sup> as is their general socio-economic status, health and wellbeing.<sup>5</sup>

Historically, poor Indigenous education outcomes are reflected in low economic participation.

The above outcomes have been linked to the historical exclusion of Indigenous people from the Australian education system, both formally through past government policy and informally through the failure to deliver education services that meet the needs of Indigenous students.

In order to improve Indigenous education outcomes there is a need to address a range of factors that negatively impacts the ability of Indigenous students to access and to engage successfully in education.

The current Australian education system is set up predominantly to support a population in which relatively few students require significant material, personal or learning support; however, for a number of Indigenous students this is not the case.<sup>6</sup>

This Report seeks to provide insight into the role that can be played by the philanthropic sector to help to improve the education outcomes of Indigenous young people in Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007 Overview*. Canberra: Productivity Commission SCRGSP, 2007, p.4. (SCRGSP Overview 2007)

<sup>3</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*. Canberra: Productivity Commission SCRGSP, 2007, pp.13–14. (SCRGSP 2007)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14–16, 13.2, 13.11.

<sup>5</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, pp.12, 18–23; Australian Bureau of Statistics. *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Cat. no. 4704.0. Canberra: ABS, 2005. (ABS 4704.0)

<sup>6</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.xxxiii.

The area of education is broad and the issues impacting the effectiveness of Indigenous education are complex. For that reason this Report has focused on the specific challenges and opportunities relating to primary and secondary school level education (Years 1 to 12).

Primary and secondary education is only one element of a broader education system that starts with early childhood development and pre-primary schooling and extends through to vocational and tertiary education and the transition from school to post-school employment. In choosing to focus on Years 1 to 12 education, we are not seeking to downgrade the importance of those other areas, which clearly play an important role in Indigenous education and the translation of education outcomes into labour force participation and employment. Indeed, each area could be the subject of a separate report.

This Report provides an overview of the state of Indigenous primary and secondary education outcomes in Australia and the impact that they have on the capacity of Indigenous students to access post-secondary qualifications and employment opportunities.

The Report identifies the underlying factors that contribute to those outcomes, including the Social/Community and Home Context in which Indigenous students live, the School Context in which they participate and their own personal life experience (referred to as Student Context).

It also discusses some of the approaches that are being taken by the not-for-profit sector to address those factors. In doing that, the Report seeks to focus on approaches that are related to the way in which schooling is delivered, the experience that students have of school and their capacity to access and to engage in school and to learn. The Report **does not** investigate interventions that seek to address broader Social issues (e.g. health, housing and community function) or Home-based issues (e.g. parenting and parental education and employment) affecting the capacity of Indigenous students to access or to engage in education. It also does not cover government-funded activity.

The Report identifies eight Intervention Categories that work within a School and Student Context to improve the delivery of education and the education outcomes of Indigenous students that are suited to philanthropic investment on the basis that they either augment or complement existing government funding or provide an opportunity for the Philanthropic Sector to invest in more innovative responses to issues affecting Indigenous education.

The eight Intervention Categories covered in this Report include:

**1. Holistic Schooling Approach** – the adoption of a holistic approach to schooling that delivers a culturally and contextually relevant and capability appropriate curriculum that relates students’ learning to their life experience. Such schooling approaches incorporate program elements that address the full range of student needs (including their basic material needs, travel to and from school, health and nutrition, personal and learning support requirements). They provide a highly supportive school environment and engage students’ parents, family and community in the design/delivery of day-to-day schooling.

**2. Tailored (Culturally Relevant and Capability Appropriate) Curriculum** – the development and dissemination of a culturally and contextually relevant and capability appropriate curriculum that is tailored to the needs of Indigenous students and teaching tools to support Indigenous student learning.

**3. Appropriate (Culturally Relevant and Capability Appropriate) Staff Training** – the development and delivery of culturally appropriate and capability relevant pre- and in-service principal, teacher and teaching support staff training that includes skills relating to the design and delivery of the curriculum as well as the establishment and management of supportive teacher–student relationships.

**4. Holistic Student Support** – the delivery of school and non-school-based programs that specifically seek to meet students’ individual needs by assisting them to access and engage in school including material, personal and learning support requirements and to promote parental and family support for student education and learning.

**5. Student and Parental Engagement** – the delivery of school and non-school-based programs that specifically seek to engage students with school and learning by encouraging school attendance, attachment and retention. This is done by promoting parental and family support for student education, connecting parents with school and helping parents to better support their children to learn.

**6. Intensive Learning Support** – school and non-school-based programs that seek to provide intensive learning support including remedial literacy and numeracy programs, general curriculum-based learning support or tutoring, extension learning and homework support.

**7. School-based Vocational Training and Development** – school-based vocational development and training programs including career planning, school-based apprenticeships and TAFE programs etc.

**8. Scholarships** – the provision of scholarships to support Indigenous student access to education.

This Report provides case studies of each of the above Intervention Categories in order to provide a sense of how they operate. (These case studies are provided by way of example only and their inclusion in the Report should not be seen as a recommendation for funding.) Having analysed each of the above Interventions we have also identified the types of Key Success Factors that apply to each of the Intervention Categories that can help Philanthropic Investors to assess the effectiveness of individual intervention programs.

The Report concludes with some insights for Philanthropic Investors when investing in this area.

When reviewing programs that seek to improve Indigenous education outcomes, it is rare for a single program to address the range of outcomes or factors that often need to be addressed to support change. In many (if not most) cases a mix of interventions is required to do that.

The strongest intervention models tend therefore to be multi-faceted and to involve the coordination of a range of programs to address the issues affecting students’ capacity to engage with school and learning. The key often lies in providing a coordinated response that addresses both the learning and other support needs of the individual students.

The implication of this for Philanthropic Investors is that well-focused investments in this area:

- **require a holistic understanding of the local issues** that need to be addressed in order to achieve effective outcomes
- **may involve multiple service providers** (and as a result tend to require more extensive due diligence, more complex funding structures and more extensive coordination, monitoring and evaluation processes)
- **often require higher levels of overall funding** in order to make sure that all relevant program components are covered and so often involve larger investments or collaborative funding arrangements
- **tend to require higher levels of support where interventions are delivered in remote areas** compared to less remote areas due to the narrower range of services and service providers in those areas and the higher levels of disadvantage that tend to be faced there
- **need to allow a reasonable timeframe for change** given the complexity of the factors affecting education outcomes
- **in the case of school-based investments:**
  - require the underlying organisational systems at the school (e.g. school management and culture, staff recruitment and training, curriculum planning and student discipline procedures etc.) to support the delivery of the programs being funded – the alignment of such systems, as well as the organisational structure and staffing of the school, with program delivery is critical to ensure that such programs are sustainable, rather than dependent on the principal and staff who are present at the school at the time of investment
  - need to take into account taxation structures that currently limit the capacity of investors to access Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) based tax deductions.

This Report **does not** provide specific recommendations to Philanthropic Investors regarding which programs they should fund. The Report has been structured to provide Investors with useful background information to help them to understand the issues associated with Indigenous education and conceptual frameworks to help them to identify and assess potential investment options.

Figure 1 Intervention Categories covered in this Report

	School context					Student context			
Change Levers	Access to school	School / Learning environment	Curriculum	Teaching approach	Parental, family and community involvement	Basic material and personal support	Engagement with school and learning	Intensive learning support	Vocational development and transition support
Intervention Categories	1. Holistic Schooling Approach					4. Holistic Student Support			
	8. Scholarships		2. Tailored (culturally relevant & capability appropriate) Curriculum	3. Appropriate (culturally relevant & capability appropriate) Staff Training			5. Student & Parental Engagement	6. Intensive Learning Support	7. School-based Vocational Training & Development

# 2. Introduction

This section of the Report provides an overview of the objectives of this Report and the methodology used to prepare it.

## 2.1 Purpose of this Report

Although there is significant interest among the Philanthropic Sector in Indigenous issues, Investors often do not invest in the area:

*'because they lack the expertise and knowledge to grant well in a complex sector and some labour under misconceptions about working with Indigenous causes.'*<sup>7</sup>

This Report seeks to provide insight into the role that the Philanthropic Sector can play to assist in improving the education outcomes of Indigenous young people in Australia. It is also intended to be a useful tool for practitioners in the not-for-profit and government sectors with an interest in Indigenous education.

The Report **does not** provide specific recommendations to Philanthropic Investors in terms of which programs they should fund. Instead, the Report has been structured to provide Investors with useful background information to help them to understand the challenges and opportunities associated with improving primary and secondary level Indigenous education outcomes. It also seeks to provide Investors with conceptual frameworks to help them to identify and independently assess potential investment options.

## 2.2 Scope of this Report – what it does and does not cover

The area of education is broad and the issues affecting the effectiveness of Indigenous education are complex. For that reason this Report has focused on the specific challenges and opportunities relating to primary and secondary school level education (Years 1 to 12).

This Report looks at:

- Indigenous education **Outcomes** – it provides an overview of the state of Indigenous primary and secondary education outcomes in Australia and the impact that they have on the capacity of Indigenous students to access post-secondary qualifications and employment opportunities
- **Contributing Factors** – it identifies the underlying factors that contribute to those outcomes including the **Social/Community, and Home Contexts** in which Indigenous students live, the **School Context** in which they participate and their own personal life experience (referred to in the Report as **Student Context**)
- **Interventions** – it discusses some of the approaches that are being taken to address those factors and identifies a series of Intervention Categories that are suited to Philanthropic Investment on the basis that they either augment or complement existing government funding or provide an opportunity for the Philanthropic Sector to invest in more innovative responses
- **Key Success Factors** – it identifies the Key Success Factors (KSFs) relating to program design and implementation that apply to each of the identified Intervention Categories.

The Report focuses on interventions that are related to the School and Student Context, in particular, the way in which schooling is delivered, the experience that students have of school and their capacity to access and engage in school and to learn. The Report **does not** investigate interventions that seek to address broader Social/Community or Home-based issues affecting the capacity of Indigenous students to access or to engage in education and to learn. It also does not cover government-funded programs.

Primary and secondary education is obviously only one element of a broader education system that starts with early childhood development and pre-

<sup>7</sup> Scaife W. *Challenges in Indigenous philanthropy: Reporting Australian grantmakers' perspectives*. Australian Journal of Social Issues 2006, p.18. (Scaife 2006)

## 2.3 Who will find this Report useful and how?

primary schooling and extends through to vocational and tertiary education and the transition from school to post-school employment. This Report **does not** deal with those areas, nor does it deal with the area of parental or adult education which is also relevant when considering Indigenous education outcomes.

In choosing to focus on Years 1 to 12 education we are not seeking to downgrade the importance of those other areas, which clearly play an important role in Indigenous education and the translation of education outcomes into labour force participation and employment. Indeed, each of those areas could, in themselves, be the subject of a separate report such as this.

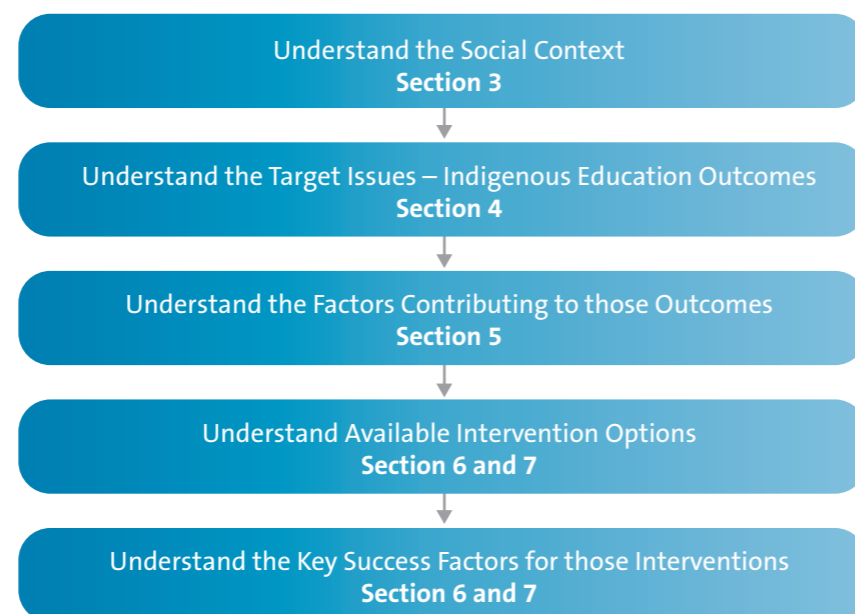
The decision to focus on school-based education has been taken as a starting point from which to build an understanding of the underlying issues relating to Indigenous education and some of the approaches that can be taken to address them.

Although the Report references some of the approaches that are being undertaken by government in this area it is not intended to (and does not) provide a detailed discussion or assessment of government policy in this area.

Throughout this Report the term 'Indigenous' is used to refer to people identifying themselves as Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

This Report has been written predominately to inform Philanthropic Investors. As noted above, it is also intended to provide a guide for practitioners in the not-for-profit and government sectors with an interest in Indigenous education.

Figure.2 What this Report is designed to help you do



In particular, the Report has been designed to help Philanthropic Investors to:

- build an understanding of the issues surrounding Indigenous education in terms of the poor outcomes that are being achieved and the factors contributing to these outcomes (Sections 4 and 5)
- identify the types of intervention that they can invest in to address these issues (Section 6)
- identify Key Success Factors that they can use to assess specific programs that they identify for potential investment (Section 6).

The case studies that are set out in Section 6 are provided by way of example only. The programs set out in these case studies have not been independently reviewed or audited. Their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding. As a matter of good practice Philanthropic Investors interested in funding interventions such as those identified in Section 6 should ensure they undertake appropriate due diligence prior to investment to make sure that the programs they invest in align with their funding strategy and meet the investment criteria.

## 2.4 Methodology used to prepare this Report

The preparation of this Report has involved five (5) stages:

### Stage 1 – Literature review

A detailed literature review was undertaken and interviews were conducted with subject matter experts to:

- understand the state of Indigenous education outcomes and collect background data
- identify the factors contributing to these outcomes
- identify the types of intervention that are effective in addressing these factors.

### Stage 2 – Program/response identification

A program review was conducted to identify examples of programs applying these types of intervention and the service providers delivering them.

This involved consultations with subject matter experts, internet-based research, a review of recommendations in research and policy papers, contact with Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Departments and Indigenous organisations, as well as a range of philanthropic foundations that fund in this area.

### Stage 3 – Program/response investigation

Interviews were then used to build an understanding of each of the above Intervention Categories and to identify key success factors associated with the delivery of higher impact programs and responses.

The case studies provided in Section 6 are based on some of the programs that were investigated. As noted above, the case studies in Section 6 are provided by way of example only. Their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding.

### Stage 4 – Framework development and draft report preparation

The information collected in Stages 1 to 3 was then used to develop the conceptual and intervention frameworks set out in this Report and a draft report was prepared.

### Stage 5 – Peer review and Report finalisation

The draft report was then reviewed by a panel of subject matter experts. The feedback and views of the Review Panel were used to inform the structure and content of the Final Report.

# 3. Background

This section sets the context for the Report. It looks at the purpose of education and provides an overview of the Australian education system and the Indigenous student population. It also provides a snapshot of the approaches that government has adopted to address disparities in Indigenous versus non-Indigenous education outcomes.

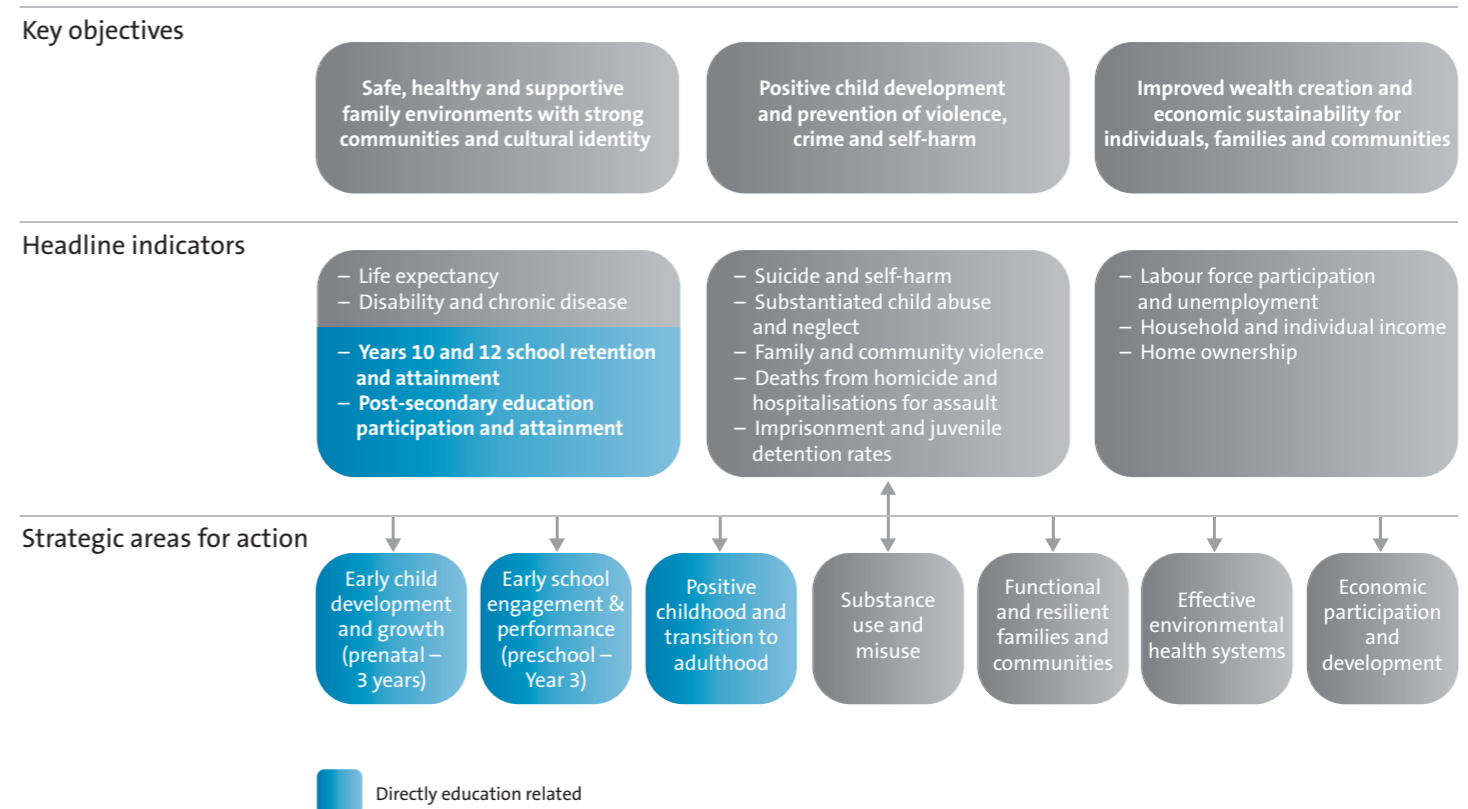
## BACKGROUND

Indigenous Australians continue to experience poorer outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians across most social and economic parameters. On average Indigenous people live 17 years less than the non-Indigenous population, their health is generally poorer, they are approximately three times more likely to be unemployed, when they are employed their incomes are likely to be lower and they are more likely to live in communities that are subject to social dysfunction.<sup>8</sup>

Issues relating to child development and education have been identified as key areas for strategic action within this framework. Improved education outcomes are specifically identified in the framework as playing a key role in improving socio-economic status, health, wellbeing and social cohesion.<sup>11</sup>

The Commonwealth Government has adopted a strategic framework through which to understand, address and report on issues of Indigenous disadvantage.<sup>9</sup> This framework identifies a range of headline indicators in relation to the state (relative disadvantage) of Indigenous people and identifies seven focus areas for strategic action.

Figure 3 Commonwealth Government's strategic framework for addressing Indigenous disadvantage<sup>10</sup>



<sup>8</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, pp.1–55); ABS 4704.0.

<sup>9</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.7–9.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.

### 3.1 The objectives of education

Defined in its broadest terms, education is the provision of formal or informal instruction to develop skills and to acquire knowledge, understanding, values and attitudes that will allow students to operate effectively in society and to succeed in life in personal, social and economic terms.<sup>12</sup>

An effective school education system supports student development across a range of skill areas. It contributes to:<sup>13</sup>

- **Academic attainment** – based on the acquisition of academic skills and qualifications that demonstrate individual ability and provide a platform for further education, vocational training and employment
- **Vocational preparation** – based on the identification of vocational interests and skills that prepare individuals for employment
- **Social skills** – based on the development of behavioural management, communication and interpersonal skills that allow individuals to interact with other people and to build friendships and personal relationships
- **Engagement as a citizen** – based on an understanding of individual rights and responsibilities, social institutions and values
- **Emotional and spiritual wellbeing** – based on the development of a sense of personal and cultural identity and self-worth
- **Physical health** – based on an understanding of how to manage personal and family health, maintain a healthy environment and access available services to meet health needs.

