AHISA LTD
ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF AUSTRALIA

28 August 2017

Emeritus Professor John Halsey
Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education
Review Secretariat
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Emailed to: IRRRRESecretariat@education.gov.au

Dear Professor Halsey,

Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the federal government's Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education.

For the purposes of this submission, AHISA has chosen to use the location descriptions of the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) system, that is, 'Major City', 'Inner Regional', 'Outer Regional', 'Remote', and 'Very Remote'. This system has been adopted by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and is used to define the location of schools on My School profiles and in the reporting of NAPLAN results by geolocation. Use of the ASGC therefore allows for correlation of any AHISA data with Australia's National Education Evidence Base.

Central to our submission is a presentation of findings from two surveys of our members: one survey canvassed the views of those who lead schools located in areas classified as 'Inner Regional', 'Outer Regional', 'Remote', and 'Very Remote', with or without accommodation arrangements for students; the second survey was of members who lead 'Major City' schools which make education provision for students from regional or remote areas through boarding, hostel, home stay or other accommodation arrangements.

We also include a section on innovative educational provision for Indigenous students, drawing on examples provided in AHISA's two-part submission to the ongoing House of Representatives Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students.

Yours faithfully,

(Mrs) Karen Spiller

AHISA National Chair
Principal of St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School, Qld

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About AHISA

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

The membership of AHISA Ltd comprises Principals of 430 independent schools. Its members lead schools that collectively account for over 430,000 students, representing 11.5 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Australia's total Year 12 enrolments. One in every five Australian Year 12 students gains part of their education at an AHISA member's school.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 40,000 teaching staff and some 25,000 support staff.

Almost one-third of AHISA's members (30 per cent) lead schools with boarding facilities.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Almost 23 per cent of members lead schools with SES scores below 100 and 17 per cent lead schools with an SES score above 120. Most AHISA members (60 per cent) lead schools with SES scores in the middle range of SES scores, that is, 100-119.

AHISA believes that a high quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

1 | The 'opportunity gap'

In this submission AHISA uses location descriptions as defined by the Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) system: 'Major City', 'Inner Regional', 'Outer Regional', 'Remote', and 'Very Remote'. This system has been adopted by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to report NAPLAN results by geolocation and is used to define the location of schools on My School profiles. Use of the ASGC therefore allows for correlation of AHISA data with other findings based on ASGC classifications.

For ease of reference, 'regional and remote' is sometimes used as a collective term to denote the four non-'Major City' categories.

AHISA is aware that terminology and the understandings that inform it are important in discussing issues relating to location. For example, there is a view expressed in research literature that terms such as 'regional' and 'remote' risk 'constructing non-urban locations as inherently deficient and marginal'.[1] There is also a view, as expressed in the *Red Dirt Education* compilation report[2], that the term 'disadvantage' in relation to remoteness is 'a Western construct that has been developed to give a sense of privilege to the

values, knowledges and ways of being that are not rooted in the context of remote Australia' (page 7). Reid, White, Green, Lock, Cooper and Hastings[3] (drawing from the earlier work of Apple[4]), write that 'to focus only on disadvantage can breed a certain fatalism – the idea that "it is impossible to change schools unless the social and economic relations of wider society are transformed first"'.

Making explicit the assumptions that can inform definitions of terms and their use is also a live issue for AHISA members who lead schools in 'Remote' or 'Very Remote' locations. For example, one respondent to AHISA's member surveys commented that a lack of aspiration for tertiary education or family/cultural obligations could not be assumed as having a negative impact on the educational experience of students from very remote areas and that time taken by students to meet family and cultural obligations, for example, should be viewed and supported as valuable and positive.

In her article *From inequality to quality: Challenging the debate on Indigenous education*[5], Professor Elizabeth McKinley urges caution in use of the term 'achievement gap' and argues for use of the term 'opportunity gap' instead:

> Debates focusing on the achievement gap tend to place an emphasis on contextual factors, such as the role of poverty in educational inequality and aggregate achievement – an argument that spirals quickly into blaming students and families, or gives schools and teachers permission to find comfort in the status quo. The idea of the opportunity gap removes the focus from locating 'the problem' in the person and focuses on the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources – expert teachers, personalised attention, high-quality curriculum opportunities, good educational materials, and quality information sources – that support learning at school and home.

With particular regard to the education challenges of Indigenous populations, the OECD in its recent report, *Promising practices in supporting success for Indigenous students*[6], warns of the need to avoid deficit thinking, 'which infers that Indigenous cultures and students are lacking and assume that the task is to rectify their shortcomings and failings'. The OECD also points out, however, that 'focusing on important disparities and shortcomings when they occur should not be mistaken for deficit thinking':

> The important point is to avoid analyses that assume that the challenges reside primarily or exclusively with the Indigenous populations themselves, do not have implications for the non-Indigenous populations and do not recognise the diverse rights, strengths and positives of the Indigenous communities . . . In addressing the meaning of success, we would emphasise that it is not about privileging one world view at the expense of another, but rather of properly recognising Indigenous cultures, values and perspectives while laying the foundations for young Indigenous students to be able to participate actively in the wider society and economy and the global world (to walk in both worlds).

AHISA supports Professor McKinley's preference for use of the term 'opportunity gap' as a term that allows for recognition of the capacities and strengths of people and institutions that can be drawn on to bridge opportunity gaps. AHISA also agrees with the OECD that identifying disparities or differences is a necessary precursor to addressing 'opportunity gaps'.

AHISA's submission does include references to achievement gaps, not only because some of the available research presents data analysis using this terminology, but also because achievement gaps can be useful and important pointers to opportunity gaps. Similarly, any use of the term disadvantage in this submission should be understood in the context of indicating an opportunity gap.

In this submission, AHISA outlines challenges to the provision of educational opportunities for young Australians from or in regional and remote areas as identified by its members and how these challenges are being addressed in members' schools. We have deliberately adopted the term 'challenge' because we believe it helps capture the entrepreneurial spirit and moral purpose that inform innovative approaches to educational provision that are adopted, adapted or developed in AHISA members' schools.

Measuring the opportunity gap

Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) has created an Educational Disadvantage Index, derived from indicators relating to 'access, performance and outcomes', with data sourced from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), ACARA, NAPLAN, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census and the National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection. (Note that the Index is used to identify 'the extent of inequality in educational opportunities by locality'; that is, 'disadvantage' is equated with opportunity gaps.)

BCEC's report, *Educate Australia fair? Education inequality in Australia*[7], presents the results of application of the Index across Australia and therefore provides a useful overview of opportunity gaps in regional and remote areas. As BCEC draws on the same data as sources reported in the Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education (IRRRRE) Discussion Paper, it is not surprising that the BCEC report confirms a widening of the educational opportunity gap the further students live from major cities, with the most extreme opportunity gap experienced in 'Very Remote' areas:

- Of the 50 most educationally disadvantaged areas in Australia, most are located in very remote regions in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia
- Educational disadvantage increases the further children live from major cities, with a large jump in the prevalence of children experiencing one or more, or two or more, developmental vulnerabilities (as defined by the AEDC) in very remote areas
- Children living in very remote areas are three times as likely as those living in major cities to be developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains
- Children living in the most advantaged areas on average achieve more than double the score in NAPLAN tests in reading, writing and numeracy than children living in the most disadvantaged areas
- Government funding for school level education is weighted towards areas of greatest educational disadvantage, with schools in areas of greatest educational disadvantage receiving on average $24,100 per student in funding from public and private sources
- In terms of access to higher education, the equity ratio for Australia overall is around 0.65; the ratio drops to 0.38 for those from remote areas.

The BCEC report is important in that it identifies the high risk of compounding educational disadvantage in very remote areas (an issue addressed later in this submission in the section on Indigenous education). The report also highlights area-specific differences in educational opportunity gaps and suggests that these differences 'invite either different solutions, or, at least, a flexible suite of programs and initiatives that can be weighted differently depending on the local environment and needs base'.

AHISA supports this latter proposition for flexibility in programs and initiatives to address opportunity gaps. Policies that are targeted at school education must take into account that schools are more than a collection of classrooms or discrete groups of students: schools are unique communities which, while they

may share common challenges, will need to address these challenges in ways that are best suited to the school community if interventions are to be effective.

2 | AHISA member surveys

In preparation for this submission, AHISA invited members who lead schools in regional and remote areas and those who lead 'Major City' schools with residential arrangements for students from regional and remote areas to complete online surveys. The surveys aimed to identify challenges in educational provision and discover how schools were responding to those challenges.

Survey 1: Schools in regional and remote areas

Noted above is the BCEC finding that there are 'area-specific differences in educational opportunity gaps'. Responses to the AHISA survey suggest that differences in educational opportunity gaps may also be school-specific and dependent on a range of factors, as are responses to those gaps. For example, while staff recruitment is noted as a difficulty for many schools in regional and remote areas, for some the greatest difficulty is in the recruitment and retention of boarding house staff rather than teaching staff.

The nature of the challenge and the circumstances of the school determine available responses. For example, some schools seek to remedy the challenge of staff recruitment by recruiting staff from overseas under various visa arrangements, while one school in a 'Very Remote' area was undertaking training of and employing Aboriginal community members to meet staffing requirements to deliver sections of the curriculum.

TOP MENTIONED FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON SCHOOLS' EDUCATIONAL PROVISION			
INNER REGIONAL	**OUTER REGIONAL**	**REMOTE**	**VERY REMOTE**
Difficulties in teacher recruitment	Difficulties in teacher recruitment	Difficulties in teacher recruitment	Difficulties in teacher recruitment
Depressed local economic conditions	Depressed local economic conditions	Depressed local economic conditions	Costs or levels of resourcing (that may have an impact on subject offerings, access to subjects via distance education or other providers)
Costs or levels of resourcing (that may have an impact on subject offerings, access to subjects via distance education or other providers)	Costs or levels of resourcing (that may have an impact on subject offerings, access to subjects via distance education or other providers)	Limited or no access to ancillary services such as occupational therapy or speech therapy	Limited or no access to ancillary services such as occupational therapy or speech therapy
Limited or no access to government-subsidised student transport	Cost of staff	Limited or no access to mental health services	Limited or no access to mental health services
Limited capacity for fundraising	Limited capacity for fundraising	Limited capacity for fundraising	Insufficient broadband width (eg for video conferencing)
Difficulties accessing teaching relief staff	Difficulty accessing relevant PD for teaching or teaching support staff	Limited subject offerings	Intermittent or unreliable internet access

While limited or no access to ancillary services or mental health services was mentioned by at least some schools in all areas, as would be expected, it is clearly a greater issue the greater the distance schools are from service hubs.

Limited or no access to medical services, ancillary services or mental health services could also present as a staffing challenge, with a flow-on effect in providing for students. One respondent mentioned that a teacher visiting such a service might need to travel several hours to take up an appointment, entailing an overnight stay. With no relief staff available, this then had an impact on remaining staff who may have to cover their colleague's two-day absence.

TOP MENTIONED FACTORS HAVING HAD OR CONTINUING TO HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE/ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS			
INNER REGIONAL	**OUTER REGIONAL**	**REMOTE**	**VERY REMOTE**
Depressed local economic conditions	Depressed local economic conditions	Depressed local economic conditions	Health issues eg hearing disability
Limited further education or training opportunities in the local community	Lack of aspiration for tertiary education	Lack of aspiration for tertiary education	Lack of part-time employment opportunities for school-aged students
Lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their local community	Lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their local community	Limited opportunities for formalised early childhood learning	Lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their local community
Absenteeism	Limited cultural facilities in the local community	Health issues eg hearing disability	Limited opportunities for formalised early childhood learning
Dislocation from family	Dislocation from family	Absenteeism	Limited access to quality primary schooling opportunities
Student's home environment	Absenteeism	Language difficulties	Language difficulties

Of interest is that 'Lack of aspiration for tertiary education' appears to be viewed as a greater challenge for schools in 'Outer Regional' and 'Remote' areas in terms of having a negative impact on the educational experience or aspirations of students. While lack of aspiration for tertiary education or training need not be viewed as a 'deficit', it should be noted that remoteness has been identified as limiting further educational opportunities and therefore occupational opportunities for people in 'Remote' and 'Very Remote' areas.[8]

Transitions

All those responding to the survey who are Heads of schools in 'Inner Regional', 'Outer Regional' and 'Remote' locations mentioned 'Visiting university open days' as a strategy commonly used by their school to motivate students, support students in realising their aspirations or to support their transition to further education or training. For schools in 'Very Remote' locations, arranging student exchanges with city-based or overseas schools and arranging specialist VET placements were the most mentioned strategies.

Student exchanges arranged with city-based or overseas schools were also a commonly used strategy for 'Outer Regional' and 'Remote' schools. Schools in 'Inner Regional' locations were more likely to draw on a wider range of strategies, including allowing students time for attendance at elite athlete training or other elite academic or sports events, arranging specialist VET placements, operating a buddy scheme with alumni, bringing in guest speakers or mounting specialist programs run by the school's careers adviser. Another strategy mentioned was supporting students to acquire the necessary bridging skills to enable them to access tertiary options.

Although AHISA's survey samples are not representative in terms of overall educational provision in Australia, it is interesting to note that no Heads of schools in 'Remote' or 'Very Remote' locations reported their school as being a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). This may be indicative only of the size of the schools and not necessarily related to remoteness. While a small but still significant proportion of schools in 'Outer Regional' and 'Inner Regional' areas are RTOs, only schools in 'Inner Regional' areas reported as offering up to Certificate IV level.

While certified VET offerings in schools were not necessarily broad in terms of industry sector coverage, with some schools concentrating only on those offerings that offered support in transitioning to apprenticeships or work within the local community (such as Building and Construction, Automotive, Metals and Engineering, Primary Industries), schools used external RTOs to augment their offerings. Some schools used external RTOs for all VET provision.

Curriculum

In relation to curriculum delivery, Heads leading schools in regional or remote areas mentioned several strategies adopted to address challenges to meet the needs of their students, including (in order of number of mentions):

- Accessing online courses
- Using external vocational education and training providers, including industry providers
- Using video conferencing
- Participation in agricultural shows
- Offering subjects with a regional application, such as agricultural science, marine studies
- Linking curriculum with localised projects
- Offering co-curricular programs with a regional focus such as equestrian eventing, shooting, diving
- Establishing a school farm
- Transition programs during the first years of boarding to bridge literacy and numeracy gaps
- Partnering with other schools or across campuses to expand subject options
- Accessing government-provided distance education courses
- Offering an Indigenous language
- Creating links with regional universities.

One Head mentioned the school created its own courses to promote school engagement, such as short-term creative projects in visual art, craft or graphic design that would allow students to experience success in education and in a school environment. Another Head mentioned the school had established 'Academies of Excellence' for students in Years 7 to 10. The Academies are built on students' interests such as robotics, coding, drama, music, science and agriculture and involved a 10-week (term) project.

Individual learning needs

Survey respondents reported a range of strategies were adopted to meet students' individual learning needs, including:

- Personalised learning plans for students, which may include the student's own learning goals
- Accessing other providers, including distance education and online courses
- Ongoing evaluation of assessment data to determine interventions
- Small class sizes
- Tutoring or homework 'boot' camps or homework clubs – before school, during lunch or after school, offered by school staff, older students or undergraduate university students
- Accessing mentors from the community or alumni
- Literacy and numeracy specialists available to help all students
- Teachers offer after hours online tutoring for students who are interstate or overseas on elite athlete training programs
- A 'stage not age' approach to choosing electives and senior secondary subjects
- Teacher professional development on differentiated teaching and learning
- Provision of a Learning Support teacher, to assist classroom teachers to modify programs and develop individual learning plans
- An Aboriginal education worker to support each subject offered
- Extended library hours.

One Head mentioned the school was considering the introduction of day boarding to assist families whose children needed additional academic support, so that they could easily access after-school co-curricular activities, homework and tutoring support and after-school snacks and an evening meal.

Using ICT to enhance educational provision

While integration of ICT in classroom practice was reported as a challenge for some 'Remote' and 'Very Remote' schools, overall, schools in regional and remote areas rely on connection to the internet and digital technologies as a key means to overcome the 'tyranny of distance' and to expand their educational offerings and meet individual learning needs. This could be in the form of providing an opportunity for one or more students to access a senior secondary course via distance education, providing extension work for gifted and talented students through access to MOOCs, or offering students the opportunity to complete an online Certificate or Diploma course as a specialist elective.

One Head mentioned the importance of courses in digital media and graphic design among strategies to support student engagement with school.

Some Heads reported their school was accessing programs, platforms and learning management systems such as Google Classroom and SEQTA, noting that digital media also provided an important way to connect and communicate with the community, including through live streaming of school events. One Head reported the school was investigating virtual reality and artificial intelligence options to enhance educational offerings for students.

Online course delivery is also seen as an important means of overcoming time and cost challenges in delivering professional development for teachers.

Quality teaching

Heads mentioned a number of strategies supported a high quality teaching workforce in their schools, including (in order of number of mentions):

- Mentoring or coaching of staff, including development of a teacher-mentor role
- Providing access to online professional development courses
- Offering salary/conditions inducements
- Partnering with other schools to create collegial teacher professional exchanges, including short-term placements
- Exchanges
- Offering time release for postgraduate studies
- Recruiting staff from overseas
- Linking with initial teacher education providers.

With greater national promotion of and therefore more interest in teacher certification, offering professional development opportunities was mentioned not only in the context of supporting teaching quality but also as important in recruiting and retaining staff. One Head mentioned the school had created two leadership positions for experienced teachers – Director of Quality Teaching and Learning, and Head of Professional Development and Teacher Accreditation. One Head mentioned that the school allowed teaching staff to select professional development courses according to their greatest perceived need or interest, including courses in youth mental health and restorative justice or teachers might choose to complete VET courses in which students had also expressed interest.

Connecting with community

Almost all respondents mentioned that their school's facilities were accessible to the community in some way, either for use of facilities such as sports or performing arts facilities, for cross-cultural exchange or volunteer service, for course provision to the wider community or even to supply basic needs for food and shelter. One Head mentioned classes for teaching the local Indigenous language were open to the community, while another Head said the school's students taught Aboriginal cultural dance and didgeridoo to younger students in other schools. Another Head mentioned the school was

open for extended hours six days a week, 51 weeks of the year to provide for students and community youth in terms of food and shelter.

Of interest is that 40 per cent of respondents reported their school had purpose-built facilities to serve both community and school needs.

Most respondents also mentioned their school linked with the community through service learning projects to enhance community wellbeing or through linking teaching of the curriculum with community projects, or through participation in community festivals or programs.

Over a third of respondents reported the school invited Aboriginal elders to offer cultural programs or teach language, in a voluntary or paid capacity.

Entrepreneuralism

Survey responses indicate that local economic conditions and a lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their local area have an impact on students' aspirations. However, responses also indicate that schools in 'Inner Regional' and 'Outer Regional' locations are already adopting or preparing to adopt a greater focus on supporting entrepreneurial activity among students – a strategy raised in the IRRRRE Discussion Paper. While some Heads mentioned an existing focus on entrepreneurship in the secondary Business Studies curriculum, others gave examples of programs or ventures established or supported by their school which was either related to or separate from the Business Studies curriculum, including:

- Encouraging students to engage in social entrepreneurialism
- Making it a requirement for students studying the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) to establish ventures to raise money for attendance at a VCAL camp
- Making it a major assessment task for Year 11 Business Studies students to create a business proposition which they then present to a panel of business professionals from the local community (in the style of the TV program, *Shark Tank*)
- Using a Conservation and Land Management course as a platform for growing trees for the community and land care organisations
- Establishing a student run café to put into practice financial literacy skills
- Making and posting YouTube clips on learning a language other than English
- Helping young mothers develop a business in partnership with their Aboriginal elders in fabric design and clothing and fashion accessories.

Challenges for principals

Responses to the survey show that staff recruitment and retention is the greatest professional challenge for principals of regional and remote schools, followed by (in order of number of mentions):

- Inadequate funding
- Difficulty accessing resources
- Lack of resources

- Housing for staff.

Other issues mentioned include gaining community buy-in for academic programs, dealing with local community issues such as domestic violence and managing teacher professional development because of the high costs of travel and accommodation and the lack of relief teachers.

One school is considering applying for certification as a provider of certified professional development of teaching staff to overcome the time/cost challenges staff development represents. However, as with expanding the range of course options for students, online delivery is see as a viable option to ameliorate the difficulties of staff development.

The most commonly mentioned personal challenges for principals were (in order of number of mentions):

- Professional isolation
- Difficulty accessing professional development or further education opportunities
- A lack of work/educational opportunities for partner/children
- Distance from family
- Distance from health/medical services for self or family.

Survey 2: Schools in 'Major City' locations providing for students from regional and remote areas through residential programs

Students from regional and remote areas living away from home to attend school – whether that school is also located in a regional and remote area or is in a 'Major City' location – may access a variety of residential arrangements, including boarding, hostel accommodation, home stay arrangements, government-funded social housing options or private arrangements. The most common residential arrangement for students reported by Heads responding to either of AHISA's surveys was boarding at school.

Students living away from home to attend school face significant challenges.

TOP MENTIONED NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON STUDENTS' AWAY-FROM-HOME EXPERIENCE (IN ORDER OF NUMBER OF MENTIONS)	
MAJOR CITY BOARDING SCHOOLS	**REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS**
Academic achievement gap	Dislocation from family
Dislocation from family	Academic achievement gap
Cultural transitions (eg bush to city)	Limitations of home to boarding school transition processes
Lack of or limited cultural support	Cultural transitions (eg bush to town)
Lack of family support	Language differences

Heads noted a number of factors – past and present – that may contribute to educational opportunity gaps for students from regional and remote areas living away from home.

