NATSIPA Submission to

The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System: Consultation Paper

NATSIPA has been incorporated since 2010 and represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principals, middle leaders, classroom teachers, aspirants, and Aboriginal support staff from across Australia.

We represent 9,600 Aboriginal educators with strong advocacy for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in schools. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators represent 1.4 percent of the teaching workforce yet 6.4 percent of all students identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. There is considerable disparity between the two groups.

A Productivity Commisssion Report (2016, p.5.55) informs us that 77 percent of all schools have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and this cohort continues to increase. This highlights the importance of having a culturally responsive workforce and representation of Aboriginal and Torres SI teachers and principals as positive role models in our schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and all students.

Background to recommendations

Australia could be on the cusp[1] of a new relationship with the First Nations peoples with the Voice referendum pending and the exploration of paths to treaty under way in several states. Along with this there needs to be an authentic approach to enacting change in the social and economic aftermath of colonisation that has resulted in First Nations peoples being unable to fully access citizens' rights - the rights related to living conditions and the provision of services that all Australians are entitled to as citizens of this country (O'Donoghue 1997).

The consultation process of the *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System: Consultation Paper* provides an opportunity for those framing a national policy related to school reform to be informed by the voices of First nations people with expertise in education and a clear vison of what changes are needed. It is also a time for listening to the needs and aspirations of First Nations communities, families and students. First Nations people with expertise in education are not only those holding western qualifications for as Morrison et al (p.1)point out f*or at least 65,000 years (Clarkson et al. 2017) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples successfully educated their youth through 'ancestrally perfected ways of learning'(Yunkaporta 2010, p. 48) in order to ensure that each generation was equipped with the knowledges, beliefs and practices that enabled them to prevail across diverse and dynamic ecosystems (Price 2012b; Rigney 2002).*

These are unquestionably areas where change is desperately needed. However, there are recurrent themes which have significant bearing on more than one of the identified areas. In the same way that there is intersectionality in factors leading to disadvantage[2] there is

---

[1] *We are on the cusp of building a true foundation for our rich and diverse nation, upholding unity, and demonstrating respect for the First Peoples of this country while honouring our Western traditions. These aims are entirely compatible. Australia's First Peoples are holding a firelight stick on the hill, beckoning us all to build a reconciled, healed and proud nation, where their unique position is recognised and respected.* https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2023/july/patrick-dodson/firelight-stick-hill?fbclid=IwAR1jW3j2oGi4KkLS9O3vAbd_G37NdGtOT3rQMv7marbL0ki4cca9U4rdGHg#mtr

[2] The drivers of this divergence from the wider student group are complex and can occur due to a combination of different factors. Analysis conducted in this report shows that much of the academic disadvantage associated with being an Indigenous, low SES or rurally located student is due to the compounding effect of holding multiple other characteristics associated with educational disadvantage. In addition, the schools these students attend typically have a set of contextual characteristics linked to lower achievement (for instance, a large proportion of students who are from low SES backgrounds).
The impact of these compounding characteristics can be seen when examining student outcomes among different subgroups shows that there are large gaps in PISA science achievement between key subgroups and the national average. However, these gaps are much smaller when comparing the national average to those who are only a member of one key subgroup (e.g., Indigenous students who are not low SES, regional or remote). As overlap in these groups are significant, the impact of belonging to a particular student background should not be considered in isolation.
(Deloitte Access Economics (2019). *Unpacking drivers of learning outcomes of students from different backgrounds,* Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education. P.vii.)

intersectionality across the focus areas in relation to what contributes to the need for reform. Separating the underlying reasons for the disparity in student outcomes from improving student mental health and well-being and from what is needed to attract and retain quality teachers – in general and First Nations teachers specifically – redacts from the pre-eminent role of racism and lack of Cultural Safety in each area. It is also arguable that if the numbering is, even unintentionally, an indicator of importance of each area that student mental health and wellbeing should precede lifting student outcomes and that given the major role of the teacher in these two areas the question of attracting and retaining quality teachers should be number one.

In this submission two key recurring themes are presented as factors which impact on the daily lives of First Nations people and considered in relation to the impact, they have on the daily experience of First Nations children inside the gates of schools.

Key aspects of school culture that influence student wellbeing.

Racism

'Fair go' is one of the most pervasive and enduring expressions in Australian cultural and political discourse. (Howard, 2023, p.210)

Moreton-Robinson (2015), (cited in Howard) argues 'the fair go expression has been used to promote a myth of equal opportunity that serves to hide the structural inequalities experienced by people of colour in Australia'.

Despite the. attachment to the concept of the 'fair go' Australia remains under the influence of entrenched racism that is underpinned by notions of race and hierarchy of race. A notion that humankind consists of distinct and identifiable groups that are defined as "races" 'is a core ideology on which racism draws' (Dunn 2003:7). Dunn (2003) conducted a survey to establish the extent of racism in Australia and tested the underpinning constructs. He found that 77.6% of respondents agreed with the concept of distinct races (Dunn 2003:8). The belief in the distinctiveness of racial groups allows for a perception that there is a hierarchy of races.

