

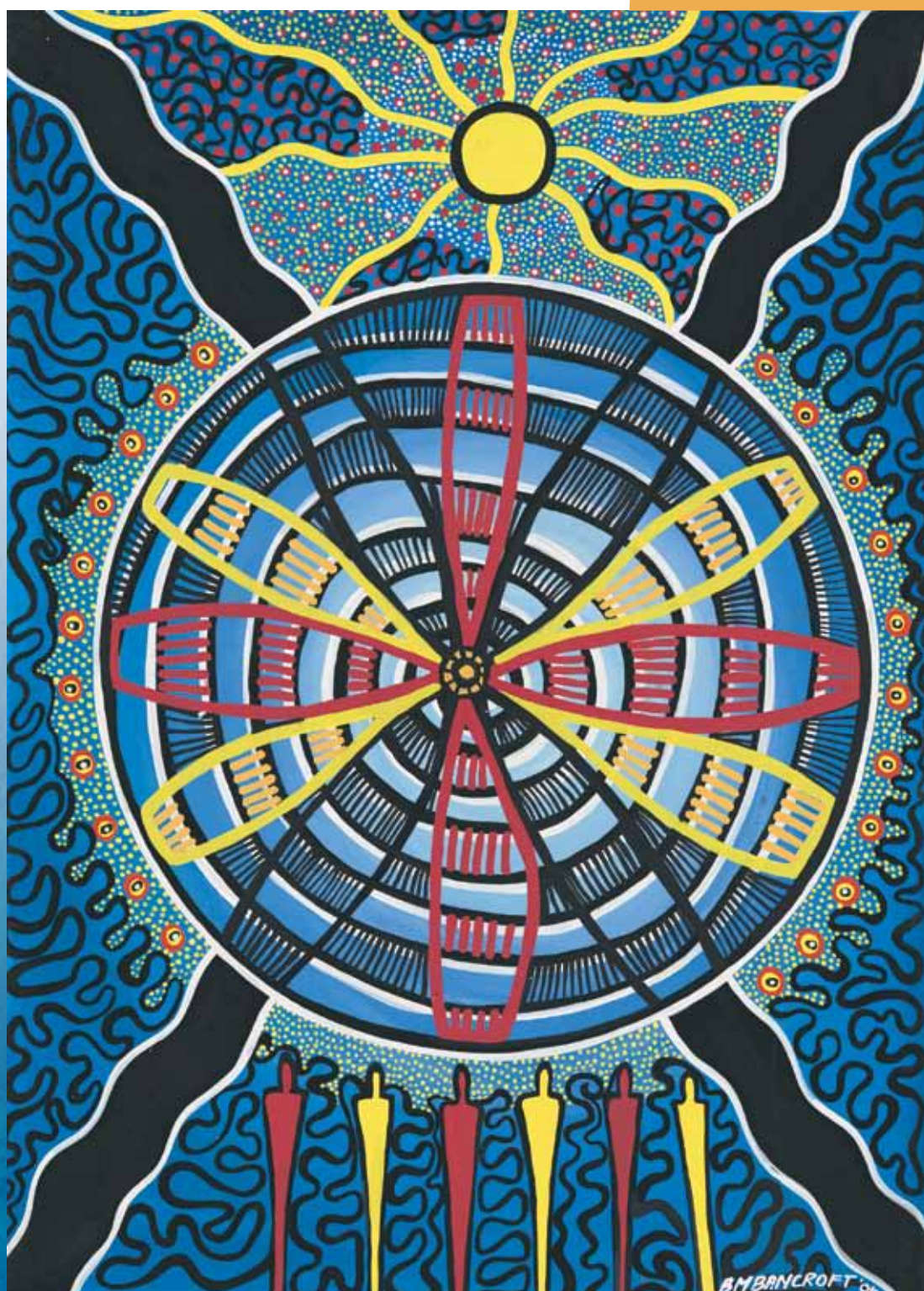
MCEECDYA

Ministerial Council For Education, Early Childhood  
Development And Youth Affairs



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander *Education Action Plan*

2010–2014



Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood  
Development and Youth Affairs  
ACN 007 342 421  
PO Box 202  
Carlton South Victoria 3053

Tel: (03) 9639 0588  
Fax: (03) 9639 1790  
Email: [enquiries@mceecdya.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@mceecdya.edu.au)  
Website: <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au>

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**Front cover painting:**

‘This painting represents pathways to greater learning. The spiral is what life contributes, sometimes low, sometimes high. The result of persistence is the bloom, growth through learning. As a drop of water hits the surfaces the ripple effect is created, this is what is needed.’

**Artist:** Bronwyn Bancroft <http://www.bronwynbancroft.com>

‘I have always supported the education system at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and firmly believe that education for Indigenous people is imperative to our development and confidence. It allows us to participate with equity in an often inequitable society.’

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# 1. Introduction

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## Preface

Governments across Australia recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Australians with one of the oldest continuing cultures in human history. They affirm the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to sustain their languages and cultures and acknowledge associations with the land and water.

Governments have agreed to take urgent action to close the gap between the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. To drive action, the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers have agreed through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to six ambitious targets:

- » close the life expectancy gap within a generation;
- » halve the gap in mortality rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under five within a decade;
- » ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years (by 2013);
- » halve the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018);
- » at least halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
- » halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and other Australians within a decade (by 2018).

Achieving these targets will require significant effort and collaboration by governments, their agencies, communities and the non-government, corporate and philanthropic sectors. Targets have been built into funding agreements between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments and non-government education providers as part of national arrangements.

Members of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) have portfolio responsibilities associated with early childhood development and schooling and for services to assist students to make successful transitions to training, further studies or employment. MCEECDYA wants all Australian children to have a high-quality, world-standard education to equip them for life in the 21st century.