TOP MENTIONED PAST/PRESENT FACTORS HAVING A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE/ASPIRATIONS OF STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME (IN ORDER OF NUMBER OF MENTIONS)*	
MAJOR CITY BOARDING SCHOOLS	**REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS**
Limited access to quality primary schooling opportunities	Depressed local economic conditions
Depressed economic conditions in student's home community	Lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their local community
Limited opportunities for formalised early childhood learning	Limited further education or training opportunities in the local community
Lack of aspiration for tertiary education	Lack of aspiration for tertiary education
Lack of employment opportunities for school completers in their home community	Limited cultural facilities in the local community
Language difficulties	Dislocation from family
*Some respondents noted the difficulty of responding to this question as there could be significant disparities in the prior educational and life experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students living away from home	

Heads reported that their schools adopted a range of strategies to help overcome the challenges experienced by students living away from home.

STRATEGIES TO HELP STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME OVERCOME PERSONAL & EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES (IN ORDER OF NUMBER OF MENTIONS)	
MAJOR CITY BOARDING SCHOOLS	**REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS**
Targeted literacy and numeracy teaching/tutoring	Targeted literacy and numeracy teaching/tutoring
Visits by school staff to students' homes	Specific curricular or co-curricular offerings to appeal to boarding students
Buddy system with day students or city families	Buddy system with day students or school families
Facilities for students to Skype with parents	Visits by school staff to students' homes
Long-term relationships with Indigenous communities	Facilities for students to Skype with parents
Programs for cultural and language recognition and support	Long-term relationships with Indigenous communities
Accommodation for students' parents while visiting their child	Collection of students from their home communities at the beginning of each academic year or each term

Other strategies reported by Heads included:

- Collecting students from their home communities
- Transition programs involving students' previous teachers and schools
- An online transition program for Year 6 students entering boarding in Year 7 to support networking with other incoming boarding students and which also support academic preparation
- Cultural training for staff and student peers

- Employment of a school Boarding Liaison Officer
- Employment of a full-time Indigenous Program Coordinator
- Employment of Aboriginal education workers
- Instituting a strong Indigenous cultural program, including a dance program
- Visits to towns or communities from which students come rather than to students' homes
- Live streaming of school events so that they can be viewed by boarding students' parents
- Funding and engaging boarding students in a laptop program prior to their entering the school.

In terms of delivering *curriculum* to meet the needs of students from regional and remote areas, Heads of schools with residential students in 'Major City' locations reported most innovation occurred in the creation of transition programs aimed at bridging literacy and numeracy gaps experienced by students in their first years of boarding. Other strategies to meet the needs of boarding students include:

- Inviting Indigenous elders to offer cultural programs or teach language
- Using external vocational education and training providers
- Accessing online courses
- Offering cocurricular programs with a regional focus eg equestrian eventing, shooting, diving
- Linking curriculum to regional/remote area circumstances
- Participation in agricultural shows.

Heads of schools in 'Major City' locations also reported a range of strategies to support the *individual learning needs* of residential students from regional and remote areas, including:

- Individual learning plans
- Tutoring programs, including specialist subject mentors
- Pre-tutoring prior to students entering the school
- Intensive tutoring in Years 7 and 8 to help boarders bridge any achievement gap
- Tutoring/mentoring by alumni
- Appointing Aboriginal university students to work with Aboriginal boarders after school.

Recommendations to government

Survey respondents were invited to note any recommendations they would make to governments for programs or services that would make a tangible difference to the quality of education their schools could offer to students from regional and remote areas. All suggested recommendations are listed below. (The Review should be aware that, depending on the state or territory, once a student enters a non-government school they may lose significant entitlements such as free access to government support services, adding considerably to the cost of education for children attending non-government schools.)

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT (IN ORDER OF NUMBER OF MENTIONS)	
MAJOR CITY BOARDING SCHOOLS	**REGIONAL AND REMOTE SCHOOLS**
• Full funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students irrespective of the SES of the school they attend • Federal or state/territory government capital funding for new residential facilities or facilities refurbishment • Full and free access to government-provided services for students with disability, such as speech therapy, irrespective of the school they attend* • Full and free access for students to government-funded mental health services, irrespective of the school they attend • Free access to government-provided distance education courses for students from regional, remote and very remote areas irrespective of the school they attend • Introduction of by-passing laws in all jurisdictions so that students attending boarding schools in other states/territories are eligible for state recurrent funding • Increased federal recurrent funding for boarding students • Extending Abstudy to cover the cost of parents coming to Year 12 graduation or valedictory events • Funding to cover the cost of additional academic support out of school hours, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills	• Federal or state/territory government capital funding for new residential facilities or facilities refurbishment • Free access for students to government-provided distance education courses • Full funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students irrespective of the SES of the school they attend • Free access to NBN Co's Sky Muster distance education satellite service • Federal government loan subsidies for capital expenditure • Reduction of local government rates, fees, charges • More housing for transient youth • Access to grants to cover programs such as keeping young mothers at school • Support for ICT resources and maintenance • Funding for transport (buses, fuel, drivers) to collect students and return them home • Increased funding for regions experiencing economic stress • A review of the ABSTUDY application and approval processes • Increased support for students with disability, especially in areas where services are non-existent or under-resourced • Recognition of the role independent schools play in providing educational choice in regional areas • Recognition that independent schools may be the sole provider in some remote areas
* It was reported that some students enter secondary boarding with hearing or language difficulties that were not diagnosed in their home location and may need intensive 'catch up' support.	

3 | Focus on Indigenous education

In 2016-17 AHISA made a two-part submission to the Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs in the 44th Parliament. That inquiry was resumed in the 45th Parliament and is yet to deliver a final report. AHISA's submissions are published at http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Indigenous_Affairs/Educational_Opportunities/Submissions and included as appendices to this submission for the convenience of the Review.

Both parts of AHISA's submission aimed to provide further substance to points on educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students raised by the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council in its submission to the Inquiry:

- The value of trialling small-scale innovative models
- The value of autonomous leadership in the development of innovative, creative responses

- The value of city-remote school partnerships.

AHISA's submission to the Inquiry also supports findings of the Productivity Commission as reported in *Indigenous Primary School Achievement* and noted on page 42 of the IRRRRE Discussion Paper, that 'for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to be successful, a culture of high expectations in schools, strong student-teacher and community relationships and support for culture are particularly important – all underpinned by strong school leadership'.

Below we set out key learnings described in the submission.

Part 1 of AHISA's submission drew on articles describing the provision of Indigenous education in AHISA's members' schools as published in AHISA's biannual journal, *Independence*. Highlighted were practices found to be successful in supporting retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in city boarding schools, key features of relationships between city independent schools and remote Indigenous communities and challenges in on-country provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Factors found to have contributed to the success of residential programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote areas attending city schools include:

- Sensitivity of school communities to the cultural backgrounds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is important in helping students develop a sense of belonging at school
- Efforts by schools to promote and celebrate Indigenous cultures and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the expression of their home cultures are important in helping students maintain their cultural identity
- Developing trust through long-term relationships between schools and remote Indigenous communities helps students transition to city boarding schools
- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within a school can augment students' sense of belonging
- The commitment of school leaders underwrites program innovation and success
- The school's ethos and values inform the development and implementation of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students socially and academically
- High expectations of students as a component of the 'academic press' that has been shown to contribute to overall student achievement in independent schools is also a factor in the achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote areas attending metropolitan boarding schools on residential scholarships
- The holistic care of students in boarding houses – where attention to the physical and emotional wellbeing of students is as important as academic studies – and the provision of safe learning environments are contributing factors to the success of scholarship programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Establishing post-school pathways supports the long-term success of metropolitan residential programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote areas.

Looking at examples of regional schooling provision, one article illustrates how, in regional areas, between-school collaboration can be a viable option for increasing educational opportunities for Aboriginal students. The Armidale School, Armidale, NSW, has built a relationship with Minimbah Primary School in Armidale (designated 'Inner Regional') which encompasses student-to-student mentoring (secondary TAS students mentoring MPS students), sharing of facilities and shared sporting and cultural opportunities. Of note is that this collaboration also includes teacher professional exchange and support.

The IRRRRE Discussion Paper notes staffing as a persistent challenge for regional and remote schools and that a 'persistent aspect of staffing rural schools is a belief (which influences practice) that "the country is a good place for a teacher to start their career but not to devote their career to"' (page 24). The Discussion Paper also notes the issue of high staff turnover.

Professor McKinley notes that 'the challenge for Australian education is to place in front of each and every Indigenous Australian child, every day, quality teachers and quality teaching'.[9] The OECD's *Promising practices in supporting success for Indigenous students* report finds that, at the system level, 'supporting teachers and leaders to develop awareness, capability and confidence' is an initiative that should be included 'in any strategy to improve the education experiences of Indigenous students', while at the individual school level, 'quality and effectiveness of teaching' should be a basic focus to improve education experiences'.

Provision of teacher professional exchange and support as a means to enhance educational opportunities for students is also a feature of a collaborative relationship between the Perth-based Christ Church Grammar School and the 'Very Remote' Yakanarra Community School in Fitzroy Crossing, WA, described in Part 1 of AHISA's submission to the Inquiry. A similar collaboration, between Woodleigh School on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula ('Metropolitan City') and the 'Very Remote' Wugularr community, south-east of Katherine in the Northern Territory, is described in Part 2 of AHISA's submission to the Inquiry. As well as student exchanges, Woodleigh School's relationship with the Wugularr community entails teacher exchanges, to help build the teaching capacity within Wugularr School.

Some of the examples of programs outlined in Part 1 of AHISA's submission to the Inquiry also illustrate learning partnerships between 'Major City' or 'Inner Regional' schools and schools in 'Outer Regional' to 'Very Remote' areas, as referred to on page 45 of the IRRRRE Discussion Paper, further supporting the proposition that between-school collaborations are a viable option for increasing educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Christ Church Grammar School and Yakanarra Community School use digital technologies to share classes, augmented by a student visitation program. Secondary students from 'Major City' independent schools with established connections with remote Indigenous communities will typically mentor primary aged students while visiting those communities, or help present educational programs. An example is the delivery of science projects by a teacher and students from Trinity Grammar School in Kew, Victoria, to students in the Gunbalanya community in west Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Student attendance and retention are also key issues for schools providing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Featured in Part 1 of AHISA's submission to the Inquiry is an article on Macleay Vocational College, South Kempsey, NSW ('Inner Regional'), outlining the school's strategies

to support the attendance, retention and academic success of Aboriginal students who experience multiple educational challenges, including:

- Provision of transport to support attendance
- Provision of breakfast, recess and lunch vouchers as many students do not have regular food sources.
- Provision of financial rewards for attendance in the form of a 'refund' on fees
- Assignment of a teacher to 'walk around duty' to help students stay on task and ensure students are able to make a positive step forward no matter the challenges they have brought with them to school
- Providing learning incentives, eg scheduling popular classes at the beginning of the week so that students start the week off with their best attitude
- Provision of courses with a health requirement as an incentive for students to reduce their addictive behaviours; for example, a certified scuba diving course as part of marine studies
- Building students' confidence as learners by establishing opportunities for students to experience success
- Supporting students' efforts to give back to the wider community, for example through fundraising walkathons
- Building trust by engaging with the community and its needs, not just students and their needs
- Building students' sense of place and belonging by opening the school to the community and elders.

Part 2 of AHISA's submission covers innovative approaches to educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, both on-country and out of country, developed by AHISA members' schools:

- Melbourne Indigenous Transition School, Richmond, Victoria: A one-year residential and academic program to assist students from regional and remote communities to transition successfully to city boarding schools.
- Woodleigh School, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria: Assistance in program development and teacher professional learning for a 'Very Remote' community school, plus primary-level student exchange (already mentioned above).
- Wesley College, Melbourne, Victoria: Establishment of a senior secondary school, Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, that provides on country provision for Aboriginal students and for which Wesley College serves as a remote campus. (Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is near Fitzroy Crossing, WA, and is designated 'Very Remote' by ACARA.)
- Gawura School, Sydney, NSW: Establishment of a primary school for Aboriginal students living in Sydney within the site of St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney CBD ('Major City').
- Darkinjung Barker College, Wyong, NSW: Establishment of a regional primary campus of Barker College, Hornsby, NSW to serve Aboriginal students within the Wyong region. (Wyong is designated as a 'Major City' location.)

The innovations described in Part 2 of AHISA's submission[10] support the finding reported in the *Red Dirt Education* compilation report, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in remote areas want their young people to be 'strong in both worlds' (pages 23, 55). Further, Part 2 of AHISA's submission records the view of independent school leaders that there must be a preparedness for 'two-ways learning' on the part of education providers if cross-cultural efforts are to be successful, sustainable and have their greatest impact.

Of interest in the Gawura and Darkinjung Barker models is the focus on K-6 provision, which is proving successful in overcoming the challenge of any compounding of educational disadvantage from early learning through to secondary schooling. Key features include:

- A focus on literacy numeracy, cultural awareness and socialisation
- Support for close kinship connections between students and maintenance of family groupings
- Celebration of cultural identities
- Adoption and teaching of an official Aboriginal dialect for the school
- Working together with families
- Attendance supported through collection and return to home transport.

At Gawura, any lack of home facilities or support is balanced with compulsory attendance at the School's Aboriginal Homework Club two to three afternoons per week.

Darkinjung Barker College was established in 2016 in conjunction with Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council. Success indicators from its first year of operation include:

- Overall, students gained between 1.5 and 5 years in academic achievement
- In reading, 61 per cent of students commencing in February 2016 in Years 1 to 5 were diagnosed as having a severe reading comprehension problem according to the York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension (YARC) scale. By November 2016, no students in this group measured as having a severe reading comprehension problem: 38 per cent had a moderate reading problem; 38 per cent measured as 'average' readers; 15 per cent measured as 'good' readers; and 8 per cent achieved an 'excellent reader' score in reading comprehension.
- In spelling, 56 per cent of students commencing in February 2016 in Years 1 to 5 were diagnosed as experiencing severe difficulties (that is, the students' academic performance was at or below the fifth percentile for his or her year of schooling) according to the Dalwood Spelling Test. By November 2016, only 19 per cent of students were still diagnosed at this level: 37 per cent were diagnosed as 'borderline'; 12 per cent were 'average' for their school year level; 6 per cent were 'above average'; and 25 per cent measured as having 'superior achievement' (that is, with scores at or above the 95th percentile for the student's school year level).

Success indicators at Gawura include:

- Attendance rates of 93-94 per cent

- Entry of Gawura students into Year 7 at St Andrew's on an equal footing – academically and socially – with students of all other ethnicities
- In 2015 Gawura's average NAPLAN scores were well above those of statistically similar schools (that is, schools with similar students)
- Since 2012, 10 Gawura students have graduated Year 12 from St Andrew's Cathedral School and entered university courses in law, fine arts, teacher education, nursing and business management.

St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School, Sydney, NSW

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assesses all students in Australian schools in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. For more information visit the NAPLAN website.

The chart below displays average NAPLAN scores for each domain. The selected school's scores are displayed in blue. Also displayed are average scores for statistically similar schools (SIM) and all Australian schools (ALL). The coloured bars indicate whether the selected school's scores are above, close to, or below the other scores.

2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015

Colour Scheme: Red & Green | Submit | Alternate view: Results in graphs

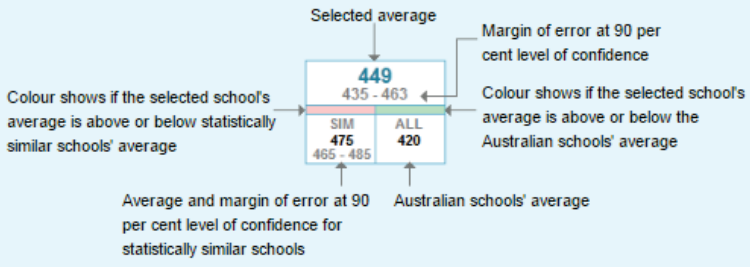
	Reading		Persuasive Writing		Spelling		Grammar and Punctuation		Numeracy	
Year 3	-		-		-		-		-	
	SIM 335 326 - 344	ALL 426	SIM 345 337 - 353	ALL 416	SIM 331 322 - 339	ALL 409	SIM 342 332 - 352	ALL 433	SIM 321 313 - 329	ALL 398
Year 5	516 464 - 567		559 511 - 606		530 482 - 578		575 520 - 630		495 454 - 535	
	SIM 417 409 - 426	ALL 499	SIM 400 392 - 409	ALL 478	SIM 435 427 - 442	ALL 498	SIM 414 404 - 423	ALL 503	SIM 421 413 - 429	ALL 493

How to interpret this chart

SIM schools serving students from statistically similar backgrounds
ALL Australian schools' average
Student population below reporting threshold
Year level not tested

Selected school's average is
substantially above
above
close to
below
substantially below

- average of schools serving students from statistically similar socio-educational backgrounds (SIM box)
- average of all Australian schools (ALL box)



Tell me more

Further learnings from the leaders contributing to AHISA's Inquiry submission include:

- Residential secondary schooling provision in 'Major City' locations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities is desired by many Indigenous families for their children
- The academic and cultural challenges faced by students from remote communities coming to city boarding schools are immense; a residential transition school linked to destination schools, providing targeted literacy and numeracy programs and social and emotional development programs, can help provide a cross-cultural bridge for students and build strong peer networks
- Positive outcomes depend on relationships between independent school communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are built on trust and respect
- Professional assistance for teachers in remote community schools provided by city-based teachers can reduce professional isolation and improve practice in remote schools
- Digital technologies are important in assisting continuity of teacher professional exchange between city/regional and remote schools, and for building relationships between children and between staff in geographically distant communities
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to increase educational opportunities in remote communities: partnerships between city schools and remote schools and communities require flexibility and the freedom to generate collaborations that are the most beneficial and which reflect the needs and capacities of those involved
- Leadership by principals and school boards is essential if visions, ideas and goodwill are to be realised
- Student exchanges begun at primary level have powerful immediate and long-term effects; friendships between students in culturally diverse communities are easily formed and, because of the age of the children, typically engage whole families
- On country provision gives students a sense of cultural place and safety and provides a platform from which mainstream educational programs can be attempted
- Educational programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, delivered on country or in metropolitan schools, must be culturally appropriate
- On-country provision supports student retention
- Experiential or 'hands on' learning programs attract students who may have become disenfranchised from school education
- Success in experiential programs inspires confidence to attempt academic programs
- Valuing the language of Aboriginal students is an important part of having a culturally strong school
- The success of cross-cultural educational provision depends on the strength of the relationships and partnerships that support it
- The willingness of those in these relationships and partnership to make long-term commitments underwrites the success of innovative ventures in Indigenous education

- Trust between schools and Indigenous communities can only be built over time and requires taking account of the views of Aboriginal people in the development of educational programs for their children
- Staff members of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent are critical as perceived advocates and go-to people for parents and students in independent Indigenous schools
- Stability of staffing in independent Indigenous schools is vital because of the relational nature of trust building
- Education cannot be separated from social, health and housing issues; leaders of independent schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students must be prepared to work with families, not just students, especially to address the issue of regular school attendance
- High profile Aboriginal leaders who are prepared to act as passionate champions and advocates of independent Indigenous schools can be essential in supporting the sustainability of the schools
- Initial and ongoing liaison with community and parent groups is essential to lay the foundations of home-school partnerships and preserve the integrity of the cultural environment of schools serving Indigenous students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities appreciate working with independent schools because of the opportunity it gives them to influence the shape and delivery of the education program, including the cultural environment in which their young people learn.

The OECD notes that 'practices that benefit Indigenous students also benefit non-Indigenous students'.[11] Some of the ideas contributed by school leaders to AHISA's Inquiry submission for government sponsored programs to support creation of educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in regional and remote areas may therefore be of interest for closing the opportunity gap for all students in regional and remote areas, including:

- Seed funding for 'pop up' schools in regional and remote areas; for example, pop up schools to deliver specific programs in STEM subjects. These 'schools' could deliver short courses to students and professional learning for teachers
- Funding to support teacher exchanges and ongoing collaborative professional development of teachers in remote community schools
- Capital funding for schools willing to establish teacher visitation programs to remote communities to build teacher accommodation in these communities, suitable for short and longer-term stays
- Funding to facilitate teacher secondments between 'Major City' and schools in remote areas.

4 | Releasing and supporting innovative practice in schools

AHISA welcomes the expressed focus of the Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education to identify innovative practice. AHISA has been concerned for some time that the narrative of 'failing schools' in Australia – based largely on narrow interpretations of Australia's performance on international tests and often used to create a platform for policy intervention – has created a policy

blind spot to the innovative ways in which schools are responding to rapidly escalating social and technological change in general and the needs of their immediate communities in particular.

Just as 'deficit thinking' should not blind policy makers to the capacities of regional and remote communities or lead to the uncritical adoption of metrocentric notions of 'success', deficit thinking about schools should not blind policy makers to the adaptive and entrepreneurial capacities of schools to develop, adopt and adapt innovative practice to meet the evolving needs of students and communities.