Ideas of racial superiority arrived with the first British colonists in Australia. Aboriginal people were seen by the colonists as primitive, and writings from early colonial history made this evident. These ideas continued and are illustrated by comments made in parliament by Senator Ross Lightfoot of West Australia. Shortly after his election to the Senate, Lightfoot created an uproar in the media when he told parliament that Aborigines were 'the bottom colour of the civilisation spectrum' (Dixon 1997:28). The positioning of the original inhabitants of Australia at the bottom tier of society can be seen as an outcome almost predicated by the scientific racism and sense of cultural superiority which underpinned colonialism.

In summarising its national consultation HREOC (2001b:4) stated that participants saw contemporary racism as a legacy of early colonialism which was inherently racist and laid the foundations for 'systemic [or institutional] racism in Australia' (HREOC 2001b:4). Institutional racism has been

described by Scheurich & Young (1997:3) as the situation where the standard method of operation of an organization or institution privileges members of the dominant race and disadvantages minority group members. This institutional discrimination is supported by laws which apply specifically to members of a particular minority group. Systemic or institutional racism can be seen to be the result of the 'mono-cultural paradigm' (HREOC 2001b:4) within which the colonisers established social and political structures.

Racism can also be more subtle and difficult to identify. Underlying 'beliefs or values [can become] built into the operations of social institutions in such a way as to discriminate against, control and oppress various minority groups' (Henry, Houston & Mooney 2004:517).

In Dunn's (2003:4) survey approximately 10% of the sample openly stated that Aboriginal Australians did not fit into the mainstream Australian society. In discussion of which groups are out-groups, Dunn (2003:4) noted that 'anti- Indigenous sentiments appear to have relentless longevities in Australia'. Out-groups, of which First Nations peoples have always been one, are partially maintained in that position through structural violence.

Winter & Leighton (1999) describe structural violence as the disadvantage which results from social structures – political, legal, economic and cultural – which favour the dominant group. Within this context structural violence can be seen to result in 'unequal access to resources, to political power, to education, to health care, or to legal standing' (Winter & Leighton 1999:1). Other writers (Webb 1999; Pilisuk & Tennant 1997) take a similar view and discuss structural violence in terms of institutions within society which deny people equal access to society's resources and which results in poor housing, inadequate education and health care, unemployment and poverty.

It could be argued that structural violence in the form of denial of appropriate education is a particularly effective way of preventing First Nations people from developing the tools to function in mainstream society. Inadequate education also limits people's ability to call attention to the exploitation and repression which have been an integral part of Australian Aboriginal history since 1788.

Lack of Cultural Safety

It is generally acknowledged that the term cultural safety originated in New Zealand in the 1980s. The concept was first proposed by Māori midwifery students in response to feeling unsafe within the predominantly Anglo (Pakeha) educational setting they were trained in. It was then further developed to provide an explanation for the poor uptake of health services by Māori in general. [3]

Cultural Safety is concerned with power and resources, including information, its distribution in societies and outcomes of information management (Ramsden 2002:1). Ramsden (2002:3) goes on to state that 'history shows that through a process of colonisation Māori have been victims of oppression and racism and today their poor health figures represent the outcomes of 160 years of monocultural domination'.

---

[3] Australian Human Rights Commission *Cultural Safety Background Paper, January,2018. P.3)*

Cultural Safety is involved with the transfer of power to First Nations people who are the recipients of services provided by the mainstream (Ramsden 2002:2). Australia's history and the current status of First Nations Australians in relation to health, education and other socio-economic indices are similar to those of Māori in New Zealand.

An understanding of the impact of socio-political processes of marginalisation and disempowerment can lead to more socially just provision of citizens' rights within a culturally safe framework – a framework where First Nations Australians have effective input into designing and delivering the services which they access.

Cultural safety is a process that involves service providers in critical reflection of the historical and socio-political factors which impact on the life chances of both them and their clients. Positions of power and powerlessness result from these factors. Recognition of this promotes respect for clients and avoids perceptions of them through the looking glass of deficit theories. This facilitates clients' input into defining what is safe for them.

• A *Better and Fairer Education System* needs to proactively address racism in all its forms – institutional/systemic, individual, overt and covert, intentional and incidental and the small microaggressions faced by First Nations peoples on a daily basis.

How does this impact First Nations students and teachers in Australian Schools?