## Purpose

The purpose of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan* (the Plan) is to assist education providers to accelerate improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The Plan seeks to progress the goals of the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* and the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals of Young Australians* and is part of a broader COAG reform agenda for school education that will contribute to closing the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their peers. It outlines how MCEECDYA Ministers will work together to achieve the closing the gap targets. Non-government education providers have agreed to join with governments to achieve these targets and progress actions outlined in the Plan. It is acknowledged that this sector includes providers that operate autonomously as they are not part of a system authority and will therefore require a more flexible approach.

The Plan reflects commitments by governments through COAG to introduce substantial structural and innovative reforms in early childhood education and schooling as outlined in national agreements between the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments. These reforms are designed to improve outcomes for all Australian students by increasing access to quality early childhood education, improving literacy and numeracy achievement, addressing disadvantage in low socio-economic status school communities, improving teacher quality and increasing the number of young people attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. Reform directions are detailed in the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*, the *National Education Agreement*, the *Early Childhood Education National Partnership*, the *Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership*, *Remote Service Delivery National Partnership*, the *Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership*, the *Smarter Schools - Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership* and the *Smarter Schools - Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership*, the *Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership* and other agreements. Commitments made in these national partnerships and agreements are brought together in the Plan with a number of new and continuing complementary measures to close the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students.

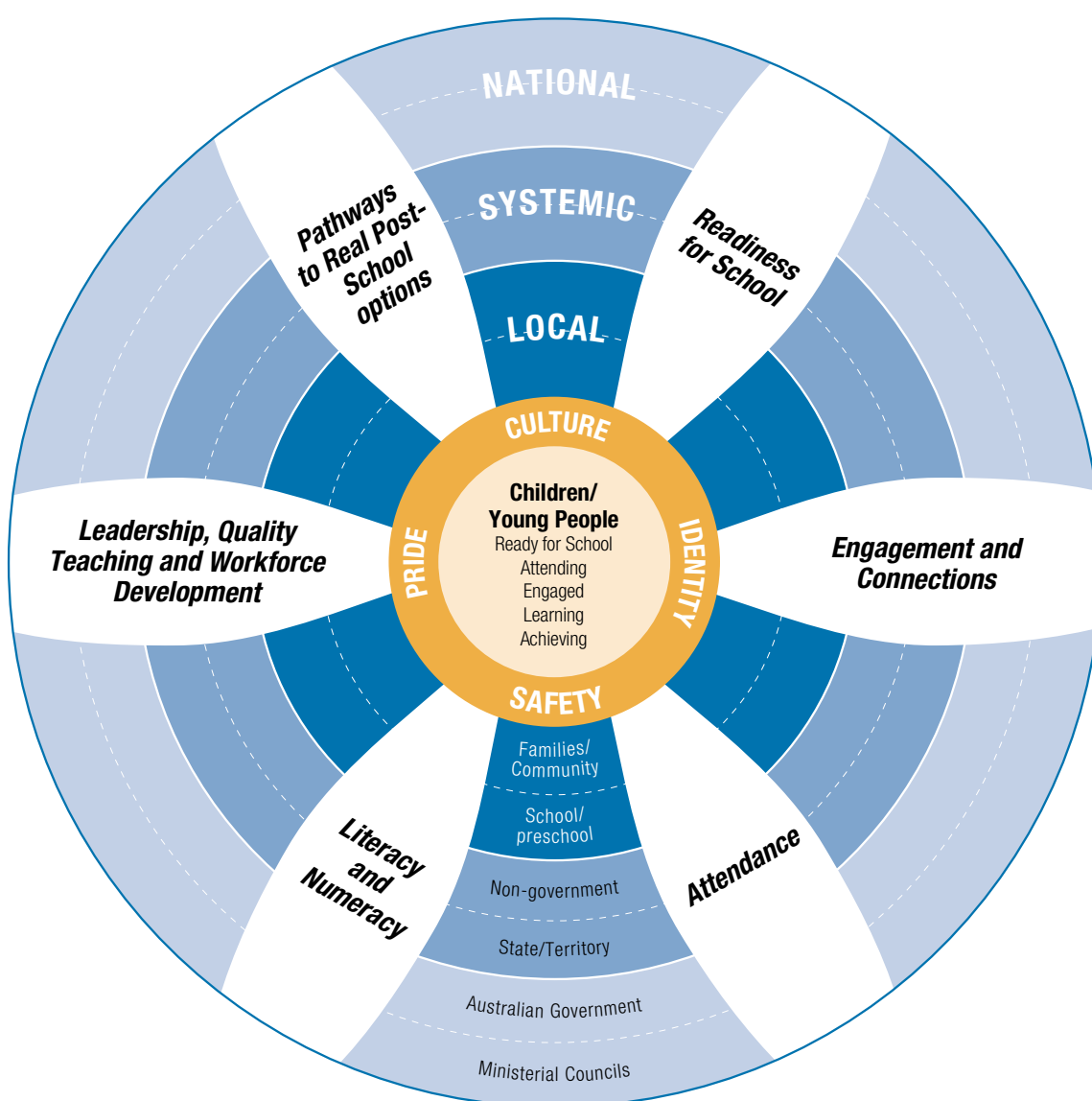
The Plan builds upon *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008* (MCEETYA, 2006), which focused national effort in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes. It is informed by a review of *Australian Directions* commissioned by MCEECDYA and undertaken by prominent Aboriginal academics from across Australia (University of SA, 2009).

## Overview

The Plan identifies national, systemic and local level action in six priority domains that evidence shows will contribute to improved outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. These priorities and actions will guide effort over the next five years.

The following diagram provides a conceptual overview of the Plan.

### Conceptual overview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014



Experience has shown that improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students arise from collaborative action that is responsive to local needs. As a consequence, Ministers have agreed in this Plan to identify a key group of schools called ‘focus schools’, some of which have been identified as sites for specific action under national partnership agreements. By monitoring and taking action in focus schools, Ministers will be assured that the benefits of national reforms are reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and that resources are used effectively to support the closing the gap targets. Focus schools will begin implementing actions outlined in the Plan during 2011, with all actions established as part of school planning processes by the end of the 2011 academic year. A definition of focus schools is provided at Appendix 1.