<sup>12</sup> Council for the Australian Federation. *The Future of Schooling in Australia*. Federalist Paper 2. April 2007, p.27. (CAF 2007)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. *Report on Government Services 2007, Indigenous Compendium*. Canberra: Productivity Commission SCRGSP, 2007, p.22. (SCRGSP Compendium 2007)

### 3.2 The Australian education system

Under the Australian Constitution matters relating to education are the responsibility of the State and Territory Governments. In practice, policy and funding responsibility for education is shared between the State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments.<sup>14</sup>

Education policy is coordinated at a national level through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). Current policy is based on the goals and objectives set out in the National Goals for Schooling for the 21st Century that was agreed by the Ministerial Council in 1999. Vocational and technical education is specifically coordinated through the Australian National Training Authority Ministerial Council (ANTA MINCO).<sup>15</sup>

Responsibility for education funding is split, with the State and Territory Governments having primary responsibility for funding government schools including preschool, primary and secondary school and vocational training, and the Commonwealth Government having primary responsibility for funding non-government/independent schools, registered training providers and tertiary education.<sup>16</sup>

In most Australian States and Territories schooling is compulsory for children aged between six and 15 years<sup>18</sup> with compulsory education ending in Year 9 or Year 10. Preschool attendance is not currently compulsory.<sup>19</sup>

There are some minor variations in the structure of the schooling systems across the different States and Territories in terms of the delineation between primary and secondary schooling and the terminology that is used to refer to different student groups (particularly in the preschool, middle school and senior school years). However, the underlying education system is similar.

<sup>14</sup> National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2004. Department of Education, Science and Training. Commonwealth of Australia, 2004, pp.1–3. (DEST 2004)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp.2–3.

<sup>16</sup> DEST 2004, pp.2–3.

<sup>18</sup> ACT, QLD, NSW, VIC, NT 6–15 years, TAS and SA 6–16 years, WA 6–17 years.

<sup>19</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.3. The term preschool has been used to refer to preschool in ACT and NSW or kindergarten in QLD, VIC, TAS, SA and WA and transition in NT.

In 2006 there were 9,612 schools operating in Australia, the majority of which were government-operated schools (72%).

Break Out Text 1 – Australian schools profile<sup>17</sup>

Chart 1 Australian schools breakdown

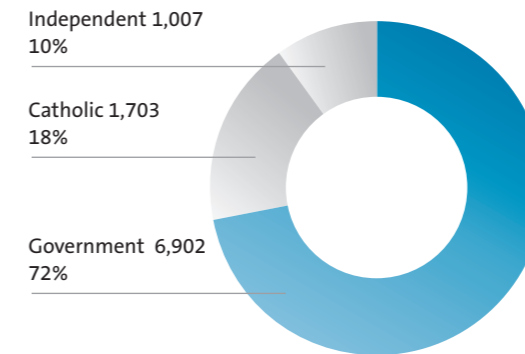


Chart 2 Breakdown of schools by student group average

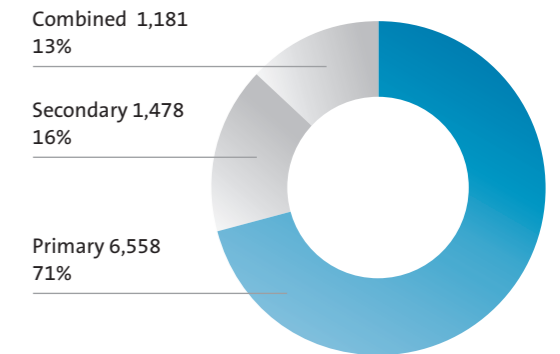


Figure 4 Education system structure by jurisdiction<sup>20</sup>

Year Level	ACT	NSW	VIC	TAS	QLD	SA	WA	NT
Pre-Year 1	Kindergarten	Kindergarten	Prep.School	Prep.School	Preparatory	Reception	Pre-Primary	Transition
Year 1	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School	Primary School
Year 2								
Year 3								
Year 4								
Year 5								
Year 6								
Year 7	High School	High School	Secondary School	High School				Middle School
Year 8					High School	Secondary/High School	High School	
Year 9								
Year 10								High School
Year 11	College			College				
Year 12								

Legend: Preschool (grey), Primary school (light blue), Secondary school (dark blue), Category name (lightest blue)

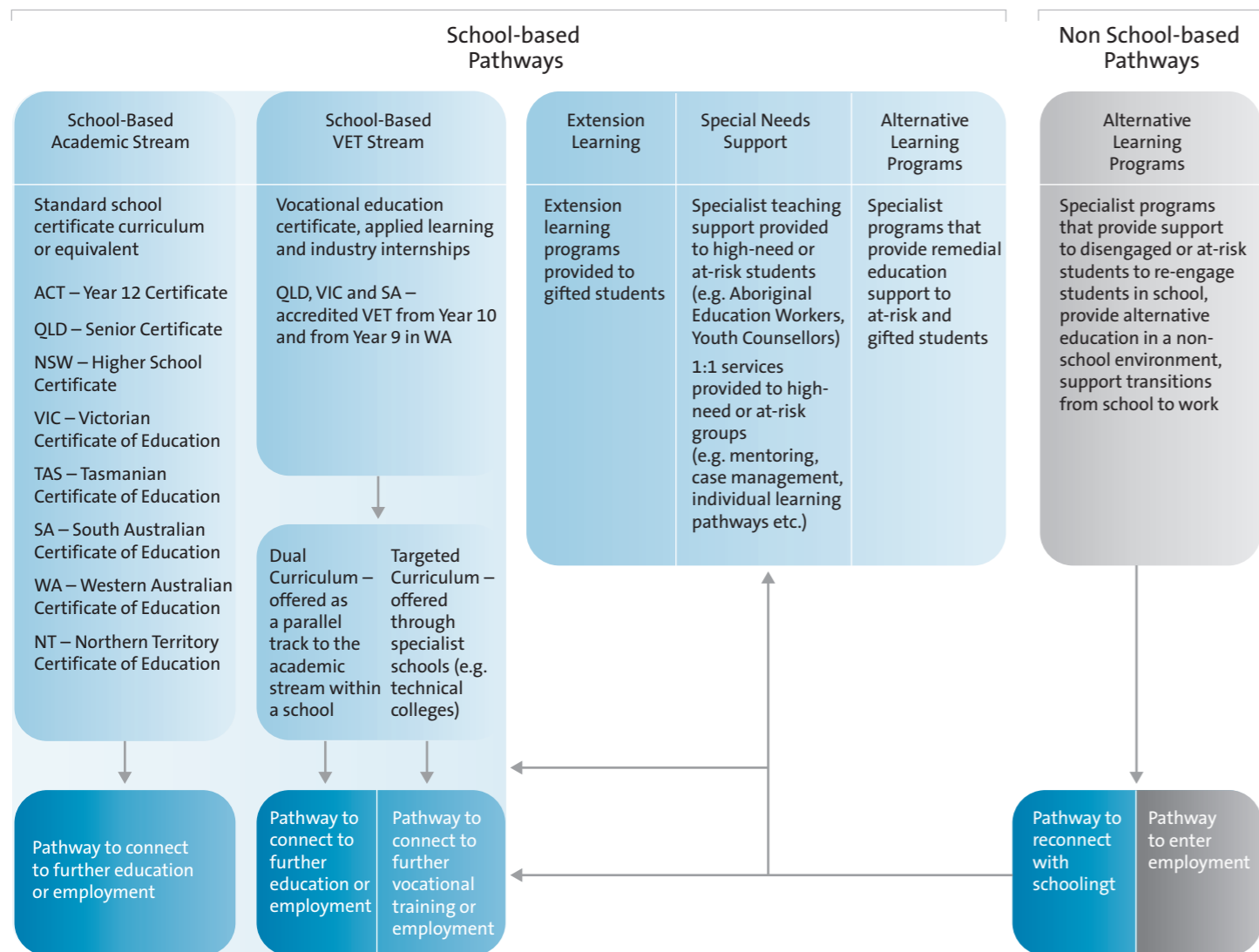
<sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. Schools Report. Cat. no. 4221.0. Canberra: ABS, 2006, pp.3, 7–8, 16. (ABS 4221.0)

<sup>20</sup> DEST 2004, p.30.

All States and Territories provide basic primary and secondary education. Academic and vocational streams are available in all jurisdictions. Although curriculum components are similar, they are not currently standardised, and so there is some variation from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and school to school. Differing tertiary entrance assessment systems are applied; however, cross-jurisdictional recognition is given to the different systems.

Post-compulsory education is regulated within the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) that provides a system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training and the higher education sector.

Figure 5 Educational pathways map <sup>21</sup>



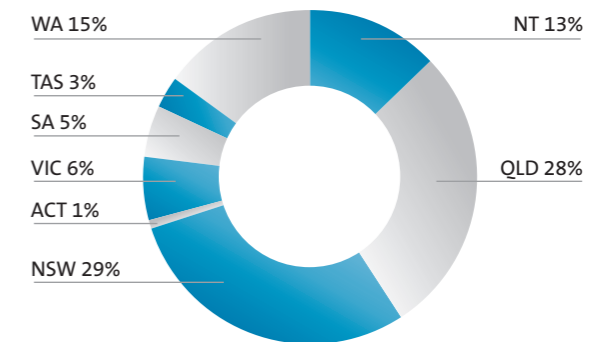
<sup>21</sup> Social Ventures Australia. Big Picture Company Australia: Briefing Paper, January 2007, p.13. (SVA 2007)

### 3.3 The Indigenous student population

#### 3.3.1 Overall Indigenous population – a contextual overview

Census data in 2006 indicate that Australia has an estimated Indigenous population of slightly over half a million (517,200) people, equating to approximately 2.5% of the total Australian population.<sup>22</sup>

Figure 6 Indigenous population by State and Territory<sup>23</sup>

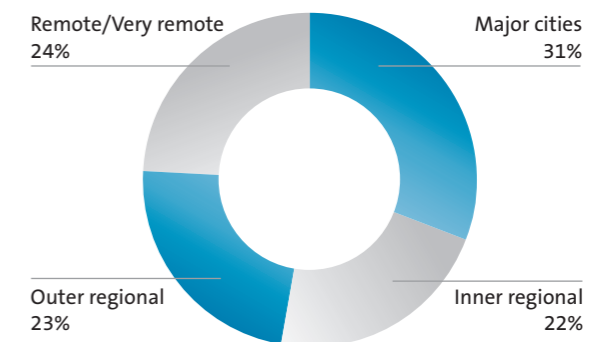


Indigenous Population	NT	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	SA	TAS	WA
Approximate Population	67,236	144,816	149,988	5,172	31,032	25,860	15,516	77,580
Total Indigenous Population	13%	28%	29%	1%	6%	5%	3%	15%
% State or Territory Population	31.6%	3.6%	2.2%	1.2%	0.6%	1.7%	3.4%	3.8%

The Indigenous population is growing at approximately 2% per annum, twice the rate of the general population.<sup>24</sup>

The majority of Indigenous people in Australia live in major cities and urban centres (31%). The balance of the Indigenous population is reasonably evenly distributed across regional and remote areas. Just under a quarter (24%) of the Indigenous population lives in remote or very remote locations.<sup>25</sup>

Figure 7 Indigenous population distribution based on standard remoteness scales<sup>26</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. Population Distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Cat. no. 4705.0. Canberra: ABS, 2006. (ABS 4705.0)

<sup>23</sup> ABS 4705.0.

<sup>24</sup> Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs AESOC Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education. Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008 MCEETYA, 2006, pp.11, 15. (MCEETYA 2006)

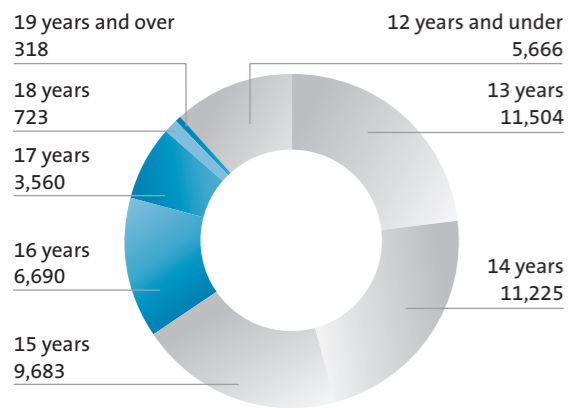
<sup>25</sup> ABS 4705.0. The remoteness structure shown here is based on the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) used by the ABS. There are five major categories of Remoteness Area: Major Cities of Australia, Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia and Very Remote Australia, together with a residual Migratory category.

<sup>26</sup> ABS 4705.0.

**Figure 8 Comparison Indigenous and non-Indigenous population age profile<sup>27</sup>**



**Figure 9 Indigenous secondary student population<sup>34</sup>**



Indigenous Student Population	12 Years and under	13 years	14 years	15 Years	16 Years	17 Years	18 Years	19 Years and over	Total	% Total
Primary School	90,396	598	18	–	–	–	–	–	91,012	64.8%
Secondary School	5,666	11,504	11,225	9,683	6,690	3,560	723	318	49,369	35.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>96,062</b>	<b>12,102</b>	<b>11,243</b>	<b>9,683</b>	<b>6,690</b>	<b>3,560</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>140,381</b>	<b>100%</b>
Percentage of Population	68.4%	8.6%	8.0%	6.9%	4.8%	2.6%	0.5%	0.2%	100%	–

The Indigenous population overall is younger than the non-Indigenous population.

The median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population (21 years) is considerably lower than that of the non-Indigenous Australian population (36 years). Almost half of the Indigenous population is approaching or of school age.<sup>28</sup>

The lower age profile of the Indigenous population has implications for the proportion of the population that is (or should be) at school and the support services required to meet the needs of this group.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3.2 Student population profile

Twenty-seven per cent of the total Indigenous population (140,381 people) were enrolled as full-time students in 2006, making up approximately 4% of the total full-time student population.<sup>30</sup>

The majority of those Indigenous students (64.8%) were enrolled in primary school (compared to 57.2% for the non-Indigenous student population).<sup>31</sup>

Over 90% of Indigenous students were aged 15 years or less (15 years of age being the age at which compulsory schooling ends for most students in Year 9 or 10).<sup>32</sup> The bias in the age of the Indigenous student population reflects the higher rate at which Indigenous students drop out of school following the completion of compulsory schooling in Year 9 or 10.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Population Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Cat. no. 4713.0. Canberra: ABS, 2001. (ABS 4713.0)

<sup>28</sup> ABS 4713.0; ABS 4704.0; Department of Health and Ageing. *Department of Health and Ageing Factbook 2006*. (DHA 2006)

<sup>29</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.11.

<sup>30</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.18.

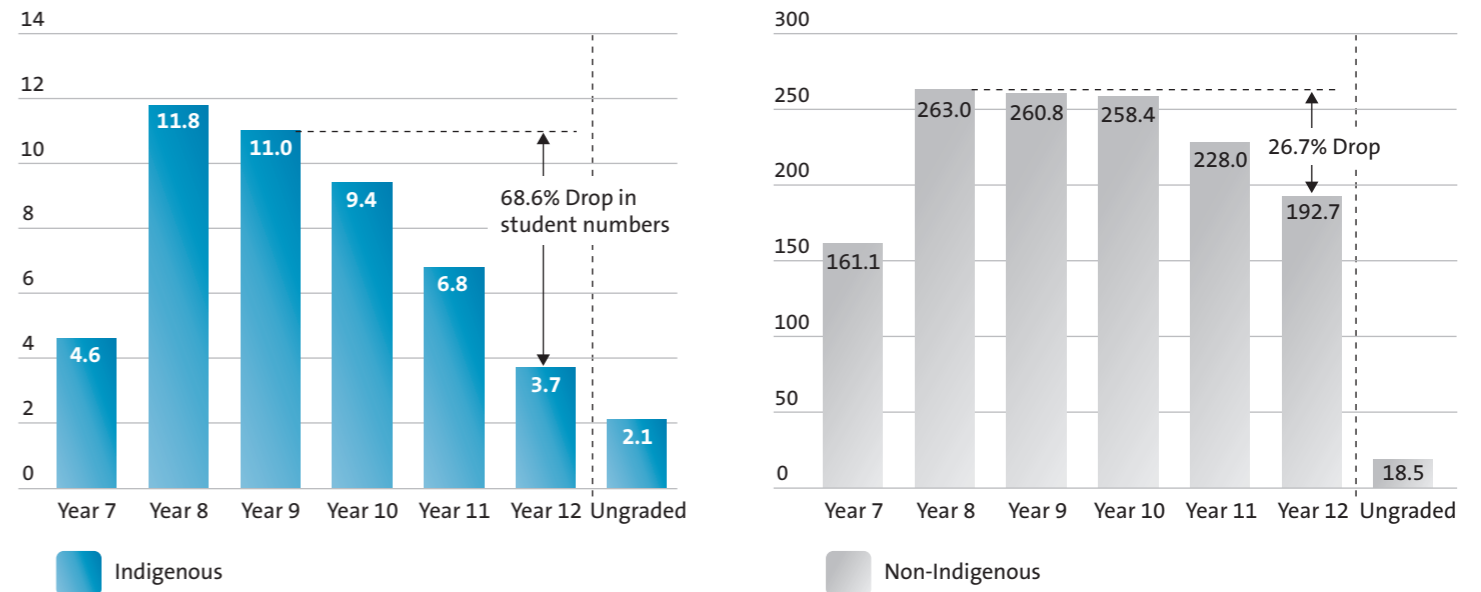
<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17.

<sup>32</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.17.

<sup>33</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.7.22–7.23.

<sup>34</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.17.

**Figure 10 Indigenous versus non-Indigenous secondary school student population profile<sup>35</sup>**



The majority of Indigenous students are enrolled in government schools.<sup>36</sup>

In most cases Indigenous students make up only a very small percentage of their school's student base (which is not unexpected given the size of the overall Indigenous population). Approximately three quarters (74.9%) of Australian schools provide education to one or more Indigenous students and in over half of those schools Indigenous students represent 5% or less of the school population.<sup>37</sup>

The number of Indigenous staff operating in schools is also low. Although the number of Indigenous teachers is increasing, the proportion of Indigenous teachers and staff working in individual schools is usually smaller than the proportion of Indigenous students.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.17.

<sup>36</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.15; SCRGSP Compendium 2007, p.24.

<sup>37</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

## 3.4 Government-based Indigenous-specific education initiatives

Australian Governments have recognised the need to address disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' education outcomes.<sup>39</sup>

Specific government policy objectives in relation to Indigenous education are set out in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP). This Policy has been endorsed by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and forms the foundation of all government Indigenous education programs. It sets out 21 long-term national goals for the improvement of Indigenous education. These goals have been legislated for in the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000. In particular, the AEP aims to make the level of education access, participation and outcomes for Indigenous people equal to that of other Australians.<sup>40</sup>

### Break Out Text 2 – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy Goals<sup>41</sup>

#### Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of preschool, primary and secondary education services for their children.
2. To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
4. To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in educational decision-making.
6. To develop arrangements for the provisions of independent advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

#### Equality of access to education services

7. To ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of pre-primary school have access to preschool services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.
8. To ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.
9. To ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and to higher education.

#### Equity of educational participation

10. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in preschool education for a period similar to that for other Australian children.
11. To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in compulsory schooling.
12. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in post-secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of other Australians in those sectors.

#### Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

13. To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through preschool education for the schooling years ahead.
14. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.
15. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.
16. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.
17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
18. To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.
19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in the English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults with limited or no educational experience.
20. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, culture and identity.
21. To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.

Pursuant to these goals Commonwealth and State and Territory Government policy has sought to improve/strengthen:

- preschool access and attendance as a precondition of 'school readiness'
- school attendance
- the quality of school leadership and teaching
- the design and delivery of culturally relevant and capability appropriate curriculum and teaching approaches
- literacy and numeracy outcomes
- post-school transitions into employment through the delivery of improved school and non-school-based vocational and employment pathways
- school, family and community partnerships to support improved school attendance, engagement, retention and attainment.<sup>42</sup>

Examples of the above activities are reflected in Commonwealth Government funded initiatives under the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) (e.g. Scaffolding Literacy programs)<sup>43</sup> and the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program (IESIP) (e.g. What Works and Dare to Lead programs) implemented under the previous Commonwealth Government.<sup>44</sup>

Ongoing commitment to those areas is reflected at a national level in the recommendations to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) for the 2005–2008 quadrennium endorsed by the Ministerial Council.<sup>45</sup> These recommendations identified six areas for focus in Indigenous education.