There are no words to describe how racism feels. Everyone deals with it differently. Some people lash out verbally, others withdraw into themselves. Some people can talk openly about how it feels, others hide it deep within… How many of our children are trying to learn in racist classrooms? How does a child reach their full potential and exercise their rights as citizens of this country when they are given messages every day that they are worthless human beings? What if it was your son or daughter? What would you do?
Mark Williams, 1999[4]

In 2000 the *Racism NoWay* project was launched with the following statement from the then Governor General:

'Racism. No way!' is about change. It asks us to reflect on our attitudes, to overcome our own prejudices and to challenge discrimination and racism. By linking students and schools across Australia, the Racism. No way! project has the potential to stimulate a nation-wide, and indeed global, challenge to racism led by Australia's youth.[5]

Despite the clear calls from many individuals presenting their personal perspectives/experiences of racism and the calls from national leaders for change, our children in schools are still experiencing everyday racism just as generations of their ancestors have. First Nations teachers are also impacted by the racist culture of schools.

Recent reporting on the Senate inquiry into 'Missing and murdered First Nations women and children' the Guardian[6] presents a summary of evidence given by an NSW police superintendent in which *the suggestion of wide-spread racism was rejected by Nicholson, but he acknowledged its prevalence in society.* This denialism occurs across many sectors and institutions of society and educations is not immune.

Reflection on racism in the culture of schools, recognition that it exists and respect for the people who are targets of the racism experiencing a lack of Cultural Safety in their everyday experiences is foundational to pursuing the pathway to a *Better and Fairer Education System*. People may understand the abstract concept of racism, accept the historical manifestations and even accept that it continues in the contemporary context but have a 'not in my backyard' mentality ('yes it happens out there, but not in my context). Sanderson and Allard (2003, p.32) found that teachers did not see the school as a place of inequitable power relationships and racism but blamed any problems in school on the home life of students. A Monash study reported in 2021 found that 'teachers didn't agree nor believe that racism occurred in their schools and believed "children don't see race", subsequently silencing the issue'.[7]

---

[4] Williams, M. 1999, *Racism: A Personal Perspective*, unpublished paper, Aboriginal Education Unit, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, Adelaide.
[5] https://racismnoway.com.au/site-info/about/
[6] https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jul/28/nsw-police-reject-suggestion-racism-is-rife-in-force-and-say-lessons-learned-after-bowraville-murders
[7] https://www.monash.edu/news/articles/kids-arent-racist,-are-they-code-of-silence-at-schools-stunts-long-term-racial-literacy

A 2021 ABC report[8] presented graphic examples of racism experienced by students:

- *words like "n*****" and "gin" are being directed at Aboriginal children by their peers.*

- *students might be openly mocked for speaking their language, teased about NAIDOC Week, called racist names or all of the above.*

- *Both said being barked at by a group of non-Indigenous boys had been one of the worst experiences they had endured.*

- *In one message, a parent seen as sympathetic to Indigenous students was labelled a "wanna be n****".*

The girls interviewed for this story relate being told to 'get over it', 'it was just a joke'. Their experiences are not isolated. Morrison et al (p.7) cite a Victorian survey of 755 Aboriginal Victorians by Ferdinand, Paradies & Kelaher in 2013 that found '97% had experienced at least one incident of racism in the preceding year, including 81.9% who were treated as less intelligent or inferior to other Australians, and 50.9% who experienced racism in an educational setting (such as school or university)'.

Racial microaggressions is an under recognised form of racism. The term is attributed to an African-America psychiatrist, Dr Chester Pierce who posited that 'one must not look for the gross and obvious', but rather 'the subtle, cumulative mini-assault is the substance of today's racism' (Pierce, 1974, p. 516). They can be described as 'brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults to target person or group' (Sue, et al., 2007, p. 273). A simple statement – 'you are so good at English for a First Nations student' – can have underlying negative connotations that act like water dripping on a rock. What was the underlying message from a university lecturer to a young palawa teaching student when he informed her it was a wonder she was there – 'good heavens: palawa, a girl, working class background and small-town parochial school! How did you beat those odds?'

Moodie et al (2018) present the results of a review of research into the impact of racism on school experience of First Nations students. One insidious impact they discuss is that of 'internalised racism' where repeated exposure to negative stereotypes, low expectations resulting from deficit thinking of teachers and marginalisation lead to students 'accepting(ing) or be(ing) complicit with the identities created by white Australia' (Sarra,2005, p.49). This in turn leads to 'disengagement, emotional distress and school withdrawal' (Moodie et al 2018, p.289).

---

[8] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-22/broome-high-school-indigenous-students-speak-out-over-racism/13252688

Deficit perceptions of First Nations students are often already formed during teacher training (Dandy et al 2015 cited in Moodie et al 2018, p.290). In fact, a 10-year study by ANU researchers found that 'three in four people have an implicit negative bias against Indigenous Australians'.[9]

This supports the need for reform of initial teacher education to develop culturally competent, anti-racist teachers. It also points clearly to the need for ongoing professional development for educators. The university learning should be viewed as the beginning of a lifelong learning curve because what can be taught in initial teacher education is an introduction to developing complex understandings and because new research emerges and changes these understandings.