In implementing the actions in this Plan, government and non-government education providers will follow the six principles for the delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians agreed under the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*:

- » **Priority principle:** Programs and services contribute to closing the gap by meeting targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
- » **Engagement principle:** Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, students and communities is central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
- » **Sustainability principle:** Programs and services are directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet COAG targets.
- » **Access principle:** Programs and services are physically and culturally accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.
- » **Integration principle:** There will be better collaboration between and within governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.
- » **Accountability principle:** Programs and services will have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

## Policy environment

In 2010, there were over 160 000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students in Australia representing just over four per cent of the student population. Around 85 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in government schools and 15 per cent in non-government schools. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can represent up to 100 per cent of enrolments in remote and community-based schools, the majority attend regional and urban schools where most of their peers are non-Indigenous. About 20 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attend schools in remote areas.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the communities in which they live. While some speak Standard Australian English at home, many speak Aboriginal English (a non-standard dialect of English), a creole, one or more Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, or any combinations of these as their first language.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have made gains in recent years in some areas of English literacy and numeracy and retention to Year 12. Many succeed at school and go on to join the increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who are undertaking further study: there are around 74 700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in vocational education and training and approximately 9 500 at university. Other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students move straight from school into employment.

However, gaps remain between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students with evidence from across Australia showing that the more remote the community the poorer the student outcomes. This is clear on all indicators including participation in early childhood education, literacy and numeracy, attendance, retention, and post-school transitions. These gaps limit the career prospects and life choices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and perpetuate intergenerational disadvantage. National trajectories to achieve the closing the gap targets are included in Chapter 4.

## Consultation

Extensive consultation with stakeholders in the government, non-government and community sectors was undertaken by Aboriginal academics for the review of *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008*.

This Plan was informed by the review and developed by a national working group of senior officials, many of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. An initial draft of the Plan was circulated to Indigenous education consultative bodies in all States and Territories as well as a number of leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators for preliminary comment prior to public release.

The Plan is also informed by public consultation. Several hundred organisations were invited to provide comment on a draft version of the Plan. Around 100 written submissions were received and discussions were held with many stakeholders. Ministers recognise the time and effort taken by these respondents in providing thoughtful comment on the Plan. Ministers acknowledge the many offers from non-government organisations, industry, unions, parent organisations and professional bodies to work with MCEECDYA and education providers to implement the actions outlined in the Plan. These offers reflect a commitment to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

## Structure

This Plan is made up of four chapters:

1. **Introduction:** providing context and an overview of the Plan.
2. **National collaboration:** detailing a suite of agreed outcomes, targets, performance indicators and actions as the foundation of collaborative effort across Australian education providers to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.
3. **Jurisdictional priorities:** providing connections to each jurisdiction's own priorities as identified by each State and Territory Government and major non-government provider representatives. These connections give further perspective on how national collaborative action and jurisdictional priorities will complement each other to close the gap.
4. **Tracking progress and building on what works:** an important function of the Plan is to provide Ministers with information on how education providers are progressing in achieving the closing the gap targets. This chapter provides an overview of what information will be provided to Ministers and highlights opportunities for sharing research and good practice across education providers and with the public. National trajectories on achieving the closing the gap targets are included in this chapter.

## 2. National Collaboration

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### Readiness for school

Children who attend preschool for more than a year show a statistically significant performance advantage in later school achievement than those without preschool attendance (OECD, 2004).

Participation in culturally inclusive, high quality early childhood education programs and care can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to get the best start in life. These programs build upon the rich cultural, linguistic and conceptual skills that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children bring to early childhood education and:

- » promote early engagement with learning;
- » provide a strong foundation for future educational achievement;
- » encourage the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children from birth; and
- » support children in their transition to school.

For the first time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and educators have available a good picture of how their children are developing before they reach school. The *Australian Early Development Index* provides information on children's physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge. This will be an invaluable tool to assist providers of early childhood education and schooling.

According to the Index, 47 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children do poorly on one or more of the index domains, much higher than the 23 per cent of all children who are considered to be at educational risk. This research indicates that further work is required to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and those who work with these children before they start school.

One of the most important strategies early childhood and education providers can employ to support academic success and developmental progress of children is to work with families to prepare for the needs of each child. Read in conjunction with other elements of this Plan, actions in this domain seek to establish culturally appropriate and quality early learning that supports families as their children transition through key phases between their birth and formal schooling.

## Readiness for school



### Outcomes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 5 years of age benefit from interagency actions to improve their social, physical and cognitive development.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are developmentally ready to benefit from schooling (e.g. in their physical health, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge).



### Targets

- Increased proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in quality early childhood education and development and child care services.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students perform at equivalent or better rates to other students in school on-entry assessment.



### Performance indicators

- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are enrolled in and attending (where possible to measure) a preschool program.
- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students assessed as ready for the first year of full-time schooling by State and Territories measures.

## Readiness for school

### National collaborative action

1. MCEECDYA will support the development of a national Early Years Development Workforce Strategy. This Strategy will address the skills and capacity of the current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children's workforce, including the early childhood educational and care sector in rural and remote areas. Connections will be made with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy (Action 33).
2. MCEECDYA will support the use of the *Early Years Learning Framework* in all early childhood settings to ensure the delivery of quality early education programs through partnerships with families. The Framework also supports the cultural competence of early childhood educators in developing and delivering programs for young children. An Educators' Guide and other resources will also support educators in developing their cultural, linguistic and contextual knowledge about the communities in which they teach and support them in engaging with these communities.
3. MCEECDYA will reference, synthesise and report on longitudinal studies into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care in the annual report on the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014*. Research will consider integrated approaches for children aged 0–8 years, examining barriers to and enablers of success and curricula and resources that provide skill development in the foundations for learning essential for the first year of formal schooling.
4. MCEECDYA will commission further development of on-entry assessment frameworks and guidelines for their use in particular settings.