<sup>39</sup> CAF 2007, p.23; MCEETYA 2006, p.4.

<sup>40</sup> DEST 2004, pp.2–3 and 149–150.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp.149–150.

<sup>42</sup> MCEETYA 2006; National Indigenous Education and Training Strategy 2005–2008. <http://www.dest.gov.au> (IETS); National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. <http://www.dest.gov.au> (NIELNS)

<sup>43</sup> NIELNS

<sup>44</sup> IETS

<sup>45</sup> MCEETYA 2006, pp.5–10. Cross-government endorsement of the principles outlined in the above document means that they are unlikely to change as a result of the recent transition in Federal Government. It is not yet clear whether the approach to how those areas are addressed through Federal Government policy, funding and coordination mechanisms will change.

Table 1 – Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008<sup>46</sup>

Focus Areas	Identified Priorities
Early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provide all Indigenous children with access to two years of high-quality early childhood education prior to formal schooling</li> <li>– Develop and implement educational programs that respect and value Indigenous culture, languages (including Aboriginal English) and contexts; explicitly teach standard Australian English and prepare Indigenous children for formal schooling</li> <li>– Provide opportunities for Indigenous parents and care givers to develop skills to support the development of their children’s literacy skills and to allow parents and care givers to play an active role in the education of their children</li> </ul>
School and community educational partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Promote the value of formal education</li> <li>– Encourage the development of school, parent and community partnerships that encourage Indigenous parents and communities to work with schools to address local attendance, retention and attainment issues</li> <li>– Increase parent and community involvement in the design and delivery of Indigenous schooling (particularly in schools with significant Indigenous student cohorts or local Indigenous communities)</li> </ul>
Schooling curriculum and approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Tailor curriculum to meet student requirements (i.e. through the design and delivery of culturally relevant and capability appropriate curricula) while maintaining high educational standards</li> </ul>
School leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Include learning outcomes for Indigenous students as a key part of the accountability framework for school principals and teaching staff</li> <li>– Review and improve incentives that attract and retain high-quality principals to schools with significant Indigenous student cohorts or local Indigenous communities</li> <li>– Implement strategies that recognise high-performing schools and principals</li> <li>– Provide accredited school leadership and teacher-training programs that develop school leaders</li> </ul>
Quality teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Provide accredited pre- and in-service teacher training that includes cultural awareness and specialist teaching skills tailored to Indigenous student needs (e.g. English as a Second Language)</li> <li>– Review and improve incentives that attract and retain high-quality teachers</li> </ul>
Pathways to training, employment and higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Design and deliver mentoring, counselling and work-readiness programs that provide culturally inclusive and intensive vocational development support in secondary school to assist Indigenous students to transition from school into post-school education, training or employment</li> <li>– Improve vocational learning opportunities for Indigenous students from Year 10 onwards</li> <li>– Expand trade-based training</li> <li>– Strengthen school to tertiary education support programs</li> </ul>

<sup>46</sup> MCEETYA 2006, pp.5–10.

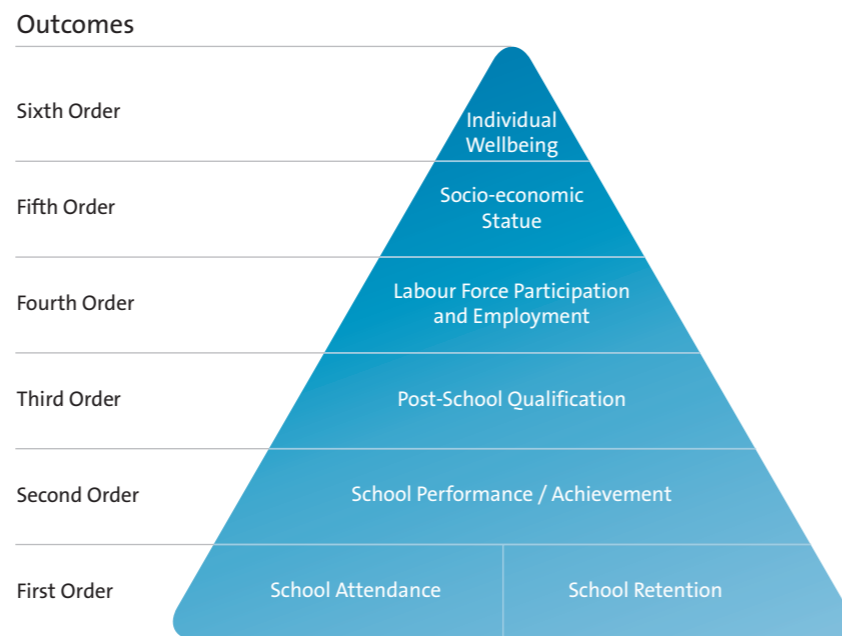
## 4. Indigenous education outcomes

This section looks at the status of Indigenous Education Outcomes. It outlines the performance of Indigenous students against a range of education outcomes including school attendance, retention, performance, post-school qualifications, labour force participation and employment, socio-economic status and individual wellbeing.

*‘While Indigenous student outcomes have improved incrementally over recent decades, marked disparities continue to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student outcomes. Poor results limit the post-school options and life choices of students, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of social and economic disadvantage.’<sup>47</sup>*

The outcomes of effective education can be considered at multiple levels. At the most basic level education engages students and encourages participation in learning, which is reflected in school attendance and retention. At the next level it promotes the development of skills and the acquisition of knowledge, which is reflected in student achievement and performance. Student performance in turn influences the capacity of students to access post-school qualifications. These qualifications, combined with school performance, influence labour force participation and employment, which in turn influence socio-economic status and individual health and wellbeing.

Figure 11 Education outcomes – conceptual framework



<sup>47</sup> CAF 2007, p.23.

The achievement of higher order outcomes is dependent on the achievement of the lower order outcomes on which they are built.

It is important to acknowledge that there has been improvement in Indigenous education outcomes over the last decade. Indigenous participation in education has increased across all education levels (schools, universities, and vocational education and training) as has the number of students graduating from Year 12 and attaining post-school qualifications.<sup>48</sup> However, this progress has been slow and significant disparities between the education outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students continue to exist.<sup>49</sup>

In Australia today Indigenous students at all levels continue to experience worse education outcomes than non-Indigenous students.<sup>50</sup> Indigenous students demonstrate lower school attendance, retention and achievement than non-Indigenous students across all age groups and all States and Territories.<sup>51</sup> Post-school qualification, labour force participation and employment rates are also lower.<sup>52</sup> Indigenous employees are more likely to be employed in lower skilled occupations than non-Indigenous employees, Indigenous employees’ incomes are likely to be lower<sup>53</sup>, their health is generally poorer, their life expectancy is lower and they are more likely to live in communities that are subject to social dysfunction.<sup>54</sup>

Indigenous children in remote areas tend to have even lower rates of school attendance, retention and achievement, and lower post-school outcomes than those in non-remote areas.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> ABS 4704.0; ABS 4221.0; MCEETYA, 2006, pp.4, 11.

<sup>49</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.11.

<sup>50</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.4.

<sup>51</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.13–14.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., pp.14–16, 13.2, 13.11.

<sup>53</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander Australians*. Cat. no. 6287.0. Canberra: ABS, 2006. (ABS 6287.0)

<sup>54</sup> SCRGSP Overview, pp.12, 18–23; ABS 4704.0.

<sup>55</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.9.

<sup>56</sup> National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy. *Supporting Statement from Indigenous Supporters of the NIELNS*. <http://www.dest.gov.au/NIELNS/SS>

<sup>57</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.3; COAG National Reform Agenda: *Human Capital, Competition and Regulatory Reform*, Communique 14. Canberra, July 2006. (COAG 2006); MCEETYA 2006, pp.1–32.

Break out 3 – Overview of the current state of Indigenous education outcomes<sup>56</sup>

Indigenous Australians:

- are less likely to get a preschool education
- are well behind in literacy and numeracy skills development before they leave primary school
- have less access to secondary school in the communities in which they live
- are absent from school two to three times more often than other students
- leave school much younger
- are less than half as likely to go through to Year 12
- are far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programs in universities and vocational education and training institutions
- obtain fewer and lower-level education qualifications
- are far less likely to get a job, even when they have the same qualifications as others
- earn less income
- have poorer housing
- experience more and graver health problems
- have higher mortality rates than other Australians

The need to address the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes across each of the above areas has been recognised in the COAG National Reform Agenda and the MCEETYA quadrennial statement on National Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008.<sup>57</sup>

Sub-sections 4.1 – 4.7 following provide more information in relation to the current state of Indigenous education outcomes against each of the key outcome areas identified in Figure 11 at left. A discussion of the factors contributing to these outcomes is set out in Section 5. A range of interventions to address these issues is outlined in Section 6.

## 4.1 Attendance

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Preschool participation (enrolment) <sup>58</sup>	– Indigenous children aged 3 to 5 years are marginally less likely to be enrolled in preschool (25%) than non-Indigenous children (29%)
Preschool attendance <sup>59</sup>	– Preschool attendance is significantly lower for Indigenous children than for non-Indigenous children
School readiness <sup>60</sup>	– Indigenous children who do attend preschool do not demonstrate the same level of literacy and numeracy skills as non-Indigenous children
School participation (enrolment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School participation rates for Indigenous children aged 5 to 8 years (Years 1 to 3) (97%) are marginally higher than those for non-Indigenous children (94%) <sup>61</sup></li> <li>– Indigenous school participation rates through higher primary and secondary school are lower than those for non-Indigenous students <sup>62</sup></li> <li>– Indigenous participation rates drop off much more rapidly than non-Indigenous student numbers following the completion of compulsory schooling in Year 9 or 10 <sup>63</sup></li> </ul>
School attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School attendance is also lower for Indigenous students with Indigenous students likely to be absent from primary and secondary school two to three times more often than non-Indigenous students <sup>64</sup></li> <li>– The gap in school attendance appears early in primary school and widens in the early years of secondary school <sup>65</sup></li> </ul>

### 4.1.1 Preschool attendance

Research indicates that access to early childhood education has a positive impact on education outcomes. Children who attend preschool for more than one year show statistically significant improvements in performance in later school years compared to students not attending preschool. <sup>66</sup>

Data indicate that Indigenous children are marginally less likely to be enrolled in preschool than non-Indigenous children. In 2005 approximately 25% of Indigenous children aged three to five years were enrolled in preschool compared to approximately 29% of non-Indigenous children. <sup>67</sup>

The ability to assess attendance – as distinct from enrolments – on a national level is limited due to constraints in existing data collection techniques that focus on enrolments rather than attendance. Where attendance data are collected, variations in the ways in which absences are defined and recorded make comprehensive analysis difficult.

Although available attendance data are limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that attendance rates for Indigenous students enrolled in preschool are significantly lower than those for non-Indigenous students. <sup>68</sup>

The lower attendance rate, combined with the lower enrolment rate, translates into a significant disparity in real access to early childhood education.

<sup>58</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.29.

<sup>59</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.6.3–6.4

<sup>60</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.18.

<sup>61</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.30.

<sup>62</sup> SCRGSP Compendium 2007, p.27.

<sup>63</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.30.

<sup>64</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, pp.113ff; Bourke C, Rigby K, Burden J. *Better Practice in School Attendance: Improving the School Attendance of Indigenous Students*. Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000, pp.1, 12. (Bourke et al. 2000)

<sup>65</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.13.

<sup>66</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.1; Kronemann M. *Universal Preschool Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*. AEU Briefing Paper 2007, p.4. (Kronemann 2007a)

<sup>67</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.5.

<sup>68</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.6.3–6.4.

### 4.1.2 School attendance

Research indicates that regular school attendance is important, with high levels of absenteeism being associated with reduced learning and retention outcomes. <sup>69</sup>

As with preschool, anecdotal evidence suggests that attendance rates are significantly lower for Indigenous students than for non-Indigenous students. <sup>70</sup> The number of days absent for Indigenous students has been estimated to be two to three times greater than for non-Indigenous students. <sup>71</sup>

The gap in school attendance appears early in primary school and widens in the early years of secondary school. <sup>72</sup>

Rates of non-attendance (absenteeism) are reported to be higher in more isolated, traditionally oriented communities. <sup>73</sup>

#### Breakout text 4 – Factors impacting attendance in remote schools <sup>74</sup>

A study of Indigenous student attendance in remote schools in the central desert region of Australia (Desert Schools Project, National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia 1996) reported that:

*'[I]n all communities but one, student attendance was low and irregular, with sometimes as many unexplained absences as attendances.'*

*In some cases variations in attendance in remote communities have been mapped to seasonal factors – suggesting that improved attendance levels could be achieved by adjusting school calendars and timetables to better fit with community practices.*

*'Attendance typically rises ... during the wet season as people move from the homeland centre to (the regional centre) and then falls during the dry season as people disperse and become involved in hunting, gathering and ceremonial activity.'*

#### Breakout text 5 – Indigenous student perspectives on school and school attendance <sup>75</sup>

*'I did actually [turn up at school] ... every day but we [sic] didn't learn much.'*

*I ended up in the top class for Years 7 and 8 even though I couldn't read or write.*

*A typical day at high school involved my cousins and I taking some golf clubs to school and hiding them in the bushes early in the morning. We would then go and sign the attendance book in the office and disappear to the golf course for the day. At the end of the school day about 3pm we would go back to school and sign out the attendance book ... The official records at a school like this indicate a high attendance record, but the reality, of course, is that kids just sign the book and then disappear.*

*There wasn't much learning going on. In fact, there wasn't really anyone in the classroom, and nobody seemed to care about that much.'* <sup>75</sup>

An Indigenous student describing his experience at school prior to accepting a scholarship at St Joseph's College Hunters Hill where at the age of 15 he learned to read and write for the first time.

Lower attendance rates have been identified as a key factor in the poorer educational outcomes achieved by Indigenous students. <sup>76</sup> It should be noted, however, that even where attendance levels are in line with overall community standards, Indigenous student outcomes tend to remain lower than those of non-Indigenous students (see Sub-section 4.3 in relation to Student Performance and Achievement).

<sup>69</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.1ff; SCRGSP 2007, p.6.1.

<sup>70</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.6; Zubrick et al. 2006, pp.113ff.

<sup>71</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, pp.113ff; Bourke et al. 2000, pp.1, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.13.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>74</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.3–4.

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families. Commonwealth Government of Australia, 1997, p.147. (HREOC 1997)

<sup>76</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.1ff.

## 4.2 Retention

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
School retention and completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous students leave school earlier than non-Indigenous students</li> <li>– In 2005 22% of the Indigenous population had completed Year 12 compared to 47% of the non-Indigenous population<sup>77</sup></li> <li>– In 2006 the retention rate from Years 7/8 (commencement of secondary school) to Year 9 for Indigenous students was 98.4% compared to 100% for non-Indigenous students<sup>78</sup></li> <li>– The retention rate from Years 7/8 to Years 10 and 12 was 91% and 40% for Indigenous students compared to 99% and 76% for non-Indigenous students respectively<sup>79</sup></li> <li>– By Year 12 the gap in apparent school retention rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was between 30 and 40% with Indigenous students being around half as likely as non-Indigenous students to complete Year 12 schooling<sup>80</sup></li> <li>– Many of those Indigenous students who leave school early have poor literacy and numeracy skills and limited post-school options<sup>81</sup></li> </ul>

School completion is linked to economic and social wellbeing. Research indicates that students who stay on at school and complete Year 12 are much more likely to undertake additional education and training and to have more, and better, employment and career options.<sup>82</sup>

Although the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous retention has reduced over recent years it remains high and is viewed by experts as a key factor limiting Indigenous students' post-school options.<sup>83</sup>

Figure 12 – Indigenous versus non-Indigenous school retention from Years 7/8 for full-time students by year level (2006)<sup>90</sup>

Apparent Retention to Year Level	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Difference
Year 9	98.4	100	(1.6)
Year 10	91.4	98.9	(7.5)
Year 11	67.7	88.8	(21.1)
Year 12	40.1	75.9	(35.8)

For most students, compulsory schooling ends during Year 9 or 10. Compulsory schooling requirements are reflected in relatively high school enrolment and apparent retention rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students through to Year 9, although Indigenous retention levels remain lower than those for non-Indigenous students.<sup>84</sup>

Grade retention data between primary and secondary school is limited; however, anecdotal data indicate that there is some drop-off in school enrolment between primary and secondary school.<sup>85</sup> Indigenous secondary school enrolment and retention rates for Indigenous students are clearly lower than for non-Indigenous students.<sup>86</sup> In 2006 the retention rate from Year 7/8 (commencement of secondary school) to Year 9 for Indigenous students was 98.4% compared to 100% for non-Indigenous students.<sup>87</sup>

Indigenous student enrolment and retention drop significantly from Year 10 when compulsory schooling ends.<sup>88</sup>

That drop-off is reflected in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' retention that starts to appear in Year 10 and grows significantly by Year 12.<sup>89</sup>

In 2006 the retention rate from Years 7/8 to Years 10 and 12 was 91% and 40% for Indigenous students compared to 99% and 76% for non-Indigenous students respectively.<sup>91</sup>

Data suggest that Indigenous students have a significantly higher rate of suspension than non-Indigenous students and are up to three times more likely to be suspended, expelled or alternatively placed (i.e. in another school) than non-Indigenous students.<sup>92</sup> In many cases this is linked to disciplinary action relating to attendance and behavioural issues which are often linked to breakdowns in communication/cross-cultural misunderstandings between teachers and students.

<sup>77</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.15.

<sup>78</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.31.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.22; Zubrick et al. 2006, p.116.

<sup>82</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.21–22.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.7.24.

<sup>85</sup> C Atkins, Victorian Council for Social Service.

<sup>86</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.34, 7.24.

<sup>87</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.31.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.; SCRGSP 2007, p.34.

<sup>89</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.31; SCRGSP 2007, p.34.

<sup>90</sup> ABS 4221.0, p.31.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.13, 15.

## 4.3 Student performance and achievement

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Literacy and numeracy <sup>93</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous students perform significantly below mainstream numeracy and literacy levels</li> <li>– Indigenous student performance against Years 3, 5 and 7 national literacy and numeracy benchmarks is generally about 20% lower than the national average</li> <li>– Over 50% of Indigenous Year 7 students do not meet numeracy benchmarks</li> <li>– Approximately 35% of Indigenous Year 7 students do not meet literacy (reading/writing) benchmarks</li> <li>– As Indigenous students progress through school the proportion who achieve the national benchmark standard decreases (i.e. the proportion of Indigenous students who meet the national benchmark drops significantly between Year 3 and Year 7)</li> <li>– Proportionately more Indigenous students participate in vocationally streamed curricula than non-Indigenous students</li> </ul>
Tertiary entrance qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Proportionately fewer Indigenous students completing Year 12 achieve a Year 12 certificate or meet the requirements for tertiary entrance than non-Indigenous students</li> </ul>

Numeracy and literacy have been recognised as important contributors to school attendance and as key indicators for student performance, Years 10 and 12 retention, post-secondary education and employment.<sup>94</sup>

Disparities in Indigenous and non-Indigenous student learning performance are identifiable from Year 1 and are maintained throughout primary and middle school.<sup>95</sup>

The percentage of Indigenous students not meeting national benchmark standards for numeracy, reading and comprehension and writing at Years 3, 5 and 7 is significantly higher than that of non-Indigenous students.<sup>96</sup>

As Indigenous students progress through school the proportion of students not achieving the national minimum benchmark standard increases.

Students not meeting benchmark standards will have difficulty with school.

In 2005 over 50% of Year 7 Indigenous students were not meeting numeracy benchmarks and approximately 35% were not meeting literacy (reading/writing) benchmarks.<sup>98</sup>

Table 2 – Percentage of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous student population NOT meeting National Numeracy and Literacy Benchmarks (2005)<sup>97</sup>

Year Level	Competency Area	Student Group	
		Indigenous	Overall
Year 3	Numeracy	20%	6%
	Reading and Viewing	22%	7%
	Writing	26%	7%
Year 5	Numeracy	34%	9%
	Reading and Viewing	37%	13%
	Writing	26%	7%
Year 7	Numeracy	51%	18%
	Reading and Viewing	36%	10%
	Writing	36%	8%

<sup>93</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.33; MCEETYA 2006, pp.13–14.

<sup>94</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p.6.9.

<sup>96</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2005. National Report on Schooling in Australia 2005: Preliminary Paper: National Benchmark Results Reading, Writing and Numeracy Years 3, 5 and 7., pp.5ff. (MCEETYA 2005)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., pp.5ff.