As can be seen from the history of innovation in Australia's independent schools, many of the education practices taken for granted today have been introduced not by government imperatives but by school leaders demonstrating entrepreneurial qualities such as vision, strategic foresight and a healthy tolerance for risk. These practices include:

- Careers advisers
- School counsellors
- Outdoor education programs
- Pastoral care programs
- School chaplains
- Service learning and character formation
- Internationalism and global student exchange.

Independent schools have also been leaders in the use of technology in education. For example, Australia's first one-to-one laptop program was introduced by Methodist Ladies' College in Melbourne in 1990, 27 years ago. The first virtual reality learning space for primary students in Australia, zSpace, opened at Barker College, NSW in 2016.

Independent schools have also entered into collaborative partnerships with universities to forge innovations in pedagogy and educational programs. In 2005, Bialik College in Victoria entered a five-year-long collaboration with Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education and helped birth the Cultures of Thinking approach to teaching and learning of which it is a world leader today. The first FabLab maker space in Australia opened at Lauriston Girls' School in Victoria in 2014, in collaboration with Stanford University's Graduate School of Education. In collaboration with Oxford University in the United Kingdom, Tara Anglican School for Girls in NSW built a research grade optical telescope and offers an astronomy program linked to Oxford's Global Jet Watch telescope program.

This collaborative enterprise also extends to social and emotional learning. Girton Grammar School in Bendigo, Victoria partnered with Yale University to introduce its RULER Approach program of social and emotional learning to Australia. Schools such as Geelong Grammar School in Victoria and St Peter's College in South Australia are recognised world leaders in positive education, that is, the merging of positive psychology with teaching and learning, working in collaboration with Professor Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania. Schools such as Anglican Church Grammar School in Queensland are also working with Swinburne Institute of Technology in the application of Emotional Intelligence to teaching and learning.

Truly innovative enterprises will always be ahead of government policy making and this is amply evident in schools. For example, by the time the Education Council had released its National STEM School Education Strategy 2016-2026 in December 2015[12], a number of AHISA members' schools had already moved to incorporate the arts in their delivery of STEM in an approach that has earned the acronym STEAM. Often incorporating innovations from the 'maker movement', STEAM reflects the emerging practice in industry of linking design to engineering at early stages of new product development. Some schools are now giving a greater profile to action research in their STEAM projects, adopting the acronym STREAM.

This proactive approach to education provision also extends to post-school transitions and teacher professional development. AHISA members' schools have forged innovative practices and collaborative partnerships with local governments, the business sector and universities to create diverse pathways for students, to help students transition more smoothly to post-school education and training and to make teacher professional development more accessible outside of major metropolitan areas. For example[13], by:

- Taking advantage of the need for facilities refurbishment to partner with universities to establish on site research-grade scientific laboratories
- Sharing resources, facilities and library services with nearby universities
- Allowing students to study university subjects while still at school
- Acting as a regional satellite university campus to offer units of university study to students and to staff (including students and staff from other schools)
- Partnering with other training organisations and industry for study options and work experience in vocational education and training.

In previous sections in this submission we have described innovations in educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the ways in which AHISA members' schools are addressing challenges in provision for students from regional and remote areas, whether they are attending 'Major City' schools or schools located in regional and remote areas. We urge the Review to consider recommending that the Australian Government establish a national Schools Innovation Fund as a means to leverage the entrepreneurial capacity of schools and support and encourage Australian schools to exercise and develop innovation in educational provision.

Grants under the Schools Innovation Fund could be competitive and open to schools, clusters of schools and/or school systems and schools partnering with outside organisations such as universities.

AHISA has promoted this concept in other submissions to government. While, ideally, such a program should be broad-based so that schools can engage with those issues they deem priorities in their communities, it would also be possible to tie such a Fund to government-mandated priorities, such as improving student engagement in STEM or improving retention rates of students in regional and remote areas.

A successful precedent already exists for such a model. A program of competitive, direct-to-school grants was administered on behalf of the Australian Government by the Asia Education Foundation (AEF) under the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP). The

Becoming Asia Literate: Grants to Schools (BALGS) program operated between 2009 and 2012 and attracted 2,000 applications. During the life of the program, some $7.2 million was disbursed on 335 projects among 521 schools.

The evaluation of the BALGS program, published by AEF in 2013[14], offers valuable insights into how direct-to-schools grants can be effectively managed to meet government objectives. Outcomes of the program, which covered both primary and secondary schools, included:

- Enabling sustainable change and innovation
- Enabling curriculum renewal and refreshing pedagogy
- Building teacher capacity, within and beyond the school
- Developing teacher-leaders to drive and support curriculum innovation
- Engagement with research to develop evidence-informed practice
- Building strategic collaborations and sustainable partnerships within and between schools.

Importantly, the program enabled schools to engage in innovation and build professional practice irrespective of where the schools were on the practice continuum, and to develop practices that met the specific needs and contexts of the school.

Other features worth noting are:

- Project proposals were assessed, scored and ranked by independent assessors in the states and territories. Schools which won grants were obliged to follow accountability procedures and guidelines, make progress reports and develop plans for the sustainability of the funded projects.
- Over 12 per cent of registrations in the program were from clusters of two to four schools, indicating a high level of interest among schools in developing communities of practice.
- For successful proposals, on-call professional learning support was available to steer schools through the process of project design, implementation and review.

The BALGS program demonstrates that, due to the increasingly collaborative nature of the teaching profession, the impact of supported projects extends well beyond individual school communities. The program also demonstrates the return on investment to government. This is significant, given that the scheme would not be open-ended in terms of either money or time.

As the IRRRRE Discussion Paper notes:

> Innovation is often thought of as something which is ‘brand new’ or particularly special and big. An innovation, however, can also be something that is quite small, relatively subtle, cost neutral overall but which delivers a significant impact. (Page 8)

The extent of an innovation’s impact will depend very much on its ‘fit’ with the community in which it is to be embedded. Supporting schools by giving them the autonomy to introduce those innovations which they can first envision and which they believe they then have sufficient confidence, courage and people power to pursue could deliver significant gains for students and communities in regional and remote areas. ■

NOTES

[1] Welch A, Helme S & S Lamb S (2007) Rurality and inequality in education: The Australian experience, in Teese R, Lamb S & Duru-Bellat M (eds) *International studies in education inequality, theory and policy Volume 2: Inequality in education systems*, Springer, Netherlands: 272. As quoted in NSW Department of Education and Communities Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2013) *Rural and remote education: Literature review*, page 2.

[2] Guenther J, Disbray S & Osborne S (2016) *Red dirt education: A compilation of learnings from the Remote Education Systems project*. Alice Springs.

[3] Reid J-A, White S, Green W, Lock G, Cooper M & Hastings W (2012) *TERRAnova: Renewing Teacher Education for Rural and Regional Australia. Volume 1: Project Report*. Bathurst: Charles Sturt University.

[4] Apple M (1996) *Cultural politics and education.* Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

[5] McKinley E (2017) From inequality to quality: Challenging the debate on Indigenous education in, Bentley T & Savage GC (2017) *Educating Australia: Challenges for the decade ahead*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press; pp191-205.

[6] OECD (2017) *Promising practices in supporting success for Indigenous students*. Paris: OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279421-en.

[7] Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (2017) *Educate Australia fair? Education inequality in Australia*. Focus on the States Series, No 5. Curtin Business School, Curtin University.

[8] See for example Tomaszewski W, Perales F & Xiang N (2017) *School experiences, career guidance, and the university participation of young people from three equity groups in Australia*. National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Curtin University.

[9] McKinley, op cit.

[10] The views of independent school leaders who contributed to Part 2 of AHISA's submission to the Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students regarding relationship building and cultural sensitivity are further explored in an article related to the submission, posted at http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=142473#folio=80.

[11] OECD, op cit.

[12] The National STEM School Education Strategy is available at http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/National%20STEM%20School%20Education%20Strategy.pdf.

[13] Such innovations are described in AHISA's journal *Independence*. See for example Wilson L (2014) The education continuum in *Independence* Vol 39 No 1; available at http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=93081#folio=18

[14] Australia Education Foundation (2013) *What works 5. Schools becoming Asia literate: What works?* Available at http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/docs/default-source/what-works-pdf/what-works-5-report.pdf.

Never Give Up

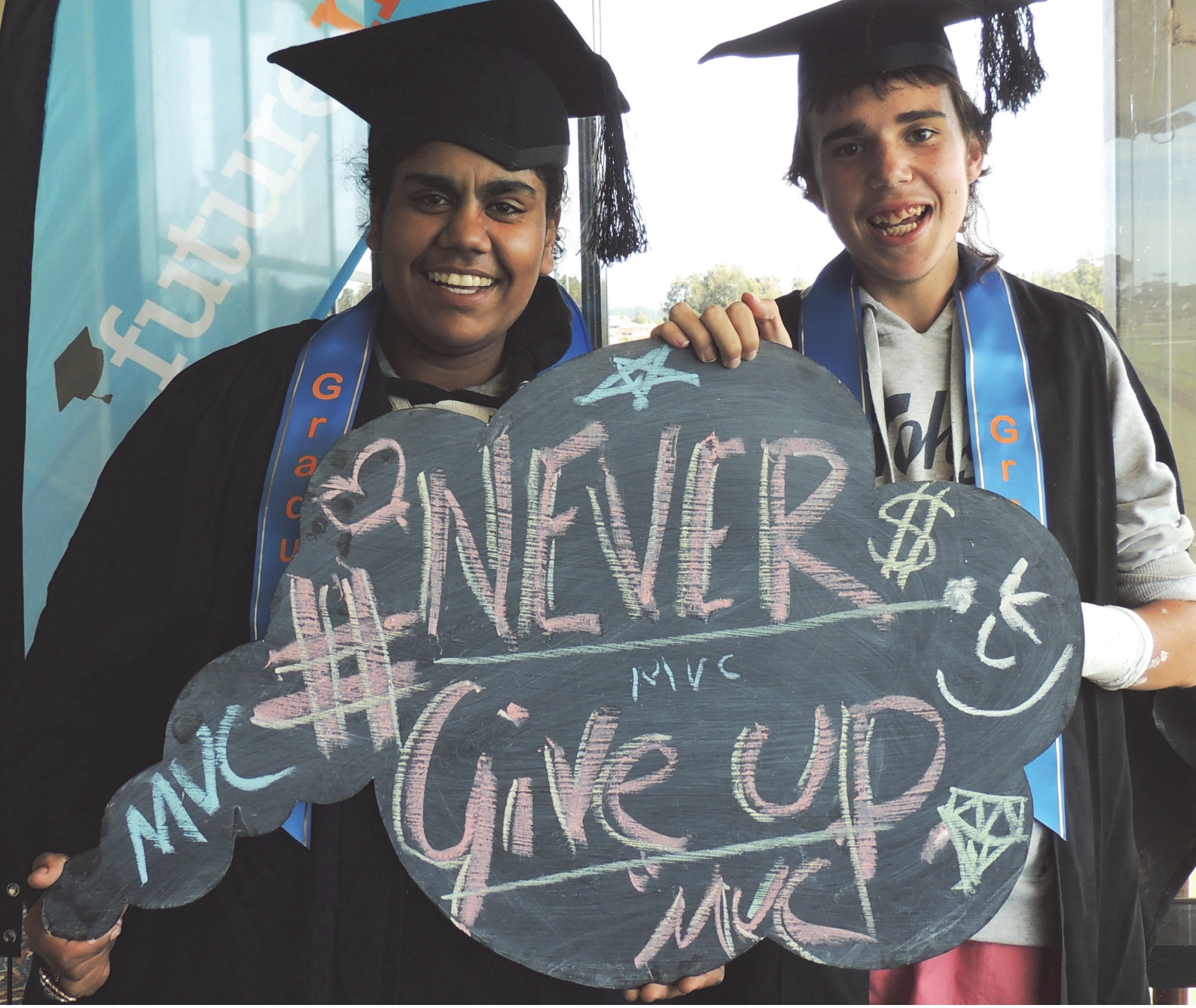
Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Submission to the Australian House of Representatives Committee for Indigenous Affairs

PART 1 — DECEMBER 2015

ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF AUSTRALIA
COLLEGIAL SUPPORT FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

AHISA LTD



Never Give Up

Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in Metropolitan, Regional and Remote Independent Schools

PART 1

AHISA LTD

Never Give Up

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

The membership of AHISA Ltd comprises principals of 420 independent schools with a collective enrolment of some 426,000 students, representing 11.7 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Australia's total Year 12 enrolment.

AHISA's core values are collegiality, collaboration and contribution. One important way these values are expressed is through the sharing of information or reflections on leadership issues and educational programs via the pages of AHISA's biannual journal, *Independence*. The journal is published in hard copy format for members and subscribers; a digital edition is published online in the public domain, as a form of contribution to the wider educational sector.

In Part 1 of its 'Never Give Up' submission to the Indigenous Affairs Committee, AHISA has gathered articles from the journal and extracted from them points relevant to the three overarching questions addressed by the Committee's inquiry into educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: What works? What's important? What can we do better?

The submission title is drawn from the photograph on the previous page, which also featured on the cover of the October 2015 issue of AHISA's journal, *Independence*. The photograph depicts students from Macleay Vocational College attending an Open Day at the Port Macquarie campus of Charles Sturt University. 'Never give up' is the inspiring message the students offer themselves and all those who strive for better outcomes for young Indigenous Australians.

16 December 2015

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AHISA LTD

Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in Metropolitan, Regional and Remote Independent Schools

What works? What's important? What can we do better?

Independent schools are contributing to the opportunities available to young Indigenous Australians through diverse arrangements, both in-country and out of country.

Articles drawn from AHISA's biannual journal, *Independence*, affirm that success factors for metropolitan residential programs for Indigenous students from rural and remote include:

- Sensitivity of school communities to the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students is important in helping students develop a sense of belonging at school.
- Efforts by schools to promote and celebrate Indigenous cultures and support Indigenous students in the expression of their home cultures are important in helping students maintain their cultural identity.
- Developing trust through long-term relationships between schools and remote communities helps students transition to city boarding schools.
- A higher proportion of Indigenous students within a school can augment students' sense of belonging.
- The commitment of school leaders underwrites program innovation and success.
- The school's ethos and values inform the development and implementation of strategies to support Indigenous students socially and academically.
- High expectations of students as a component of the 'academic press' that has been shown to contribute to overall student achievement in independent schools is also a factor in the achievement of Indigenous students on residential scholarships in high-achieving schools.
- The holistic care of students in boarding houses – where attention to the physical and emotional wellbeing of students is as important as academic studies – and the provision of safe learning environments are contributing factors to the success of Indigenous scholarship programs.
- Establishing post-school pathways supports the long-term success of metropolitan residential programs for regional and remote Indigenous students.

The articles also illustrate that:

- Between-school collaborations are a viable option for increasing educational opportunities for Indigenous students.
- Partnerships with governments and their agencies, other institutions and organisations support program implementation and success.

Key points from the journal articles are presented on the following pages, with key terms in the sidebar. Articles are presented in full at the conclusion of this document.

AHISA LTD

Metropolitan

Day students

International Grammar School, Ultimo, Sydney, NSW

Published in *Independence* Vol 33 No 2, October 2008:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62582#folio=16

Relationships
Partnerships
Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity
School ethos and values

IGS is an inner-city school. The success of its scholarship program for Indigenous students living in Sydney is built on:

- Close ties with the local Indigenous community.
- Adherence to the values of inclusion and acceptance.
- Demonstration of valuing Indigenous perspectives and reinforcing Indigenous culture and identity, eg flying the Aboriginal flag alongside the Australian flag, welcome to country at major school gatherings and events, incorporation of ATSI perspectives in all curriculum areas from Prep to senior secondary, and provision of appropriate resources to teachers.
- Establishment of a 'Koori club' for students.
- Home-school liaison through a single member of staff.
- Drawing on Dare to Lead program.

External link: http://www.erea.edu.au/docs/default-source/identity/justice-and-peace/immersions/dare-to-lead-indigenous-school-review-checklist.pdf?sfvrsn=0

Boarding students

Guildford Grammar School, Guildford, WA

Published in *Independence* Vol 40 No 2, October 2015:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=129837#folio=22

Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity

In this article, Headmaster of Guildford Grammar School, Stephen Webber, describes how formation of an Indigenous dance troupe comprising students from the school helps students grow in confidence and stay connected to their culture 'while learning and living in a fast-paced world'.

The school's Indigenous students are also supported by a full-time Indigenous Program Coordinator, who is responsible for a range of programs aimed at retaining the students and ensuring that their pastoral care is culturally sound. The Coordinator also helps develop curriculum information that is used across the school to educate all students on some key components of Indigenous culture and history.

Kormilda College, Darwin, NT

Published in *Independence* Vol 39 No 1, May 2014:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=93081#folio=30

High expectations
Partnerships
Mentoring

Former Principal of Kormilda College in Darwin in the Northern Territory, David Shinkfield describes in this article how the College encourages

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School ethos and values

aspirations for tertiary study among its remote area Indigenous boarding students. Targeted and explicit interventions and strong external partnerships include:

- A partnership with Charles Darwin University (CDU) and participation in its 'Into Uni' project, funded by a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) grant, involving engagement by the students with an online learning management system and on-campus activities at CDU.
- Mentoring of senior students by a network of Kormilda alumni studying at CDU.
- Partnerships with The Smith Family through its Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and with the Clontarf Foundation.

The article also notes the importance of a school's ethos and values as factors in supporting the achievement of Indigenous students, along with high expectations of all students.

External links: https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/what-we-do/our-work/supporting-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-families/indigenous-youth-leadership; http://www.clontarf.org.au/

Trinity Grammar School, Kew, VIC

Published in *Independence* Vol 33 No 2, October 2008: http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62582#folio=18

Relationships
Partnerships
Post-school pathways
Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity

- Trinity Grammar identifies the importance of relationships or partnerships between the student, the student's family, the student's home community and the school.
- The school has a partnership with the University of Melbourne to assist with the higher education of the school's Indigenous scholarship holders.
- Programs promote the value of Indigenous culture and identity across the school and include annual visits by groups of students to remote Indigenous communities.

Rostrevor College, Adelaide, SA

Published in *Independence* Vol 33 No 2, October 2008: http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62582#folio=18

Sporting Chance program
Indigenous Sports Academy
Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity
Post-school pathways

Rostrevor College has supported a scholarship program for Indigenous students from regional and remote communities since the 1950s. This program was expanded when the College was selected to establish an Indigenous Sports Academy under the Australian Government's Sporting Chance program. Contributing to the success of the Rostrevor program are:

- Targeted support by education officers in the classroom.
- A large enough cohort of Indigenous students to allow students to feel at ease expressing their own culture.

- A post-school pathways coordinator, to support students entering vocational training or tertiary education.
- Whole-school celebration of Indigenous heritage and culture to help give Indigenous students a sense of belonging.
- Whole staff professional development with a focus on Indigenous cultural awareness.

External link: http://www.rostrevor.sa.edu.au/blog/unesco-award

Sporting Chance program

The Committee is invited to note that an evaluation of the Sporting Chance program, conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research in 2011, found effective Academies were characterised by:

- Highly skilled, enthusiastic, culturally aware and dedicated staff members who are capable of building strong and trusted relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Willingness to engage communities in the planning and processes well before the program is implemented.
- Strong support from the school leadership, other teachers and parents/carers.
- An integrated curriculum.
- Effective communication between provider and school, school and community, provider and community.
- Sufficient resourcing and funding, including the provision of an environment – such as a designated Academy room – in which students can feel safe and comfortable and where parents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff feel comfortable.
- Strong external relationships, such as with community and business organisations, tertiary providers and potential funders, who can provide the Academy with additional financial and in-kind support and mentoring.
- A strong perception (and promotion of) the Sporting Chance Program as an education program and not primarily as a sports program.
- Recognition of the need to monitor and evaluate programs.

External link:
http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=policy_analysis_misc

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Research & evaluation

Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity
Parental commitment
High expectations

'Across two worlds'

Published in *Independence* Vol 35 No 2, October 2010:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62625#folio=30

In this article, Jessica de Campo presents findings of a research project assessing the experience of Indigenous students boarding in three boarding schools in Melbourne, Victoria. The project entailed interviews with students, staff and parents and found that scholarship programs 'represent a

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significant pathway to educational opportunity and life choice for young Indigenous people'. Several factors important to the success and wellbeing of Indigenous students boarding in city schools were identified:

- Independent schools should be confident to continue to do business as usual, because that business is good business.
- In the case of Indigenous students, schooling provision must be administered with heightened empathy and with resources to match school leaderships' expectations.
- Independent schools should foster their Indigenous students' confident and positive self identities as they would for all students.
- Students' families and communities must give assurances that support for their children will persist despite prolonged absences.

The author also notes that 'the significance of students relocating to the opposite end of the country – in some cases for a number of years – in order to access what they see as a good secondary education should not be lost on government or Indigenous policy makers'.

'High expectations'

Independence Vol 33 No 2, October 2008:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62582#folio=4

Cultural identity
Cultural sensitivity
Transition support
High expectations

Confirming Jessica de Campo's findings that the desire of Indigenous families and students for a 'better education' is a driver for them to seek opportunities out of country, is the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership's Higher Expectations Program (now the Cape York Leaders Program). The program places Cape York students in high-performing, city-based boarding schools. In this article, John Wenitong and Preben Mindamarra describe the factors contributing to student retention and academic achievement in the program, including:

- Implementing support strategies to create an environment in which the students and school staff are cross-culturally knowledgeable, including a handbook for schools and cultural awareness sessions for schools.
- Support for students to help in the transition from remote community life to a metropolitan boarding school, including professional and private tutors, mentors, role models, weekend home stay families and counsellors.
- Assistance and support for parents and guardians of Indigenous students.
- Helping students take pride in their Indigenous identity.