### Systemic level action

5. Education providers will work with focus schools as early as possible in 2011 to:
  - analyse data, where available, from the *Australian Early Development Index* and, as appropriate, in conjunction with ESL/D (English as a Second Language or Dialect) specific assessment tools to identify priorities for community-based early childhood development; and
  - develop outreach strategies to connect with early childhood education and care, health, family support, welfare and community services at both local and system levels consistent with Action 15.
6. Education providers will prioritise measures to ensure that universal access to early childhood education is available for all focus school communities by 2013.
7. Education providers will develop a linguistically and culturally appropriate on-entry assessment program to assess students' pre-literacy, literacy, pre-numeracy and numeracy skills. This will help in identifying students at educational risk and implementing early intervention strategies.

### Local level action

8. Focus schools will in 2011 identify what strategies can be implemented to address readiness for school and commence implementation as early as possible. Strategies and resources will be identified in school plans or other public documents.



## Engagement and connections

Schools and early childhood education providers that work in partnership with families and communities can better support the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These partnerships can establish a collective commitment to hold high expectations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and foster learning environments that are culturally safe and supportive. Evidence shows that children who are expected to achieve at school and who have high expectations of themselves are more likely to succeed. A sense of cultural and linguistic identity, and the active recognition and validation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages by schools, is critical to student wellbeing and success at school. There are strong links between wellbeing and learning outcomes.

The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels of educational decision-making and the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principals, teachers, education workers or community members in schools and classrooms provides strong role models and builds connections, contributing to a positive impact on educational outcomes. Similarly, non-Indigenous school leaders and staff must go beyond the classroom and school in seeking to engage with communities. Increasing the involvement of principals, leaders and staff in cultural and community activities signals a valuing of cultural identity and community assets. A two-way approach to community engagement that results in interaction of school and community in locations both in and out of school will build social capital in the school community to enable authentic engagement and connection.

Governments through the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* have committed to ensuring better connections across seven strategic 'building blocks': early childhood; schooling; health; economic participation; healthy homes; safe communities; and governance and leadership. These connections are critical as they recognise the complex interplay of factors that impact on learning and engagement.

## Engagement and connections



### Outcomes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are engaged in and benefiting from schooling.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities are empowered through the promotion of their identity, culture and leadership in community partnerships with providers of early childhood and school education.



### Targets

- Increased number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students involved in personalised learning.
- Active school–community partnership agreements in place within focus schools.



### Performance indicators

- Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with personalised learning strategies in place.
- Proportion of focus schools with a school–community partnership agreement in place.

## Engagement and connections

### National collaborative action

9. MCEECDYA will seek support from the Australian Health Ministers' Conference and Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference to strengthen connections between schools and health, welfare, family support, and youth and community services at local and systemic levels. Consideration will also be given to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disabilities.
10. Governments commit to maintaining appropriate advisory arrangements to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, cultures and languages can be considered when developing policy and programs.
11. The Australian Government and education providers will work together to promote the cross-cultural value of formal education in contemporary Australia to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families. This will help to create partnerships with families to build from and strengthen their capacity to be involved in their children's education.
12. As part of the implementation of the Australian Government's *National Indigenous Languages Policy*, a study will be commissioned into the feasibility of a national panel of experts framing the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, including consideration of out-of-school schemes.
13. MCEECDYA's *National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools* will acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and require all States and Territories to communicate their expectations surrounding the teaching of these languages to schools.
14. The Australian Government and education providers will work together to develop options to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in regional and remote areas to access high quality secondary schooling while retaining links with their communities.

### Systemic level action

15. Education providers will work with focus schools in 2011 to identify and commence implementation of outreach strategies to connect with early childhood education, health, welfare, family support, and youth and community services at both local and system levels.
16. Education providers will consult with other service providers to develop and implement programs and/or services targeted to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are pregnant and students who are parents to support their continued engagement in education.
17. Education providers will review the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers to maximise their ability to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents and teachers to improve educational outcomes.
18. Education providers will strengthen school accountability and reporting to families and the community on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.

## Local level action

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19. Focus schools will commence negotiating a formal school–community partnership agreement between the school, families and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in 2011 that sets out the respective responsibilities of each party and the ways in which they will work together to create a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and support improvements in their engagement, wellbeing and educational outcomes.
20. Focus schools will commence establishing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family forums in 2011 through school and community partnership agreements, with terms of reference and operating guidelines jointly developed by schools, staff and families.
21. Schools will involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers in the development of personalised learning strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the first year of formal schooling to Year 10 to support improved educational outcomes. Issues relating to health and wellbeing that impact on education will be considered in this process through the cooperation of health services with the assistance of education providers.

## Attendance

Attending school and engaging with learning is fundamentally important in helping young Australians to acquire the skills they need for life.

Successful learning cannot be built on irregular attendance. There is evidence to suggest that the more regularly students attend school the greater their success in learning.

In 2008, the median Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendance rate in government primary schools was 87 per cent compared to 93 per cent for non-Indigenous students. At the secondary level, the median Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendance rate was just under 78 per cent compared to a non-Indigenous median of 89 per cent (DEEWR, 2008).

To succeed in this area, education providers need to develop a better understanding of the complex factors influencing attendance and gather improved data on attendance. With this information, and a better picture of what strategies are working, education providers will be in a stronger position to implement effective and sustainable measures to support the regular attendance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Schools need to embrace diversity and explicitly value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures to enable students to feel culturally safe at school. Increased engagement between the school, community and parents is a key factor in supporting regular attendance. A curriculum and pedagogy that embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives will support attendance and retention.



## Attendance



### Outcomes

- All compulsory school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are enrolled in school and progressing through schooling at the same rate as non-Indigenous students.



### Targets

- Attendance rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are equivalent to non-Indigenous student attendance rates.
- All compulsory school-aged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enrolled in school.
- Increased retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Increased grade progression ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



### Performance indicators

- Attendance rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in schools.
- Enrolment to population ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians compared to other Australians.
- Retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Grade progression ratios for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students.