• A schooling experience is dependent on the attitudes of teachers and school leaders and the willingness of these educators to reflect on themselves and their own practices and, in turn, on their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and wider members of their educational communities (AITSL, 2020, p.13)'.

---

[9] https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-09/three-in-four-negative-bias-against-indigenous-australians-study/12335184

Lifting student outcomes

There is a very narrow focus on NAPLAN results as the key assessment of students and concurrent focus on comparing First Nations students with the perceived mainstream norm. Media reports highlight the negative results with sensational headlines. A sample of these from the channel 9 news website include: *NAPLAN results show Year 9 boys' literacy levels at record low, NAPLAN results show students struggling, 2018 NAPLAN tests: Writing results hit record lows.*[10]

An increasing number of writers are questioning the use of NAPLAN. Lingard (2009, p.13) presents a brief discussion where he describes it as 'high stakes testing 'with potentially negative effects on pedagogies and curricula'. Mayes and Howell (2018) present an account of what they name as *the (hidden) injuries of NAPLAN* where they point to teacher frustration at the impact on their teaching in the early part of the years in which the test is administered and of its inroads into the time needed for inclusive practice. They also cite work that show '*accounts from students suggest boredom, anger or anxiety relating to 'not having enough time to finish, not being able to figure out the answers, and not passing the test' (Triplett and Barksdale2005, 244; Cranley and Hine 2016). Indeed, there may well be intertwined positive and negative emotions for many students in the situation of the test itself and its aftereffects (Howell 2016)* (Mayes and Howell, 2018 p.1110).

Research published by the Whitlam Institute in 2012 reported on a survey of 8,300 teachers who *reported unintended NAPLAN consequences that included:*

- *narrowing of teaching strategies and of the curriculum*
- *negative impacts on student health and wellbeing*
- *negative impacts on staff morale, and*
- *negative impacts on school reputation and capacity to attract and retain students and staff.*

Additional to these impacts of NAPLAN across the board there are additional issues for First Nations students. On Q&A Oct 8, 2018, *Cindy Berwick, the President of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultation Group, said NAPLAN was "unfair" to indigenous students because of its "cultural lens". "I don't think there's enough support put in place to actually support aboriginal kids in achieving literacy and numeracy benchmarks," she said.*[11]

Denise Angelo (2013, p.54)) states that *whilst it is claimed that NAPLAN is a test of literacy and numeracy, there is <u>a profound and problematic silence</u> about the fact that it is clearly also a test of English language proficiency (in the written mode).* She points out that First Nations students' results are disaggregated from the whole leading to interventions – but interventions focussed on literacy and numeracy with no regard for the EAL/D context of First Nations students.

In a 2022 report for the Productivity Commission the Australian council of TESOL[12] Associations present that an estimated of 26,600 First Nations students speak a language other than Standard

---

[10] https://www.9news.com.au/naplan

[11] https://www.9news.com.au/national/q-and-a-teacher-gabbie-stroud-demoralised-by-naplan-education/8c27b228-31e6-42f5-9938-5b60141b13ad

[12] https://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/341991/sub037-school-agreement-attachment.pdf

Australian English as their first language and that there are many first languages spoken by these students. They present an array of systemic practices that have contributed to the failure to Close the Gap[13]. They identify the need for a co-ordinated state and federal approach and funding to address the varied language learning needs in different place-based contexts.

Angelo & Hudson (2020, p.5) state that 'there is an ongoing tendency for Indigenous EAL/D learners to remain on the periphery of current TESOL advocacy, research and practices in Australia'. Where is the First Nations EAL/D learner in this ACARA infographic?

[14]

---

[13] CTG has its critics. It relies *on detailed use of statistics to identify 'gaps and track progress. Whilst statistics are necessary to a reform process (Rowse, 2006) over emphasizing them effectively constructs: as the problem, the group whose details are to be measured; the desired change as change in that group; and, by implication, failure to achieve outcomes, as that group's recalcitrance. This is what Rose (1999) following Foucault (1984, 1991) calls a disciplinary strategy. The group is named, separated out, mapped and targeted for intervention. Failure to self-govern according to dominant group norms attracts government and community censure. The structural dimensions, the policy inadequacies, the ethnocentricity and historical legacy are obscured by the direction of the policy gaze.* (Ingamells, 2010, p.9).
[14] https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/media/6232/eald-infographic_v6.jpg

Anecdotally a First Nations teacher completing a Masters degree in TESOL found it disconcerting that First Nations EAL/D status was missing from the entire course. Angelo & Hudson (2020, p.56) attribute the marginalisation of First Nations EAL/D learners partly to the lack of dedicated Commonwealth funding resourcing - with one exception of a program that ran from 1998-2009 and had a goal of learning reaching beginner level in Speaking which is not a level allowing 'access to mainstream pedagogy'.