External link: http://capeyorkpartnership.org.au/game-changers/cape-york-institute/leadership/

Regional

Meeting the needs of disadvantaged students

Cultural sensitivity
Attendance
Student engagement
Relationships

Macleay Vocational College, South Kempsey, NSW

Published in *Independence* Vol 40 No 2, October 2015:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=129837#folio=26

[NOTE: A full description of the education provision for Indigenous students at Macleay Vocational College is given in the submission already made to the Committee by AIS NSW.]

In this article, titled 'Measures of success', Mark Morrison, Principal of Macleay Vocational College, South Kempsey, NSW, outlines strategies the College has adopted to support retention and academic success of marginalised students, including:

- Provision of transport to support attendance.
- Provision of breakfast, recess and lunch vouchers as many students do not have regular food sources.
- Provision of financial rewards for attendance in the form of a 'refund' on fees.
- Assignment of a teacher to 'walk around' duty to help students stay on task and ensure students are able to make a positive step forward no matter the challenges they have brought with them to school.
- Providing learning incentives, eg scheduling popular classes at the beginning of the week so that students start the week off with their best attitude.
- Provision of courses with a health requirement as an incentive for students to reduce their addictive behaviours; for example, a certified scuba diving course as part of marine studies.
- Building students' confidence as learners by establishing opportunities for students to experience success.
- Supporting students' efforts to give back to the wider community, for example through fundraising walkathons.
- Building trust by engaging with the community and its needs, not just students and their needs.
- Building students' sense of place and belonging by opening the school to the community and elders.

The Armidale School, Armidale, NSW

Published in *Independence* Vol 38 No 1, May 2013:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=76899#folio=74

Between-school collaboration
Relationships
Professional exchange and support
Mentoring

The Armidale School has established a relationship with Minimbah Primary School, a nearby independent school serving students from a low socio-economic background, most of whom are Aboriginal. The relationship includes:

- Student-to-student mentoring.
- Sharing of facilities.
- Shared sporting and cultural opportunities.
- Teacher professional exchange.

Remote

In-country provision

Government funding
Attendance

Nyangatjatjara College, NT

Published in *Independence* Vol 33 No 2, October 2008:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=62582#folio=10

AHISA member, The Rev. Mark Doecke, former Principal of Yirara College, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, discusses the challenges of providing in-country schooling for Indigenous students in remote communities, as experienced at Nyangatjatjara College in central Australia up to 2008, including:

- The difficulty of attracting quality long-term staff. Long-term funding is not guaranteed for a school which has low student numbers and is costly to run. Accommodation for staff may be inadequate.
- Student attendance is irregular. Reasons for this range from community and family dysfunction and mobility, to traditional cultural practices whereby families are not able to force their children to attend school.

External link: http://www.nyangatjatjaracollege.org.au/

Christ Church Grammar School, Claremont, WA in partnership with Yakanarra Community School, WA

Published in *Independence* Vol 38 No 1, May 2013:
http://independence.realviewdigital.com/?iid=76899#folio=74

Relationships
Professional exchange and support
Between-school collaboration

As well as providing opportunities for Indigenous students through a residential scholarship program, Christ Church Grammar School seeks to support remote Indigenous students within their own communities. The article describes a partnership between the school and Yakanarra Community School in the Kimberley region, which involves:

- Teaching and administrative support and exchange
- Shared classes enabled by the use of digital technologies.
- Student exchange visits.

Big city initiatives

Three metropolitan independent schools describe their Indigenous scholarship programs

International Grammar School, Sydney, NSW

International Grammar School is a co-educational day school with 1100 students from Pre-school to Year 12.

International Grammar School (IGS) is a co-educational, secular school in Ultimo, close to the heart of the Sydney CBD. The school seeks to provide students with a learning experience that focuses on academic achievement and the development of a strong sense of individual and social responsibility. Our educational philosophy has a special focus on language studies and music.[1]

The school's motto is 'Unity Through Diversity'. The school's logo portrays a globe with an arc representing the bridges we build between people and cultures. We believe that to give our students the tools to be able to live harmoniously together – the tools of inter-cultural understanding – is critical.

The school curriculum includes French, Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese and Chinese. Language study promotes a natural acceptance of difference and the bilingual partial immersion language program enables our students to engage with European and Asian cultures. The critical need for our students to embrace our own Indigenous cultures and languages emerged as the school moved into the 21st century.

Connecting with our local Indigenous community has been a priority for the school over the last decade. Despite our very close proximity to one of the largest concentrations of urban Aboriginal communities in a capital city in Australia, we had only a few Indigenous students. A program was developed to encourage enrolments and connect with the local community, including an annual scholarship offer.

The annual scholarship offer is open to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. The scholarship covers tuition fees and the supply of text books and other support from Kindergarten to Year 12. The criteria for selection include:

- supportive family/community and commitment to an education at IGS
- residential proximity or transport access to IGS
- developmental attributes of the child including social skills
- relative disadvantage.

There are now nine students attending IGS on Indigenous scholarships, enrolled in Kindergarten through to Year 10.

To support this program, and to ensure that all aspects of school life embrace the fundamental values of inclusion and acceptance across all areas of curriculum, management and protocols have needed examination. The Dare to Lead[2] initiative has provided a valuable source of guidance. The local branch of the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultation Group (AECG)[3] is also a useful resource, with an IGS staff member regularly attending the meetings to keep up to date with what is going on in the local Aboriginal community. Slowly the school has developed more meaningful relationships from within and through the Indigenous families of the school.

IGS makes a concerted effort to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in all curriculum areas, from the preschool years to upper high school, and the library makes sure that there are useful and up to date resources to support teachers. Indigenous people are invited into the school on a regular basis and every day the Aboriginal flag flies proudly alongside the Australian flag.

As a school we acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of our land. At major school gatherings and events an appropriate person from the local Aboriginal community gives a Welcome to Country. Recently this has been performed by a student from the school coached by his grandfather who works for the local Land Council. This recognition creates enormous pride for the Aboriginal students.

On our recent International Day a Year 10 student gave the Welcome to Country at the Primary School assembly and then four primary students acknowledged the welcome in French, German, Italian and Japanese. At the Senior School assembly, after the Welcome to Country, Uncle Max Eulo performed a Smoking Ceremony.

International Grammar School encourages interaction between Indigenous students at different year levels. Left to right are Zane McMillan, Year 5, Tjarani Barton-Vaofanua, Year 7, Mi-Kaisha Masella, Year 2, and Joel Davison, Year 10. A photograph of IGS Year 4 student Delaine Mundine with Indigenous performer Sean Dewar features on the cover of *Independence*.

All these rituals are important as they reinforce Indigenous culture and identity. The Indigenous students feel proud of their culture and the fact that it is recognised with the many other cultures of the school, and the non-Indigenous students gain in understanding and acceptance.

Embedding a strong sense of the value placed on the inclusion of Aboriginal culture requires leadership from the top. On the day that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said sorry to the Stolen Generations not only was a flag raising ceremony held in which our Indigenous students (those that had not gone to Canberra or Redfern for the event) played a major role, but the whole school community including parents, staff and students watched the Parliamentary broadcast live. The pride and excitement demonstrated by our Indigenous students on that day was clearly visible.

The Indigenous students meet in a Koori Club once or twice a term so they get to know each other and there is increased recognition and respect for them. The secondary students provide good role models and mentors for the younger Aboriginal students.

The difference between home language and school language can hinder a student's understanding of all subjects and concepts. Indigenous students may speak Aboriginal English, for example Bandjalung, at home. The school recognises this and offers support and contact with a teacher who knows the students from year to year. They work as a bridge between home and school and help interpret what is going on at school. When necessary the after school care program provides homework help and reading support.

Keren Skyring
Primary Teacher-Librarian,
International Grammar School

Notes

[1] International Grammar School's partial immersion language program was described in the previous issue of *Independence*.

[2] Dare to Lead is a program initiated by the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council Inc (APAPDC), which involves schools in improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. More information is available at www.apapdc.edu.au

[3] Further information about NSW AECG Inc. can be found at www.nswaecg.com.au

LAYING PATHWAYS

Guildford Grammar School, Guildford, WA

Guildford Grammar School has 1200 students, including 148 boarders in Years 7–12. The School is co-educational from Kindergarten to Year 6 and boys only in Years 7–12. Headmaster: Mr Stephen Webber.

GUILDFORD Grammar School in Western Australia has a long history of providing educational opportunities for Indigenous students. Since 1905, over 150 Indigenous students have attended the School.

Today, 41 Indigenous students attend Guildford Grammar, 34 in the Senior School and seven in the Preparatory School, and a full-time Indigenous Program Coordinator is responsible for a range of programs aimed at retaining the students and ensuring that their pastoral care is culturally sound. He also helps develop curriculum information that is used across the School to educate students on some key components of Indigenous culture and history.

In 2013 the School formed its own Indigenous dance troupe – Boodjar Bidi – meaning country pathways or country tracks. The name captures the wider significance of the educational journey of our Indigenous students. Each one is creating their own track during their time at the School; the more they continue on their path, the sooner it will become a permanent track along which other people from their community will be able to follow.

One of the main goals in establishing the dance troupe was to help students stay connected to their culture while learning and living in a fast-paced world. The dance troupe also helps showcase Indigenous culture and demonstrates that one of the world's oldest living cultures is still strong today.

Boodjar Bidi are in high demand as performers and last year performed for several businesses and schools, including Fortescue Metals Group, Governor Stirling High School and Midvale Primary School. They also performed at the opening of the Anglican Schools' Association Conference held in Perth in 2014, and were once again a huge hit, with teachers amazed at the dancers' confidence and strong performance.

GUILDFORD Grammar School's Indigenous dance troupe, Boodjar Bidi, helps students stay connected to their culture.

Boodjar Bidi represented Guildford Grammar School twice on national television in 2014. Two students were flown to Sydney to appear as special guests on the SBS *Insight* program, and five of the students danced live for the Channel Nine *Today* show, in preparation for the Wardarnji Festival in Fremantle.

Last year, six members of Boodjar Bidi traveled to Singapore to perform alongside the School's rock band and orchestra at a corporate function for our alumni. This was a new experience for many of the boys and provided a wonderful opportunity to showcase their skills and adaptability. It was also a highly visible statement of the status we accord to Indigenous culture in our School. □

STEPHEN WEBBER
HEADMASTER, GUILDFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

CRITICAL ISSUES DAVID SHINKFIELD

FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

David Shinkfield describes how Kormilda College in the Northern Territory has helped encourage aspirations for tertiary study among its remote area Indigenous students.

KORMILDA College is at the forefront of tackling the issues of education and training for remote area Aboriginal young people in the Northern Territory. An independent day and boarding school operating in Darwin, the College offers the International Baccalaureate, the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET), and various vocational education programs.

Indigenous students represent one third of the student body, most of these being the 220 boarders from remote communities across the Top End of Australia. There are many boarding schools in Australia that offer places for remote area Indigenous students, but none match the volume and ambition of Kormilda.

Achievement barriers

Low levels of prior school attendance and a variety of socioeconomic, health and wellbeing factors seriously compromise the chances of remote area Indigenous students in the Northern Territory attending and completing school through to Year 12. Very few transfer and continue studying at a tertiary level. To illustrate the difficulty Indigenous Year 12 students have in completing the NTCET, in 2013 a total of only 174 Indigenous students across the whole of the Northern Territory completed the NTCET.

The table below indicates the Year 12 completion, qualification and ATAR achievement, year by year, for Indigenous students at Kormilda College. In 2013, Kormilda graduates represented 8.6 per cent of the entire cohort of Indigenous NTCET graduates.

In 2011, the NTCET adopted changes in the South Australian Curriculum that introduced a minimum level mathematics and English competency that had a devastating effect on the number of Indigenous completers. Despite this, the numbers of Indigenous students achieving an NTCET pass with an ATAR was alarmingly low. Regardless of aspirations, remote area Indigenous students simply did not choose the combination of subjects to allow them to achieve an ATAR – the means by which all Australian students routinely enter tertiary study.

KORMILDA COLLEGE INDIGENOUS YEAR 12 GRADUATES

	2013	2012	2011*	2010	2009	2008
Total Completers	**27**	**20**	**10**	**16**	**15**	**22**
NTCET pass	15	5	5	14	15	22
ATAR achieved	12	1	1	5	2	5

** First year of new SACE (English and mathematics requirements introduced to pass NTCET)*

The last five years at Kormilda College have signaled a change for Indigenous education, and the completion and NTCET pass rates for 2013 are testament to the enduring hard work of the students and staff; but the biggest difference is in the number of Indigenous Year 12 students who passed their NTCET *and* achieved an ATAR score. Results of this nature, achieved within five years, require major institutional and cultural change, targeted and explicit interventions and strong external partnerships.

Partnership power

A major contributor in supporting and facilitating change has been Charles Darwin University (CDU) through a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) grant. The grant supported the development of an ambitious program called 'Into Uni', with the aim of introducing into schools strategies to improve the aspirations and transfer of remote area Indigenous students into tertiary pathways.

Along with two government schools, Centralian Middle School and Centralian Senior School, Kormilda entered a partnership with CDU to deliver the 'Into Uni' program. Three targeted strategies were introduced in all three schools to support the aims of the project:

1. Introduction of the CDU online learning management system

Students studying at tertiary level routinely use online media to facilitate higher education courses, and students with limited or no exposure to such a

KORMILDA College students benefit from attending open days at Charles Darwin University.

medium are at a serious disadvantage. Coupled with this, cultural commitments in remote communities can often mean students miss a significant amount of face-to-face teaching and learning.

As part of the project, students were introduced to CDU's LMS (Blackboard) and provided with a tablet computing device to facilitate anytime-anywhere learning.

Kormilda's boarding students now access homework and tutorial study out of hours during homework time in their Houses as a means to introducing them to online distance-style learning.

2. Senior student mentoring

Tapping into a network of Kormilda alumni already studying at CDU has proved to have a significant impact on the aspiration and achievement of Indigenous students in Years 10, 11 and 12, many of whom had not previously considered structured learning beyond the compulsory school years.

An added bonus has been the significant number of recent alumni modelling the College mission in service to others beyond the boundary of their schooling years. Although the majority of alumni mentors are non-Indigenous, the values of compassion, justice and understanding that underpin our commitment to reconciliation have allowed for strong cross-cultural bonds to form between students.

Mentors have been provided with cross-cultural awareness professional development through the auspices of the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Education (ACIKE) – a division within Charles Darwin University specifically designated to support Indigenous students and the learning of Indigenous knowledge.

3. CDU campus engagement activities

A number of on-campus and 'on-country' activities, guided by university lecturers and other staff, have been conducted in order to connect students' thinking with learning beyond school.

University campuses are exciting places and most have outstanding facilities; CDU is no exception. Kormilda students have been treated to lectures and seminars in health, law, arts and a number of vocational pathway activities. Most important, however, have been the trips and activities run by ACIKE – connecting students with senior Aboriginal elders studying at CDU, prominent Aboriginal mentors and role models through special talks and lectures, and the other Indigenous students studying at CDU.

The identification of a special place for Indigenous students at university and the help and support that can be obtained through ACIKE has been a lasting link in the minds of students.

Ethos and values

The 'Into Uni' project concludes at the end of 2014, but the strategies for improving Indigenous student transfer into tertiary education will outlive the project. The project is being independently evaluated through CDU's Centre for School Leadership, Learning and Development. (The Centre is a joint venture between CDU and the Northern Territory Government.)

Supporting remote area Indigenous students to achieve at school is a complex business. Collectively, the nation shakes its head at the gap in Indigenous health, education and life expectancy targets. Our experiences at Kormilda College, gained over more than 20 years as one of the largest boarding providers for remote area Indigenous students, indicate that the most important factor in supporting students to achieve is the ethos and values of the school itself – a notion that will not be unfamiliar to the independent school sector. These values are reflected in the resources the school itself expends on disadvantaged students and the partnerships it creates to support the aim of obtaining outcomes. Above all, a culture of high expectations must exist for all students.

As well as its partnership with Charles Darwin University, Kormilda has developed key partnerships with The Smith Family through its Indigenous Youth Leadership Program and with the Clontarf Foundation through the Kormilda College Clontarf Academy.

It is, however, the extraordinary work of the academic, boarding and support staff of Kormilda College – those who embrace the challenge every day (and night) of supporting Australia's most disadvantaged students – that deserves the most encouragement and praise. ■

Kormilda College is a co-educational day and residential secondary school with some 800 students from Years 6 to 12. Principal: Dr Helen Spiers.

David Shinkfield was Principal of Kormilda College from 2009 to February 2014. Later in 2014 he will take up the position of Head Master at the Harrow International School in Beijing.

Trinity Grammar School, Melbourne, Victoria

Trinity Grammar School is an Anglican day and boarding school for boys, with 1340 students from the Early Learning Centre to Year 12. Girls and boys attend the ELC.

Trinity Grammar School is an Anglican school with a commitment to social justice and equity. As part of that commitment we have initiated several programs designed to inform our community on Indigenous issues and offer support to Indigenous communities. We seek to form partnerships of mutual benefit with several communities.

Trinity's Indigenous scholarship program has been in place for several years and began with a partnership with The University of Melbourne ensuring higher education entry for several students. Currently the scholarship program is supported by the school's Council with individual sponsors providing extra resources and places. The scholarship covers all academic costs, including the student's computer. The costs of accommodation, usually in our boarding house, are shared between the family and school.

The scholarship program seeks to create partnerships between the student, his family, his community and the school.

Trinity has several long-standing and successful partnerships in place with Indigenous communities. For 10 years a senior commerce teacher has led 10-day cultural awareness tours to central South Australia to visit the Arabunna community. These awareness tours involve students, parents and community members. Boys become more aware of the social and cultural structure in traditional Aboriginal communities and understand the relationship between the people and their land. Outcomes from this program include the annual Dadirri Dinner, the formation of AAA (an Aboriginal advocacy student group), visits to the school by an Arabunna elder and scholarship recipients from this remote community.

A science teacher from the school travels to the Oenpelli community in Arnhem Land twice a year to conduct science teaching projects for a week each time. He takes a small number of Trinity students as assistants and the outcome of this work has been a greater awareness of the cultural dynamic in remote communities as well as a sense of excitement and enjoyment of science among the Aboriginal students.

Other initiatives and developments include helping Worrawa College in Healseville develop their curriculum, art programs and exhibitions and visits by local elders to improve awareness of Melbourne's Indigenous history. The students at Trinity are the indirect beneficiaries of these initiatives through their improved understanding of Aboriginal identity and culture.

Trinity student, Alex Lawton works with a local student at Oenpelli.

Trinity Headmaster, Mr Rick Tudor with Trinity Indigenous scholars.

Tom Delahunty
Outreach Co-ordinator,
Trinity Grammar School, Kew

Rostrevor College, Adelaide, SA

Rostrevor College is a Catholic day and boarding school for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition. It has 1100 students from Reception to Year 12.

Rostrevor College has an extensive and proud history in supporting Indigenous young people and their families to actively engage in education. Since the 1950s the school has provided a significant number of Reconciliation Scholarships for Indigenous students from regional and remote communities.

In recognition of the College's commitment to Indigenous education, through a rigorous and competitive application process to the Australian Government in 2006, Rostrevor College was selected to establish an Indigenous Sports Academy.[1] The overall objective of the Indigenous Sports Academy is to build on the interest of sport to achieve significant improvement in Indigenous student levels of engagement in and completion of the South Australian Certificate of Education and gain improved post-school opportunities.

The sports foci of the Academy include but are not restricted to athletics, Australian Rules football, cricket, netball, outdoor/environmental recreation and volleyball.

This initiative has increased the annual number of Indigenous Rostrevor College students from 15 to 30 (full-time boarding) and also has allowed for 60 Indigenous students per year, from other Adelaide schools, to participate in a part-time Sports VET program.

The 30 Indigenous Sports Academy students who began the full-time program in 2008 have added to the diversity of Indigenous communities represented in the student cohort. The students originate from a range of urban, remote and regional communities, including the Pilbara, Tiwi Islands, Arnhem Land, Katherine, Alice Springs, Cairns, Thursday Islands, Far North SA and metropolitan Adelaide.

The Academy is managed by an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from key stakeholder organisations and Rostrevor College staff. Three additional staff members from Indigenous backgrounds have been employed by the College to support the initiative.

Strategies have been implemented to improve parental and community involvement with the school and student's schooling.

To maximise the numbers of Indigenous students participating in academy programs the academy delivers a range of sports and related educational programs to three main cohorts of Indigenous secondary students.

The programs incorporate:

- Accredited VET (Vocational Education and Training) Certificate II in Sport (Career-oriented participation) auspiced under an agreement with the partner organisation and Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Sport SA; for part and full-time students.
- Senior Secondary Certificate (SACE) programs/subjects such as Physical Education, Outdoor Education, Community Studies/Individualised programs contextualised within the sport and recreation industry and other non-contextualised general subjects to provide a full SACE package; for full-time students.
- Accredited short courses such as First Aid, Coach Training, Mandatory Notification; for part- and full-time students.
- Sport programs and clinics during non-school times such as weekends and school vacations for 'live-in' short term visiting students; up to 70 young people at a time use the College boarding house for overnight accommodation.