## Attendance

### National collaborative action

22. MCEECDYA will dedicate National Project Funds in 2011 to further develop a better evidence base of what works in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance. The evidence base will consider a range of contextual information, including the way in which schools respond to the diverse linguistic, cultural and geographical contexts in which they operate.
23. MCEECDYA will initiate work to establish mechanisms for tracking individual students (enrolment and attendance) from at least the first year of compulsory schooling to post-school destinations.
24. The Australian, Western Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments will continue working with non-government providers to develop strategies to better record enrolment and attendance of highly mobile students from remote communities.

### Systemic level action

25. Each education system will have an evidence-based attendance strategy in place in 2011.

### Local level action

26. Focus schools will:
  - commence developing an evidence-based attendance strategy in 2011 in consultation with parents and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, which includes targets for improved attendance and reflects how the school responds to and seeks to enhance the linguistic, cultural and contextual resources that students bring to their schooling;
  - publish their attendance strategy in 2012;
  - evaluate and monitor the success of their attendance strategy; and
  - report annually on progress towards meeting their targets.

The strategy and resources will be identified in school plans or other public documents.

## Literacy and numeracy

Mastering the basics of English literacy and numeracy is essential to participation in contemporary Australian society. Ensuring that young Australians achieve and go beyond these basics is one of the most effective ways of enabling their participation and broadening their life choices and options.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not speak Standard Australian English as their first language. Their home language is often Aboriginal English, a creole, or one or more Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages, or any combination of these. In addition, many parents and relatives may not speak Standard Australian English at home.

Governments are working together to improve Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy outcomes by:

- » developing and implementing a rigorous and world-class Australian Curriculum for all young Australians from kindergarten to Year 12, with the learning areas of English and mathematics among the first progressed;
- » supporting teachers to improve their teaching of Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy, including through implementing whole-of-school approaches;
- » supporting the use and development of pedagogies that are sensitive to and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' languages and cultures; and
- » implementing reforms under the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership to promote strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy, effective evidence-based teaching and effective monitoring of student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed.

The following actions complement these reforms.

## Literacy and numeracy



### Outcomes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards and overall levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are improving.



### Targets

- Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students by 2018.
- Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participation rates in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).



### Performance indicators

- Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in NAPLAN testing.
- Participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in NAPLAN.

## Literacy and numeracy

### National collaborative action

27. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority will regularly review NAPLAN tests to ensure that they are not culturally biased against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
28. The Australian Government will work with education providers to develop and maintain a national database of effective, evidence-based literacy and numeracy strategies to support the sharing of best practice. Bilingual and bidialectal evidence-based strategies will be considered for inclusion in the database.
29. The Australian Government and education providers will work together to support access to family literacy and numeracy programs, including multilingual family programs, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and target participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in intensive support playgroups and other family support services.

### Systemic level action

30. Education providers will ensure that teachers working in remote schools with multilingual students are appropriately prepared with English as a Second Language (ESL) strategies, including the means by which to assess student progress in the acquisition of skills in Standard Australian English.

### Local level action

31. Focus schools will during 2011 have in place a whole-of-school approach to the teaching and learning of Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy which:
  - builds from students' home language(s) where Standard Australian English is a second or further language;
  - in literacy, in the first three years of school (and beyond if necessary), uses an integrated and balanced approach to reading that includes explicit teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension;
  - in numeracy, in the first three years of school (and beyond if necessary), uses an integrated approach to numbers and includes explicit teaching of their purpose, representations, use and application, and interpretation in context (including comprehension); and
  - in both literacy and numeracy, uses data to monitor individual student performance and drive whole-of-school improvement.
32. Teachers and education workers in focus schools will participate in appropriate professional learning during 2011 and 2012 to support a whole-of-school approach to the teaching of Standard Australian English literacy and numeracy and use of data on student performance to drive individual and whole-of-school improvement.



## Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development

It is important that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are taught by high quality teachers in schools led by effective and supportive principals who are assisted by a world-class curriculum that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

The 2007 *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey found that 31 per cent of early career primary teachers and 40 per cent of early career secondary teachers felt their pre-service education was of no help in preparing them to teach students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Consistent with this evidence, a recent study of around 4 500 Australian teachers found that more than a quarter wanted more professional development to help them to better assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In 2008, only one per cent of teaching staff in government schools were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Leaders and researchers agree that increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators is a key factor in fostering student engagement and improving educational outcomes. Building a well qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educator workforce is an important way of potentially reducing the impact of high teacher turnover in school communities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Educational leadership by principals that acknowledges and embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership is also central to establishing and maintaining cultures of learning that are inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families and enables and celebrates student achievement.

## Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development



### Outcomes

- High performing principals and teachers are effective in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students benefit from school leaders who have a strong understanding of their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



### Targets

- Increase in professional development hours in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and cultural and linguistic competence training undertaken by principals and teachers.
- Increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, principals and education workers (Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) and equivalents).
- Increase retention of principals and teachers in hard-to-staff schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



### Performance indicators

- Number of professional development hours on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and cultural and linguistic competence training undertaken by principals and teachers.
- Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principals, teachers and education workers (AIEWs and equivalents).
- Average length of service of principals and teachers in hard-to-staff schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

## Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development

### National collaborative action

33. MCEECDYA will develop a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy to assist education providers to make progress towards an equitable ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to students. The Strategy will support aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education leaders, include initiatives to attract more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians into the education workforce and bureaucracies and provide pathways through the workforce. The Strategy will also help to recognise and clarify the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and support their professional development and career aspirations.
34. MCEECDYA has agreed to the development and implementation of an Australian Curriculum by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority that will include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives to ensure that all young Australians have the opportunity to learn about, acknowledge and value the cultures and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.
35. Education providers in northern and central Australia will work more closely together to provide professional learning for staff and to share staff and resources where mutually beneficial. Providers will work with the Australian Government to establish a coordinated approach to support sustained improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous contexts.
36. MCEECDYA will consult with the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education sectors to develop and introduce core components on good practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, in all pre-service teacher education courses across Australia.
37. Education providers will consult with teacher registration boards to ensure that completion of core components on good practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, in pre-service teacher education courses are a condition of registration. Where teachers completed their pre-service training before these requirements were introduced, education providers will ensure the provision of appropriate professional learning.
38. MCEECDYA will ensure that requirements for teachers to have knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, are included in the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. This requirement will be made at graduate, proficient, highly accomplished and lead teacher levels. The Standards will inform reforms in pre-service education course accreditation and national consistency in teacher registration.
39. MCEECDYA will consult with the higher education sector to establish a coalition of universities, based on the New Zealand model, to provide evidence-based culturally and linguistically authenticated research that can directly inform classroom pedagogy.
40. The Australian Government and education providers will provide access to high quality, highly effective professional learning and research for current and aspiring school leaders for the purposes of improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership will oversee and facilitate the delivery of national flagship programs.

## Systemic level action

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- 41. Education providers will deliver professional learning to teachers to ensure high levels of cultural and linguistic understanding and competencies to inform the best teaching strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- 42. Education providers will give priority to focus schools when attracting or placing high performing leaders and teachers.

## Local level action

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- 43. Every principal of a focus school will within two years be required to participate in a leadership program to assist them to lead improvement in the learning outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- 44. School principals will have the flexibility to tailor operations to meet the needs of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This might include extending operating hours and providing onsite or co-located services such as health care, after hours' study support, multilingual and English as a Second Language programs, sporting programs, child care, and family support programs. Principals might also partner with other schools to share resources and facilities, develop joint initiatives and provide peer mentoring and support.

## Pathways to real post-school options

The evidence shows that young Australians who do not complete Year 12 or equivalent are less likely to have the same opportunities as those who do.

Successful education can lead to employment and economic independence and form the basis for intergenerational change by providing individuals with the skills to participate fully in society and work and determine their own futures.

The incidence of unemployment among 20–24 year olds who have not completed upper secondary education or its equivalent is more than double those who have (Sweet, 2006). Labour market participation is central to achieving positive outcomes for individuals and their families in terms of social and economic engagement.

Despite some improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander retention in recent years, the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment remains significant. In 2008, 46.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continued their schooling from years 7/8 through to Year 12, compared to 75.6 per cent of their peers (ABS, 2008). Non-Indigenous 20–24 year olds are almost twice as likely to attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification as their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander counterparts (COAG Reform Council, 2008).

As noted in the *National Statement on Social Inclusion* (Australian Government, 2010), successful pathways for real post-school options require that young Australians have:

- » **Capabilities:** the skills and abilities needed to take up opportunities including life skills such as the ability to communicate, negotiate, organise, manage time, raise children and understand and navigate services, as well as the skills and abilities developed through formal education and training.
- » **Opportunities:** the options that are available and the choices that a person has, including the chance to participate in education, work, leisure, relationships and community activities.
- » **Resources:** the assets needed to support participation. Resources can be material (e.g. possessions, clothes, a car, tools, facilities, equipment) and non-material (e.g. information, good health, social networks and family support). Resources can belong to an individual (such as tools of trade, personal income, personal strengths), a family (family home, warm and supportive relationships) or a community (library, services, public transport, community organisations, informal community networks).
- » **Responsibilities:** the formal and informal duties we owe to each other, including abiding by the law, working to the best of our abilities to support ourselves and our families, extending a fair go to others and treating each individual with respect and courtesy.

## Pathways to real post-school options



### Outcomes

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students make a successful transition from school to work and further study.



### Targets

- Halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.



### Performance indicators

- Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 who have attained Year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above.

## Pathways to real post-school options

### National collaborative action

45. MCEECDYA will seek advice from Indigenous education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, Universities Australia and other strategic stakeholders to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who make a successful transition to university in conjunction with new national reforms to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in higher education.
46. MCEECDYA will request that the Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) develop a companion document to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* that outlines actions to close the gap in training, university and employment outcomes. This companion document would improve links between the school sector and the training, tertiary education and employment services sectors and support the development of innovative cross-sectoral approaches to programs and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
47. MCEECDYA will institute an investigation into how new technologies can increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' access to education and training, collaborate with relevant bodies such as the Learning Federation and Education Services Australia in extending these technologies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for use in education and training programs, and monitor the results of innovative developments in the use of interactive technologies.

### Systemic level action

48. Education providers will maximise opportunities offered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under Youth Connections, which provides case management, flexible schooling options and support to encourage young people who have left school early to reconnect with education.
49. Education providers will strengthen partnerships between schools, VET providers, universities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to broaden the horizons and post-school options of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
50. Education providers will develop innovative uses of interactive technologies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### Local level action

51. Secondary schools will provide innovative and tailored learning opportunities, mentoring and targeted case management strategies to increase the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to Year 12.
52. Secondary schools will provide pathways and improved access to school-based accredited training, including traineeships and apprenticeships, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 10–12.
53. Secondary schools will provide case management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking school-based traineeships and link them to employment services.
54. Secondary schools will provide access to career services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families to support informed career and study choices.
55. Secondary schools will maximise opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students under School Business Community Partnerships to extend learning beyond the classroom, increase student engagement, deepen learning experiences and improve educational outcomes.

## 3. Jurisdictional Priorities

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### Overview

This Chapter provides a brief summary of jurisdictional priorities as identified by each State and Territory Government and major non-government provider representatives. These priorities give further perspective on how national collaborative action and jurisdictional priorities will complement each other to close the gap between the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their peers.

The links provide stakeholders with easy access to related policy and planning documents published by individual education providers. They also provide links to education provider websites, where information will be regularly updated so that stakeholders will be able to see the progress that is being made in implementing the Plan.