Within the cohort of First Nations EAL/D learners is on group who have been especially marginalised. Contact languages developed to allow communication between the colonisers and the colonised. These languages are an adaptation of English on the part of the colonised and have come to be known as Aboriginal English(es) or Creole or Kriol. These dialects are usually belittled as sub-standard English, rather than recognised as a language of adaptation and cultural vitality. As Angelo & Hudson (2020, p.16) point out 'the English related vocabulary can obscure major linguistic differences between them and Standard Australian English' making it even more difficult for the generalist trained teacher to devise a suitable language learning program.

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-12-22/calls-for-teachers-to-understand-aboriginal-english/11780094

Recommendations for lifting student outcomes

a) Student mental health and wellbeing be considered as a priority that must be maximised in order to lift outcomes.

b) The impact of racism and lack of cultural safety be delegated as priorities for educators' professional development.

c) Development of antiracism strategies be a priority for school targets and for educators' professional development

d) Implementing principals of Cultural Safety be priority school target and professional development topic. The recently released MK Turner Report (2023, p.45) pointed to the need for improving 'Cultural Safety in mainstream education settings servicing First Nations children' and presented a case study of the work of the Stronger Smarter Institute[15] as evidence of success in this field.

e) Cultural capable/proficient standards for all teaching staff.

f) EAL/D support for First Nations students.

Recommendations for Improving student mental health and wellbeing.

a) Recognise the need for a unique screening tool that is culturally sensitive and de-identifies students.

b) Holistic service delivery model (Full- service school) that incorporates education and health services to meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

---

[15] See Appendix

Attracting and retaining quality teachers

The *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*[16] has made 17 recommendations that the expert panel considers will alleviate teacher shortages, attract more highly suitable people, provide better preparation and support. This report is comprehensive in relation to mainstream teachers, also applies to First Nations teachers but there are some specifics related to attracting and retaining First Nations teachers.

The Education Council (2019, p.5) were clear on the importance of First Nations educators who bring 'cultural knowledge and experience … to work in partnership with local communities'. This includes First Nations Education Support Workers (these workers have different titles in different jurisdictions).

One of the problems faced by rural and remote schools and schools with high percentages of First Nations students is the transience of the teaching work force. As Michaelson (2006, p. 60). reported *there is a strong relationship between the Indigeneity of a school and its rating of undesirability Negative attitudes toward Indigenous Australians by the majority of white Australians (Pedersen, Beven, Walker, & Griffiths, 2004) will continue to promote negative attitudes toward teaching prospects in remote Indigenous communities.* This is illustrated by the increase in transfer ratings for schools with higher percentages of First Nations students – even in urban and regional areas. Anecdotally teachers seek a remote posting to build the transfer points needed to move to a specific desired location.

The continuity for students in these schools is provided by local Indigenous Teachers Assistants. This is clearly recognised by AITSL in a 2021 spotlight[17] who additionally point to the place-based knowledge that ITAs bring to the school. Anecdotally one teaching assistant in Central Australia commented that she had 'trained' 9 principals during her time working at her local school. However, as Warren, Baturo & Cooper (2010, p.194) describe it is difficult for the relationship between ITAs and teachers to be equitable with the differences in remuneration that do not leave space for ITAs to have much input into planning and preparation. To some extend participants in this study 'felt restricted by funding limitations that would not pay assistants for time before and after school to meet with teachers' (Warren, Baturo & Cooper, 2010, p.202). This study also found that status and authority of ITAs was increased with professional development and communication (Warren, Baturo & Cooper, 2010, p.206).

Some jurisdictions have adopted approaches to support community people who have been working in education support roles to become accredited teachers with the status and appropriate remuneration. Queensland has the RATEP program, in the Northern Territory and Charles Darwin University developed the *Growing our Own* program, Northern Territory has the RATE program.

---

[16] https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review

[17] https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/the-impact-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-educators

Evaluation of a More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) funded program in Tasmania found that 'when AEWs feel valued in their roles, they are more likely to consider enrolling in teaching' (Anderson, Gower & O'Dowd, 2015, p.41). They also found that the availability of multi-modal delivery was preferred, and that financial assistance would increase the chances of people enrolling in and completing degrees(ibid). They also recommended clear RPL for AEWs wishing to enrol in study and paid study time (p.44).

- Teachers can and usually do have positive effects, but they must have exceptional effects.
- We need to direct attention at higher quality teaching, and higher expectations that students can meet appropriate challenges.
Hattie, 2003, p.3

<u>Recommendations for Teacher attraction and retention</u>

    a) Recognition of community educators experience for renumeration and RPL for pursuing teaching qualifications.
        1. Development of a relevant scale for recognition of experience.
b) Support for programs for First Nations Education Support workers to pursue teaching credentials.
c) In a range of locations Teacher training models for First Nations support staff to be delivered On- Country with provisions of teacher housing and appropriate remuneration for practicums and study leave.