Measures used to monitor the performance and outcomes of the Academy include academic and vocational levels of achievement and completion, retention rates in Academy programs and tracking of exiting students' post-school activities such as employment outcomes, tertiary enrolments and community involvement.

Above: Scholarship students in Rostrevor College's Indigenous Sports Academy program with two of the Indigenous staff. Below: Indigenous students at Rostrevor College.

Rostrevor College has made a whole school commitment to Indigenous students and has worked hard to ensure school is a place where they want to be. The College ensures students are welcomed, valued and recognised and that Aboriginal heritage and culture is celebrated with all the school community to help give students a sense of belonging.

School staff, including teachers, support and boarding house staff, have developed their understanding of the students, acknowledging and working with them to address any learning and/or social and emotional needs. This has been supported through the provision of whole staff professional development with a focus on Indigenous cultural awareness.

Expectations for students are positive and a range of pathways are used to ensure outcomes are maximised. Key people have been identified in the school who work in a respectful and encouraging way with the students. A collaborative team approach is utilised and expertise is sought from a range of people, from within and from outside the College, in order to best understand and support work with the students to ultimately improve student post-school outcomes. ■

Vincent Fleming
Director, Rostrevor Learning Community, Rostrevor College

[1] The Academies are funded under the Australian Government's Sporting Chance program. Further information is at www.dest.gov.au/sectors/indigenous_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/sporting_chance_programme/default.htm

Jessica de Campo

Across two worlds

Indigenous students in Victorian secondary boarding schools

As part of her Masters of Research (Education) program at Monash University, Jessica de Campo assessed the experience of Indigenous students boarding in three AHISA members' schools in Victoria. She surveyed the students, their parents, school Heads and staff and found that the programs offered by the schools have a significant role to play in Indigenous education through their contribution to processes of empowerment and social capital formation.

Aboriginal activist Noel Pearson recently wrote, 'Our vision in Cape York Peninsula is that our children be able to "orbit" between two worlds and have the best of both' (Pearson 2009:61). This comment articulates an emerging approach to Indigenous education.

The recent proliferation of programs for Indigenous students in Victorian boarding schools highlights a nascent shift in approach to Indigenous education in Australia. Whilst Indigenous students have participated in independent school boarding programs for many decades, anecdotal evidence suggests that the scale of current participation is unprecedented. These programs, which select Indigenous young people to study in southern secondary schools, are part of a broader conceptual shift in thinking within the Australian Indigenous establishment and a bold response to decades of failure to educate Indigenous students.

Indigenous young people's tendencies to leave school early, their apparent difficulties adjusting to working life and resultant vulnerability to mental health problems, criminal activity, drug abuse and other social welfare issues (Ogilvie & Van Zyl and Walker & McDonald in Schwab 2006:3) have prompted urgent calls for policy and education options that will re-engage such young people (Schwab 2006:3). The development of numerous Indigenous student programs in boarding schools is a response, in part, to these calls.

Study findings

A recent study conducted at three Victorian independent boarding schools examined the experience of Indigenous students at these schools, as well as the experiences of the school staff. The research involved interviews with 30 Indigenous students, 20 school staff and 10 parents or caregivers across the three schools. The focus was specifically on remote and rural Indigenous students, although urban Indigenous students were also interviewed.

The findings of the study were overwhelmingly positive: Indigenous student programs have a significant role to play in the Indigenous Australian context through their contribution to processes of empowerment and social capital formation. The educational implications of these programs justify their inclusion in Indigenous education thinking, and when done well they represent a significant pathway to educational opportunity and life choice for young Indigenous people.

Three significant issues emerged from the hours of data collected in discussions with students, staff and parents.

1. The search for a 'good education'

The Indigenous students and families interviewed in this study indicated that they were not assured access to high quality education in their home community or even necessarily within their state or territory and that Indigenous students coming to Victorian boarding schools and their families are primarily motivated by a desire to find 'better' quality education.

All students interviewed indicated that they were in Victoria attending school in order to access a 'good education', which they consistently referred to as being different from the education they had previously received. Students spoke about 'hard work', 'better resources', 'learn[ing] more', 'consequences' and 'finish Year 12' when referring to their education at Victorian secondary boarding schools. When describing their previous schools, students used words and phrases such as 'not the best', 'small', 'slack' and 'baby work'. The majority of student participants used the word 'boring' when talking about their former school.

The significance of students relocating to the opposite end of the country – in

In the case of Indigenous students, schooling provision must be administered with heightened empathy and with resources to match school leaderships' expectations.

some cases for a number of years – in order to access what they see as a good secondary education should not be lost on government or Indigenous policy makers. With the philanthropic and independent sectors showing increasing interest and success in their endeavours to overcome the Indigenous achievement gap (Langton & Ma Rhea 2009:102), this study suggests that Indigenous parents and students will continue to seek out independent schools willing and able to provide a 'good education'.

2. Targeting greatest need

All of the schools involved in this research were thoughtful and to varying extents uncertain about whether to prioritise scholarships for remote or local Indigenous students. All of the case study schools had a combination of students from both geographic locations, and all reported that supporting their remote Indigenous students had been more challenging.

This is not to say, however, that remote students should not be supported by secondary boarding schools in Victoria. Until gaps in the education system for remote Indigenous students are plugged, Victorian schools will continue to be an attractive and critical option for remote students and their families. Likewise, schools reported they felt a moral imperative to support remote students, even over rural students:

> 'Kids who have come here from [rural Victoria and NSW], you could argue that their needs will be met with the system as it is anyway . . . the much greater need is there for the remote kids, because the gap between where they are and where we would like all Australians to be is that much bigger.' (School staff member)

This study suggests that in a number of cases there are distinct benefits to remote Indigenous students attending Victorian schools, such as opportunities to gain confidence interacting with the non-Indigenous community, the nurturing of a positive attitude to study and health and being surrounded by a high expectation cohort.

These features could all be considered protective layers and benefits of enhanced social capital (Greenwald et al 2006:7) that have heightened significance for remote students given concerning data about their wellbeing and engagement in earning or learning. Data from the report, *How young people are faring* (Lamb & Robinson 2009) suggests that only 33 per cent of rural and remote Indigenous youth are engaged in learning; their unemployment rate is 26 per cent; and 52 per cent of young people in remote locations have no post-school qualifications.

If Victorian secondary boarding schools offer scholarships to remote students they must be willing to support this decision with a range of measures and sufficient resourcing. Particularly, they must be prepared to commit the time (many years) and effort to build partnerships and understanding with remote communities and family members. Likewise, community members must reciprocate in the partnership by ensuring that their children are – to borrow Noel Pearson's phrase – 'school ready', and provide support for their children when they come to Victoria.

3. Measuring success

All of the case study schools were critically engaged in thinking about what success meant and would look like, particularly for their remote community students. The narratives in this study point to the ability of independent schools to broaden their understanding of student success beyond purely academic measures.

When discussing criteria by which they would define the success of their Indigenous student program, schools offered a range of possible answers. These included tangible measures, such as student retention and Year 12 graduation and university admission. Non-tangible measures were also discussed at all schools, such as providing 'safety', increasing students' self confidence and offering them 'pathways'. 'Success in life' was the ultimate outcome for the Principal at one school.

The issue of success is ultimately not particular to the Indigenous students, as their host schools discussed in this study:

> 'I would say that every child is an individual, and as I look at every kid in this year level, I would have the same approach to Indigenous students. What our outcomes for these children are is what individually meets their needs.' (School staff member)

A better understanding of individual students' needs – where students come from, what their aspirations may be and what they need to achieve them – is ultimately the measure of success for schools engaged in Indigenous student programs, as it is for all schools engaged in the delivery of caring, high quality education. This may be somewhat more challenging in the case of Indigenous students from remote communities arriving in a different milieu in Victoria, who are likely to have some needs which are novel to Victorian schools, but schools must accept this challenge and be able to apply the same standard of individual care to these students as they would

Students' families and communities must give assurances that support for their children will persist despite prolonged absences.

aspire to give to the rest of their charges. The research project suggests that schools should approach this commitment with empathy and common sense.

Strong foundations

The narratives of both staff and students involved in Indigenous student programs suggest several common factors as being important in the success and wellbeing of Indigenous students in southern schools:

- Independent schools should be confident to continue to do business as usual, because that business is good business.
- In the case of Indigenous students, schooling provision must be administered with heightened empathy and with resources to match school leaderships' expectations.
- Independent schools in Victoria should foster their Indigenous students' confident and positive self identities as they would for all students.
- Students' families and communities must give assurances that support for their children will persist despite prolonged absences.

Without family and community support Indigenous young people face a barbed choice, and Victorian programs will be little more than a narrow window on opportunity and ultimately not sustainable. When done in this spirit of partnership and promise, and when adequately resourced, Indigenous student programs have the potential to give Indigenous youth the resources to choose the 'good life', as defined by them.

Despite potential critics and the pervasiveness of the 'breaking up families' rhetoric, the research project indicates that Indigenous programs in Victorian secondary boarding schools can empower Indigenous young people through the facilitation of a significant choice between a mainstream, high quality education and poor educational access in their home communities.

Indigenous student programs in Victorian schools recognise the reality of Indigenous educational disadvantage but choose to focus on the possibilities for youth development rather than the deficit or assimilationist agendas of the past. Conducted in partnership with Indigenous communities they represent a new, more positive and empowering chapter in the history of Indigenous education policy in Australia. ■

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SURVEY RESPONSES

[In the Northern Territory] there's a lack of education. Our children are separated from other students. I want them to mix with other people. I've seen so many kids finish Year 12 without achieving like mainstream. When they finish at school up here they are still shy and don't know how to read or write properly. **Remote community parent**

I think that we're not going to be able to solve everything in one go … this is a long-term business. **Principal**

We can do good for Indigenous kids but we can also do good for our kids. It's humanising stuff. **Staff member**

It's changed what I really want to do. It's good. I was like 'I want to do that' but now I'm like 'I could do that, or that, or that'. It's just a bit more open. 'Cause I never really thought about other options. I was at [a regional school for Indigenous students] before, when no one's really thinking about options. **Student**

Success comes in different forms and your expectation of what is going to be a successful program certainly isn't going to be how you're eventually to measure it. **Staff member**

I would say that every child is an individual, and as I look at every kid in this year level, I would have the same approach to Indigenous students. What our outcomes for these children are is what individually meets their needs. **Staff member**

We sometimes had discussions about allowing these kids to celebrate and recognise their Indigenous heritage and how can we do that … and then we recognised that we didn't have to worry about them having an identity as an Indigenous person. They're an Indigenous person, they know that. There is never an issue about them being an Indigenous person; they were very comfortable with who they were and where they came from. As a kid from Thailand was comfortable with who they were. **Staff member**

High expectations

John Wenitong and Preben Mindamarra of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership explain the Institute's Higher Expectations secondary scholarship program for Indigenous students.

The aim of Cape York Institute's (CYI) Higher Expectations program (HEP) for secondary students is to develop the capability of future leaders from Cape York. The program identifies and supports academically talented Indigenous students from throughout the Cape, Palm Island and Yarrabah communities so that they can complete secondary education and progress to university studies.

Sponsored by Macquarie Group Foundation, the program covers tuition and boarding fees so that the identified students can attend boarding schools in Queensland with a demonstrated record of high academic achievement in their students.

How it began

The original concept for HEP came from talks Noel Pearson, CYI Director, had with his then protégé Tania Major from the Cape York community of Kowanyama. The fact that both Noel and Tania had successfully completed secondary school and progressed into further tertiary education while 'orbiting' away from home to Brisbane-based boarding schools was seen to be a catalyst for some genuine success in an area that showed very little success at all.

In Far North Queensland (FNQ) as few as six per cent of students complete Year 12. Many Indigenous leaders and educationalists felt that there was going to be a vacuum of academically qualified youth from Cape York in the near future unless something practical was done to change the lack of school completion and retention rates for Indigenous youth going on to secondary and tertiary pathways.

John Wenitong, a Kabi Kabi descendant who had been living and working in a Cape York community, joined CYI in January 2005 and began to put the program together with support from the Queensland and Australian governments. Macquarie Bank Foundation, now Macquarie Group Foundation (MGF), were also interested in the possibility of providing support. With John, MGF staff visited several communities to appreciate the issues of remoteness and the 'community' life Indigenous students experience. This empathetic partnership has since developed into a $5.5 million sponsorship of HEP, with funding agreements ongoing until 2011.

Brisbane-based Griffith University, which handles the financial accounting for CYI, also expressed interest in supporting the HEP concept and has generously taken on the role of financial accounting for HEP, handling funds from sponsor MGF and all payments in support of the program and participants.

John then began Indigenous capacity building for the program, again with the generous support of MGF, to train and develop Indigenous people in the management and maintenance of such a program. John believes that a very important aspect to creating a successful long-term program in any area of Indigenous advancement is equally about supporting Indigenous experience, knowledge and growth in the management and maintenance of such a program. It is also an important means of giving examples to participating youth that Indigenous people can operate and manage programs for their people.

The learning opportunities for staff within HEP are invaluable as the work allows interaction with many areas of Australian trade, commerce and industry, various levels of business and government and with corporate and philanthropic organisations.

Success factors

HEP senior staff realised fairly quickly that just having a place at a high-outcome boarding school was not enough. Support strategies that create an environment in which the student and school staff are both cross-culturally knowledgeable and as comfortable as possible are important for good learning outcomes and student retention.

The program uses professional and private tutors, mentors, role models, weekend

home stay families and counsellors to support students as they transition from remote community life. MGF staff have also been involved with the students in organising extra-curricular activities, including trips to Dream World and facilitating a student exchange program to Japan.

We have also developed a handbook for partner schools with information designed to assist boarding school staff who have little knowledge of Indigenous and remote issues. This booklet has been utilised nationally and is available for use in any interested school on request. Cultural awareness sessions and other materials are also made available to the schools involved.

As well as a wide range of services to help students achieve once they are enrolled, HEP provides much of the assistance and support that parents and guardians need to send their children to boarding schools.

Another reason for successful completion, retention and enthusiasm of students is the education and awareness in issues of Indigenous identity. HEP has found that with the building of pride in being Indigenous, participants have a foundation to support them through the difficult times and that youth who are ashamed of being Indigenous have lesser chance of success in achieving goals.

Professional management strategies underpin the success of the program. With MGF support, we have completed two levels of evaluation, the results of which are currently being incorporated into the HEP vision and support strategies.

Finally, we understand our program is not the only way to achieve success in creating academically qualified future leaders in Australia and we work closely, although unofficially, with Education Queensland (EQ), EQ's Indigenous student support unit, Catholic Education, the Yalari scholarship, the Federal Government's IYLP scholarship program, Djarragun College, St Joseph's Indigenous scholarship program and institutions like Chris Sarra's Leadership Institute to ensure we get the best advice and best practice policies included in HEP support strategies.

Preben Mindamarra (centre) and John Wenitong (far right) with HEP students from Weipa, Mossman, Kowanyama and Lockhart River.

Results

Now in its third year, HEP has 35 students in top-tier boarding schools: Clayfield College, Lourdes Hill College, Marist College Ashgrove, Brisbane Grammar School, St Peter's Lutheran College and Stuartholme School (2009) in Brisbane; Rockhampton Girls Grammar School; The Cathedral School in Townsville; Columba Catholic College at Charters Towers; and Trinity Anglican School in Cairns.

The support structure for students built into the program has helped deliver a very strong retention rate. In late 2007, the program reached a significant milestone, with the first cohort of students graduating from Year 12, bringing the total graduates from the program to five. The students are all either in employment or pursuing further education in business, criminology, law, politics and early childhood studies.

Two students from the program hold leadership positions within their school communities, as boarding captains at Lourdes Hill College (2007) and Clayfield College (2008).

HEP sponsor, Macquarie Group Foundation, also supports students by organising extra-curricular activities.

A national vision

HEP's driving force is the very real fact that there will be a vacuum of qualified leaders to lead Indigenous Australia into the future if we do not offer best practice support for our youth now. We believe young Indigenous Australians in remote areas are at a desperation stage in their education and that action is required to ensure we give them best practice opportunities for the advancement of our people as equal and strong future Australian leaders.

Our long-term goal is to expand the program to other regions throughout Australia, giving Indigenous students from outside Cape York the opportunity to attend leading boarding schools and potentially to progress to university. This has begun in the Northern Territory and, dependent on corporate and philanthropic support, we hope that in 2009 10 NT youth will start along the same path as Queensland's HEP participants. ■

John Wenitong is CYI's National Indigenous Education Development Officer, with oversight for development and expansion of CYI's education projects. Preben Mindamarra is HEP (Secondary) Manager at CYI. Originally from WA, and a FNQ resident for over 25 years, Preben is acknowledged for changing attitudes toward the advancement of Queensland's remote Indigenous youth in all relevant HEP service providers.

For further information about HEP (Secondary), contact Preben Mindamarra at preben.mindamarra@cyi.org.au, or John Wenitong at john.wenitong@cyi.org.au. Telephone contact for CYI is 07 4046 0600.

Deadly Murris

John Wenitong, National Indigenous Education Development Officer at CYI, has produced a series of DVD recordings of interviews with successful Indigenous Australians to encourage Indigenous pride in young people. Called 'Deadly Murris Encourage Murri Youth', the series covers interviews with Indigenous people from around Australia, including writer and artist Sally Morgan, Johnny Gulam Targan (actor, artist and PhD candidate), Leisa McCarthy (nutritionist and research fellow) and Gary Thomas (Director of Indigenous Education, La Trobe University). Further information about the DVDs is available from John at john.wenitong@cyi.org.au.

CRITICAL ISSUES MARK MORRISON

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Mark Morrison, Principal of Macleay Vocational College, South Kempsey, NSW, describes how the College adapts its offerings to give the greatest possible support to students.

AT MACLEAY Vocational College (MVC), one of the most important things we do as an organisation is to revisit our vision every six months. Many of our students must overcome immense personal trauma and social challenges to achieve their goals, and to regularly remind ourselves of our own objective – to provide an environment that is both supportive and flexible where students can develop a sense of belonging, pride, personal identity and cultural awareness – this keeps us agile and adaptive in meeting students' needs.

First steps

MVC offers Year 9 to Year 12 programs that enable students to earn a NSW Record of School Achievement (RoSA) certificate or sit the Higher School Certificate. We have an emphasis on courses that help prepare students to transition from school to work through first-hand experiences of educational success.

Whatever our students' learning journey may be, we work hard to support them in every aspect of their holistic journey. That journey begins with a basic and essential step: attendance.

First, we help them get to College. Some of our students come from areas not serviced by public transport or, if public transport is available, they are made to feel unwelcome and anxious if they use it. We have two buses – one a 14-seater and the other an 8-seater – out on the road from 8.30am collecting students. (We have plans to buy another second-hand 14-seater bus as we now have around 95 students.)

The next essential is food. Not all of our students have regular food sources, so we provide breakfast, recess snacks and vouchers for lunch. Students can also help themselves at any time to cereal packs, milk-based 'meal' drinks and fruit from my office. At one point, we tried a yarning circle over breakfast, but found the delay in starting class was counter-productive. Students are now in class by 9.00am – and they take their breakfast in with them. It works, although we may have to replace the carpets more often!

In class time, one teacher is assigned what we call 'walk around' duty. Their job is to help students stay on task. If someone is lacking motivation, the teacher talks with them, acknowledges their circumstances – whether that is fatigue because they had nowhere to sleep the night before, domestic violence, drug abuse or some other problem – and find for them a positive step forward. That might be taking the student out of maths class at that time and setting them to work on an art project instead – something that will help the student gain a sense of achievement for that day.

We also encourage attendance with what amounts to a savings plan. Students who attend 80 per cent or more of their classes are eligible to receive the equivalent of a 50 per cent refund on each term's fee of $200. Students have the opportunity to save up to $400 each year – possibly their only such opportunity. One student recently used her savings to buy an iPad. While the iPad can be used only at the College (only two of our students have internet access at home), it is a much-prized reward for successful attendance.

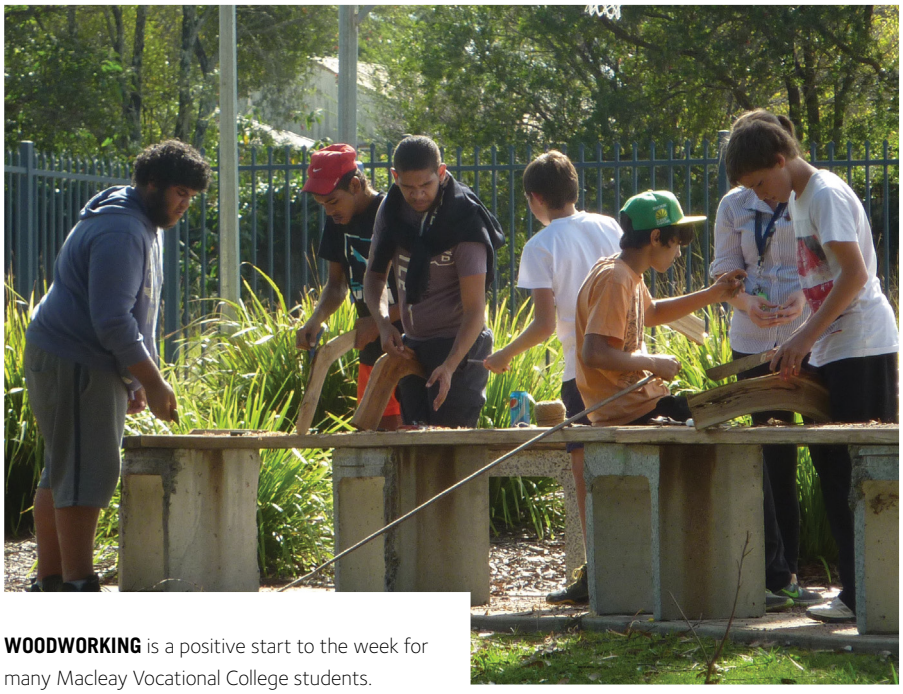
Curriculum and timetable

We strive to meet each student at the point of their learning needs, and that may entail addressing not just their level of knowledge but their preparedness to learn.