<sup>98</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.7.5ff.

## 4.4 Post-secondary qualifications

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Post-secondary qualifications <sup>99</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous students obtain fewer post-school qualifications than non-Indigenous students</li> <li>– Indigenous people are half as likely as non-Indigenous people to have completed a post-secondary qualification of Certificate Level III or above</li> <li>– Students obtaining post-secondary qualifications tend to obtain lower level qualifications than non-Indigenous students (i.e. Indigenous enrolments tend to be in lower level (Certificate I and II) qualifications rather than higher level qualifications (Certificate III and above))</li> <li>– Indigenous completion rates for higher level qualifications (Certificate III and above) are lower (55%) than for non-Indigenous students (80%)</li> <li>– Labour force participation rates for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people aged 18 and over are much higher for people with a Certificate III vocational qualification or higher</li> </ul>

Although Indigenous participation in vocational training and tertiary education has increased in recent years it remains relatively low compared to the non-Indigenous population.<sup>100</sup>

Indigenous people in all age groups are still less likely than non-Indigenous people to have a vocational or higher education (non-school) qualification with over 70% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over having no non-school qualifications, compared to 49.5% of non-Indigenous people.<sup>101</sup>

Indigenous student participation in vocational education and training (VET) is broadly in line with population, with Indigenous students constituting approximately 3% of the total student population enrolled in VET courses.<sup>102</sup> However, Indigenous students' module completion rates are relatively low compared to those of non-Indigenous students (in 2003, the rate of VET module completions for Indigenous students was 65%, compared to 78% of the total VET student population).<sup>103</sup> The disparity in course completion has been attributed in part to lower school completion and attainment levels and basic numeracy and literacy deficits.

Indigenous students are under-represented in the higher education sector comprising approximately 1% of the total higher education population.<sup>104</sup> Some educators have raised concerns that the growth of VET programs in schools, while making an important contribution to educational and employment outcomes, is contributing to the diversion of Indigenous students away from tertiary education. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey 2006 notes that anecdotal evidence from Indigenous students suggests that some schools are providing Indigenous students with information relating to VET courses without providing them with information relating to their tertiary options.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>99</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.16; MCEETYA 2006, p.14.

<sup>100</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.11.

<sup>101</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.13.11.

<sup>102</sup> ABS 4704.0.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.; Hunter B, Schwab R. Practical Reconciliation and Continuing Disadvantage in Indigenous Education. The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs, 2003, Nov: 4(2), pp.83–98. (Hunter et al. 2003)

<sup>104</sup> ABS 4704.0.

<sup>105</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.xxix.

## 4.5 Labour force participation and employment

(positive transitions from school to work)

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators <sup>106</sup>
Labour force participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Labour force participation rates for Indigenous people (58.8%) are lower than for non-Indigenous people (65%)</li> <li>– Indigenous people aged 18 to 24 years were approximately three times more likely not to be participating in the labour force or undertaking post-school education or vocational training compared to non-Indigenous people in the same age group</li> </ul>
Employment rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unemployment rates for Indigenous people (14.3%) are approximately three times the rate for non-Indigenous people (4.7%)</li> <li>– Indigenous people are more likely than non-Indigenous people to be employed part-time (35% compared to 28%)</li> </ul>
Employment profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous people are more likely to be employed in lower skilled occupations (26%) than non-Indigenous people (16%)</li> </ul>

Labour force participation (defined as working or looking for work) provides an indication of both the desire for paid work and the ability to obtain and perform paid work.

Labour force participation rates are lower for Indigenous people (58.8%) than for non-Indigenous people (65%) across all eligible age groups.<sup>107</sup>

Indigenous unemployment rates (14.3%) are approximately three times the rate for non-Indigenous people (4.7%).<sup>108</sup>

People aged 18 to 24 who are not involved in employment, post-school education or training have been identified as being at higher risk of long-term disadvantage.<sup>109</sup>

As is the case with respect to post-secondary education, the disparity in labour force participation and employment has been attributed in part to lower school completion and attainment levels and basic numeracy and literacy deficits.

<sup>106</sup> ABS 6287.0.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

## 4.6 Socio-economic status

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Household and individual income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In 2001 the mean gross household weekly Indigenous income (\$364) was approximately 38% lower than the mean non-Indigenous income (\$585)<sup>110</sup></li> <li>– 45% of the Indigenous population falls within the lowest quintile (20%) for gross household weekly income compared to 19.3% for the non-Indigenous population<sup>111</sup></li> <li>– 72% of the Indigenous population is in either the lowest or second lowest income quintiles and only 5% are in the highest<sup>112</sup></li> <li>– In 2004–5 over half of the Indigenous population (52%) received most of their individual income from government pensions and allowances, 34% from salaries and wages and 10% from CDEP<sup>113</sup></li> </ul>
Home ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In 2002 (the most recent year in which comparable data are available) 27% of Indigenous adults lived in homes owned or being purchased by a member of their family compared to 74% on non-Indigenous adults<sup>114</sup></li> <li>– In 2001 10% of Indigenous households and 22% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over lived in overcrowded housing (six times more than among the non-Indigenous population)<sup>115</sup></li> <li>– In 2004–5 25% of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over live in overcrowded housing<sup>116</sup></li> <li>– Indigenous homelessness rates (2%) are 3.5 times the rate for the non-Indigenous population<sup>117</sup></li> </ul>

Indigenous people generally have poorer socio-economic outcomes than the non-Indigenous population. The disparity in status is reflected in lower than average household and individual income levels and home ownership, and high levels of household overcrowding and homelessness.

The areas of disadvantage described in the above table are affected by a range of factors, of which education is one. This Report does not go into detail in relation to the areas covered in the table. Further information on these areas can be obtained from the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report for 2007*<sup>118</sup> prepared by the Productivity Commission.

<sup>110</sup> ABS 4713.0.  
<sup>111</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Year Book Australia*. Cat. no. 1301.0. Canberra: ABS, 2004. (ABS 1301.0)  
<sup>112</sup> ABS 4713.0.  
<sup>113</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.18.  
<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.19.  
<sup>115</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. *Indigenous Housing Needs 2005: A Multimeasure Needs Model*. Cat. no. HOU 129. Canberra: AIHW, 2005, pp.2, 94. (AIHW 2005)  
<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp.2, 94.  
<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.2.  
<sup>118</sup> SCRGSP 2007.

## 4.7 Individual wellbeing

Outcome Areas	Key Performance Indicators
Life expectancy at birth <sup>119</sup>	– Average Indigenous life expectancy is approximately 17 years lower than for the total Australian population
Health, disability and chronic disease <sup>120</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous health is generally lower than for the non-Indigenous population</li> <li>– Indigenous infant mortality rates are two to three times higher than for the total infant population</li> <li>– Death rates from external causes and preventable diseases are approximately five times higher for Indigenous children than for non-Indigenous children</li> <li>– Indigenous hospitalisation rates for potentially preventable chronic conditions is eight times the rate for non-Indigenous people</li> <li>– Indigenous children are three times more likely to have adverse hearing conditions than non-Indigenous children</li> </ul>
Suicide and self-harm <sup>121</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Suicide rates are higher for Indigenous people than for the non-Indigenous population</li> <li>– A marginally higher number of Indigenous people are hospitalised for intentional self-harm than non-Indigenous people</li> </ul>
Substantiated child abuse and neglect <sup>122</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous children are nearly four times as likely as other children to be the subject of substantiated abuse or neglect</li> <li>– Almost 30 out of every 1000 Indigenous children aged 0 to 17 were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2006 compared to 5 per 1000 for non-Indigenous children</li> </ul>
Family and community violence <sup>123</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous people are more likely than non-Indigenous people to be victims of domestic violence-related assault</li> <li>– In 2005–6 4000 Indigenous people and 15,000 non-Indigenous people sought Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) assistance to escape domestic or family violence</li> </ul>
Deaths from homicide and hospitalisations for assault <sup>124</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In 2004–5 Indigenous people accounted for 15% of homicide deaths and 16% of homicide offenders</li> <li>– The homicide rate in the Indigenous population is five to 15 times the rate in the non-Indigenous population in Queensland, WA, SA and the NT</li> <li>– Indigenous people are 17 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of assault than non-Indigenous people</li> </ul>
Imprisonment and juvenile detention rates <sup>125</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Indigenous people are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system</li> <li>– Indigenous people are 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people</li> <li>– Indigenous juveniles are more than 23 times more likely to be detained than non-Indigenous juveniles</li> </ul>

Indigenous Australians continue to experience poorer outcomes than non-Indigenous Australians across most social and economic parameters.<sup>126</sup> A range of those parameters is summarised in the above table.

As with socio-economic status, the areas of disadvantage described in the table are affected by a range of factors, of which education is one. This Report does not go into detail in relation to the areas covered in the table. Further information in relation to these areas can also be obtained from the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report for 2007*<sup>127</sup> prepared by the Productivity Commission.

<sup>119</sup> SCRGSP Overview 2007, p.13.  
<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp.25–27, 41.  
<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.20.  
<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp.20, 40.  
<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.21.  
<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.21.  
<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.23.  
<sup>126</sup> SCRGSP 2007, pp.11–16.  
<sup>127</sup> SCRGSP 2007.

# 5. Factors contributing to poor Indigenous education outcomes

Section 4 above has detailed the poor status of Indigenous education outcomes. The following section looks at the factors that are contributing to these poor outcomes.

## 5.1 Underlying conceptual framework

A number of factors impact the education outcomes of Indigenous students. These factors can be grouped into four (4) areas:

1. **Social or Community Context** – factors linked to socio-economic status such as family income, health, nutrition and housing
2. **Home Context** – factors linked to the home environment in which the student lives such as parental status and life experience, parenting, early childhood development and parental and family capacity to support student learning
3. **School Context** – factors linked to the education system and the way in which education is delivered
4. **Student Context** – factors linked to the individual student’s life experience, skill base, emotional status, behaviour, life goals and aspirations, experience of and attitude towards school and school performance.

Figure 13 – Contributing factors influencing Indigenous student learning and development

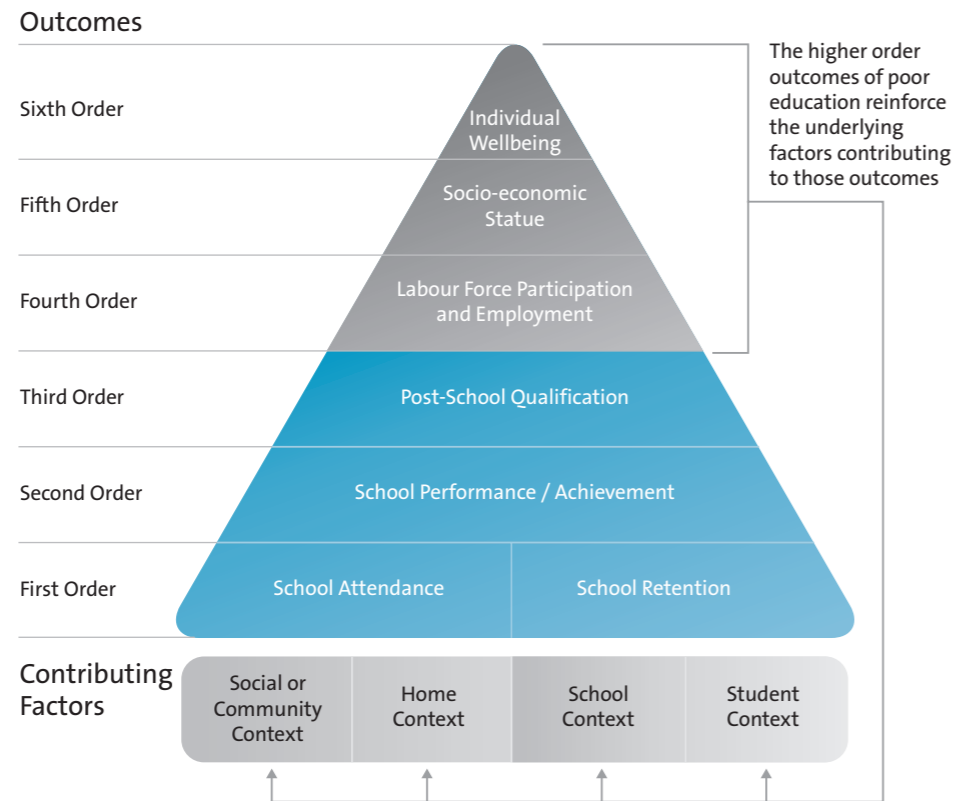
Social or Community Context	Home Context	School Context	Student Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Household income/ financial stability</li> <li>– Access to mainstream services</li> <li>– Health and nutrition</li> <li>– Housing/physical learning environment</li> <li>– Community environment/safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Family stability/function</li> <li>– Family mobility</li> <li>– Parenting</li> <li>– Early childhood development (inc. physical, cognitive, cultural and spiritual development)</li> <li>– Parental/family experience (inc. education, labour force participation and employment)</li> <li>– Parental/family support for student learning at home</li> <li>– Language and culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access to school (inc. availability of local educational institution/ transport)</li> <li>– School/learning environment</li> <li>– Curriculum</li> <li>– Teaching approach</li> <li>– Parental/family/ community involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Basic material and personal support needs</li> <li>– Engagement with school and learning                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– school experience</li> <li>– foundation skills (inc. communication and language skills, social interaction)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– personal and cultural identity</li> <li>– behaviour</li> <li>– Learning support needs                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– school performance</li> <li>– literacy and numeracy</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Vocational development                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– life experience</li> <li>– life and vocational goals and aspirations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Where students are affected by factors across multiple contexts then each of those contexts needs to be addressed in order to support optimal learning and development outcomes effectively. Many, if not most, Indigenous students will be affected by factors across all four (4) contexts.

A more detailed discussion of the contributing factors adversely affecting Indigenous education is set out in Sub-sections 5.2 – 5.5 below.

When considering those factors it is worth noting the cross-generational impact that historically poor Indigenous education outcomes have had, and continue to have, in influencing the Social or Community, Home, School and Student Contexts of the current generation of Indigenous students.

Figure 14 Cross-generational effect of poor indigenous education outcomes



## 5.2. Social or community context

### A. Poverty/low household income

Low income negatively impacts key health and housing indicators.

Low household income often means that families are not able to cover school fees, subject levies or other school-based costs. It therefore limits the ability of Indigenous families to access education and education support services and to fund the provision of basic school equipment, uniforms and transport.<sup>128</sup>

### B. Limited access to or use of mainstream services

Until the late 1960s many Indigenous Australians were excluded from mainstream government services, including education.<sup>129</sup> Exclusion from those services has led to socio-economic disparities in areas such as health, housing, education and employment.

Some researchers suggest that in many cases current access to mainstream services is impeded by the failure to address long-term disadvantage linked to historical exclusion from such services/to adapt service delivery appropriately to meet the cultural needs of Indigenous people.<sup>130</sup>

Some researchers also suggest that the rapid movement from exclusion to inclusion in the Australian welfare system has led to welfare dependency, creating a ‘poverty trap’ that is difficult to escape.<sup>131</sup>

Negative experiences associated with exclusion from (or in some cases adverse experiences associated with participation in) the education system, have had a cross-generational impact, leading some Indigenous parents and families to have a negative view of education/to see the education system as being the domain of non-Indigenous people, not suited to Indigenous needs. Those views affect parental and family engagement with the education system and the approach that they take to encouraging school attendance.

High Indigenous unemployment and reliance on welfare can also have a negative effect on the perceived relevance of education. High levels of parental and family unemployment and limited access to post-school employment opportunities can mean that students do not appreciate the connection between school and post-school employment and so can lead them to exit school early and revert to welfare rather than pursuing employment or post-school qualifications.

### C. Poor health and nutrition

Poor health and nutrition have been identified as key factors impacting both the ability of Indigenous children to attend school and to be able to concentrate and participate effectively in school when they do attend.<sup>132</sup>

Basic illnesses and conditions related to poor environmental health and hygiene, such as chronic ear infections, have a significant negative impact on Indigenous children and their capacity to engage effectively at school.

#### Breakout Text 6 – Snapshot of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous child health<sup>133</sup>

*‘Each year, around 11,000 Aboriginal children are born. By the age of 10 years, in many remote Aboriginal communities, up to 40% of these children will have developed a chronic suppurative ear infection causing hearing loss, about 20% will have been infected with trachoma, 10 to 15% will have developed malnutrition, around 30% will have anaemia, some will suffer the highest rates of acute rheumatic heart disease in the world, and a further 5% will have been hospitalised for preventable pneumonia.*

*In non-Indigenous Australian children, it is likely that none will develop trachoma, rheumatic fever, and chronic suppurative ear infections, and only a few may develop the other diseases’.*

<sup>128</sup> Greer T. Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Inquiry into the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007, pp.4–7. (Greer 2007)

<sup>129</sup> Fletcher J. Clean Clad and Courteous: A History of Aboriginal School Education in New South Wales. Sydney: Southwood Press, 1989. (Fletcher 1989)

<sup>130</sup> Behrendt L. Achieving Social Justice: Indigenous Rights and Australia’s Future. NSW: The Federation Press, 2003. (Behrendt 2003)

<sup>131</sup> Cechanski J. Poverty in Australia: A Focus on Indigenous Poverty from an International Human Rights Perspective. Human Rights Defender, 2002: 2, p.25. (Cechanski 2002); Pearson N. Address to the National Reconciliation Planning Workshop. Canberra, 30 May 2005. (Pearson 2005)

<sup>132</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.23; Blair E, Zubrick R, Cox A. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: Findings to Date on Adolescents. The Medical Journal of Australia 2005, 8, pp. 433–435. (Blair 2005)

<sup>133</sup> Couzos S. Perspective – Aboriginal Health. ABC Radio National, 15 January 2004. (Couzos 2004)

Recent studies conducted by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation have identified that school attendance rates tend to be lower for students suffering from chronic ear infections than for other children.<sup>134</sup> Chronic ear infections and related hearing loss have also been identified as contributing to language and learning deficits in affected children.<sup>135</sup>

#### Breakout Text 7 – Impact of chronic ear infections on Indigenous school attendance<sup>136</sup>

Indigenous children are three times more likely to have adverse hearing conditions than non-Indigenous children.

Results from the Western Australia Aboriginal Child Health Survey indicate that approximately 18% of Indigenous children in West Australia suffer from recurring ear infections.

Poor nutrition has a similar effect. It also has the capacity to impact cognitive and physical development and reduce students' concentration and capacity to learn.<sup>137</sup>

Anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of Indigenous children (particularly in regional and remote areas) attend school without adequate breakfast or lunch.<sup>138</sup>

#### D. Poor housing

Poor or overcrowded housing has been identified as having a negative impact on health, family stability and education.

At the most basic level, it limits the ability of students to get enough sleep and to establish a productive home-learning environment (with a quiet, appropriately lit space to study). Those factors negatively impact the ability of Indigenous children both to concentrate and participate effectively in school and to learn at home. Data from the Western Australia Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2006) indicate that students who have trouble getting enough sleep are one and a half times more likely to be absent from school than other students.<sup>139</sup>

#### E. Poor or unsafe community environment

High levels of community violence or anti-social behaviour tend to have a negative impact on individual and family welfare and to reduce the stability of students' home environment. That in turn tends to have a negative impact on students'

physical and emotional wellbeing and to reduce their capacity to focus on education and to establish a productive home-learning environment.

Research has established that the experience of stressful events (such as a death in the family, family violence or trauma) can have an adverse impact on the individual's and family's ability to cope with day-to-day life.<sup>140</sup>

The Western Australia Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2006) identified that over 20% of Indigenous children were found to be living in families experiencing high levels of stress (7 to 14 major life stress events per year).<sup>141</sup> Those children were found to be more than five times more likely to be at risk of clinically significant emotional and behavioural difficulties than children in families subject to lower levels of stress.<sup>142</sup>

These emotional and behavioural difficulties are identified as tending to have a negative impact on students' capacity to learn by reducing their ability to:

- concentrate
- interact with peers and teaching staff
- regulate their behaviour.

Research indicates that students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are more likely to have poor school attendance.<sup>143</sup> Indigenous students with such difficulties are also approximately three times more likely than other Indigenous students to have low academic performance.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>134</sup> National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. NACCHO Ear Trial and School Attendance Project: Final Report to the Department of Education Science and Training. Canberra: NACCHO, 2003. (NACCHO 2003)

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Zubrick S, Lawrence D, Silburn S, Blair E, Milroy H, Wilkes T, Eades S, D'Antoine H, Read A, Ishiguchi P, Doyle S. The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Health of Aboriginal Children and Young People. Perth: Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, 2004, pp.142ff. (Zubrick et al. 2004)

<sup>137</sup> Center on Hunger and Poverty. Statement on the Link Between Nutrition and Cognitive Development in Children., Institute of Assets and Social Policy, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, 1998. <http://www.centeronhunger.org> (Center on Hunger and Poverty 1998)

<sup>138</sup> Program and Educational Subject Matter Expert Interviews conducted in the preparation of this Report.