Data collection

In general, the data collected about First Nations Australians is disaggregated from broad datasets by and identity question creating a picture of First Nations people as a problem. This then informs how policy makers view us (Walter, 2018). It is data that focuses on 'Difference, Disparity, Disadvantage, Dysfunction and Deprivation' (Walter, 2018, p.258). It is data that is aggregated – ignoring cultural and geographic diversity; it is decontextualized – ignoring the context in which the subjects of the data live (Walter, 2018, p.258). This description clearly is reflected in the data collected by NAPLAN.

A further concern with NAPLAN data is the high level of non-participation of First Nations students. As Aero (2023, p.11 – 12)) states this leads to:

- *policy and evaluation decisions being made based on non-representative data,*
- *varying rates of school participation mean school results may not be comparable between schools and over time, raising doubts about the validity of inferences made in relation to educational performance using reported school results.*
- *increasing non-participation results in data not being a valid source of information to support students, particularly those who need the most support in literacy and numeracy.*

Schools and teachers need different data – data that informs the individual learning needs of every student. Recognising the professional expertise of teachers allows the recognition that classroom based formative and summative assessment by the teacher provides this. It provides the evidence needed for planning the future learning experiences of each student, it provides evidence of the success (or otherwise) of approaches being trialled - at classroom and whole school levels. It provides longitudinal data.

When authentic community engagement occurs and community led innovations in curriculum, pedagogy, professional development or any other field are incorporated then First Nations people should set the 'who, what, when where and why for all data projects' (Rodriguez-Lonebear, 2016, p.267). The Australian Educators Union (2010, p.7) also raised the need for 'information about the total income and resources of a school to allow for the meaningful analysis of the relationship between resources and outcomes' in any school level data reporting'.

Recommendations for data collection

a) *Recognise the centrality of informed teacher judgement and quality of pedagogies to achieving better learning outcomes for all students (*Lingard, 2009, p.14). Foundational to this recognition that formative and summative assessment by teachers is assessment for and as learning and has the capacity to be adjusted to student context. The most important measurement is that of individual student gain not comparison of cohorts and league tables of schools. As Angelo (p.70) recommends there is a need to look to the international research that recommends 'multiple performance measures' which 'is not a good basis for identifying and promoting differentiated achievement and encourages narrowing of the curriculum and "re-allocation" of time to test practice rather than teaching'.

b) Data that is useful and purposeful.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendations for lifting student outcomes

a) Student mental health and wellbeing be considered as a priority that must be maximised in order to lift outcomes.
b) The impact of racism and lack of cultural safety be delegated as priorities for educators' professional development.
c) Development of antiracism strategies be a priority for school targets and for educators' professional development
a) Implementing principals of Cultural Safety be priority school target and professional development topic. The recently released MK Turner Report (2023, p.45) pointed to the need for improving 'Cultural Safety in mainstream education settings servicing First Nations children' and presented a case study of the work of the Stronger Smarter Institute as evidence of success in this field.
b) Cultural capable/proficient standards for all teaching staff.
c) EAL/D support for First Nations students.
d) Establishment of a First Nations Education Authority to lead, coordinate, design and deliver all areas of schooling for First Nations children and for all children to be taught about First Nations Peoples.

Recommendations for Improving student mental health and wellbeing.

a) Recognise the need for a unique screening tool that is culturally sensitive and de-identifies students.
b) Holistic service delivery model (Full- service school) that incorporates education and health services to meet the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Recommendations for Teacher attraction and retention**

a) Recognition of community educators experience for renumeration and RPL for pursuing teaching qualifications.
   1. Development of a relevant scale for recognition of experience.
b) Support for programs for First Nations Education Support workers to pursue teaching credentials.
c) In a range of locations Teacher training models for First Nations support staff to be delivered On- Country with provisions of teacher housing and appropriate remuneration for practicums and study leave.

Recommendations for data collection

a) *Recognise the centrality of informed teacher judgement and quality of pedagogies to achieving better learning outcomes for all students (*Lingard, 2009, p.14). Foundational to this recognition that formative and summative assessment by teachers is assessment for and as learning and has the capacity to be adjusted to student context. The most important measurement is that of individual student gain not comparison of cohorts and league tables of schools. As Angelo (p.70) recommends there is a need to look to the international research that recommends 'multiple performance measures' which 'is not a good basis for identifying and promoting differentiated achievement and encourages narrowing of the curriculum and "re-allocation" of time to test practice rather than teaching'.
b) Data that is useful and purposeful.