For example, we schedule woodwork only of a Monday. We have a number of students interested in working in wood – not least because we have a master craftsman whose background is in boat building to work with the students. Those students therefore have a great incentive to start the week off with their best attitude.

We also look for courses that have a health requirement, as an incentive for students to reduce their addictive behaviours. For example, we offer a world-certified scuba diving course as part of marine studies. To participate in that course, students cannot test positive for drugs or alcohol. This venture has been hugely successful. There have been a number of young people who have completed the Certificate I course in the last three years and some are now doing their night dive to gain Certificate II. One of our teachers is on his way to gaining Certificate III so that he can take over teaching of the course, and some of the local elders are investigating the possibility of establishing a local dive business for young people to move towards.

Adaptations to our timetable help sustain attendance over a full week. There are six periods on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays but only



WOODWORKING is a positive start to the week for many Macleay Vocational College students.

five on Thursdays and Fridays, with later starts on those two days as well. The timetable is also structured to ensure that intensive, sit-down learning is relieved by physical education or something that has a practical or creative component. Back to back, mentally draining classes are often the cause of students' frustrations, which in turn may lead to students finding themselves in the behavioural bad books and excluded from education.

We work with students to help them keep improving their personal bests, in all aspects of life and in their academic studies, and we actively look for opportunities for them to experience success so that their confidence continues to grow. For example, we hold our Year 12 graduation in September, before students sit the HSC, because we recognise the milestone of qualifying to sit. Many of our students are the first in their family to reach Year 12 or even attend school regularly so, regardless of their exam results, these students are demonstrating outstanding commitment and extraordinary achievement that is worthy of celebration. In 2014 we had nine students sit their HSC exams, one of whom gave birth to her first child only four days later.

Community

We have found that one of the most important things we do is behave as active members of the community, meeting the community's needs rather than just expecting the community to support us. For example, we don't have typical opening and closing times. The College remains open until I leave at night; not just our own students, but students from primary schools in the area know they can come into my office and grab a box of cereal for dinner. We don't close during term breaks, as many students or children from the area come to College anyway, so we are available to offer food and course opportunities for our students. There are always people here; even of a Christmas morning we host a BBQ for the community.

We have other BBQ days for the community, when students can bring a friend or an aunty or uncle to share the meal, have a photo taken (as they don't have family photos) or even teach their guest how to use a computer or print a T-shirt. That is incredibly powerful.

The elders are welcomed to share women's and men's business with the students. Some of the women elders have set up a sewing class and teach our students skills and share other knowledge with them, too. Recently we invited local elders from the Valley land councils to the College to talk to students; 47 elders came together (a remarkable occurrence in itself) and spoke to students about behaviours befitting a proud Aboriginal person.

All of these occasions, big and small, help build a sense of belonging for our students, a sense of place.

For me as Principal, helping to create a sense of belonging means supporting students beyond the College grounds – including at police stations or in court or at juvenile justice centres. Sometimes, helping students define their sense of place means providing opportunities for them to explore beyond this place.

At the end of each term we offer activities the students may never have done before – paddle boarding, rock climbing, going on a three-day trek up-river. We take them to Coffs Harbour – only an hour and a bit away, but most of our students have never been there. We take them to see their first movie in a cinema at Port Macquarie. We support their efforts to give back to the wider community: last year students undertook a 17 km walk to raise funds for Westmead Children's Hospital.

Unfortunately these opportunities are not fully funded by governments, and too much of my time is spent writing grant applications. Taking students on individual learning pathways that are built upon multiple successes, one small step after another, costs a lot more than governments can realistically provide. It demands intense commitment from staff, who must constantly adapt to the unique circumstances of each student. Fortunately for me and the students, we have such a dedicated staff. Their authentic contribution is a large part of why we all have a strong sense of belonging at MVC. ■

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

The Armidale School, Armidale, NSW

The Armidale School is a coeducational day school from pre-Kindergarten to Year 5, and a day and boarding school for boys in Years 6 to 12; it has 600 students, including 200 boarders. Headmaster: Mr Murray Guest.

FOR most of its 15 years, Minimbah Primary School has been separated from its much older neighbour, The Armidale School (TAS), by only a few suburban blocks, but a gulf of understanding. That gulf began to narrow in 2010 as meaningful collaboration developed from a grassroots initiative by staff at both schools. The goodwill, trust and conviction that it was based on has deeply influenced the culture of TAS and benefitted not just students and staff from both schools, but also the wider Armidale community.

While both are independent schools, TAS and Minimbah are culturally and historically very different. Minimbah provides educational opportunities for students from a low socio-economic background, most of whom are Aboriginal. TAS was established 120 years ago to serve grazing and farming families from the New England and north west regions of NSW, and is the only regional member of the NSW GPS.

In 2010, TAS English teacher Barney Buntine approached Minimbah's Principal Carolyn Briggs to ask if some of his senior students could help her young Indigenous boys and girls with their reading. More than just an opportunity for some regular, local and meaningful community service, it was also a way of forming closer relationships with the Armidale Aboriginal community and shifting perceptions.

Initially, senior TAS students went to Minimbah on a weekly basis to read and play games. Reading and playing has remained the cornerstone of the program because the intimacy of one-to-one reading or play builds relationships better than anything else.

CAROLYN BRIGGS
PRINCIPAL,
MINIMBAH PRIMARY SCHOOL, ARMIDALE, NSW

The relationship between Minimbah and The Armidale School is based on mutual respect and a willingness to learn from each other. This is being noticed by community members more and more through the combined events that have occurred. The opportunities that are becoming evident for Minimbah students and the respect shown by TAS staff and students are often commented on.

Much has been learned by all staff watching the growth in the students and seeing that reconciliation can happen.

It is important to note that this relationship started and has blossomed because of a conversation. Sometimes we just have to step out of our comfort zones and be willing to talk and listen. □

Minimbah Primary School is an independent day school with 55 students from pre-Kindergarten to Year 6; 95 per cent of students are Indigenous.

THE Armidale School and Minimbah Primary School are together creating a model of reconciliation through connection and collaboration.

From this foundation other programs have developed. During summer terms, Minimbah students visit TAS for swimming lessons and play with senior boys.

Minimbah and the TAS Junior School now run a joint athletics carnival each year, boosting competition opportunities for the better athletes of both schools and providing social interaction for all. As a result, Minimbah athletes now have a pathway to representative honours (via the North Coast Independent Schools championships) which they did not have previously.

The schools also hold combined National Day of Healing and NAIDOC Week activities, with many of these being student-run. Minimbah students attend music and drama performances at TAS and the TAS Senior Band has performed for Minimbah's two classes and 'jammed' with the younger students.

In 2011, the two schools were successful with a joint application to the Association of Independent Schools of NSW for funding a project to further the cooperation.

Kindergarten and Year 4 teachers from TAS have visited Minimbah and hosted reciprocal visits, allowing teachers from both schools the opportunity to observe and participate in each other's classroom activities, exchange ideas, and share teaching practices.

For TAS staff, this has helped their understanding of the contemporary Aboriginal experience, which has been particularly pertinent with a strong growth in the number of Aboriginal students at TAS in recent years. TAS now has 14 Aboriginal boarders, including three students previously at Minimbah, and there is no doubt that the influence of these boys has had a strong and positive impact on the perceptions and attitudes of the TAS student community.

The collaboration with Minimbah and TAS's other Indigenous partnerships have been very favourably supported by members of our broader school community. As an example, last year three of the School's Old Boys set up the 'TAS Indigenous Student Support Fund' to help with the cost of extra expenses and excursions not otherwise covered by bursaries. The fund has attracted considerable support from former students and parents.

There is no doubt our collaboration with Minimbah has been transformative on many fronts. Our boys who visit Minimbah feel privileged to be involved in such a program and know they are part of something special. More broadly, TAS is culturally a more inclusive and respectful place than in the past, something that aligns well with our strategic plan that puts holistic wellbeing up front and centre of all that we do. Barriers that had been held in place by stereotyped belief systems have been dismantled by real relationships, and TAS is a better place for it. This is something that could not have happened without personal contact and the power of new friendships. □

MURRAY GUEST
HEADMASTER, THE ARMIDALE SCHOOL

Mark Doecke

Remote community Indigenous education

The Rev. Mark Doecke, Principal of Yirara College in Alice Springs, reports on Yirara's assistance in the re-establishment of Nyangatjatjara College in central Australia.

Located in the south-west of the Northern Territory is Nyangatjatjara College, a small non-government secondary school for Indigenous students. The College began in the late 90s by setting up a main campus (including boarding facilities) at Yulara (near Ayers Rock), and operating three small one-teacher schools at the Pitjantjatjara speaking communities of Imanpa (180 km east of Uluru), Mutitjulu (at the base of Uluru) and Docker River (230 km west of Uluru).

During its short history the College has struggled. Poor governance structure, inexperienced management, a high staff turnover, low student and staff morale, and poor student attendance have all dogged the College for much of its life. So much so, that in 2006 the Nyangatjatjara Corporation (which owns the school) was put under administration.

The school, however, has potential. Governments have put considerable

Yirara College teacher, James Russell, with his family and students at the Docker River campus of Nyangatjatjara College.

money into the College, Pitjantjatjara families like the idea of having their own college and there are great prospects for students to gain work experience and training leading to real jobs at Yulara – in hospitality, the National Park, mechanics and more.

Unlike Nyangatjatjara College, Yirara College educates Indigenous students out of their country. Located in Alice Springs, Yirara is a coeducational residential school for Indigenous students from the surrounding remote communities. The school provides vocational and educational development programs to Indigenous students from Years 7 to 10. The school has a strong religious emphasis and is part of the Finke River Mission Inc, which operates under the auspices of the Lutheran Church of Australia. We have 180 students on campus at any one time, but in the course of a year see around 380 students.

In mid 2007, Yirara College was invited to 'manage' Nyangatjatjara College 'for a period of time' – to stabilise the operation, to give local communities a chance to talk about how to get the College functioning properly again, and to think about how they want the College run. In effect the relationship is a 'partnership' where Yirara is assisting what is a small and fragile school.

The Pitjantjatjara people of the area are happy about this arrangement. Most are Lutheran and identify closely with the Lutheran Church. At recent meetings and consultations they have clearly said they want Nyangatjatjara to be 'like Yirara' – with Christian staff, devotions and Christian perspectives in the curriculum.

Many Pitjantjatjara people also have had a long association with Yirara. For a long time now, Yirara has been undertaking the challenging work of educating secondary-aged Indigenous teenagers with very low English literacy levels. Most important for families, some of our key staff members have stayed a long time, and the families feel they know and can trust Yirara staff.

At the beginning of 2008, after being closed for 18 months, the boarding house at Nyangatjatjara's Yulara campus re-opened to a small group of girls aged 15 years or older. The College has a curriculum focused on basic English literacy (some 17 year old girls currently enrolled cannot read or write their own names) and on vocational courses. The head of campus is a very experienced Lutheran educator and school leader, Mrs Gail Donaldson. Her husband, Bill, is teaching at the school, and other Yirara staff members have re-located to both Yulara and Docker River to help re-build the College.

Nyangatjatjara College students, Docker River.

It has been a challenging year for the new management and staff of Nyangatjatjara College. The challenges include:

- The difficulty of attracting quality long-term staff. Long-term funding is not guaranteed for a school which has low student numbers and is costly to run. There is a teacher shortage in remote areas of the country. Accommodation provided by Voyages at the Yulara Resort for College staff is sometimes fairly ordinary.
- Student attendance is irregular. There are so many reasons for this, ranging from community and family dysfunction and mobility, to traditional cultural practices whereby families are not able to 'make' their children attend school.
- The behaviour of the girls has been, at times, very difficult for staff to manage. Violence towards staff, abusive language and frequent attempts to run away from school (including stealing College vehicles, even a bus, to do so) is very wearing for the small band of committed staff.

The last point raises a number of significant issues for the education of Indigenous students from remote communities. Some of the students at Nyangatjatjara College this year have previously attended Yirara College in Alice Springs. Their behaviour, however, was never as bad at Yirara as what it has been at Nyangatjatjara College. It seems that some of this difference can be attributed to students being 'in their own country'.

When students are at Yirara they are forced to mix with Aboriginal students from a diversity of country and language. This moderates their behaviour and assists them to gain vital social skills. The larger size of Yirara, and the large numbers of non-Indigenous staff, as well as the proximity to Alice Springs, mean students have to learn how to operate in mainstream society and within the English language far more than is required of them if they remain in their own country.

Over the years there have always been those who have argued that Indigenous students should be educated in their own country. When they leave their country to go away to school they become homesick. Stories are frequently told of the large numbers of students who leave their country to go away to school and soon return. This was one of the reasons for the establishment of Nyangatjatjara College. And now there are plans to build more local boarding schools in or near remote communities in the Northern Territory.

Our experience, so far, in managing Nyangatjatjara College, would suggest caution in assuming that local schools and colleges are the only and best answer to Indigenous education. On the contrary, our experience lends weight to the need for initiatives such as the Cape York Institute's Higher Expectations program (see previous story). Similarly, well struc-

Nyangatjatjara College students, Docker River.

tured boarding programs in interstate independent schools offer opportunities to Indigenous students that can never be matched in local community schools. Even Yirara College, where all students are of Indigenous background, cannot match the level of highly focused education and social programs that mainstream independent boarding schools can offer. When our students have to mix with non-Indigenous students on a daily basis they have the potential to learn so much more than when they remain in a fairly narrow Indigenous groove.

For these reasons we are considering whether we should be looking for a boarding school to partner with Yirara in its work for the Nyangatjatjara College communities.

Nyangatjatjara College is small and every enrolment makes a difference financially, as well as socially. The school is fragile. Students have extremely low literacy levels. Can mainstream boarding schools provide the level of educational and social support our students need? Will the students be too homesick? Will the families be prepared to go without seeing their children for 10 weeks at a time? After all, that is why they supported the setting up of Nyangatjatjara College in the first place. These are just a few of the questions such a venture raises.

At the end of the day, however, much of the issue of remote community Indigenous education has to do with regular and sustained attendance at school, whether it be locally or interstate. Yet, by and large, Aboriginal families in remote communities do not have the cultural mechanisms to make their students go to school. One of the advantages of boarding schools far from home is that attendance at school is for longer and more intense periods of time. The Australian Government's proposal to link welfare payments to school attendance could prove to be another useful strategy, and deserves genuine consideration if it is found to support the education of young Indigenous people.

The key to success for Indigenous children is to ensure they stay at school for the long haul and complete their education. But that's another story… ■

To find out more about Yirara College's work with Nyangatjatjara College or explore ways to assist, contact Mark Doecke at mdoecke@yirara.nt.edu.au

CROSS-CULTURAL COLLABORATION

Christ Church Grammar School, Claremont, WA

Christ Church Grammar School is a day and boarding school for boys with 1580 students from pre-primary to Year 12. Headmaster: Mr Garth Wynne.

CHRIST Church Grammar School currently has 16 Indigenous students, from Years 7 to 12, on residential scholarships. These boys are predominantly from the Kimberley region. To complement the scholarship program, our Headmaster Garth Wynne sought a mutually beneficial relationship that would support Aboriginal communities 'where they were'.

A conversation with the Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA), Valerie Gould, led to a further conversation with Helen Unwin, Principal of Yakanarra Community School in the Kimberleys. Since then, the relationship between the schools has blossomed.

Yakanarra Community School is a part of the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools network in WA. It has about 40 students, ranging in ages from four to 15 and is the heart of the Yakanarra community. The School was the initiative of community elders who wanted to create a school which embraced their traditional Walmajarri culture and also worked in partnership with the expectations of 'whitefella culture'. The community is classified as remote, and is about two hours' drive south of Fitzroy Crossing and just over six hours from Broome.

In 2011, Christ Church senior librarian Greg Lindorff lent his expertise to the Yakanarra Community School's library. He reorganised books, created a more user-friendly system and developed a database in consultation with the Yakanarra staff. The Christ Church Senior Library also sent resources to Yakanarra to augment their library collection and, during the National

CLASSES at Yakanarra Community School and Christ Church Grammar School shared their participation in Literacy and Numeracy Week.

Year of Reading, both the Senior and Preparatory Schools at Christ Church held a free dress day where monies raised went to the Yakanarra community.

In early 2012, Head of Christ Church Senior School, Roger Bayly, and Indigenous Program Co-ordinator Jamie Foster travelled to Yakanarra to get a taste of Kimberley life and learn more about the Community School. They began a dialogue on how the relationship between the two schools could play a part in the future of service learning opportunities for boys at Christ Church. They also discussed future exchanges and boarding possibilities for students and staff at both schools.

At Christ Church Grammar School, teaching staff as well as students are given opportunities to follow paths that relate to their individual interests. It is in this spirit that I was given the opportunity to live and work in Yakanarra for the duration of Term 3 in 2012 as part of my postgraduate studies in early childhood education.

This exchange had a positive impact on students from both schools and, through the use of multimedia and a letter writing program, united two very different groups of children.

In Yakanarra I kept an internet blog so that my Year 3 students at Christ Church could check regularly for updates and photos of what life was like in the Kimberley and see the children and activities of the Community School. Rachel Sykes, who took the Christ Church class for Term 3, also compiled a DVD featuring photos and video of what the class had been up to and included messages from the boys to Yakanarra. The children in Yakanarra loved looking at the images of the class so far away in Perth and noticing the kinds of things that were similar and different about their school life.

During Literacy and Numeracy Week, the Year 2 and 3 classes at Christ Church and my junior class in Yakanarra participated in the simultaneous story reading of *Pearl Barley and Charlie Parsley* using the internet resources provided by the Literacy and Numeracy Week website. Photos were then exchanged of each class reading the story – the nine students in Yakanarra looking at a laptop screen and the Christ Church classes of 26 boys viewing the website on their interactive white boards.

At the end of Term 3, Jamie Foster returned to Yakanarra along with three Year 11 boys from Christ Church as part of the Senior School service learning program. During the week-long visit, the boys acted as mentors as well as welcome playmates to children at Yakanarra. They also engaged proactively in the community, by helping to maintain the community vegetable garden and assisting with the controlled burning of dry vegetation that posed a potential fire risk to the community.

In October 2012, a federally-funded visit to Perth enabled 19 children, staff and guardians from the Yakanarra community to visit Christ Church, which further enhanced the schools' growing relationship. As a precursor to the visit, I spoke at an assembly to Preparatory School students, staff and parents about my experience in Yakanarra. This included sharing two multimedia presentations created during my stay, which were approved by the elders.

While the Yakanarra students were shy, they enjoyed their time at Christ Church, which they spent attending Chapel, painting, drawing, reading books and visiting classrooms in both the Preparatory and Senior Schools.

Yakanarra's junior primary teacher Kitty Marshall and I have organised for our two classes to correspond with each other during 2013. While practising their functional literacy skills, children from both communities will be able to discover the similarities and differences between their lives and environments. These differences are profound, but so are the connections we are building between our communities. □

CHANTAL HOCKEY
YEAR 3 TEACHER, CHRIST CHURCH GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Never Give Up

Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Submission to the Australian House of Representatives Committee for Indigenous Affairs

PART 2 — FEBRUARY 2016

ASSOCIATION OF HEADS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS OF AUSTRALIA
COLLEGIAL SUPPORT FOR EXCELLENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

AHISA LTD

Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students in Metropolitan, Regional and Remote Independent Schools

PART 2

AHISA LTD

Never Give Up

About AHISA

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

The membership of AHISA Ltd comprises principals of 420 independent schools with a collective enrolment of some 426,000 students, representing 11.7 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Australia's total Year 12 enrolment.

Never Give Up – Part 1: Key points

AHISA's 'Never Give Up' submission to the Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students is in two parts.

Part 1, submitted in December 2015, gathered articles on Indigenous education from AHISA's journal, *Independence*, and extracted from them points relevant to the three overarching questions addressed by the Committee's inquiry: What works? What's important? What can we do better?

The stories collected in Part 1 demonstrated how various strategies are adopted and adapted by independent schools to meet the unique circumstances of their communities and the needs of students. The stories affirmed that success factors for metropolitan residential programs for Indigenous students from rural and remote include:

- Sensitivity of school communities to the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students is important in helping students develop a sense of belonging at school.
- Efforts by schools to promote and celebrate Indigenous cultures and support Indigenous students in the expression of their home cultures are important in helping students maintain their cultural identity.
- Developing trust through long-term relationships between schools and remote communities helps students transition to city boarding schools.
- A higher proportion of Indigenous students within a school can augment students' sense of belonging.
- The commitment of school leaders underwrites program innovation and success.
- The school's ethos and values inform the development and implementation of strategies to support Indigenous students socially and academically.
- High expectations of students as a component of the 'academic press' that has been shown to contribute to overall student achievement in independent schools is also a factor in the achievement of Indigenous students on residential scholarships in high-achieving schools.
- The holistic care of students in boarding houses – where attention to the physical and emotional wellbeing of students is as important as academic studies – and the provision of

AHISA LTD

safe learning environments are contributing factors to the success of Indigenous scholarship programs.