<sup>139</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.113.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.134.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., pp.113, 127.

<sup>144</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.6.

## 5.3 Home context

### A. Low parental/family engagement with the education system/employment

Research indicates that people who have completed secondary or post-secondary education and/or are employed, are more likely to encourage their children to do the same and are better positioned to provide children with educational support.<sup>145</sup>

Historically low Indigenous engagement in the education system and poor educational and employment outcomes mean that Indigenous students are less likely to have parental support to assist them in their studies than non-Indigenous students.<sup>146</sup>

At a practical level, low parental and family education has:

- negatively affected Indigenous experiences of, and attitudes towards, the education system
- reduced the capacity of Indigenous parents/families to engage effectively with the education system
- reduced parental involvement in school-based activities and decision-making
- limited the capacity of Indigenous parents/families to support their children in education and employment.<sup>147</sup>

Poor parental education levels mean that many Indigenous parents and families are not able to provide their children with much of the early childhood support that most non-Indigenous families take for granted when building basic communication and literacy skills.

### B. Parenting and early childhood development

*'There is a proven relationship between the quality of early childhood experiences ... and the developing capabilities of the brain.'*<sup>148</sup>

Positive parenting and engagement in early childhood education have been identified as important factors in providing a good grounding for school attainment. Poor environmental circumstances (such as low family income), poor health and negative experiences (such as exposure to family and community trauma and dysfunction) have been identified as having a negative effect on children's cognitive development, behaviour and school attainment.<sup>149</sup>

The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey (2006) identified that 24% of the Indigenous children surveyed were at high risk of clinically significant emotional and behavioural difficulties associated with:

- developmental problems – including hearing, language and visual deficits
- family factors – including carer illness, poor parenting and poor family function in some cases relating to adverse health, behavioural and educational outcomes associated with long-term socio-economic disadvantage and the impact of the Stolen Generation on individual and family health and wellbeing.<sup>150</sup>

The above figure compares with a rate of 15% for non-Indigenous children.<sup>151</sup>

#### Breakout Text 8 – Effect of family removals on current Indigenous population<sup>152</sup>

Government policy provided for the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families from the late 1800s until 1969. Such removals involved putting children in government institutions and fostering or adoption by white families.

As many as 100,000 children are believed to have been taken away from their families.

The 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSIS) identified that 8% of Indigenous people aged 15 years or over and 10% of Indigenous people aged 35 years or over reported that they had been taken away from their natural family.

It is generally accepted that the forced separation of children from their families resulted in trauma for the children, families and communities affected by the removal policy, and that that has had long-term consequences in terms of social and cultural dislocation, poor health and wellbeing and social dysfunction.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.6.6.

<sup>146</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.6.6.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.; Mellor S, Corrigan M. The Case for Change: A review of Contemporary Research in Indigenous Education Outcomes. Camberwell: Australian Council of Education Research Press, 2004, p.17. (Mellor et al. 2004)

<sup>148</sup> Wise S, da Silva L, Webster E, Sanson A. The Efficacy of Early Childhood Interventions. AIFS Research Report No.14, July 2005, p.1. (Wise et al. 2005)

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>150</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.xxxiii.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>152</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, Cat. no. 4714.0. Canberra: ABS, 2002; Zubrick et al. 2004, pp.30ff; HREOC 1997.

As noted above, students who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are more likely to struggle at school.<sup>153</sup> The Western Australia Survey notes that in order for Indigenous students to access learning effectively, additional support is required to address basic health and developmental needs.

### C. Language barriers

*'Australian Aboriginal English ... is now the primary language of internal and wider communication for the majority of Australian Aboriginal people.'*<sup>154</sup>

Although most Indigenous people (approximately 80%) speak either Standard Australian English (SAE) or Aboriginal English (a non-standard dialect of English)<sup>155</sup> at home, approximately 12% of the Indigenous population speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island (Australian Indigenous) language at home.<sup>156</sup>

Data from the 2001 Census indicate that more than half (55%) of the Indigenous people living in very remote areas speak an Indigenous language at home (the figures in non-remote areas are significantly lower, with only 1% in major cities and inner regional areas).<sup>157</sup>

The difference between the language spoken at home and at school affects Indigenous education outcomes in multiple ways. It increases the challenges that Indigenous students face when they start (pre)school in understanding what is being taught. It inhibits communication between teachers and their students. It limits the ability of the school and teaching staff to communicate with parents (at the most basic level, this includes the fact that some parents cannot understand school newsletters and school reports that are written in Standard Australian English). It also limits the capacity of parents to provide home-based learning support for their children.

Cultural differences can also make it difficult for students and their parents to understand the –often unspoken – rules about how school operates and what is expected of students and parents in a school environment. This can lead to confusion and misunderstanding and make school seem like an unwelcoming and foreign place.<sup>159</sup>

#### Breakout Text 9 – Indigenous students aged 12 and 13 comment on their ability to engage with school on Yolngu Radio<sup>158</sup>

*'We don't retain information – we hear teaching especially in English and feel that we don't grasp what is being taught, and so it disappears.*

*We go to school, hear something, go home, and the teaching is gone. We feel hopeless. Is there something wrong with our heads because this English just does not work for us?*

*We want to learn English words but the teachers cannot communicate with us to teach us. It is like we are aliens to each other'*

<sup>153</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.6.

<sup>154</sup> Harkins, J. Structure and Meaning in Australian Aboriginal English. *Asian Englishes: An International Journal of the Sociolinguistics of English in Asia-Pacific*, 2000, 3(2), pp.60–81 on p.60. (Harkins 2000)

<sup>155</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.13.

<sup>156</sup> ABS 4713.0.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Wild R, Anderson P. Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse. Northern Territory Government, 2007, p.147. (Wild et al. 2007)

<sup>159</sup> Osborne B. (Ed.) *Teaching Diversity and Democracy*. Victoria: Common Ground, 2001, pp.105–110. (Osborne 2001)

## 5.4 School context

A range of factors associated with the socio-economic and home context in which students live, the school context in which they are engaged and the student's own personal experience have been identified as contributing to Indigenous student absenteeism.

Research indicates that students are more likely to attend school when<sup>160</sup> :

- they are encouraged to attend school by their parents/family – data indicate that this is more likely to happen when one or more members of the student's family have completed Year 12 and/or are employed and can act as positive role models for the student<sup>161</sup>
- they perceive school as a safe caring place where they and their parents feel valued and welcome
- they have a positive and supportive relationship with their teachers
- they find school interesting and relevant – data indicate that this is more likely to be the case where:
  - the curriculum is contextually relevant (i.e. it takes into account the student's situation, is linked to their practical interests) and culturally relevant (i.e. it includes some form of Indigenous language/cultural studies)
  - the teaching approach is aligned with Indigenous learning styles/preferences
- they see the connection between school and post-school education and employment opportunities that align with their individual life goals and aspirations
- teaching staff are trained in teaching English as a second language (ESL) and have experience teaching in a cross-cultural and bilingual situation
- teachers place reasonable demands on the student and do not cap student potential or motivation by setting a low performance expectation
- Indigenous parents and communities are involved with the school and in the teaching process.

A detailed summary of the factors identified as affecting Indigenous student absenteeism is provided in Appendix One.

### A. Access to education

*'It is estimated that as many as 7,500 Indigenous children in the Northern Territory do not attend school and preschool. In most cases, the teachers, classrooms, chairs and desks simply do not exist to accommodate them.'*<sup>162</sup>

*'Secondary teachers are still only available in a relatively small number of communities.'*<sup>163</sup>

Although physical access to education institutions is not an issue in most urban and regional areas, some service gaps continue to exist in a number of remote Indigenous communities.

Some outer regional and remote communities only have access to limited preschool and primary school services. Although long-distance secondary education is technically available, low parental education levels and poor service access mean that, in practical terms, students seeking to pursue secondary education are often required to move away from their community in order to attend secondary school.

The distance between regional and remote communities and an appropriate educational institution and access to reliable transport exacerbate this issue.

The need for students from regional and remote communities to move away from their community (often for the first time) makes the transition from primary to secondary schooling particularly challenging for many Indigenous students.<sup>164</sup>

In some cases where schools do exist in outer regional and remote communities they are not adequately resourced to service the local student population.

For example, in the Northern Territory resourcing decisions have been based on student attendance levels rather than enrolments which, given the high non-attendance levels, means that if all Indigenous

<sup>160</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.16–17; Zubrick et al. 2006, pp.124ff.

<sup>161</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.30; Zubrick et al. 2006, p.131.

<sup>162</sup> Kronemann, M. Education is the Key: An Education Future for Indigenous Communities in the Northern Territory. AEU, 9 September 2007, p.6. (Kronemann 2007)

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.25.

<sup>164</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.2; Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs Taskforce on Indigenous Education. Discussion Paper: Exploring Multiple Pathways for Indigenous Students. Melbourne: MCEETYA, 2001. (MCEETYA 2001)

students of school age did turn up for school tomorrow there would not be enough teachers, classrooms and resources for them.<sup>165</sup> The above resourcing approach has been described by some educational practitioners as '(resourcing schools) to cope, not to succeed.'<sup>166</sup>

It has been noted that in some cases the above resourcing model has the effect of discouraging schools from doing more to get Indigenous students to attend school on the basis that they do not have the resources to service those (often higher need) students if they do attend.<sup>167</sup>

#### Breakout text 10 – Snapshot of issues affecting remote access to school facilities and resources<sup>168</sup>

*'At least 10 schools in the prescribed communities in the Northern Territory have current average student attendance that exceeds available classroom capacity. A further 12 schools have emerging classroom pressures where classrooms are operating at 80% or more of current capacity and will face significant accommodation pressure when school attendance provisions impact on communities.'* (DEST)

Commonwealth Government funding has been allocated as part of the Northern Territory Intervention to increase the number of classrooms in a series of Northern Territory schools to respond to gaps in existing facilities.

The use of short-term teaching contracts and high teaching staff turnover in remote communities has also been identified as an issue, as has the inadequate pre- and in-service training of remote teaching staff.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.13; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Northern Territory Emergency Response. <http://www.dest.gov.au> (DEWR NTER)

<sup>166</sup> Wild et al. 2007, p.150.

<sup>167</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.27.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p.36.

<sup>169</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.20–26; Kronemann 2007, p.24.

<sup>170</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.26ff.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.23.

<sup>173</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.20.

<sup>174</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.12.

<sup>175</sup> Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education Committee. *Katu Kalpa – Report on the Inquiry into the Effectiveness of Education and Training Programs for Indigenous Australians*. Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 2000. <http://www.aph.gov.au> p.2. (SEWRSBEC 2000)

## B. School environment

Research indicates that students are more likely to engage positively with school if they and their families feel safe and welcome. Poor Indigenous student attendance is often linked to students not feeling comfortable, valued or supported at school.<sup>170</sup>

The above reaction is often linked to multiple factors including:

- poor student–teacher relationships
- feelings of social isolation
- racial discrimination or bullying
- learning difficulties/poor performance.

Teacher–student relationships and perceived staff attitudes towards and interest in students, their family and community have been identified as being particularly important in influencing how students and families experience the school environment.<sup>171</sup>

Research shows that Indigenous student and parental engagement with school tends to improve where schools adopt an organisational culture and teaching approach that affirms Indigenous culture and identity.<sup>172</sup>

## C. School curriculum

*'Teachers need to identify the learning needs and strengths of individual Indigenous students and adopt culturally appropriate teaching strategies to meet these needs.'*<sup>173</sup>

### C.1 Capability appropriate curriculum

Research indicates that a large proportion of Indigenous students attend school with limited basic literacy and English comprehension skills.<sup>174</sup> (This is particularly true of students from outer regional and remote areas where Standard Australian/Aboriginal English are not spoken at home.)<sup>175</sup>

In order to address the needs of these students, school curricula need to incorporate intensive language and comprehension components based on ESL and bilingual teaching practices that recognise and accommodate students' linguistic backgrounds and capabilities.

*'It follows that teachers need to develop an informed understanding of, at least, Aboriginal English to enable them to understand and communicate effectively with Indigenous students and to assist them in teaching literacy to students for whom Standard Australian English is a second language or dialect.'*<sup>176</sup>

Research indicates that in many cases inadequate focus is placed on addressing the language and literacy-based learning needs of these students through the provision of intensive language and learning support programs.

Some practitioners believe that the relatively low focus on English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher training and curricula in recent years has reduced the ability of schools to meet the needs of Indigenous and other ESL students.<sup>177</sup>

The adoption of a bilingual or two-way-learning approach that recognises the student's existing linguistic and cultural knowledge base while building SAE language, literacy and numeracy skills has been endorsed by a number of education specialists.<sup>178</sup>

### C.2 Culturally and contextually relevant curriculum

Research also indicates that in many cases (again particularly in regional and remote areas) Indigenous students struggle to engage with schooling because curriculum components are not seen as being sufficiently practical or relevant to student experiences in that they:

- are not adequately contextualised in relation to students' daily experience or knowledge base
- do not align strongly with students' goals and aspirations
- do not take into account local job opportunities or provide clear linkages from school to VET, higher education and employment
- do not incorporate Indigenous knowledge, culture or language.<sup>179</sup>

The failure to adequately contextualise what is being taught:

- distances schooling from students' community and cultural experience
- makes it difficult for students to establish a clear framework on which to build an understanding of what they are being taught
- make it difficult for students to connect school with post-school education or employment options.

Education researchers have identified the need for schools to adopt culturally and contextually relevant curricula that are structured to connect with and engage students.<sup>180</sup>

The adoption of such approaches does not imply a 'dumbing down' of curricula, but rather the adoption of curricula and teaching approaches that are:

- culturally relevant – recognise and build on students' social, linguistic and cultural capital

- contextually relevant – recognise and incorporate the local/community context
- individually relevant – recognise and respond to students' interests and aspirations.<sup>181</sup>

Approaches to incorporating Indigenous culture in school curricula vary. Most States and Territories have developed policies to incorporate cultural studies in their curricula in some form.<sup>182</sup> Education researchers suggest that (particularly in regional and remote communities where the Indigenous student population is high) school curricula should be developed in conjunction with parents and community members, taking into account the local environment and culture, and including Indigenous language/cultural studies.<sup>183</sup>

It is broadly agreed that the inclusion of such studies in curricula should not be at the expense of the delivery of the core academic program or academic standard.<sup>184</sup>

The inclusion of Indigenous cultural studies and language in school curricula has been identified as an important element in supporting:

- student attendance and engagement in learning
- parental involvement in, and attitude towards, the curriculum and the teaching process.<sup>185</sup>

The inclusion of Indigenous culture, history and language in standard school curricula has also been identified as playing an important role in building both Indigenous and non-Indigenous student understanding and appreciation of Indigenous history and culture and addressing racism and discrimination.<sup>186</sup>

<sup>176</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.17.

<sup>177</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.21; Program and Educational Subject Matter Expert Interviews conducted in the preparation of this Report.

<sup>178</sup> Northern Territory Department of Education. *Learning Lessons Report: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*. Darwin, 1999, pp.125–131. (NTDE 1999)

<sup>179</sup> National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia, South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre, 1996. *Desert Schools: An Investigation of English Language and Literacy Among Young Aboriginal People in Seven Communities*. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), 1996, 2, p.77 (NLLIA); MCEETYA 2006, p.21.

<sup>180</sup> MCEETYA 2006, p.25.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> SCRGSP 2007, p.7.26; SEWRSBEC 2000, p.7.

<sup>183</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.5; NTDE 1999, pp.129–131.

<sup>184</sup> SEWRSBEC 2000, p.15.

<sup>185</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.29.

<sup>186</sup> Watego L. *An Indigenous Perspective on Mathematics Contextualisation in a Preschool: From Safety to Empowerment*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, pp.767–774. (Watego et al.)

## D. Teaching approach

*'A good teacher can overcome many of the negative effects caused by the problems and barriers facing Indigenous children. Good teachers can improve students' learning. Indigenous students are frequently taught in an environment of low expectation. Non-Indigenous teachers can often find it difficult to adopt culturally inclusive, appropriate and effective approaches with Indigenous students without adequate training and preparation. Research suggests that only about half the universities in Australia offer teaching courses that include Aboriginal or Indigenous Studies as a core component.'*<sup>187</sup>

Educational researchers note that the current education system is set up to support a student population in which relatively few students require significant support; however, for a number of Indigenous students this is not the case.<sup>188</sup> For these students there is often a need to provide broader based support to address the social, cultural, physical and emotional barriers that limit student learning and attainment.

Research indicates that teacher attitudes and teaching approaches play an important role in how Indigenous students feel about school and so have a significant impact on student attendance, learning and attainment.<sup>189</sup> Bourke et al. go as far as suggesting that in the case of many Indigenous students: *'if they liked their teachers they liked the school'*.<sup>190</sup>

Indigenous student attendance tends to be higher when<sup>191</sup>:

- teachers are seen as:
  - being warm and supportive
  - positively encouraging student attendance and performance
  - setting reasonable demands on students based on appropriate academic and behavioural standards
- teachers are:
  - trained in ESL-teaching techniques
  - have an understanding of Indigenous culture
  - experienced in teaching in a cross-cultural and bilingual situation
- teachers tailor their teaching approaches to meet the specific needs of the student group by:
  - structuring curricula to align with student skills
  - incorporating remedial and extension work to meet specific student needs
  - linking curricula to practical experience
  - incorporating Indigenous language and culture where possible in curricula
  - adopting teaching strategies aligned with preferred Indigenous learning styles.

In many cases, the existence of a warm and supportive teacher–student relationship is seen as involving the adoption of a mixed teaching and support function in which the teacher provides both educational instruction and personal support.

### Breakout text 11 – Attributes of effective teacher–student relationships<sup>192</sup>

The existence of a positive, supportive teacher–student relationship has been identified as a critical factor in encouraging Indigenous student attendance.

Education researchers have noted that *'effective classroom teachers are personally warm towards, respectful of and academically demanding of students'*. (Osborne 2001)

The key characteristics of an effective teaching relationship have been identified by educational specialists as:

- being warm and supportive
- making realistic demands on students
- acting in a responsible, business-like and systematic manner
- being stimulating, and imaginative. (Fanshawe 1989 quoted in SCRGSP 2007)

*'A warm teacher is one who welcomes personal friendships with students and makes use of non-verbal communications such as high frequency of smiling, close body distance and physical contact to convey acceptance and encouragement.'* (Kleinfield 1972 quoted in SCRGSP 2007)

Teachers who establish rapport first ('personal warmth') then make active demands ('active demandingness') *'tend to be successful with ... students in both integrated and all-[Indigenous] classrooms.'* (Kleinfield 1975)

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in many cases the failure of teaching staff to establish an effective teacher–student relationship is linked to:

- low teacher expectations of Indigenous students that are reflected in curriculum content and delivery
- inadequate pre- or in-service training in ESL teaching and cultural awareness
- poor communication and engagement skills that limit the ability of the teacher to engage effectively with students and their parents
- racist/poor attitudes to Indigenous people.<sup>193</sup>

The need to strengthen teacher training to support the improved delivery of Indigenous education has been acknowledged by education specialists and in government policy. Currently, specialist Indigenous studies and ESL-related courses are not included as core/compulsory components in pre-service teacher training in many universities.

## E. Indigenous teaching staff

As noted previously, Indigenous teaching staff numbers are relatively low. Indigenous staff generally makes up a relatively low proportion of school staff and are usually in subordinate or assistant teaching positions.<sup>194</sup>

Education practitioners have noted that Indigenous teaching and assistant teaching staff:

*'provide a vital link between the language, culture and expectations of Aboriginal children and the community, and the culture, language and expectations of Western schooling.'*<sup>195</sup>

Educational researchers have recommended that an effort be made to train Indigenous teachers so that the number of Indigenous teachers in classrooms can at least equal the percentage of Indigenous people in the population.<sup>196</sup>

## F. Parental, family and community engagement

*'The involvement of families and communities in determining the policy directions and priorities of the school is a vital part of ensuring educational engagement, and must be fostered.'*<sup>197</sup>

Parental, family and community engagement in the design and delivery of education has been identified as an important factor in encouraging parental support for education and promoting student attendance, retention and attainment.<sup>198</sup>

In many cases negative parental or family experiences of the education system have led Indigenous parents and families to feel excluded or distant from the education system.