Appendix – The Stronger Smarter Approach
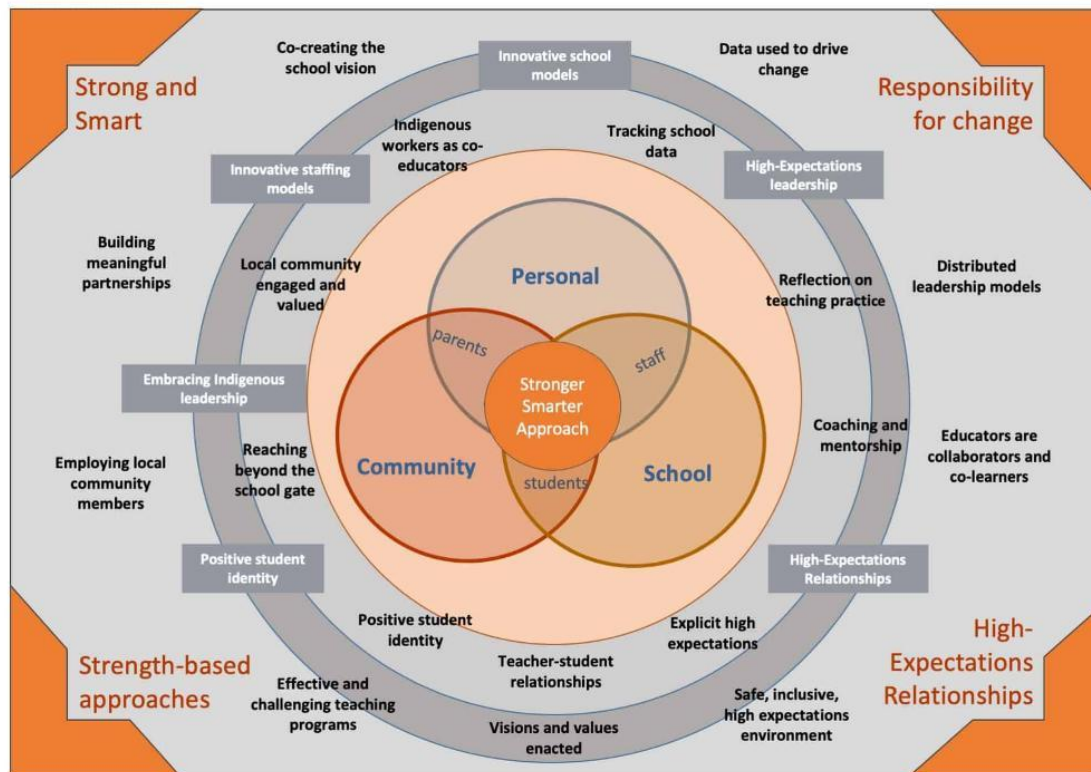
Since 2007, the Stronger Smarter Institute has been working with educators across remote, regional and metropolitan regions of Australia for over a decade to transform education for First Nations students in all classrooms. The Stronger Smarter Approach is unique in the way it ensures a space of equal power-relating where community members, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education leaders, principals and teachers sit together in the Circle to create transformative change in Indigenous educational outcomes. The Stronger Smarter Approach focuses on genuine collaboration with communities and turns thinking towards a different and dynamic vision of community empowerment. In a community empowerment model, voices of community are privileged in all aspects of school and organisation planning, starting with decisions about what they see as quality outcomes for their children and families. The model recognises that Indigenous community members and Indigenous staff are articulate with powerful voices, and are seeking to engage in substantive, informed dialogue about educational issues, organisational practices and operations, and teaching and learning. Community engagement must be grounded in strong local connections and as an organisation-wide intervention where staff members learn more about local people and cultures, involving deep listening to understand different perspectives, experiences, beliefs and aspirations. Investing in the community rather than the school or organisation is a cornerstone for sustainability as staff transfer in and out; the more remote the location, the higher the turnover.'. The long-standing powerlessness First Nations communities have felt in the education space and other service delivery as a result of colonial policy and practice can be ameliorated and lead to lifting student outcomes.

References

AITSL. 2020*. Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce: Discussion paper.*

Andersen, C., Gower, L. & O'Dowd M. 2015, *Aboriginal Education workers in* Tasmania *Becoming Teachers*, A report prepared for the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative by the University of Tasmania

Angelo, D. 2013. 'NAPLAN implementation: Implications for classroom learning and teaching, with recommendations for improvement'*. TESOL in Context,* Volume 23, No.1 & 2. Pp. 53-73.

Angelo, D. & Hudson, C. 2020. 'From the periphery to the centre: Securing the place at the heart of the TESOL field for First Nations learners of English as an Additional Language/Dialect'*. TESOL in Context*, Volume 29, No.1, pp. 5-35.

Australian Human Rights Commission *Cultural Safety Background Paper,* January,2018.

Deloitte Access Economics (2019). *Unpacking drivers of learning outcomes of students from different backgrounds,* Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education.

Dixon, N. 1997, 'The Far Right in the Coalition', *Green Left Weekly,* vol. 445, p. 28.

Dunn, K. 2003, 'Racism in Australia: findings of a survey on racist attitudes and experiences of racism', Paper presented to conference, *The Challenges of Immigration and Integration in the European Union and Australia,* 18-20 February 2003, University of Sydney.