### New South Wales

The overarching priorities in the provision of education and training in New South Wales by all three schooling sectors are:

- » improved outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in literacy and numeracy, attendance, retention and completion;
- » professional development of the education workforce; and
- » engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities.

These will be driven by scaffolding current policies, strategies and agreements that underpin the very essence of providing a culturally inclusive, intellectually demanding and exciting curriculum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students P-12.

The NSW Department of Education and Training will gain leverage by building on existing systemic initiatives across the whole education sphere including the development of an Aboriginal Early Years Strategy to support existing policy and practices; unpack literacy/pre-literacy and numeracy/pre-numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, including the development of an early years language and literacy program; further develop *Wgual-Marri* a middle years maths program; partner with schools through engaging in action research that involves the identification of effective teaching and learning practices that are linguistically and culturally inclusive; and celebrate students' identity and culture through implementing specific programs such as Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal cultural studies.



A partnership agreement between the Department and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated formally acknowledges that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are Australia's first nations people and are recognised among the longest living cultures in humanity. The agreement focuses on parental and community engagement that embraces line of sight management at a local, regional and state level.

### Web links

- » [NSW State Plan](http://www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan)  
<http://www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan>
- » [Aboriginal Affairs Plan: Two Ways Together](http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/policies/policy.html)  
<http://www.daa.nsw.gov.au/policies/policy.html>
- » [Keep Them Safe](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/57146/Keep_Them_Safe_Executive_Summary.pdf)  
[http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/57146/Keep\\_Them\\_Safe\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/57146/Keep_Them_Safe_Executive_Summary.pdf)
- » [Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat_direction/aetstrat0912.pdf)  
[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat\\_direction/aetstrat0912.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat_direction/aetstrat0912.pdf)
- » [Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009-2011](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat_direction/ahrdplan0911.pdf)  
[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat\\_direction/ahrdplan0911.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/strat_direction/ahrdplan0911.pdf)
- » [NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc](http://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/)  
<http://www.aecg.nsw.edu.au/>

## Victoria

The Victorian Government and the Catholic and Independent school sectors in Victoria, in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, are committed to improving the educational outcomes and well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This commitment is supported by plans and strategies currently in place, but all sectors will continue working towards developing further initiatives to enable and improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' engagement, retention and academic success in all schools.

Current plans and strategies include:

- » The Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework
- » *Wannik: Learning Together - Journey to our Future*, the Government's Education Strategy for Koorie Students
- » *Dardee Boorai*: The Victorian Charter of Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal Children and Young People

The Victorian Government and the Catholic and Independent school sectors in Victoria support the actions of each identified domain in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* and will work towards supporting schools with processes and strategies employed to meet State and national targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

## Web links

- » [Wannik](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/wannik/default.htm)  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/wannik/default.htm>
- » [Dardee Boorai](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/aboriginalcharter/default.htm)  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/aboriginalcharter/default.htm>
- » [The Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/web7/AAVMain.nsf/allDocs/RWP536BCBD377083AD3CA2574E2001A8984?OpenDocument)  
<http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au/web7/AAVMain.nsf/allDocs/RWP536BCBD377083AD3CA2574E2001A8984?OpenDocument>
- » [Yarra Healing: Towards Reconciliation with Indigenous Australians](http://www.yarrahealing.catholic.edu.au/)  
<http://www.yarrahealing.catholic.edu.au/>

## Queensland

The Department of Education and Training, Queensland Catholic Education Commission and Independent Schools Queensland are committed to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students.

All three sectors are working collaboratively on implementing four joint National Partnership Agreements on Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, Improving Teacher Quality, and Youth Attainment and Transitions which include specific accountabilities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Accountabilities include (but are not limited to):

- » improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attendance and retention;
- » building the skills of teachers and school leadership teams to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement in literacy and numeracy;
- » improved in-school support for teachers and leaders, particularly in disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools;
- » improved reward structures for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, rural/ remote and hard-to-staff schools; and
- » improved outcomes through enhanced access to digital teaching and learning opportunities.

## Web links

- » [Department of Education and Training Closing the Gap Education Strategy](http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/pdfs/closing-gap.pdf)  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/schools/indigenous/pdfs/closing-gap.pdf>
- » [Queensland Catholic Education Commission Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/images/pdfs/aboriginal_sept2007.pdf)  
[http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/images/pdfs/aboriginal\\_sept2007.pdf](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au/images/pdfs/aboriginal_sept2007.pdf)
- » [Independent Schools Queensland](http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au)  
<http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au>
- » [Children and Family Centres](http://education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/fact-sheet-children-and-family-centres.pdf)  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/pdfs/fact-sheet-children-and-family-centres.pdf>

- » [ESL Bandscales:](http://education.qld.gov.au/students/evaluation/monitoring/bandscales/speaking/index.html)  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/students/evaluation/monitoring/bandscales/speaking/index.html>
- » [Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee](http://www.qiecc.eq.edu.au/)  
<http://www.qiecc.eq.edu.au/>
- » [Queensland Studies Authority Indigenous Perspectives Strategy](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/approach/577.html)  
<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/approach/577.html>

## South Australia

*South Australia's Strategic Plan* contains overarching education and early childhood development priorities, plans and strategies and includes specific targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning and employment.

Education providers in South Australia are guided by the directions of documents relevant to each sector, including the Department of Education and Children's Services *Aboriginal Strategy 2005–2010*; the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia *Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010*; and the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools *SACCS Indigenous Education Policy*.

The three schooling sectors in South Australia are committed to substantial improvement in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and support the aims and intent of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014*.

South Australia has identified priorities in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community engagement; professional learning to support the cultural competence of educators and education systems; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment; improvement in literacy and numeracy, attendance and retention outcomes; and improvement in the South Australian Certificate of Education completion rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students.

These priorities have been embedded in the plans, policies and strategies of the three schooling sectors in South Australia to meet sector needs and contexts.