The development of strong school, parent and community partnerships has been identified as a key mechanism through which to:

- build stronger connections between schools and local parents and community
- provide an opportunity for the cultural exchange of knowledge in relation to Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge and education structures and systems
- align the schooling system with local community and student needs (e.g. adjust local school terms to cater for the cultural needs of outer regional and remote Communities to ensure maximum participation at school while recognising cultural activities<sup>199</sup>)
- develop and implement culturally relevant curricula
- leverage parental, family and community support for education and promote student attendance, retention and attainment
- strengthen parental involvement in the school and their children's education.<sup>200</sup>

<sup>187</sup> NIELNS SS.

<sup>188</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.xxxiii.

<sup>189</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.24–25.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p.26.

<sup>191</sup> Osborne B. 2001; SCRGSP 2007, pp.23–26; Kleinfield J. Effective Teachers of Indian and Eskimo High School Students. The School Review; 1975, pp.301–341 on p.335. (Kleinfield 1975)

<sup>192</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.25.

<sup>193</sup> Program and Educational Subject Matter Expert Interviews conducted in the preparation of this Report.

<sup>194</sup> Kronemann 2007, pp.10–12

<sup>195</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.26.

<sup>196</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.4.

<sup>197</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.29.

<sup>198</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.31; MCEETYA 2006, pp.21–22.

<sup>199</sup> Kronemann 2007, p.16.

<sup>200</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, p.31; MCEETYA 2006, pp.21–22.

## 5.5 Student context

### A. Student skills, identity and behaviours

Several factors linked to Indigenous students' individual life experience have a direct impact on their capacity to engage with school and learn<sup>201</sup>:

- basic material and personal support needs
- school experience
- foundation skills (including communication and language skills, social interaction)
- personal and cultural identity
- behaviour/engagement in risk-taking (including alcohol and drug consumption) or criminal activity
- learning support needs based on school performance and basic literacy and numeracy skills
- life and vocational goals and aspirations.

Many of the above factors are influenced by the students' Social/Community and Home Context and the experience that they have at school (School Context) (and for that reason are not discussed separately in this section).

### B. School experience

Past negative experiences of school (often linked to the factors outlined above in the School Context section), and those of their parents and other family members, have been identified as having a negative impact on school attendance and retention.<sup>202</sup>

### C. School performance

Poor school performance and the inability to 'keep up' with school have also been identified as having a negative impact on school attendance and retention.<sup>203</sup>

# 6. Intervention options

This section identifies a series of Intervention Options that can support the delivery of improved Indigenous education outcomes. It provides examples (case studies) of those interventions and identifies the key factors that contribute to the success of interventions of that type.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., pp.26–31.

<sup>202</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.26–31.

<sup>203</sup> Zubrick et al. 2006, p.126.

## 6.1 The role of the Philanthropic Sector

Given that it is the role of government to take responsibility for mainstream funding of education through investment in schools, Philanthropic Sector investment in other areas can complement government funding. In light of that, Philanthropic Investment in education can sensibly be targeted in three main areas:

- services that build on or complement the core school and program funding provided by the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments
- services that help students and their families to access the education facilities and programs provided by government and non-government schools and not-for-profit organisations that are already supported by government funding
- research, policy development and advocacy aimed at improving Indigenous schooling and learning support services.



(caption) Caption to be written

## 6.2 Considerations when investing in the Indigenous Sector

In her article 'Challenges in Indigenous philanthropy: Reporting Australian grantmakers' perspectives'<sup>204</sup> Dr Wendy Scaife identifies grant-making to Indigenous people as sitting within the parent discipline of 'social change philanthropy'. Social change philanthropy concerns itself not just with outcomes but also with the process through which change is achieved. Its focus is on the creation of systemic change, rather than the giving of alms or charity.

As such it is vital that there is appropriate engagement of Indigenous people in programs designed to benefit them, whether the organisation is run by Indigenous or non-Indigenous staff.

Interviews conducted by Scaife with Philanthropic Investors experienced in funding programs to support Indigenous Australians identified the following themes as being associated with successful Philanthropic Investment in this area<sup>205</sup>:

- having the objective of 'change not charity'
- entering the area as a long-term commitment
- recognising cultural sensitivity as being paramount in this area (a key recommendation made by funded organisations was for Philanthropic Investors to take the counsel of Indigenous representatives grounded in Indigenous culture and the issues impacting participant outcomes, program design and delivery to guide funding options and plan for realistic outcomes)
- recognising that assumptions of cooperation and automatic translation of programs from area to area are dangerous due to the multi-tribal environment and diversity of Indigenous culture and language
- maintaining flexibility when making grants and evaluating their success
- accepting that usually investment over a long timeframe is required to see change occur
- recognising that infrastructure funding is often badly needed before a program can succeed.

The importance of providing an adequate level of support to facilitate change was also highlighted. Because there are often multiple and persistent types of disadvantage present for an Indigenous student, providing support that either addresses just one problem, or does too little to address the multiple problems, is unlikely to achieve results. It is particularly important to consider this factor in relation to remote and outer regional programs, where the level of disadvantage is often more acute.

Philanthropic Investments in the Indigenous sector (and more generally) tend to generate greater value when funding provided is sufficient to:

- support rigorous evaluation and measurement of impact and outcomes
- build ongoing organisational capacity rather than just investing in program funding alone (e.g. including the development of strategic planning, management and financial skills and resources)
- support the dissemination of practice learnings, networking and collaboration to promote the scaling and replication of successful programs.

<sup>204</sup> Scaife W. Challenges in Indigenous philanthropy: Reporting Australian grantmakers' perspectives. Australian Journal of Social Issues 2006, p 4 (Scaife 2006)

<sup>205</sup> Ibid. pp.12–14.

## 6.3 Identified intervention (investment) options

Research has shown that in order to improve Indigenous education outcomes it is necessary to take a holistic approach and address factors across the Social/Community, Home, School and Student Context that limit the capacity of students to engage in school and to learn.

It is rare for a single intervention to address all four contexts. In many (if not most) cases, communities are reliant on a mix of interventions (and service providers) to do that.

In this Report we have chosen to focus on interventions that seek to address factors in the School and Student context that reduce Indigenous students' capacity to engage in school and to learn.

We have identified eight Intervention Categories that work within a School and Student Context to improve the delivery of education and the education outcomes of Indigenous students that are suited to philanthropic investment on the basis that they either augment or complement existing government funding or provide an opportunity for the Philanthropic Sector to invest in more innovative responses to issues affecting Indigenous education.

These interventions seek to improve Indigenous education outcomes by pulling one or more of the following 'change levers':

- improving student **access to school/school** facilities
- improving the **school/learning environment**
- supporting the development and adoption of an **appropriately tailored curriculum**
- improving **teaching approach** by:
  - improving teacher training and development
  - supporting the adoption of more strongly student-focused teaching approaches
- improving **parental, family and community engagement** with school and involvement in the teaching process
- providing for **basic student (material and personal) support needs**
- strengthening **student engagement** with school and learning
- providing **intensive learning support** to address student learning support needs
- strengthening student-based **vocational development** and training support, including exposure to vocational and alternative life options and support in the development and realisation of vocational education, training and employment goals.

A more detailed discussion of each of these change levers is set out in Appendix Two.

A description of each of the above Intervention Categories is set out below. In some cases a single intervention program may sit across more than one Intervention Category.

- 1. Holistic Schooling Approach** – the adoption of a holistic approach to schooling that delivers a culturally and contextually relevant and capability appropriate curriculum that relates students' learning to their life experience. Such schooling approaches incorporate program elements that address the full range of student needs (including their basic material needs, travel to and from school, health and nutrition, personal and learning support requirements). This provides a highly supportive school environment and engages students' parents, family and community in the design/delivery of day-to-day schooling.
- 2. Tailored (Culturally Relevant and Capability Appropriate) Curriculum** – the development and dissemination of a culturally and contextually relevant and capability appropriate curriculum that is tailored to the needs of Indigenous students and teaching tools to support Indigenous student learning.
- 3. Appropriate (Culturally Relevant and Capability Appropriate) Staff Training** – the development and delivery of culturally appropriate and capability relevant pre- and in-service principal, teacher and teaching support staff training that includes skills relating to the design and delivery of curricula as well as the establishment and management of supportive teacher–student relationships.
- 4. Holistic Student Support** – the delivery of school and non-school-based programs that specifically seek to meet students' individual needs assisting them to access and engage in school including material, personal and learning support requirements. This approach also promotes parental and family support for student education and learning.

**5. Student and Parental Engagement** – the delivery of school and non-school-based programs that specifically seek to engage students with school and learning by encouraging school attendance, attachment and retention. This is achieved by promoting parental and family support for student education, connecting parents with school and helping parents to better support their children to learn.

**6. Intensive Learning Support** – school and non-school-based programs that seek to provide intensive learning support including remedial literacy and numeracy programs, general curriculum-based learning support or tutoring, extension learning and homework support.

**7. School-based Vocational Training and Development** – includes career planning, school-based apprenticeships and TAFE programs etc.

**8. Scholarships** – the provision of scholarships to support Indigenous student access to education.

The above interventions are complementary and in many cases will either go hand in hand or, indeed need to do so, to be most effective (e.g. curriculum development and teacher training and development need to be aligned if culturally relevant and capability appropriate curricula are to be implemented effectively).

It is worth noting that many of the above responses are equally applicable to other high-need student groups.

Figure 15 Intervention suited to non-government investment

	School context					Student context			
Change Levers	Access to school	School / Learning environment	Curriculum	Teaching approach	Parental, family and community involvement	Basic material and personal support	Engagement with school and learning	Intensive learning support	Vocational development and transition support
Intervention Categories	1. Holistic Schooling Approach					4. Holistic Student Approach			
	8. Scholarships		2. Tailored (culturally relevant & capability appropriate) Curriculum	3. Appropriate (culturally relevant & capability appropriate) Staff Training			5. Student & Parental Engagement	6. Intensive Learning Support	7. School-based Vocational Training & Development

## 6.4 Key success factors

Based on the research that has been conducted to prepare this Report and the interviews that have been conducted with subject matter experts across the Indigenous Education Sector, a number of Key Success Factors (KSFs) that apply to the Intervention Categories identified in this Report have been identified. A summary of those Key Success Factors is set out in Table 3 below.

Well designed and delivered programs will meet the Key Success Factors that have been identified as applying to the Intervention Category to which they relate in the table.

It is recommended that those Key Success Factors be taken into consideration by Philanthropic Investors when assessing programs for investment in addition to standard organisational capacity and program delivery capability criteria.

Break out text 12 – Standard organisational capacity and program delivery capability assessment criteria used when making Philanthropic Investments<sup>206</sup>

### Organisational Capacity:

- does the organisation have a clear mission and strategy?
- is its program execution well-aligned with mission?
- does it have good governance structures in place?
- does it have a strong leader?
- does it have a capable senior management team?
- is its financial management sound and does it have good financial management controls in place?
- does it have a successful fundraising strategy?
- are its marketing and communications clear and consistent?
- does it have a strong organisational track record?
- does it have a track record in successful program delivery of the type being considered?

### Program Delivery Capability:

- does the program have adequate staffing?
- is it aligned with the organisation's mission and strategy?
- does it have a logical program plan that is likely to achieve the desired outcomes?
- are sufficient resources allocated to the program for success?
- are all of the necessary stakeholders on board and engaged (or are they likely to be)?
- are effective performance evaluation/tracking processes in place to monitor program outcomes and assess delivery against program objectives?

<sup>206</sup> SVA has developed an Organisational Capability Diagnostic Tool to assess organisational compliance with the above criteria. This tool is available free of charge on its website at [www.socialventures.com.au](http://www.socialventures.com.au)

Table 3 – Key Success Factors by Intervention Type

Key Success Factors	Description	Holistic Schooling Approach	Tailored Curriculum	Appropriate Staff Training	Holistic Student Support	Student and Parental Engagement	Intensive Learning Support	School Based Vocational Development & Transition Support	Scholarships
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
General	Understand / meet holistic needs	●	●	–	●	●	●	●	●>
	Strengths-based approach	●	●	–	●	●	●	●	●>
	Dual learning and engagement focus	●	●	–	–	–	●	●	●>
	Culturally inclusive	●	●	●*	●	●	●	–	●>
	Family and community engagement	●	●	–	●	–	–	–	●>
	Appropriate network of collaborators	●	–	–	●	●	–	●	●>
School/Program-based	Strong school leadership	●	●	●*	–	●	●	●	●**
	High performance standards and expectations	●	●	●*	–	–	●	●	●**
	Tailored curriculum/program design	●	●	●*	●	●	●	●	●**
	Specialist teaching capability	●	–	●*	–	–	●	–	●**
	Dual teaching and support focus (i.e. mixed teaching – support approach)	●	–	●*	–	–	●	–	●**
Student-based	Clear behavioural guidelines	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	●>
	Positive and welcoming learning environment	●	–	–	●	●	●	●	●**
	Quality teacher–student relationships	●	–	–	●	●	●	●	●**
Program Specific	Critical mass	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	●>
	Appropriate course content and delivery	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–

\* Refers to targeted skill development areas for teaching staff.

\*\* Attributes that must apply to the school that scholarship recipients are attending.

> Attributes must apply to both the scholarship design (i.e. student selection and scholarship management and coordination) and to the school that the scholarship recipients are attending.

## 6.5 Detailed intervention summaries

The following section reviews each of the identified Intervention Categories in more detail. It provides an outline of the key objectives and Key Success Factors for each Intervention Category and provides examples of the different intervention types.

The case studies in this Section are provided by way of example only. The programs set out in the case studies have not been independently reviewed or audited. Their inclusion in the Report should not, therefore, be seen as a recommendation for funding. As a matter of good practice Philanthropic Investors interested in funding interventions such as those identified in this Report should ensure they undertake appropriate due diligence before investing in any programs to make sure that the programs in question align with their funding strategy and meet the investment criteria.

### 6.5.1 Holistic schooling approach

It was noted at the beginning of this section that improvements in Indigenous education outcomes require a holistic approach that addresses the full range of factors affecting Indigenous education across the Social/Community, Home, School and Student Context.

An **Holistic Schooling Approach** seeks to do this to by addressing all of the above factors through the provision of school-based support and learning programs. This is done by going beyond providing the standard educational curriculum and providing values and behavioural education, incentives to engage in school (e.g. sport and arts-based programs), personal support (e.g. counselling) and basic needs assistance (e.g. meals). These supports would ideally be provided through students' Home and Social environments. Current levels of disadvantage mean that often they are not; nevertheless, they must be in place for students to succeed at school and reach their potential.

Figure 16 illustrates the multi-layered student learning and support model that an Holistic School Based Approach uses.

By its nature, the Holistic School-based Approach seeks to incorporate aspects of all of the other intervention types covered in the section.

**Figure 16 Holistic student learning and support model** (as applied by Djarragun College)



Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low preschool attendance</li> <li>- Low school attendance</li> <li>- High student suspension and expulsion rates</li> <li>- Poor student numeracy and literacy</li> <li>- Low school retention</li> <li>- Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>- Poor health and nutrition</li> <li>- Poor housing</li> <li>- Low parent/family literacy and numeracy</li> <li>- Low parent/family engagement in education and/or employment</li> <li>- Language barriers</li> <li>- Lack of access to education</li> <li>- Unwelcoming school environment</li> <li>- Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>- Poor teaching approach</li> <li>- Lack of Indigenous teaching staff</li> <li>- Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>- Negative school experience</li> <li>- Poor school performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School-based responses that incorporate elements from across the School and Student intervention spectrum to establish a supportive school-based environment in which students are assisted to engage with school and access learning opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand/meet holistic needs</li> <li>- Strengths-based approach</li> <li>- Dual learning and engagement focus</li> <li>- Culturally inclusive</li> <li>- Family and community engagement</li> <li>- Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>- Strong school leadership</li> <li>- High performance standards and expectations</li> <li>- Tailored curriculum/program design</li> <li>- Specialist teaching capacity</li> <li>- Dual teaching and support focus (i.e. mixed teaching – support approach)</li> <li>- Clear behavioural guidelines</li> <li>- Positive and welcoming learning environment</li> <li>- Quality teacher–student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved literacy</li> <li>- Improved numeracy</li> <li>- Improved attendance</li> <li>- Increased retention</li> <li>- Improved school performance</li> <li>- Improved primary to secondary transition</li> <li>- Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>- Increased confidence</li> <li>- Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>- Improved physical health</li> <li>- Improved behaviour</li> <li>- Improved personal relationships</li> <li>- Improved social skills</li> <li>- Improved emotional health</li> <li>- Stronger engagement with parents and community</li> <li>- Better cross-cultural understanding</li> </ul>

### Case Study

#### Djarragun College – Gordonvale, Queensland

Djarragun College delivers pre-prep to Year 12 schooling to students from Indigenous communities in Cairns, Yarrabah, Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands. It also has a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program for post-Year 12 students. It offers both academic and vocational streams.

The school caters for students who are extremely disadvantaged, many of whom would not ordinarily participate in school. Over 95% of the students attending the school are Indigenous. Over the last six and a half years the school has taught 1600 students.

The College has achieved a high level of success compared to national Indigenous indices in promoting school attendance, completion and transition into further education and employment with:

- school attendance rates between 65 and 75%
- year-on-year retention rates between 70 and 75%
- Year 10 completion rates between 80 and 85%
- Year 10 to 12 completion rates between 90 and 95%
- graduate transitions into further education and employment of approximately 70% (based on combined graduate outcomes over the last two years).

The College's success is attributed to its use of an integrated education model that works to address students' basic and personal support requirements, address behavioural issues and provide tailored educational programs to meet their individual learning requirements. The design and delivery of the above program are driven by the School Principal Jean Illingworth. The school uses a values-based approach to guide the behaviour of both staff and students and there is a focus placed on the establishment of close supportive relationships between teachers and students. School systems and staffing are structured to allow staff to be responsive to the learning and personal support needs of students, with investments being made in both teaching and counselling staff. Cultural activities and language are incorporated into the school curriculum and activities, and parents and the community are actively involved in the life of the school.

### 6.5.2 Tailored curriculum (culturally relevant and capability appropriate)

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low preschool attendance</li> <li>– Low school attendance</li> <li>– High student suspension and expulsion rates</li> <li>– Poor student numeracy and literacy</li> <li>– Low school retention</li> <li>– Poverty/low household income</li> <li>– Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>– Low parent/family literacy and numeracy</li> <li>– Low parent/family engagement in education and/or employment</li> <li>– Inadequate parenting and early childhood development</li> <li>– Unwelcoming school environment</li> <li>– Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>– Poor teaching approach</li> <li>– Lack of Indigenous teaching staff</li> <li>– Low parent engagement</li> <li>– Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>– Negative school experience</li> <li>– Poor school performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School-based responses that focus on aligning school curriculum with students’ specific learning and development requirements (such responses are often linked to Staff Training and Skill Development Responses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand/meet holistic needs</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Dual learning and engagement focus</li> <li>– Culturally inclusive</li> <li>– Family and community engagement</li> <li>– Strong school leadership</li> <li>– High performance standards and expectations</li> <li>– Tailored curriculum/program design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved literacy</li> <li>– Improved numeracy</li> <li>– Improved attendance</li> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>– Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> <li>– Improved social skills</li> <li>– Improved emotional</li> <li>– Stronger engagement with parents and community</li> <li>– Better cross-cultural understanding</li> </ul>

A **Tailored Curriculum** is one that is developed to meet the needs of the individual student or student group. In many cases this means that in addition to the standard academic offering, schools will provide ESL-based programs, behaviour management and personal development programs, cultural and language studies for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, school engagement programs and a dedicated vocational stream. A tailored curriculum is not a ‘dumbed-down’ curriculum and assists students to achieve to their full potential rather than expecting less of them.

#### Case Study

##### Yule Brook Secondary College – The “Big Picture Inspired School” Program, Western Australia

Yule Brook Secondary College provides schooling for approximately 200 students each year from Years 8 to 10 in Western Australia. Approximately 23% of the students at Yule Brook are Indigenous.

The school operates the “Big Picture Inspired School” Program for its Year 8 students. They plan to expand it to Years 9 and 10 in the next two years. The Program is designed for students who are at high risk of leaving school prior to completing Year 12, or in some cases, Year 10. The Program is based on a model developed by the Big Picture Company in the United States, which is now being made available to schools in Australia through the Big Picture Company of Australia.