- Establishing post-school pathways supports the long-term success of metropolitan residential programs for regional and remote Indigenous students.

The articles also illustrated that:

- Between-school collaborations are a viable option for increasing educational opportunities for Indigenous students.
- Partnerships with governments and their agencies, other institutions and organisations support program implementation and success.

Never Give Up – Part 2

Part 2 of AHISA's submission covers innovative approaches to educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, both on country and out of country, developed by AHISA members' schools:

- Melbourne Indigenous Transition School, Richmond, Victoria: A one-year residential and academic program to assist students from remote communities to transition successfully to city boarding schools.
- Woodleigh School, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria: Assistance in program development and teacher professional learning for a remote community school, plus primary-level student exchange.
- Wesley College, Melbourne, Victoria: Establishment of a senior secondary school, Yiramaly/Wesley Studio School, that provides on country provision for Aboriginal students and for which Wesley College serves as a remote campus.
- Gawura School, Sydney, NSW: Establishment of a primary school for Indigenous students living in Sydney within the site of St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney.
- Darkinjung Barker College, Wyong, NSW: Establishment of a regional primary campus of Barker College, Hornsby, NSW to serve Indigenous students within the Wyong region.

The descriptions of these initiatives are designed to illustrate elements that may be replicated by other schools and/or communities. Key points are listed within each description and are also collected and, where necessary, generalised for presentation within one discrete section.

There is also a section titled 'Recommendations & Dreams'. AHISA invited leaders responsible for the initiatives described in Part 2 of the submission to suggest ways the Australian Government might direct funding or otherwise support the replication, adaptation or development of these various models.

Both parts of AHISA's submission serve to illustrate points raised by the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council in its submission to the Committee:

- The value of trialling small-scale innovative models
- The value of autonomous leadership in the development of innovative, creative responses
- The value of city-remote school partnerships.

In his presentation of the 2016 Closing the Gap report, the Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, mentioned advice he had been given by Dr Chris Sarra: 'Do things with us, not to us.' This message is delivered strongly in the models outlined in this submission. Leaders emphasise the importance of Indigenous community participation in the development of the models. Moreover, they emphasise that there must be a preparedness for 'two-ways learning' if cross-cultural efforts are to be successful, sustainable and have their greatest impact.

29 February 2016

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The submission title is drawn from the photograph on the previous page, which also featured on the cover of the October 2015 issue of AHISA's journal, *Independence*. The photograph depicts students from Macleay Vocational College attending an Open Day at the Port Macquarie campus of Charles Sturt University. 'Never give up' is the inspiring message the students offer themselves and all those who strive for better outcomes for young Indigenous Australians.

Key Points

- Residential secondary schooling provision in major metropolitan cities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities is desired by many Indigenous families for their children.
- The academic and cultural challenges faced by students from remote communities coming to city boarding schools are immense. A residential transition school linked to destination schools, providing targeted literacy and numeracy programs and social and emotional development programs, can help provide a cross-cultural bridge for students and build strong peer networks.
- Positive outcomes depend on relationships between independent school communities and Indigenous communities that are built on trust and respect.
- Professional assistance for teachers in remote community schools provided by city-based teachers can reduce professional isolation and improve practice.
- Digital technologies are important in assisting continuity of teacher professional exchange between city/regional and remote schools, and for building relationships between children and between staff in geographically distant communities.
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to increase educational opportunities in remote Indigenous communities. Partnerships between city schools and remote schools and communities require flexibility and the freedom to generate collaborations that are the most beneficial and which reflect the needs and capacities of those involved.
- Leadership by Principals and school boards is essential if visions, ideas and goodwill are to be realised.
- Student exchanges begun at primary level have powerful immediate and long-term effects. They are examples of 'reconciliation in action'. Friendships between students in culturally diverse communities are easily formed and, because of the age of the children, typically engage whole families.
- On country provision gives students a sense of cultural place and safety and provides a platform from which mainstream educational programs can be attempted.
- Educational programs for Indigenous students, delivered on country or in metropolitan schools, must be culturally appropriate.
- On country provision supports student retention.
- Experiential or 'hands on' learning programs attract students who may have become disenfranchised from school education.
- Success in experiential programs inspires confidence to attempt academic programs.
- Valuing the language of Indigenous students is an important part of having a culturally strong school.

- The success of cross-cultural educational provision depends on the strength of the relationships and partnerships that support it.
- Aboriginal people need to be part of decision-making.
- The willingness of those in the partnership to make long-term commitments underwrites the success of innovative ventures in Indigenous education.
- Trust can only be built over time and requires taking account of the views of Aboriginal people in the development of educational programs for their children.
- Building partnerships with parents requires dedicated effort from school leaders.
- Staff members of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent are critical as perceived advocates and go-to people for parents and students in independent Indigenous schools.
- Stability of staffing in independent Indigenous schools is vital because of the relational nature of trust building.
- Education cannot be separated from social, health and housing issues. Leaders of independent schools for Indigenous students must be prepared to work with families, not just students, especially to address the issue of regular school attendance.
- High profile Aboriginal leaders who are prepared to act as passionate champions and advocates independent Indigenous schools can be essential in supporting the sustainability of the schools.
- Initial and ongoing liaison with community and parent groups is essential to lay the foundations of home-school partnerships and preserve the integrity of the cultural environment of schools serving Indigenous students.
- Indigenous communities appreciate working with independent schools because of the opportunity it gives them to influence the shape and delivery of the education program, including the cultural environment. Relationships are formed between communities and between the people of responsibility within those communities in a way that is not possible when dealing with government departments and their officials.
- Current funding models for non-government schools must become more flexible to ensure support for innovative in-country educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Recommendations & Dreams

AHISA draws the attention of the Committee to the importance of strong, autonomous leadership in providing the long-term commitment and 'heart' required to build trusting relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is these relationships that create the space for innovative programs and which underpin positive outcomes for students.

AHISA therefore **recommends** that the Australian Government introduces federally funded grants programs that encourage and support schools demonstrating strong leadership to realise their visions and ambitions for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, whether in or out of country, in order to multiply the educational opportunities and pathways open to students.

The leaders of the initiatives described in this submission have **dreams** that the federal government could support through such grants programs:

- Seed funding to lay the foundations for and/or trial innovative models of education provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Seed funding to support the replication and/or adaptation of the models described in this submission.
- Seed funding for 'pop up' schools in regional and remote areas; for example, pop up schools to deliver specific programs in STEM subjects. These 'schools' could deliver short courses to students and professional learning for teachers.
- Funding to empower Indigenous communities to engage in the visioning of educational opportunities for their children.
- Funding to support visits of students and elders from regional and remote communities to city or regional schools.
- Funding to support teacher exchanges and ongoing collaborative professional development of teachers in remote community schools.
- Capital funding for schools willing to establish teacher visitation programs to remote communities to build teacher accommodation in these communities, suitable for short and longer-term stays.
- Longer-term funding for projects where warranted. The success of many school-to-school initiatives depends on consistency and continuity. When projects are dependent solely on schools finding funds from already committed annual budgets or on fundraising, they are easily destabilised.
- Funding to enlarge the influence of existing on country models of provision, for example by fostering partnerships between on country independent school models such as the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School with government-owned or independent community schools. These partnerships could facilitate teacher secondments.
- Significant federal funds support scholarship places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities in city and regional boarding schools. There is a case for funding scholarship schemes for urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as day

students in non-government schools. Unlike boarding school scholarship schemes, schemes for urban Indigenous students could support children in the early years of learning, to avoid the achievement gaps suffered by many students by the time they reach secondary school.

- Funding to support the establishment of Indigenous education and culture resource centres in nominated schools, which can then act as hubs for other local school and community visits.
- Through the Education Council, the Australian Government could encourage state and territory governments to adjust existing school registration requirements to allow for innovative schooling models for Indigenous students, including cross-jurisdictional models such as the Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School.

Melbourne Indigenous Transition School, Victoria

From remote community to city opportunities: Bridging academic and cultural gaps

KEY POINTS

- Residential secondary schooling provision in major metropolitan cities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities is a valid form of education provision and desired by many Indigenous families.
- The academic and cultural challenges faced by students from remote communities coming to city boarding schools are immense. A residential transition school linked to destination schools, providing targeted literacy and numeracy programs and social and emotional development programs, can help provide a cross-cultural bridge for students and build strong peer networks.

Secondary education opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are limited in rural and remote communities. Scholarship programs supporting attendance at major metropolitan or regional boarding schools have proved successful in expanding these opportunities. However, the educational and cultural gaps students experience on leaving their communities to attend city boarding schools can present an initial and sometimes insurmountable hurdle to educational success.

The Melbourne Indigenous Transition School (MITS) was conceived as a means to help Indigenous students from remote communities overcome the educational and cultural challenges they meet when taking up educational opportunities in city boarding schools and to provide the emotional, cultural and academic support needed to maximise their chances of success.

While MITS has just welcomed its first intake of students (first term, 2016), the school was seven years in formation.

The MITS model

MITS provides accommodation and educational programs for 22 Year 7-aged students for one year, as a bridge between on country primary-level schooling and secondary schooling in city boarding schools.

The transition year means schools are able to offer scholarships to students whose current level of achievement does not qualify them for scholarships offered under national government-supported schemes, but who have the desire to succeed academically and who have family support for out of country schooling.

MITS is registered as a specialist school with the Victorian Government, which means students are eligible for federal and state general recurrent funding and Abstudy allowances. MITS has also received substantial support from private benefactors. The school was able to attract a capital works

grant from the Prime Minister's Office after receiving substantial private and corporate cash and in-kind donations.

MITS is also supported by its partner schools. The destination schools will cover the academic costs of their prospective student while at MITS. MITS will also work with the destination school to ensure there are support structures in place for the incoming student, such as an individualised learning program and awareness of cultural challenges.

Home away from home

The school residence is a refurbished house leased from the Catholic Parish of St Ignatius in Richmond, Melbourne. 'Lockington' has been remodelled to create a safe and home-like atmosphere for students. A purpose-built extension enables girls to be housed separately. The two buildings are sited to create a courtyard which features a sunken fire pit and surrounding space suitable for a yarning circle – one of many ways MITS communicates and celebrates students' culture and identity. (Detailed plans of the School site and two buildings comprising the residence are posted at http://www.mitschool.org.au/#!campus/c11ff.) There is accommodation for families to stay if visiting their children at MITS.

An inner city location was deliberately sought for the site of the School, given the proximity to the city of most of the schools to which students would progress. To aid students' transition, the model provides for engagement by students in extra-curricular activities at their destination school, to familiarise students with the school and also to allow the formation of friendships with students already attending those schools.

Capping student numbers at 22 minimises the costs of meeting various accommodation ordinances and regulations and has been essential in developing a model that is both affordable and sustainable and which allows for investment in a very low student to staff ratio (less than 2:1). The school also covers the travel costs of trusted school staff and/or parents to accompany the students on their journey from their homelands to the school. This is seen as essential in providing the emotional support that can make the difference to a student's decision to return to the city each term.

Targeted learning and teaching

The learning program has a focus on literacy and numeracy and also encompasses resilience education, health and physical education, sport and visual and performing arts.

Social, emotional and academic learning is fostered in an environment of high expectation relationships. Staff appointments are therefore key to the MITS program. Founding Teacher Principal is Paul Munday, who previously worked for the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Sale, where he had oversight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in 43 primary and secondary schools across Gippsland and outer eastern Melbourne. Between 2009 and 2013 Paul worked in outback Kimberley regions of WA, including in the role of Deputy Principal at Halls Creek District High School where he specialised in motivating disengaged students from remote communities. He is a qualified facilitator of Indigenous programs for the Stronger Smarter Leadership Institute.

MITS is leasing access to the offsite learning facilities of the Korin Gamadji Institute (http://www.kgi.org.au/), which provides leadership programs for young Indigenous people during

school holidays. The Institute is located at the Richmond football grounds and is within walking distance of Lockington. During term time, MITS has been granted access to the Institute's rooms, including a large multi-purpose room, and its pool, and has access once a week to its oval and surroundings in Yarra Park.

MITS students also have access to the art and technology facilities of St Kevin's College Year 9 campus, which is a short walk from Lockington.

Network of peer support

It is envisaged that, once students have transitioned to their secondary boarding school, their MITS friends will continue to be a support. Students will be invited to return on Friday nights for a BBQ around the MITS fire pit, meeting face to face with MITS alumni and also encouraging new MITS students. With 22 new students each year, it is expected that a critical mass of peer-to-peer support across Melbourne schools will build rapidly.

The MITS operational timeline to December 2015

(Accessed at http://www.mitschool.org.au/#!ourprogress/c1w8l, 25 January 2016)

Critical area	Key success factor	Status
Tax	Deductible Gift Recipient / Tax Concession Charity status	✓
Partner buy-in	Endorsement from 20 Partner Schools	✓
	Endorsement or willingness to partner from leading universities and residential colleges	✓
	Strategic partnership formed with University of Melbourne	✓
Community buy-in	Communities/students keen to participate identified	Ongoing
School registration	Curriculum prepared	✓
	Key policy documents prepared, submitted to VRQA	✓
	Registration as specialist school	November 2015
Operations	Property identified	✓
	Long-term (25-year) lease secured	✓
	Architectural plans prepared	✓
	Planning approval from City of Yarra, construction commenced	✓
	Executive Director, Teaching Principal, other key staff appointed	✓
	All initial students selected and enrolled	October 2015
	Construction complete	December 2015
	First student intake	February 2016
Fundraising	Capital funding secured, over $2.75 million cash and in-kind raised	✓
	Funds raised to secure first years of operation	December 2015

Foundations for a vision

The idea of a transition school for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students coming to the city for their secondary education was first conceived by Rick Tudor OAM, immediate past Headmaster of Trinity Grammar School, Kew in Victoria, and his wife, veterinarian Dr Liz Tudor. The Tudors had observed over many years of connection with remote Indigenous communities and from conversations with Rick Tudor's AHISA colleagues what they believed was the avoidable reluctance of some students to either initially grasp or follow through on their educational opportunities, even though their desire for those opportunities was strong.

The Tudors had built strong connections with remote communities and families since the 1970s, when Liz Tudor had worked at Gunbalanya in Arnhem Land (approximately 350kms east of Darwin) as a fifth year Veterinary Science student from the University of Melbourne. These relationships were deepened and expanded when Rick Tudor became Headmaster of Trinity Grammar School in 1999, and began the development of Trinity's interest in and engagement with Indigenous people and communities.

Relationships began to form between Trinity and the local Wurundjeri people and with the Arabunna community in the Marree-Leigh Creek area in north-eastern South Australia, the latter through a joint program with Genazzano FCJ College, another independent school in Kew.

The introduction in 2001 of an Indigenous scholarship scheme at Trinity Grammar School, formed in conjunction with The University of Melbourne and MLC, an independent school for girls in Kew, saw new relationships established with communities in Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and in Port Augusta in South Australia.

The Tudors' connection with Gunbalanya deepened after a visit in 2002. Liz Tudor's observation of the large numbers of unhealthy dogs roaming the community led to her developing the Western Arnhem Land Dog Health Program; Rick Tudor's meeting with the Principal of the local school seeded an enduring relationship between Trinity Grammar and Gunbalanya School. Students from Gunbalanya are considered for scholarships to Trinity, and twice a year Gunbalanya School hosts members of staff and students from Trinity, who deliver a science and technology program with a literacy and numeracy component.

The relocation of former Trinity staff to Indigenous communities helped develop further connections, including a professional exchange between teachers in Trinity's Early Learning Centre and Palumpa Pre-school in Ngarnmarryanga in the Northern Territory and a student exchange program with the Lombardina community, north of Broome.

Key indicators for a MITS model

From these years of experience and observation, key indicators emerged to support the vision of a city-based transition school as realised in the MITS model:

- The Tudors had observed that many of the leaders in the communities they visited or who were respected members of the communities had had some of their schooling out of the community. Out of country schooling was therefore a valid model.
- The Trinity scholarship program had demonstrated the achievement gap for new students did not make for an easy fit into the academic program for their age group in their city school.
- The cultural differences for students from remote communities attending city boarding schools were enormous and, even though students were embraced by the city school and pastoral care was intense, the adjustment remained extremely difficult.
- Students coming in from remote communities needed time to adjust academically and socially and this was not readily available if they were also to feel part of the existing school program for their year group.

- Either for academic or cultural reasons, some students abandoned the scholarship program, leaving them with an experience of failure that was no fault of their own.
- Students who came to city schools with at least one other student from their community were more likely to transition successfully.
- Home community support and support from the student's Principal in their community school is very important in successful transitioning.
- Relationships with remote Indigenous communities must be built up over time. Parents want to know they can trust the person who will be caring for their child.
- Parents saw Melbourne as being a safe place for their children. If they were to attend schools in nearby cities they would be more tempted to return home or could be unduly influenced by relations already living in those cities. There was a match between Melbourne as an educational destination and parents' desires for their children.
- Ensuring students are escorted from their community to the city at the start of each term – either by school staff or parents – encourages them to persist with the scholarship program.
- All city boarding schools experienced similar problems with cultural and academic adjustment of Indigenous students from remote communities.
- The Principal of the city school has an essential role to play as advocate for Indigenous students from remote communities coming to their school. The Principal must ensure there are adequate support structures in place in the first instance and then advocate on behalf of the student with staff if the behaviour of the student is at first erratic and unpredictable.
- Relationships must be 'two way' – non-Indigenous students and school communities must be prepared to learn from Indigenous Australians.

MORE INFORMATION

Melbourne Indigenous Transition School http://www.mitschool.org.au/

KEY PERSONNEL

Chairperson, Liz Tudor

Executive Director, Edward Tudor

Teaching Principal, Paul Munday

Woodleigh School, Victoria

‘Two-ways learning’: Helping to build teaching capacity and learning opportunities for primary students in remote community schools

KEY POINTS

- Relationships built on trust and respect are key to connections that lead to positive outcomes.
- Professional assistance for teachers in remote community schools from city-based teachers can reduce professional isolation and improve practice.
- Digital technologies are important in assisting continuity of teacher professional exchange and for building relationships between children in the two communities and between staff.
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to increase the educational opportunities in remote Indigenous communities. Partnerships between city schools and remote schools and communities require flexibility and the freedom to generate collaborations that are the most beneficial and which reflect the needs and capacities of those involved.
- Leadership by Principals and school boards is essential if visions, ideas and goodwill are to be realised.
- Student exchanges begun at primary level have powerful immediate and long-term effects. They are examples of ‘reconciliation in action’. Friendships between students in the two communities are easily formed and, because of the age of the children, typically engage whole families.

Woodleigh School encompasses three campuses sited on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. The two primary campuses, called Minimbah and Penbank, and the secondary campus at Baxter together serve some 1020 students from early learning to Year 12.

Woodleigh School is committed to ‘two-ways learning’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and employs a Director of Indigenous Education. The school has a well-established reconciliation and cultural awareness program linking the school with local Indigenous Australians and communities and involving the whole school community, including parents. Woodleigh has a scholarship program for local Aboriginal students who have the support of their families and are living at home.

For the past six years, the school has also worked closely with three remote Aboriginal communities:

- There is a student exchange program with Ampilatwatja, a community north of Alice Springs. Each year Woodleigh School students, usually from Years 9 and 10, travel with teachers to spend time immersed in the Ampilatwatja community. Students from Ampilatwatja then

spend time at Woodleigh's senior campus, billeted with Woodleigh families and working alongside Woodleigh students.

- A similar student exchange program is in place with the Miwatj community in East Arnhem Land.
- A long-term relationship has also developed between Penbank campus and the Wugularr community, south-east of Katherine in the Northern Territory. Unlike most student exchanges, which involve secondary students, the Penbank-Wugularr relationship is focused on primary level students. As well as student exchanges, the relationship also covers teacher exchanges, to help build the teaching capacity within Wugularr School and the on country learning opportunities for its students.

Cutbacks in Northern Territory Government funding have meant the travel costs of students from remote communities must be sourced privately. To this end, Woodleigh School has created the 'Little Bit Long Way' fundraising campaign to enable students and elders from its sister communities to travel to the Mornington Peninsula.

Making a difference in Wugularr

Woodleigh's relationship with Wugularr began when a Penbank campus teacher took extra leave to work at Wugularr School. When the Head of Penbank campus, Vivienne Wearne, visited the school, she identified gaps in resources, programming and expertise that could potentially by filled by Penbank. For example, there were no sports or arts program although the children showed strengths in athleticism and artistic creativity (Wugularr is an artists' community and produces world-renowned art works); the school library was resourced, but books were still in boxes and there was no librarian.

A program of visits by Penbank campus teachers was initiated to help provide professional assistance in Wugularr School. The constancy in the visits, which were scheduled two to three times a year during Penbank holiday periods, was a key factor in establishing a trusting relationship with the Wugularr community. Wugularr School teachers have also visited Penbank and worked alongside Penbank staff. For many Wugularr children and families, because of the rapid turnover in teachers that can occur in remote community schools, Penbank staff members have been the longest-term and best-known educational presence in their community.

Penbank's involvement has served to minimise the professional isolation of Wugularr teachers and inspired many to undertake professional development in Darwin. A common professional language is developing between the two schools through consistent and continuous professional dialogue, enabling more collaborative professional work to evolve.