Education Council 2019, Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. <http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Alice%20Springs%20(Mparntwe)%20Education%20Declaration.pdf>.

Ingamells, A. 2010. Closing the Gap: some unsettling assumptions. A remote region case study.' *Journal of Social Inclusion* 1(1). Pp.7-22.

Hattie, J.A.C. (2003, October). Teachers make a difference: What is the research evidence? Paper presented at the Building Teacher Quality: What does the research tell us ACER Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved from http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2

Henry, B., Houston, S. & Mooney G. 2004, 'Institutional racism in Australian healthcare: a plea for decency', *MJA,* vol. 180, pp. 517-520.

'Howard, C. 2023. 'What did a "fair go" originally mean to Australians?'. *Australian Journal of Political Science*. Vol.58. No. 2. Pp. 210-229.

Lingard, B. 2009Testing Times: The need for new intelligent accountabilities for schooling. QTU Professional Magazine November 2009 – 13

Lu, L., Williams, L., Groves, O., Wan, W., & Lee, E. (2023) NAPLAN participation: Who is missing the tests and why it matters. Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO). https://www.edresearch.edu.au/resources/naplan-participation-who-missing-tests-and-why-it-matters

Mayes, E. & Howell, A. 2018 The (hidden) injuries of NAPLAN: two standardised test events and the making of 'at risk' student subjects, International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22:10, 1108-1123, DOI: 10.1080/13603116.2017.1415383

Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. 2015. The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Cited in

Meghan Stacey (2022) Deficit discourses and teachers' work: the case of an early career teacher in a remote Indigenous school, Critical Studies in Education, 63:1, 64-79, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2019.1650383

Michaelson, M. 2006. 'A measure of the strength of the relationship between the Indigeneity ad Desirability of Queensland State Schools.' *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education,* Vol 35. Pp. 54-60.

Moodie, N., Maxwell, J. & Rudolph, S. (2019). The impact of racism on the schooling experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: A systematic review. The Australian Educational Researcher. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-019-00312-8

O'Donoghue, L 1997, 'Past wrongs, future rights'. *Aboriginal Law Bulletin,* vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 18-21.

Pierce, C. (1974). Psychiatric problems of the Black minority. In S. Arieti (Ed.), American handbook of psychiatry (pp. 512-523) New York: Basic Books.

Ramsden, I. 2002, *Cultural Safety and Nursing Education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu,* Chapter 8 of a thesis submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing. http://culturalsafety.massey.ac.nz (accessed 11/01/2004)

Rodriguez-Lonebear, D. 2016. 'Building a data revolution in Indian country." In Kukutai, T. & Taylor, J. eds. 2016. *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an agenda*. ANU Press. Pp. 253- 271.

Pilisuk, M. & Tennant, J. 1997. 'The hidden structure of violence'. *ReVision,* vol. 20, no. 92, pp. 25-31.

Sanderson, V., & Allard, A. (2003). 'Research as dialogue' and cross-cultural consultations: Confronting relations of power. *Australian Educational Researcher, 30*(1), 19–39.

Sarra C. (2005). *Strong and smart: Reinforcing Aboriginal perceptions of being Aboriginal at Cherbourg State School.* Unpublished PhD thesis**.** Murdoch University, Perth.

Stronger Smarter Institute. (2017). *Implementing the Stronger Smarter Approach.* Brisbane: Stronger Smarter Institute Limited.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. American Psychologist, 62(4), 271-286.

Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2016.

Turner, M.K. & Children's Ground (2023) Apmerengentyele. *The M.K. Turner Report: A Plan for First Nations-led and designed Education Reform in Australia.* https://childrensground.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/The-MK-Turner-Report-Childrens-Ground.pdf

Walter, M. 2018.   'The voice of Indigenous data Beyond the markers of disadvantage'. *Griffith Review 60: First Things First.* Griffith University.

Warren. E., Baturo, A. & Cooper, T. 2010. *Power and Authority in School and Community: Interactions Between Non-Indigenous Teachers and Indigenous Teacher Assistants in Remote Australian Schools* pp. 193- 208. in Zajda, J &. Geo-JaJa, M. Editors *The Politics of Education Reforms* Springer.

Webb, K. 1999. 'Structural Violence and the Definition of Conflict', in Javier Perez De Cuellar & Young Seek Choue (eds), *World Encyclopaedia of Peace,* 2nd ed., Oceania Publications, Inc.®, New York.

Wilson, R., Piccoli, A., Hargreaves, A., Ng, P. T., & Sahlberg, P. (2021). *Putting Students First: Moving on from NAPLAN to a new educational assessment system (The Gonski Institute Policy Paper #2-2021)*. Sydney: UNSW Gonski Institute.

Winter, D. & Leighton, D. 1999, *Structural Violence Introduction. ww*w.psych.ubc.ca/~dleighton/svintro.html (accessed 23/11/2004).

Thank you

NATSIPA Executive