Yule Brook started running its Big Picture Program in 2005 at the instigation of its School Principal Paul Billings. The program works with the home group classes of 12 to 15 students. Individual learning plans are prepared for each student. Those plans are developed collaboratively by the student, their parents and teachers and are based around the student’s personal interests and passions. Mentoring relationships are established to support all students and formal pastoral care sessions are built into home room activities on a daily basis in Term One and then weekly after that. Students also undertake ongoing workplace internships called “Learning Through Internship” which are linked to their learning plans. Students then present their work for assessment by way of a public exhibition four times a year. Their mentors, parents and teachers witness these exhibitions.

Yule Brook is also a Clontarf Football Academy School. This program is discussed in Section 6.5.5 Student Engagement.

The school is currently conducting an external evaluation of the Big Picture Program; however, anecdotal results are good and some promising data have emerged. For example, in 2006 prior to the program’s commencement, Year 8 students were suspended for a total of 86.5 days, whereas after the program was introduced in 2007, students were only suspended for a total of 9 days.

### 6.5.3 Appropriate staff training (culturally relevant and capability appropriate)

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Unwelcoming school environment</li> <li>– Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>– Poor teaching approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School or sectoral-based responses that focus on providing school management and teacher training to assist staff to improve school environment, curriculum and teaching approach to support improved Indigenous</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Culturally inclusive*</li> <li>– Strong school leadership*</li> <li>– High performance standards and expectations*</li> <li>– Tailored curriculum/ program design*</li> <li>– Specialist teaching capacity*</li> <li>– Dual teaching and support focus (i.e. mixed teaching – support approach)*</li> <li>– Appropriate course content and delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved literacy</li> <li>– Improved numeracy</li> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> <li>– Stronger engagement with parents and community</li> <li>– Better cross-cultural understanding</li> <li>– Improved primary to secondary transition</li> <li>– Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>– Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Improved personal relationships</li> </ul>

**Staff Training** and Skill Development focuses on developing the skills of teaching and management staff to design and deliver the school curriculum and extra-curricular programs to suit the needs of their Indigenous students. It also focuses on teaching staff how to create a more culturally inclusive school environment.

Interventions of this type often include ESL training, cultural awareness training, intensive support and relationship management and counselling-based skills training. In addition to that, it can include the establishment of professional mentoring programs and programs designed to assist the showcasing and dissemination of good school practice.

#### Case Study

##### Stronger Smarter Principals Program – Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, Queensland

The Stronger Smarter Principals Program was developed by Dr Chris Sarra. Dr Sarra is recognised for his success in improving results and retention at Cherbourg School in Queensland. He is the Director of the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute (IELI).

The Stronger Smarter Principals Program is available to school principals and includes support for teachers. It aims to address issues of poor teaching approach, poor curriculum and poor school environment.

The Program is run in groups with a maximum of 20. Principals complete a one-week residential course and develop an action plan for their schools to address the above issues. IELI then provides follow-up support to the principals and their staff. Dr Sarra believes that the key to improving Indigenous schooling and educational outcomes is to get principals to take responsibility for the results in their school and for them to continue making the social and academic changes required until they succeed in delivering results.

The Program is in its first year; a formal evaluation is planned but is yet to be conducted. The Program is based on Dr Sarra’s own experiences as Principal of Cherbourg State School where under his leadership there was a 94% reduction in unexplained absenteeism and a 58% improvement in Year 2 literacy within two years. Under Dr Sarra’s leadership the school had 81% of Year 7 students within the Queensland State average band for literacy, compared to 0% in 1999 before he joined the school.

\* Refers to targeted skill development areas

6.5.4 Holistic student support

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poverty/low household income</li> <li>- Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>- Poor health and nutrition</li> <li>- Poor or unsafe community environment</li> <li>- Negative school experience</li> <li>- Low parental/family engagement with the education system/employment</li> <li>- Lack of access to education</li> <li>- Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>- Poor school performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School and non-school based responses that focus on meeting students' basic needs as a precursor to their being ready and able to participate effectively in school including health, nutrition (e.g. breakfast and lunch programs), personal counselling, material aid (in the form of school uniforms or equipment), transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand/meet holistic needs</li> <li>- Strengths-based approach</li> <li>- Culturally inclusive</li> <li>- Family and community engagement</li> <li>- Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>- Tailored curriculum/program design</li> <li>- Positive and welcoming learning environment</li> <li>- Quality teacher-student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved literacy</li> <li>- Improved numeracy</li> <li>- Improved attendance</li> <li>- Increased retention</li> <li>- Improved school performance</li> <li>- Increased confidence</li> <li>- Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>- Improved behaviour</li> <li>- Improved personal relationships</li> <li>- Improved physical health</li> <li>- Improved social skills</li> <li>- Improved emotional health</li> </ul>

**Integrated Support Programs** seek to address students' basic personal and support needs, behavioural issues, school engagement and basic literacy and numeracy skill deficits. They tend to work with students who are operating below the standard school literacy and numeracy levels/ are at risk of leaving school.

The interventions are usually multi-faceted and in some cases have a dual focus on engaging both students and their parents or carers, with some programs seeking to act as a bridge between the family and the school. These types of programs operate best when they are developed in consultation with parents/the local community in order to understand and address the relevant barriers to education.

**Case Studies**

**Learning for Life – The Smith Family, Northern Territory**

The Smith Family has developed an approach to its Learning for Life Program in the Northern Territory that is specifically tailored to working with disadvantaged Indigenous people. The Program started in nine Northern Territory school communities and is growing (currently it operates in 13 communities). It is envisaged that this model will be used by The Smith Family in other Indigenous communities across Australia.

The Smith Family estimates that around 3000 people are involved in some way with their Northern Territory Learning for Life Programs. The Program targets disadvantaged to highly disadvantaged Indigenous students in remote, regional and some urban communities.

The Program seeks to capitalise on the human resources already present in schools (with a particular focus on leveraging the skills of tertiary-educated teachers) and to identify and remove the barriers that prevent children from engaging in school and learning.

Activities are developed in consultation with the community to link students, families and the broader community with teaching staff and the local school(s). In the case of this program, in addition to the Key Success Factors identified in the table above, the program works with schools where there is strong school leadership (we note this factor is not always a key factor in programs using this Intervention).

Because activities are developed in consultation with community, activities vary from place to place. Some examples of the sorts of activities that are undertaken are:

- Breakfast with a Mentor – where children are given a meal and connected with interested adults in their community
- Literacy Programs – where high school students do literacy work with primary school students
- Sports and Recreation Programs – that allow children to play sport and participate in cultural activities such as music workshops linked to the local school or involving local school staff.



(caption) Caption to be written

The Smith Family is tracking both quantitative and qualitative data. Information gathered to date suggests that there is good engagement with the Program. An example is a school in Katherine where over half of the students were not having breakfast before the Breakfast with a Mentor Program began. Since the Program commenced many of the parents have volunteered to pay for their children's lunch at school. The School Principal attributes this to the Program having built greater trust in the school in the parent body. The Principal also reports improvement in behaviour, readiness to learn, punctuality and parent participation. Teachers report improved relationships with withdrawn and disconnected students.

**Dream the Pathways – Centacare Wilcannia Forbes, New South Wales**

Dream the Pathways is a suite of Youth Services Programs run by Centacare in Wilcannia Forbes. Centacare Wilcannia Forbes provides early intervention programs to young families, youth services, counselling and community development programs to people in western NSW.

It supports 600 at-risk young people aged 13 to 24 in rural and remote towns of central and far west New South Wales. Approximately 75% of the young people they support are Indigenous and experience most or all of the issues outlined in the table above.

Dream the Pathways works with at-risk young people on an individual and group basis to support them to engage in education, training and employment as well as addressing basic personal needs. The Program includes:

- engagement activities with participants and family or community members
- liaison support for transitions into high school
- intensive school retention activities
- alternate education and training
- supported transitions to employment and tertiary education
- vocational skills assessments and training.

Centacare tracked participants in their 2006 Program and found:

- 80% demonstrated increased connection to culture
- 100% increased knowledge of full-time education, training and employment options
- 80% demonstrated improved literacy and numeracy
- 80% have employability and work-readiness skills
- 70% actively pursuing a life goal.

**Dubbo Cultural Leadership Program – Mission Australia, New South Wales**

Mission Australia runs the Dubbo Cultural Leadership Program. The Program seeks to improve school retention in primary and secondary school. It involves the four high schools and one primary school in Dubbo.

The Program works with Indigenous students from Years 5 to 11 who are considered to be at risk of early school leaving.

The Program is essentially a preventative strategy. Schools refer at-risk students to the Program and caseworkers then assist each individual to overcome the challenges that stand between them and staying in the education system. The Program includes:

- after-school sessions that are designed to be educational and support vocational development while linking into cultural activities and being fun
- school work support for suspended students
- referrals to counselors, family mediation and support agencies
- connection with Aboriginal Elders and mentors.

The Program seeks to promote respect and pride through a strong focus on Aboriginal Culture allowing students to make a connection with their own culture, spirit and the countries they are from.

Fifty-two students participated in the Program in 2006 of whom 39 had been in contact with the juvenile justice system before being referred to the Program. Of those 52 participants:

- 46 went on to attend some form of education
- 2 moved
- 3 left the Program
- 1 went back into detention.

**6.5.5 Student and parental engagement**

**Student Engagement** programs are designed to promote student attendance and retention.

Most programs provide an activity that the students enjoy and tie it to school attendance. Activities tend to revolve around sport, arts and the media and will often involve excursions and camps. If successful, the activities will lead to increased attendance, but unless the school associated with the program is delivering quality education to students improved performance outcomes will not necessarily follow.

The better programs also help students with career pathway planning and help them to develop the life skills they need to succeed. They develop the student’s aspirations, and once a career seems like a real possibility the student has a good reason to start learning and is more likely to want to engage with school.

Currently, many of these programs appear to be targeted at boys rather than girls.

**Case Study**

**Clontarf Football Academies – Clontarf Foundation, Western Australia and Northern Territory**

The Clontarf Foundation runs a series of Football Academies with a group of schools. Currently, Clontarf Football Academies are attached to 20 schools. Any Indigenous boy in Years 7 to 12 at a Clontarf Football Academy secondary school can apply to be part of the Program. There are three primary school programs. There are expected to be 1400 students involved in the 2008 school year.

The bulk of the students involved in the Program experience, or are strongly at risk of experiencing, some or all of the issues identified in the table above.

Students participating in an Academy:

- receive specialist football coaching
- participate in structured training and competition games
- have the opportunity to work with and be coached by professional AFL players
- receive mentoring and support from program staff with a focus on education, attendance and life skills development.

Participants are also given breakfast and learn about healthy nutrition.

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low school attendance</li> <li>- High student suspension and expulsion rates</li> <li>- Poor student numeracy and literacy</li> <li>- Low school retention</li> <li>- Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>- Poor health and nutrition</li> <li>- Low parental/family engagement with the education system/employment</li> <li>- Unwelcoming school environment</li> <li>- Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>- Negative school experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School and non-school-based programs aimed at engaging students with school and or learning with a view to encouraging increased school attendance and improved participation as a precursor to improved education outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand/meet holistic needs Strengths-based approach</li> <li>- Culturally inclusive</li> <li>- Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>- Strong school leadership</li> <li>- Tailored curriculum/program design</li> <li>- Clear behavioural guidelines</li> <li>- Positive and welcoming learning environment</li> <li>- Quality teacher–student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved literacy</li> <li>- Improved numeracy</li> <li>- Improved attendance</li> <li>- Increased retention</li> <li>- Improved school performance</li> <li>- Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>- Increased confidence</li> <li>- Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>- Improved behaviour</li> <li>- Improved personal relationships</li> <li>- Improved physical health</li> <li>- Improved social skills</li> <li>- Improved emotional health</li> <li>- Stronger engagement with parents and community</li> </ul>

It is a precondition of participation in the Academy that the student attend school. To maintain their position in the Football Academy participants need to show commitment towards both the Academy Program and their education. Students are expected to be fully engaged with school, plan for their future and stay out of trouble.

The results to date show improved retention, attendance, Year 12 completion and, anecdotally, an improvement in engagement in post-school employment. Examples of these outcomes include:

- Mid-West Academy – Indigenous male retention rates for Years 10 to12 (57%) now exceed non-Indigenous retention rates (55%)
- The Clontarf School (first Academy) – no Indigenous boy had completed Year 12 until the Program started; in 2006 32 Indigenous students enrolled in Year 12 over 20 of whom completed school
- Kununurra Academy – had 25 boys in the Program in 2007 who had an average attendance rate over the previous three years of 5%; boys now have attendance rates ranging from 50 to 90%.

### 6.5.6 Intensive Learning Support

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low school attendance</li> <li>– Poor student numeracy and literacy</li> <li>– Low school retention</li> <li>– Low parent/family literacy and numeracy</li> <li>– Low parent/family engagement in education/employment</li> <li>– Language barriers</li> <li>– Lack of access to education</li> <li>– Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>– Poor teaching approach</li> <li>– Unwelcoming school environment</li> <li>– Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>– Negative school experience</li> <li>– Poor school performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School and non-school based-programs providing remedial and extension learning support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand/meet holistic needs</li> <li>– Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Dual learning and engagement focus</li> <li>– Culturally inclusive</li> <li>– Strong school leadership</li> <li>– High performance standards and expectations</li> <li>– Tailored curriculum/program design</li> <li>– Specialist teaching capacity</li> <li>– Dual teaching and support focus (i.e. mixed teaching – support approach)</li> <li>– Positive and welcoming learning environment</li> <li>– Quality teacher–student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improved literacy</li> <li>– Improved numeracy</li> <li>– Improved attendance</li> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Heightened aspirations for the future</li> </ul>

**Intensive Learning Support** encompasses programs where additional academic support is made available in addition to the ordinary school curriculum. Common forms of this type of intervention are intensive literacy and numeracy programs during schools hours and ‘homework’ clubs after school. These programs usually seek to help Indigenous students to increase their literacy and numeracy skills at a faster than average rate, with the ambition of bringing them up to the level they should be for their age and school year.

#### Case Studies

##### **MULTILIT – Macquarie University and The Exodus Foundation, New South Wales**

MULTILIT is an intensive remedial literacy program developed by the Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC). A separate for-profit entity has been established by the university to market and sell the program across Australia. Discounts are given to non-profit organisations including schools. There are a number of different ways in which the Program can be delivered, including by parents at home and through schools. The university can be funded by Foundations to deliver the program.

An example of this is The Exodus Foundation which facilitates the running of MULTILIT as a 20-week intensive course staffed by a team from MUSEC at their Ashfield and Redfern locations in New South Wales. The Program commenced in Ashfield in 1996 and more recently in Redfern in 2007, the latter specifically targeting Indigenous students.

The Program caters for primary school-aged children with literacy at least two years behind their chronological age. The majority of participants are at risk of disengaging and unable to access remedial assistance for financial reasons.

Students attend morning classes five days per week then attend school in the afternoon as usual. Individual learning plans are prepared for each student. Students receive substantial time with MULTILIT instructors and trained volunteers receiving instruction in reading and spelling skills in small groups (1:5 teacher student ratio).

Results from Exodus Foundation’s Ashfield Program in Semester 2 in 2006 indicate that on average over the course of the 20-week Program students achieved:

- 18-month improvement in reading accuracy
- 11.5-month improvement in reading comprehension
- 21.5-month improvement in single-word recognition
- 19-month improvement in spelling
- 47% increase in words read correctly per minute.

These outcomes compare with standard-progress results for low-progress readers whose typical gain in reading and related skills in the same period would be around two months.

##### **Partnership for Success – Polly Farmer Foundation, Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia**

The Polly Farmer Foundation’s Partnerships for Success Program sets up and runs after school homework clubs. The Program was established in 1997 and currently there are approximately 300 participants across 10 sites in regional areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory and South Australia.

Partnerships for Success targets Indigenous students who show academic promise and have the capacity, interest and potential to complete their secondary education. Most participating students attend school regularly and are likely to have experienced a moderate but not severe level of disadvantage.

The Partnership for Success Program seeks to recognise potential, provide a positive learning environment and intensive support to learn and promote responsibility for self and future. At each site, the Program sets up an ‘enrichment centre’. The centre will typically have internet workstations, study areas, a kitchen and eating areas. Participants come to the centre after school under the supervision of a project leader. They do homework and can seek assistance when needed for their academic work, personal and family issues and for career pathway planning. Each student has an Individual Learning Plan which is prepared in partnership with the student’s teachers. Personal and cultural development programs are offered in non-school time.

In the case of this program, in addition to the Key Success Factors identified in the table above, the program requires parent, family and community engagement (families must sign a compact committing to getting their children to school) and a strong network of collaborators.

In the 10 years since the Program began in 1997, 123 students have gone on to further education, training or employment. In Karratha only one student had completed Year 12 prior to the Program’s inception and in the 10 years since that site was established, 51 students participating in the Program have gone on to further education, training or employment, with 17 of them going on to university.

### 6.5.7 School-based vocational training and development programs

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low Year 10 and 12 retention</li> <li>– Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>– Low parental/family engagement with the education system/employment</li> <li>– Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>– Poor student skills and behaviour</li> <li>– Negative school experience</li> <li>– Poor school performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School and non-school-based programs that expose students to vocational and life options, encourage students to set vocational and life goals and support vocational planning and development</li> <li>– In some cases this includes intensive support to assist students to transition from school into further education, vocational training and employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understand/meet holistic needs Strengths-based approach</li> <li>– Dual learning and engagement focus</li> <li>– Appropriate network of collaborators</li> <li>– Strong school leadership</li> <li>– High performance standards and expectations</li> <li>– Tailored curriculum/program design</li> <li>– Positive and welcoming learning environment</li> <li>– Quality teacher–student relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increased retention</li> <li>– Improved attendance</li> <li>– Improved school performance</li> <li>– Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>– Increased confidence</li> <li>– Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>– Improved behaviour</li> </ul>

**Vocational Training and Development** Programs seek to increase awareness of, and interest in, vocational or career options, assist students in identifying career preferences and developing and implementing career development plans. They often involve the provision of school-based vocational training. They can also provide intensive transition support to assist students to transition from school into further education, vocational training and employment.

They tend to be hands-on and to have a strong practical focus. They often include vocational assessment, career planning, resume writing and interview skills, work readiness and vocational skills training, work experience and work placements.

#### Case Studies

##### Midlands Indigenous Youth Program – The Beacon Foundation, Swan Valley, Western Australia

The Beacon Foundation operates the Midlands Indigenous Youth Program in partnership with the Swan Valley Education District and three high schools in the Swan Valley area. The Program seeks to help young Indigenous people who have graduated from high school to make a successful and sustained transition to further education, training and employment.

There are currently 66 Indigenous students between 17 and 21 years of age participating in the Program.

A program coordinator provides or facilitates access to support on a case-management basis. From Years 10 to 12, the coordinator helps each student with career planning, choosing the most appropriate subjects and learning stream (vocational or academic), and provides support or referrals for family and personal issues. The coordinator helps Year 12 students identify the most appropriate post-school options and then continues to support the student with any career or personal and family issues at the post-school stage. For example, this might include taking a student to a job interview, helping them buy the right clothes for work or providing a referral for counselling. Students in Years 11 and 12 are connected with a mentor from a business or community organisation. The mentor relationship continues through the transition from school to further education, training or employment.

An independent evaluation report for the Midland Indigenous Youth Project completed in June 2007 found the Program dramatically boosted school-to-work transition rates and reduced anti-social behaviour. About 90% of participants in the Program went on to employment at the end of compulsory schooling, compared to 67% of those in the general Perth population.

##### Jobs 4U2 – Ganbina, Shepparton, Victoria

Ganbina is a local Indigenous vocational development and employment support agency. It runs a suite of programs that seeks to assist Indigenous young people to realise the role of education in enabling them to access vocational training and employment opportunities. The above programs include:

- school-based programs – that provide students with exposure to vocational options, assist students in identifying career opportunities and helping them to develop career plans to pursue those opportunities
- employment support programs – that help older students and young people who have disengaged from education to develop vocational skills and to access employment opportunities
- skill-based programs – including driver education and financial management
- youth leadership and development programs
- scholarship and awards programs – to promote equality of access and local Indigenous student achievement.

The Programs set high expectations for student and employee performance and place responsibility on participants to be accountable for their vocational development and career path.

Ganbina is in the process of conducting a three-year evaluation of the results of its programs. Early results from schools operating Ganbina programs show an increase in Indigenous school retention from 23 to 33% as well as an increase in Indigenous student enrolments. An independent evaluation of its 2006 program indicated that 97% of students successfully completed the program and either continued school or accessed employment.