Two-ways learning

In 2009, a group of Wugularr children in Years 5 and 6 visited Penbank campus, and in 2010, a group of Penbank students visited Wugularr. These visits were hugely successful, the younger age of the students leading to the fast formation of friendships and enjoyment of shared experiences which in turn allowed for speedy cultural exchange and sharing. The relationships between the children have further strengthened the connection between the two communities, especially as many students are maintaining their friendships into their adolescence via Facebook. Recently, a student from Wugularr

of Year 9 age, who originally visited Penbank campus as a primary student in 2009, was able to make a solo visit to Woodleigh School for three-and-a-half weeks, with the full support of his family.

Trust between the two communities is such that Penbank campus students have been guided to spiritual places in Wugularr, seen only once before by non-Indigenous people. Penbank students now participate in the annual 'Walking with Spirits' music festival in Wugularr, alongside the Wugularr children.

The student exchanges have also served to demonstrate to the Wugularr community that schooling and school attendance are accepted as a normal part of life in mainstream Australia, and that Australian families value their children's school education. This has helped initiate a shift in attitudes to schooling in the Wugularr community.

For the Woodleigh community, there has been a noticeable cultural shift in how families appreciate and relate to their environment. The Woodleigh community has also come to appreciate the importance to Aboriginal people of their culture and their land, and developed awareness of Aboriginal people's concern at a potential loss of identity. Many Woodleigh parents are gaining these insights through the first-hand experiences of their children.

MORE INFORMATION

Woodleigh School http://woodleigh.vic.edu.au/

KEY PERSONNEL

Principal, Jonathan Walter

Deputy Principal and Head of Penbank Campus, Vivienne Wearne

Wesley College, Victoria and Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, WA

Best of both worlds: The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School in the Kimberley region, WA

KEY POINTS

- On country provision gives students a sense of cultural place and safety and provides a platform from which mainstream educational programs can be attempted.
- Educational programs for Indigenous students, delivered on country or in metropolitan schools must be culturally appropriate.
- On country provision supports student retention.
- Experiential or 'hands on' learning programs attract students who may have become disenfranchised from school education.
- Success in experiential programs inspires confidence to attempt academic programs.
- Valuing the language of Indigenous students is an important part of having a culturally strong school.
- The success of cross-cultural educational provision depends on the strength of the relationships and partnerships that support it.
- Aboriginal people need to be part of decision-making.
- The willingness of those in the partnership to make long-term commitments underwrites the success of innovative ventures in Indigenous education.

The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is located on Leopold Downs Station, north-west of Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The school is one of a number of projects and exchanges that have been progressed under a Memorandum of Understanding agreed between Wesley College and the Aboriginal people of the Fitzroy Valley community in November 2004, which encapsulated a commitment by the two communities to learn together and expand the horizons and future opportunities for their children and families.

Another project that has had long-term positive outcomes has been the development and publication of Bunuba and Walmajarri language curriculum resource units of inquiry for primary school children. Both languages are taught at Wesley College in Melbourne.

The Yiramaly/Wesley Studio School model

Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School is a registered non-government residential school in WA, with educational programs provided and all teaching and pastoral staff appointed by Wesley College, Melbourne, Victoria. Students attending the Studio school are eligible for state and federal general recurrent funding and Abstudy allowances.

The Studio School was founded under a 20-year agreement between Wesley College, Bunuba Cattle Company (a large Aboriginal pastoral business in the region running around 20,000 head of cattle on 1.4 million acres which encompasses Leopold Downs Station), Bunuba Aboriginal Corporation and Bunuba Inc. The school's steering committee comprises nominees of these four organisations.

Inspiration for the concept of the model

When Wesley College's connection with the Fitzroy Valley community began in 2004, Principal Dr Helen Drennen noted that some students who had abandoned scholarship positions in city schools – because of homesickness, lack of cultural fit or the failure of the city school to take account of their learning needs – felt shame on returning to their homelands and therefore did not attend school in their community. In too many instances, the experience of leaving community to attend a city school had served only to dislocate the children from education entirely.

At the same time, students with post-secondary learning aspirations would benefit from access to the specialist facilities of large city schools and institutions.

While teaching in Wisconsin in the United States, Helen Drennen became aware of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, which is based at Taliesin, near Spring Green, Wisconsin, in summer and then moves to Arizona in winter. The notion of context-based learning, shaped by seasons, inspired the concept of a studio school that could move across country and across cultures, accessing the best of both worlds.

Structure of the model

Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School began operation in August 2010 and currently caters for 60 Indigenous students in Years 10 to 12 and up to 20 Year 10 students attending from Wesley College in Melbourne participating in three-week induction programs. Although places are not advertised, applications to the school also come from students outside the region, as far away as Alice Springs and East Arnhem Land as well as from Roebourne in WA's Pilbara region. There are currently nine language groups represented in the school.

The school's educational program is guided by the Senior Years Learning Framework developed by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). The Framework gives equal value to academic learning, hands-on practical industry learning, and personal/social learning across cultures. The educational program is further shaped by local industry opportunities in pastoralism, agriculture and ecotourism, and by the arts and the language and culture of Aboriginal Australia.

Preservation of students' home language is highly valued. Although English is the language of instruction for the program, students are supported to practise their language and encouraged to use it in different ways across the curriculum.

Students spend two terms of the school year at Yiramalay during the dry season (Terms 2 and 3) and two terms in Melbourne (Terms 1 and 4) at Wesley College. Students' ties in the Wesley community are strengthened and they experience mainstream city culture. As well as attending programs at Wesley's city campuses, taking classes in Wesley's specialist facilities such as science, technology and music labs, students may engage in experiential learning programs at Wesley's Clunes property or attend TAFE courses associated with their vocational learning programs at Yiramalay.

Year 10 students enrolled at Wesley College in Melbourne also attend the Studio School to join with Year 10 Indigenous students for a three-week 'induction' program that incorporates two strands: Personal Development involves social and cultural learning; Industry Learning introduces students to the pastoral, eco-tourism and arts industries of the region. The program is repeated throughout the year so that there are always non-Indigenous students learning alongside Aboriginal students at the school.

Staff members from Wesley's three Melbourne campuses and the Clunes experiential learning campus also attend induction programs. This assists in the development of cross-cultural pedagogies at Wesley.

Students enrolled at the Studio School are supported by teachers and mentors. Sixty per cent of the staff members employed in the program are Aboriginal.

Students who graduate from the Studio School complete one of the following accredited secondary Year 12 qualifications – VRQA Certificate II in Work Preparation, VCE, VET, WACE, or International Baccalaureate Diploma. Students also receive an ACER certificate of completion of the new Senior Years Learning Framework.

Cultural adjustment within the model

Students at the Studio School do not visit Wesley College until they have become accustomed to the structure of learning and teaching at Yiramalay. Some students may not have attended school for some years or only attended irregularly or may not be able to read at a level required for more academic study. Mentors help students make up lost years by encouraging their hunger to learn as well as their efforts to learn.

Also contributing to the success of the first step into city culture are the friendships formed with Wesley students in induction programs. The local and cultural knowledge of the Yiramalay students makes them leaders of learning in these shared programs and helps them recognise the value of different ways of learning and to value and feel confident in the learning they already have. Importantly, this leadership experiences helps Yiramalay students to lose any sense of shame around gaps in their literacy and numeracy skills.

Before the Studio School students attend Wesley in Melbourne they have already developed strong relationships with Melbourne-based students in learning situations. The students may live on different sides of Australia but are one community of learners. As described by Wesley Principal Helen Drennen, the students are part of a cross-cultural mob and look out for each other. This helps students take significant and transforming steps into each other's culture, unlike many student exchange programs where other cultures are merely 'visited'.

Success of the Studio School model

Key outcomes for students enrolled at the Studio School include:

- The majority of students who complete the Year 10 induction program remain at the school
- Near perfect school attendance and high level retention

- Measurable improvement in student health – reduction in smoking and other drug taking, improved sleep, improved physical fitness
- By 2014, all students were successfully re-engaged in their education, where success is defined as completing Year 10 and re-enrolling either at Yiramalay to complete Year 12 or enrolling at another school, or gaining employment
- In 2015, seven students graduated with a Year 12 qualification, taking the total number of Year 12 graduates to 15.

Other benefits have included the engagement of Aboriginal families in the program at Yiramalay and in Melbourne – a Yiramalay parent committee has been established. The Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School also employs local people as residential mentors, community mentors, teacher assistants and general staff.

The benefits of the inter-cultural understanding that develops from the model are already being realised within the two communities. For example, Wesley's Melbourne-based community has established Wesmob, a student support group, and the Yiramalay Foundation, together with the Friends of Yiramalay, provide financial support to the Studio School.

Opportunities for replication of the Studio School model

Enquiries about attending the Studio School are generally initiated by the students themselves. The number of applications far exceeds available places and indicates a case for replication for the model. It is expected that the numbers of students seeking senior secondary studies would be even greater if more children in remote communities experienced regular attendance at school during the primary and middle years of schooling.

Currently, the Studio School fills a gap in senior secondary educational opportunities in remote communities. Wesley College believes the model could be expanded. One avenue of expansion could be the establishment of partnerships with government-owned or independent community 'feeder' schools to support, for example, teacher secondments and/or teacher professional learning in the feeder schools.

MORE INFORMATION

Wesley College http://wesleycollege.net/

http://wesleycollege.net/Wesley-Life/Yiramalay-Wesley-Studio-School.aspx

KEY PERSONNEL

Principal, Wesley College, Dr Helen Drennen AM

Executive Director, Yiramalay/Wesley Studio School, Ned McCord

Gawura School, New South Wales

'School within a school': A primary school for Indigenous students within St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney

KEY POINTS

- Trust can only be built over time and requires taking account of the views of Aboriginal people in the development of educational programs for their children.
- Building partnerships with parents requires dedicated effort from school leaders. Indigenous school staff members are critical as perceived advocates and go-to people for parents.
- Stability of staffing is vital because of the relational nature of trust building.
- Education cannot be separated from social, health and housing issues. Leaders of schools for Indigenous students must be prepared to work with families, not just students, especially to address the issue of regular school attendance.
- High profile Aboriginal leaders prepared to act as passionate champions and advocates for Gawura were essential in supporting the sustainability of the school.

Gawura is a small Kindergarten to Year 6 primary school for up to 28 Indigenous students living in the inner city areas of Sydney, NSW. Although registered as a non-government school in its own right, it is an integral part of the St Andrew's Cathedral School precinct and is situated on one floor of the St Andrew's multi-storey building next to Sydney Town Hall.

As a registered school, students attending Gawura are eligible for state and federal recurrent funding based on their SES status and Indigenous background rather than on the far higher SES status of the wider St Andrew's community. Even so, substantial private donations are required to support the low student:staff ratio.

Evolution of Gawura

The concept of a small school aimed at increasing educational opportunities for disadvantaged Indigenous children in the inner city areas of Sydney arose from a visit by former St Andrew's Head of School, Phillip Heath, to the Republic of South Africa in 2005. Phillip Heath observed the success of a small group of people in Johannesburg offering educational support to the children of Soweto. Using space in Anglican churches in well-to-do suburbs of Johannesburg and funded from private donations, the schools had a strong focus on literacy and numeracy acquisition together with the development of personal and social skills.

With the support of the Council of St Andrew's Cathedral School, Phillip Heath began investigating the possibility of establishing a small primary school in Redfern, an inner city suburb of Sydney. Redfern had a relatively high proportion of Indigenous Australians clustering around dedicated – and politically powerful – legal, housing and medical services and advocacy groups. The area was not a united community but a cluster of unaligned and often competing spheres of influence.

A taskforce of Redfern community members was established. There were, however, significant objections to the proposed school, principally that it was a 'private' school which would operate from a council-owned site. (St Andrew's proposed to situate the school within the Redfern Community Centre.) The affiliation of St Andrew's Cathedral School with the Sydney Diocese of the Anglican Church, which was held to be mission-focused, was also of concern to some groups.

Despite objections, many local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents remained enthusiastic for the scheme and it was decided to progress the project within St Andrew's multi-storey building next to Sydney Town Hall. A purpose-built classroom was created on the ninth floor of the tower, which has direct access to the building's rooftop playground.

Gawura (Eora for 'whale', a totem for the Sydney region) opened in April 2007. By Term 3, 2008, it had 25 students enrolled in seven year levels.

The Gawura model

The Gawura model provides for up to 28 students – four in each year level from Kindergarten to Year 6. Its program is built upon key educational and cultural foundations:

- Early childhood and Stage 1 education is vital to long term success
- A focus on literacy, numeracy, cultural awareness and socialisation
- Academically rigorous teaching and learning in an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is predominant
- The celebration of cultural identities as definitional
- Working together with families: not separation/removal but formation of partnerships.
- Continuity of practice, the development of good work habits, high expectations of students and regular attendance support high achievement
- Learning is a community experience, with close kinship connections between the children supported and differences in backgrounds and traditional family areas respected.

The concept of a 'school within a school' supports a successful blending of an assertive approach to Indigenous cultural education, while retaining access to a mainstream school community. The aim is to skill students so that they are able to enter St Andrew's secondary school on an equal footing, academically and socially, with students of all other ethnicities commencing in Year 7.

The classroom programs are systematic and intensive, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Wiradjuri has been embraced as the official Aboriginal dialect and is taught to all students in Gawura.

Gawura staff includes a Head of campus, three teachers, two teacher's aides, a bus driver and 120 reading tuition volunteers. The volunteer group mostly consists of staff members of city corporates, some of which are Gawura's financial partners and which allow their staff a day per month of volunteering on full salary.

Complementing this core is interaction with St Andrew's Junior School for music, sport, visual arts, drama, languages and Christian development. Gawura students also have access to St Andrew's

facilities, including Design & Technology and computer laboratories and participate in wider school events.

Parents are formally engaged through the Gawura Parents Advisory Committee and the Parent School Partnership Initiative. To demonstrate the reality of the partnership with parents and to reflect the highly relational nature and trust that supports interactions with parents, the Head of Gawura is available to take mobile phone calls from parents every afternoon for around four hours when school has finished. Parents also attend school functions.

Successful outcomes

NAPLAN results show Gawura students often achieve above the national Australian average, an extraordinary result given that some children come from homes which lack even a single book and have no space or facility for students to undertake homework. Most parents of Gawura students have not progressed beyond Year 9 in their schooling.

Attendance rates have consistently hovered at 93 to 94 per cent. This exceptional result is supported by the collection of children and their safe return home each school day by bus, funded by Sydney City Council. The driver is a major pastoral figure, having never missed a day in the job in eight years. The level of trust he has built through consistency of presence means he is able to encourage parents – even to the point of insistence – to have students ready for collection.

Other factors supporting success of the model include:

- Individual successes are celebrated and leveraged.
- To ameliorate the lack of homework facilities or support at home, students must attend the Aboriginal Homework Club two to three afternoons per week. This is supervised by Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, who assist students with their work.
- To support students move from the small Gawura classes into a Year 7 cohort of some 140 students in St Andrew's Cathedral School, with classes of 24 students, a mentor is provided who also liaises with families.

Since 2012, eight Gawura students have graduated Year 12 from St Andrew's Cathedral School and entered university courses in law, fine arts, teacher education, nursing and business management.

Opportunities for replication of the Gawura model

Dr John Collier, Head of School, St Andrew's Cathedral School and Gawura, believes the Gawura model is replicable and scalable. However, funding is an ongoing issue and a barrier to expansion. For example, to increase the intake from four to six students per year represents a 50 per cent increase in capacity and therefore in funding.

Significant federal funds support scholarship places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities in city and regional boarding schools. There is a case for funding scholarship schemes for urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as day students in non-government schools. Unlike boarding school scholarship schemes, schemes for urban Indigenous students could support children in the early years of learning, to avoid the achievement gaps suffered by many students by the time they reach secondary school.

MORE INFORMATION

Gawura www.gawura.nsw.edu.au

St Andrew's Cathedral School http://www.sacs.nsw.edu.au/

KEY PERSONNEL

Head of School, St Andrew's Cathedral School and Gawura, Dr John Collier

Head of Gawura, David North

Darkinjung Barker College, New South Wales

Satellite school: Taking Barker College, Hornsby, NSW to the Darkingjung Community on the NSW central coast

KEY POINTS

- Initial and ongoing liaison with community and parent groups is essential to lay the foundations of home-school partnerships and preserve the integrity of the cultural environment of schools serving Indigenous students.
- Indigenous communities appreciate working with independent schools because of the opportunity it gives them to influence the shape and delivery of the education program, including the cultural environment. Relationships are formed between communities and between the people of responsibility within those communities in a way that is not possible when dealing with government departments and their officials.
- Current funding models for non-government schools must become more flexible to ensure support for innovative on country educational provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The establishment of the Darkinjung Barker campus arose from a vision that Barker College's contribution to Indigenous education could be to 'take the College to the communities'. To that end, the College Council investigated the prospect of establishing a small school for Indigenous children in areas of need. Based loosely on the Gawura model, which Head of Barker College, Phillip Heath, established in 2007 when Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney, Barker's vision was for a school for students from Kindergarten to Year 6 which would celebrate Indigenous cultures and identities and support high levels of academic achievement.

While Head of Radford College in Canberra, ACT, Phillip Heath had established relationships with the Gunawirra Foundation (http://gunawirra.org.au/), which works to bring about fundamental improvements in the life of Aboriginal families, their infants and children, and with the 'Crossing the Divide' (CTD) program within Bundarra Central School in northern NSW (http://crossingthedivide.nsw.edu.au/). CTD is an alternative education program targeted at youth who have disengaged from mainstream education. Drawing on these connections, Barker College identified the Darkinjung community on NSW's central coast as having a critical need. Indigenous children in the region were entering Year 7 some two to four years behind their peers in levels of academic achievement.

Auspicious beginnings

Contact was made with the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council (DLALC) (http://www.darkinjung.com.au/). Members of the Council were warmly receptive of the notion of a

partnership to extend the educational opportunities available to children in the area, in spite of concerns about the options that would be available to students beyond Year 6.

A Memorandum of Understanding was prepared by DLALC and entered into with Barker College. DLALC immediately set about finding a suitable property that could be used for the school, with a view to students commencing in first term, 2016.

A local advisory council of parents and community representatives was established to liaise with Barker in the formative phase of the school, with input on the naming of the school, key policies and practices, support for staff, the choice of specific academic priorities (other than literacy and numeracy) and the celebration of culture and languages. The council continues to provide advice and support now that the school is operational.

DLALC identified the Yarramalong Public School site for what was to become known as Darkinjung Barker College. Yarramalong Public School, 20 km from Wyong, was opened in 1870 and had operated continuously until 2009. Barker was able to secure a lease on the site, and its refurbishment of the school building and grounds has ensured the historic site remains a vibrant part of the Yarramalong community.

The Darkinjung Barker College model

The academic priority of Darkinjung Barker College is the acquisition and strengthening of literacy and numeracy skills sufficient to ensure student achievement at a level at least commensurate with the general non-Indigenous population and in keeping with the standards of Barker College. This entails:

- Provision of high-quality, culturally appropriate education and training programs as a foundation for lifelong learning
- Provision of appropriate intervention and support programs to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes
- Provision of programs that promote student engagement and maintain high levels of attendance
- Preparation of students for a successful transition into high school education.

The small size of the school, limited to 30 students, allows the school to function essentially in one space. This enables students to remain in close contact with one another, with the intention of maintaining family groupings.

The school has two teachers, a teacher's aide and specialist subject teachers as required. Low student:teacher ratios allow teachers to develop deep knowledge of student progress and provide pastoral and cultural support.

Upholding Aboriginal cultural identities, including language, is also a focus of the school. Community elders and volunteers assist in providing access to traditional cultural experiences as agreed by the advisory committee. The model aims to ensure that students learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia, understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the custodians of knowledge about their own culture and history.

Each Wednesday, students from Darkinjung Barker attend the Barker Hornsby campus where they have the opportunity to interact with peers and attend classes such as woodwork, art, music and personal development as well as attend the library and chapel.

The sports program includes swimming, cross country, athletics and winter and summer sports.

Students are collected each school day and returned home by bus.

Governance and finance

As a campus of Barker, Darkinjung Barker College is governed by the Council of Barker College and its ordinances. The policies and compliance framework that obtains at Barker Hornsby campus also applies at Darkinjung Barker, as required by the registration and accreditation granted by the NSW Board of Studies. This includes matters such as child protection, employment standards, workplace health and safety, student assessment, pastoral care and parental engagement.

Because Darkinjung Barker College is a campus, not a school registered in its own right (separate registration would have delayed launch of the school by several years), students are eligible only for the same levels of state and federal government general recurrent funding as students at the Hornsby campus. Darkinjung Barker College must therefore be sustained by significant private contribution. To that end, Barker College is seeking to establish a tax deductible Indigenous Education Fund.

By leasing facilities and avoiding significant capital investment, funding has been secured for the initial start-up phase of the school, with estimated annual recurrent costs of between $12,000 and $15,000 per student. Given the low student:teacher ratio, this cost is not high relative to the cost of investments in other Indigenous education initiatives.

MORE INFORMATION

Barker College https://www.barker.nsw.edu.au/

KEY PERSONNEL

Head of Barker College, Phillip Heath

Coordinator – Darkinjung Barker College, Yarramalong, Jamie Shackleton

CEO, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, Sean Gordon