### 6.5.8 Scholarship programs

Issues	Response	Key Success Factors	Results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low Year 10 and 12 retention</li> <li>- Poverty/low household income</li> <li>- Limited access to or use of mainstream services</li> <li>- Low parental/family engagement with the education system/employment</li> <li>- Lack of access to education</li> <li>- Inappropriate school curriculum</li> <li>- Poor school performance</li> <li>- Poor student numeracy and literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student or school-based scholarships providing funding for school fees/student support requirements to facilitate access to education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understand/meet holistic needs<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Strengths-based approach<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Dual learning an engagement focus<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Culturally inclusive<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Family and community engagement<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Appropriate network of collaborators<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Strong school leadership**</li> <li>- High performance standards and expectations**</li> <li>- Tailored curriculum/program design**</li> <li>- Specialist teaching capability**</li> <li>- Dual teaching and support focus (i.e. mixed teaching – support approach)**</li> <li>- Clear behavioural guidelines<sup>&gt;</sup></li> <li>- Positive and welcoming learning environment**</li> <li>- Quality teacher–student relationships**</li> <li>- Critical mass<sup>&gt;</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved literacy</li> <li>- Improved numeracy</li> <li>- Increased retention</li> <li>- Improved school performance</li> <li>- Improved secondary to tertiary transition</li> <li>- Increased confidence</li> <li>- Heightened aspirations for the future</li> <li>- Better cross-cultural understanding</li> </ul>

Scholarships create an opportunity for students with academic and/or leadership qualities to access education and to help them to realise their potential.

Traditionally scholarship programs take the form of a donation that allows a student to access school. However, for scholarship programs to be effective for Indigenous students who often have a range of support requirements, they need to provide for the holistic needs of the student across the Social/Community, Home, School and Student contexts. In effect, successful Indigenous scholarships fund students to access an education like that provided under the Holistic Schooling Approach (Section 6.5.1).

The key difference is that while a donation is made at the organisational level in the Holistic Schooling Approach, scholarships are targeted at an individual level.

There are two main Indigenous Scholarship models currently in use. The first involves the school providing both education and the additional support required by the scholarship recipient and the second involves the school providing education, with additional support being delivered by another organisation.

Scholarships can benefit students from urban, regional and remote areas, but are commonly granted to students from regional and remote areas, as it is recognised that this group has the greatest difficulty in accessing quality education.

### Case Studies

#### Indigenous Education Program – St Joseph’s College, Hunters Hill, New South Wales

St Joseph’s College is a private secondary college providing boarding facilities in Sydney. The Scholarship Program allows Indigenous boys from regional and rural New South Wales from Year 7 onwards to take up a boarding scholarship at St Joseph’s College in Sydney and stay until they complete Year 12. Of the school’s 970 students, 750 are boarders and 41 (5%) of those are Indigenous students on scholarships.

The Indigenous boys who receive scholarships at St Josephs are those who are in financial need, have leadership potential and a genuine interest in finishing Year 12. They are likely to have some experience of the issues shown in the table above.

\*\* Attributes must apply to the school that scholarship recipients are attending.

> Attributes must apply to both the scholarship design (i.e. student selection and scholarship management and coordination) and to the school that the scholarship recipients are attending.



(caption) Caption to be written

The school has strong and committed leadership. It focuses on the potential of its students and provides a positive learning environment, Indigenous staff, as well as intensive support to learn. The school’s culture of supporting boys in all aspects of their lives – academic, social and emotional – helps to create the environment required for students to stay and achieve their full potential. The school takes a holistic approach, seeking to provide support across all the different life contexts (Social/Community, Home, School and Student) that affect the ability of the student to connect with school and learn effectively.

Since the program commenced in 1998, there have been 60 students who have completed more than one year at St Joseph’s College. Of those 60 Indigenous students:

- 17 have completed Year 12, many of them going on to tertiary study
- 11 are completing Year 12 in 2008
- 23 are enrolled in other year levels
- 9 have left the program for reasons including disciplinary issues and pursuit of employment
- school attendance is 100%.

St Joseph’s College has established an Indigenous Capital Fund to facilitate funding scholarships for students and in 2007 commenced funding scholarships for girls at high-performing girls’ boarding schools.

# 7. Conclusion

This section summarises the key insights of the Report.

Although the issues relating to Indigenous education are complex, Philanthropic Investors can play a positive role in helping to improve the education outcomes of Indigenous students.

In order to improve Indigenous education outcomes it is necessary to take a holistic approach. To do that it is often necessary to address factors across the Social/Community, Home, School and Student Context that limit the capacity of students to engage in school and to learn.

## 7.1 Key insights for Philanthropic Investment

There are a range of interventions suited to Philanthropic Investment that works within a School and Student Context to improve the delivery of education and the education outcomes of Indigenous students including both:

- **school-based** interventions such as the Tailored Curriculum or Integrated Schooling Approach and
- **student-based** interventions addressing specific areas of need such as Intensive Learning Support and Vocational Training and Development Programs.

It is rare for a single intervention to address the range of outcomes or factors that often need to be addressed to support change. In many cases a mix of interventions is required to do that.

The strongest intervention models tend therefore to be multi-faceted and to involve the coordination of a range of programs to address the issues affecting students' capacity to engage with school and learning. The key often lies in providing a coordinated response that addresses both the learning and other support needs of the individual students.

The implication of this for Philanthropic Investors is that well-focused investments in this area:

- **require a holistic understanding of the local issues** that need to be addressed in order to achieve effective outcomes
- **may involve multiple service providers** (and as a result tend to require more extensive due diligence, more complex funding structures and more extensive coordination, monitoring and evaluation processes)
- **often require higher levels of overall funding** in order to make sure that all relevant program components are covered and often involve larger investments or collaborative funding arrangements
- **tend to require higher levels of support where interventions are delivered in remote areas** due to the narrower range of services and service providers in those areas and the higher levels of disadvantage that tend to exist there
- **need to allow a reasonable timeframe for change** given the complexity of the factors affecting education outcomes

## 7.2 Final words

Philanthropic Investments can change lives.

They can help Indigenous students to develop the skills, values, experience and confidence to realise their potential.

When Philanthropic Investors apply strong analysis and due diligence to make well-focused investments, their impact can be profound.

- **in the case of school-based investments:**
  - **require the underlying organisational systems at the school** (e.g. school management and culture, staff recruitment and training, curriculum planning and student discipline procedures etc.) This is necessary to support the delivery of the programs being funded – the alignment of such systems, as well as the organisational structure and staffing of the school. It is critical to ensure that such programs are sustainable, rather than dependent on the principal and staff who are present at the school at the time of investment
  - **need to take into account taxation structures** that currently limit the capacity of investors to access Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) based tax deductions.



(caption) Caption to be written

## Glossary of Terms

Attendance	Student presence in school classes (as opposed to enrolment)
Contributing factor	Underlying factors in a student’s social/community, home, school, or own (student) context that contribute to their educational outcomes
Culturally inclusive	Include, recognise, acknowledge and respect Indigenous knowledge base and cultural and linguistic background and values
Culturally relevant curriculum	Teaching which acknowledges and respects Indigenous knowledge, philosophies and values while providing education that will enable full participation in society at large
Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR)	An entity that is entitled to receive income tax deductible gifts. All DGRs have to be endorsed unless they are named specifically in the income tax law. Most, but not all philanthropic foundations and trusts can only make donations to entities with DGR.
Due diligence	The care that a prudent person might be expected to exercise in the examination and evaluation of risks affecting a Philanthropic Investment
Enrolment	The registration of a student for attendance at a school
Exclusion	The permanent prohibition of a student from attending a school (or multiple schools)
Grade retention	The continued participation (enrolment) of a student at school from year level to year level
Holistic approach	To meet all aspects of an individual’s needs (material, personal, cultural and spiritual) in concert
Home context	The home environment in which the student lives and home or parental factors that influence or inform the development of the student or their home experience including parental status and life experience, parenting, early childhood development and parental and family capacity to support student learning
Indigenous Australians	People identifying themselves as Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
Indigenous consultation	The active discussion with and inclusion of Indigenous Australians in the formulation and implementation of programs and policies that will affect them
Intervention	A specific type of involvement in a situation that is designed to alter the existing state of affairs
Key success factor	An element that is required for the success of an Intervention
Non-school qualification	A qualification that is received from an educational institution (e.g. TAFE or university) other than a secondary school either while a student is still at secondary school or after they have completed secondary school.
Outcome	Measure(s) that show the status of an individual against a desired socio-economic parameter(s) at a given point in time

Philanthropic investment	A philanthropic donation or grant
Participation rate	The number of students of school age who were reported as being enrolled in school expressed as a percentage of the total number of children of school age
Post-school qualification	A qualification received from a higher education institution after a student has completed secondary school
Quadrennium	A period of four years
Quintile	A fifth or 20% of the whole amount – the term is used when describing the statistical distribution of a population
School retention	The continued participation (enrolment) of a student at school – the term may be used to refer to participation from the commencement of schooling or from commencement at a defined year level (e.g. from commencement of secondary school)
School context	The schooling system and way in which education is delivered that is experienced by a student
School performance and achievement	The results achieved by a student at school – this can include both academic and non-academic elements (e.g. emotional maturity, personal development, peer group or civic leadership)
Schooling	Schooling from Years 1 to 12
Social change philanthropy	Philanthropy designed to cause a change in the nature of social institutions, social behaviour or the social relations of a society, community of people, or other social structures (in contrast with the provision of alms)
Social/Community context	The socio-economic status such as family income, health, nutrition and housing and the community environment in which individuals live
Student context	The personal attributes and life experience that a student brings to their schooling including skill base, emotional status, behaviour, life goals and aspirations, experience of and attitude towards school and school performance
Suspension	The temporary exclusion of a student from attending school for disciplinary reasons
Vocational development	Research, planning and organisation for a career including the identification of career options, the identification of career preferences, the development of career plans and the investigation and pursuit of career training, work experience and professional or trade skill development
Vocational training	Training for a specific future career
Year 12 completion	The successful completion of Year 12 schooling with or without the acquisition of a tertiary entrance score

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## Acknowledgements

The publishing organisations would like to acknowledge the contributions made in relation to the preparation of this Report by:

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Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia

Department of Education and Training, Australian Capital Territory

Department of Education and Training, New South Wales

Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Queensland

Department of Employment, Education and Training, Northern Territory

### Philanthropic Investors

Kirsty Allen and Debra Maine, The Myer Foundation

Georgia Symmons, Telstra Foundation

Trish Burrows, Foundation for Young Australians

### Not-for-Profit Organisations

Andrew Penfold, St Joseph's Indigenous Fund

Anne Hampshire, Mission Australia

Dr Chris Sarra, Indigenous Education Leadership Institute

Gerard Neesham, Clontarf Foundation

Jean Illingworth, Djarragun College

John Cunningham, Polly Farmer Foundation

Leoni Wilbow, The Exodus Foundation

Liz Langstaff and Valerie Woods, Macquarie University

Margaret Flynn, Centacare Wilcannia Forbes

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Scott Harris, The Beacon Foundation

Tricia Rushton and David Ballhausen, The Smith Family

Viv White, The Big Picture Company of Australia

# Appendices

## Appendix One – Factors identified as affecting Indigenous student absenteeism<sup>207</sup>

Key Parameters	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Socio-economic factors (Social/Community Context)	<b>Income</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family is financially stable</li> </ul> <b>Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family and student health is good</li> </ul> <b>Community safety/stability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The local community is relatively stable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family is under financial stress</li> <li>Family/student health is not good</li> <li>The local community environment is unstable/there is a high level of community dysfunction</li> </ul>
Family-based factors (Home Context)	<b>Family situation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student has a stable family/home environment</li> <li>The family is not highly mobile</li> </ul> <b>Parental status</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parental education – one or both parents have completed Year 10/had a positive experience of school</li> <li>Parental employment – one or both parents are employed</li> </ul> <b>Parental attitude to education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive parental/family attitude to education</li> <li>Parents actively encourage attendance at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is family dysfunction/an unstable home environment</li> <li>The family is highly mobile/transient</li> <li>Limited parental education – the student lacks an educated family role model</li> <li>Negative parental education experience – one or both parents had a negative experience of school</li> <li>Parental unemployment – both parents are unemployed, the student lacks an employed family-based role model</li> <li>Negative parental/family attitude to education</li> <li>Parents do not actively encourage attendance/give children autonomy in determining whether or not to attend school</li> </ul>
School-based factors (School Context)	<b>School environment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive school environment – school is seen as a safe, caring place where students and parents feel valued and welcome</li> </ul> <b>Curriculum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging school curriculum – interesting and relevant curriculum linked to student’s immediate practical interests</li> <li>Inclusion of Indigenous studies in curriculum</li> <li>References to Indigenous language and culture</li> </ul> <b>Teaching approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers skilled in teaching in a cross-cultural and bilingual situation</li> <li>Limited cross-cultural misunderstanding</li> <li>Empathy for social and cultural issues</li> <li>Strong teacher–student relationships – teachers seen as being supportive and adopt a mixed teaching and support function</li> <li>Teachers positively encourage student attendance and performance</li> <li>Teachers set reasonable demands on students – set appropriate academic and behavioural standards</li> <li>Discipline system – disciplinary action is based on restorative justice principles (in which the student participates rather than being subject to the disciplinary process) and takes into account the student’s situation</li> <li>System uses a structured but culturally sensitive approach to manage late attendance, absenteeism and behavioural issues</li> </ul> <b>Parental/family/community engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High level of parental/community involvement in the school/teaching process</li> <li>Parents kept informed of children’s progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School is not seen as a safe caring place, students and parents do not feel valued and welcome</li> <li>Lack of interesting and relevant curriculum – curriculum not linked to student’s immediate practical interests</li> <li>Indigenous studies not included in curriculum/limited incorporation of such studies or references to Indigenous language or culture</li> <li>Teachers not skilled in teaching in a cross-cultural and bilingual situation</li> <li>Significant cross-cultural misunderstanding</li> <li>Perceived lack of empathy for social and cultural issues</li> <li>Poor teacher–student relationships</li> <li>Teachers seen to discipline non-attendance rather than encourage attendance</li> <li>Teachers demonstrate low expectations of Indigenous student capability</li> <li>Penalty or punishment-based discipline system adopted to manage late attendance, absenteeism and behavioural issues</li> <li>Low level of parental/community involvement in the school/teaching process</li> <li>Parents not kept informed of student’s progress</li> </ul>

<sup>207</sup> Bourke et al. 2000, pp.1ff; Zubrick et al. 2006, pp.113ff.

Key Parameters	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Student-based factors* (Student Context)	<b>Personal factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of significant emotional and behavioural difficulties/appropriately managed behaviour</li> <li>Positive peer and other role models</li> <li>Strong sense of individual and cultural identity</li> <li>Clear/positive life goals and aspirations</li> </ul> <b>Student attitude towards school</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive experience of and attitude towards school</li> <li>Believe that attending school is likely to lead to positive consequences (e.g. getting a better job when they finish school)</li> </ul> <b>Access to resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to school equipment and resources (e.g. computers and internet access)</li> </ul> <b>Student performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet basic literacy and numeracy skills</li> <li>Able to participate in/keep up with class work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional and behavioural difficulties</li> <li>Lack positive peer or other role models</li> <li>Lack a strong sense of individual and cultural identity</li> <li>Lack clear/positive life goals and aspirations</li> <li>Negative experience of or attitude towards school</li> <li>Do not believe that attending school is likely to lead to positive consequences</li> <li>Lack access to school equipment and resources</li> <li>Poor student performance, low literacy and numeracy skills</li> <li>Find it difficult to participate in/keep up with class</li> </ul>

\* Student-based factors are significantly affected across factors in the other areas listed.

## Appendix Two – Detailed description of School and Student-based change levers

Activity Area	Description
<b>1. School Context</b>	
1.1 Access to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve Indigenous student access to school through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>investment in the provision of additional schools, school facilities, teaching staff (including Indigenous education workers/liaison officers)/equipment to improve the availability of appropriately located and resourced educational institutions</li> <li>investment in public/private transport services to allow Indigenous students and their families to access existing schools and school support services</li> <li>provision of financial support to assist students to access education and learning support services</li> <li>provision of transition support services to assist students in remote communities to manage the transition to school outside of their community</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.2 School/ learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve school environment and culture to make school a more accessible and welcoming place for Indigenous students and their families through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incorporation of cultural references in school spaces, class exercises and educational materials</li> <li>investment in the training and employment of Indigenous teaching, support and administration staff</li> <li>encouragement of Indigenous community participation in the school</li> <li>recognition of cultural events and participation in cultural activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>Develop school-based management, operational and disciplinary systems, protocols and tools to encourage appropriate staff and student behaviour</li> <li>Showcase high-impact schools and curriculum models</li> </ul>
1.3 Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve school curriculum through the development and delivery of a culturally appropriate curriculum that is suited to the needs of Indigenous students including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESL-based programs and intensive literacy and numeracy-based skill development programs to address existing language and core skill gaps</li> <li>behaviour management and personal development programs to address social competency and emotional development needs</li> <li>cultural and language studies</li> <li>school engagement programs to introduce students to the learning environment and encourage school attendance and participation</li> <li>vocational development programs aimed at exposing students to alternative vocational and life options</li> <li>vocational and academic education streams</li> </ul> </li> <li>Develop school-based curriculum-planning processes, protocols and tools to support annual school-based curriculum planning to take into account Indigenous (high-need) student learning requirements</li> <li>Promote connection between school and post-school education and employment options that align with student goals and aspirations</li> </ul>

Activity Area	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Showcase high-impact schools and curriculum models</li> <li>– Showcase tertiary education providers that provide quality pre- and in-service training for Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers</li> </ul>
1.4 A. Teacher training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Invest in the training and development of Indigenous teachers, education workers and liaison officers</li> <li>– Invest in targeted pre- and in-service training for specialist teaching staff to support the delivery of Indigenous education including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ESL and bilingual teaching training</li> <li>– intensive literacy and numeracy</li> <li>– cultural awareness training</li> <li>– intensive support, relationship management and counselling-based skills training</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Improve understanding of the importance of establishing a supportive teacher–student relationship</li> <li>– Teach teaching staff how to align teaching approaches with Indigenous student learning styles/preferences and to tailor teaching strategies to individual student needs</li> <li>– Establish professional mentoring or supervision programs to support the development of teacher skills to assist in the development and maintenance of effective student–teacher relationships</li> <li>– Invest in principal-based training to build understanding of approaches required to achieve effective learning outcomes for Indigenous (high-need) students and to support the implementation of school-based approaches</li> <li>– Showcase and reward highly effective school management and teaching staff</li> </ul>
1.4 B. Teaching approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Encourage and support schools and teaching staff to tailor teaching strategies to accommodate Indigenous student learning and development requirements</li> <li>– Provide pre- and in-service training and teaching tools to assist teaching staff to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– develop class plans that tailor teaching content and style to meet the needs of the specific student group</li> <li>– present the curriculum in a culturally appropriate way</li> <li>– build and maintain warm and supportive teacher-student relationships</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.5 Parental/family engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Improve school and teacher engagement with Indigenous parents and families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– encourage parental and family involvement in school activities</li> <li>– establish administration, teaching and reporting processes that take into account cross-cultural issues and encourage engagement between the school and teaching staff and Indigenous parents and families</li> <li>– encourage parental and family involvement in curriculum design and delivery</li> <li>– provide opportunities for parents and families to participate in adult education</li> <li>– provide workshops for parents on a range of topics including school curriculum, how to help their children with school, literacy and numeracy and vocational development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>2. Student Context</b>	
2.1 Basic material and personal support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Invest in school and non-school-based programs that address students' basic support needs to improve their capacity to attend and participate effectively in school including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– physical and mental health</li> <li>– material aid</li> <li>– home/family-based support</li> <li>– financial support</li> <li>– computer and internet access for home use</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.2 School engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Use early childhood education as a bridge to encourage parental, family and student engagement in formal school-based education</li> <li>– Invest in school and non-school-based activities that encourage attendance and attachment to learning and school</li> </ul>
2.3 Intensive learning support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Investment in intensive student learning support programs including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– intensive language, literacy and numeracy teaching</li> <li>– ESL-based teaching</li> <li>– one-on-one remedial and extension-based learning support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2.4 Vocational development and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Invest in vocational development programs to increase awareness of, and interest in, vocational/career options</li> <li>– Assist students in identifying career preferences and developing and implementing career development plans through supported career guidance and development programs</li> <li>– Provide intensive transition support to assist students to transition from school into further education, vocational training and employment</li> <li>– Invest in career pathway programs that attract Indigenous students to tertiary education</li> <li>– Invest in the training and development of Indigenous careers guidance counsellors</li> </ul>