### Web links

- » [South Australia's Strategic Plan](http://www.stateplan.sa.gov.au/)  
<http://www.stateplan.sa.gov.au/>
- » [Department of Education and Children's Services Aboriginal Strategy 2005–2010](http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/DecsAboriginalStrategy2-1.pdf)  
<http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/docs/documents/1/DecsAboriginalStrategy2-1.pdf>
- » [South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools Indigenous Education Policy](http://online.cesnet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7343/Indigenous+Education+Policy.pdf)  
<http://online.cesnet.adl.catholic.edu.au/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7343/Indigenous+Education+Policy.pdf>

## Western Australia

Western Australia's government and Catholic school systems and Independent school sector are committed to improving the education and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Western Australia is building on local and regional strategies that have proved successful and will be generating new initiatives to close the gap in education achievement between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students. These strategies will be further enhanced by the greater empowerment of local public schools.

The priorities in the provision of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are:

- » engagement with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community;
- » enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readiness for schooling;
- » improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in literacy, numeracy, attendance and school completion; and
- » up-skilling the education workforce.

The three sectors are utilising the *National Education Agreement* and the National Partnerships Agreements to build on the local, regional and state-wide strategies.

The priorities in the three *Smarter School National Partnerships* on Literacy and Numeracy, Low Socio-economic Status School Communities and Improving Teacher Quality, have been incorporated into school plans in ways that recognise the characteristics of each school's community, the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in urban, regional and remote areas and the challenges individual school communities face producing improvements in their students' education and well being.

The Western Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Council and the Smarter Schools National Partnership Cross Sectoral Governance Group, the latter established specifically to coordinate planning, support for schools and reporting across the three National Partnerships, will gauge the success of the initiatives in lifting outcomes for Western Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### Web links

- » <http://www.det.edu.au/aboriginaleducation>
- » <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/partnershipschools>
- » <http://www.aetcwa.org.au>

## Tasmania

The Department of Education and Skills Tasmania are responding to the national Indigenous reform agenda by developing a strategic approach to improving the education and skills outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that includes targeted actions across mainstream and specific programs.

*Learner at the Centre*, the *Tasmanian Skills Strategy* and the *Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan* provide the basis for goals that include all Tasmanians reaching their potential in a culturally rich, socially-cohesive and economically productive community. *Launching in to Learning* is a commitment to building learning opportunities from birth to 4 years by engaging families prior to schooling and implementing school-based programs to support school readiness and early literacy development. *Tasmania Tomorrow* is implementing Tasmania's vision for post-compulsory schooling and training and the *Community Knowledge Network* enhances lifelong learning through a network of libraries, archives, adult education and online access centres.

The Tasmanian strategy for Closing the Gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education reflects the priority domains and actions of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* in the context of Tasmania's school improvement process. The overall aim is to build the capacity of every school to meet the educational needs of all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to successfully engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culture through effective, evidence-based learning practices and partnerships.

Priority will be given to focus schools, including all schools engaged in implementation of both the *Low SES School Communities and Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Agreements*. The Department of Education is working co-operatively with Catholic and Independent schools with the aim of meeting all education, transition and attainment targets established by the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*.

### Web links — Department of Education

- » [Learner at the Centre](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies)  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies>
- » [Launching into Learning](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/early-learning/early_years/launching)  
[http://www.education.tas.gov.au/early-learning/early\\_years/launching](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/early-learning/early_years/launching)
- » [Tasmania Tomorrow](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies)  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies>
- » [Community Knowledge Network](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies)  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies>
- » [Adult Literacy Action](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies/adult)  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies/adult>
- » [Supportive School Communities Policy Framework \(School Improvement\)](http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/health/inclusive/supportiveschoolcommunities/framework)  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/school/health/inclusive/supportiveschoolcommunities/framework>

## Web links — Skills Tasmania

- » [Tasmanian Skills Strategy](http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/skillstas/tasskillsstrategy)  
<http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/skillstas/tasskillsstrategy>
- » [Equity Policy and Action Plan](http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/skillstas/policy-and-publications)  
<http://www.skills.tas.gov.au/skillstas/policy-and-publications>

## Northern Territory

The education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, and the policy emphasis on evidence-based planning for improvement in remote and very remote schools are core business for the Northern Territory.

In 2009, 40.5 per cent of Northern Territory students in both government and non-government schools from preschool to Year 12 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In 2009, 83.7 per cent of Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in government schools and 16.2 per cent in non-government schools.

A package of measures announced by the Northern Territory Government in May 2009 has set a five year program of development focusing on the creation of 20 towns in the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the Territory as hub service centres for their region. Each town will have a plan for the development of quality education in each location and the surrounding hinterland starting from an understanding of the opportunities for transition from school to training and employment and backwards mapping from there across the years of schooling and into early childhood education and care.

The Northern Territory Department of Education has released a three year strategic plan for education and training for the period to 2012. An integrated implementation plan for the *Smarter Schools and the Closing the Gap National Partnerships*, focused on whole school development, has also been developed in partnership with the non-government school sector. At the heart of these plans are priority targets around student enrolment and attendance, improving literacy and numeracy, the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers and the development of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

## Web links

- » [Northern Territory Government Working Future Initiative](http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/)  
<http://www.workingfuture.nt.gov.au/>
- » [Northern Territory Department of Education and Training Strategic Plan](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/4126/DET_strategic_plan_2009-2012.pdf)  
[http://www.det.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0013/4126/DET\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2009-2012.pdf](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/4126/DET_strategic_plan_2009-2012.pdf)
- » [Northern Territory Department of Education and Training Families as First Teachers Program](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/grants/funding/general/FaFT)  
<http://www.det.nt.gov.au/grants/funding/general/FaFT>
- » [Northern Territory Smarter Schools Implementation Plan](http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Documents/NTFIP.pdf)  
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Documents/NTFIP.pdf>

## Australian Capital Territory

Closing the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other students is a priority for the ACT. The commitment to achieving this goal is articulated in the *ACT Department of Education and Training's Strategic Plan 2010-2013 Everyone matters*.

To support this priority, the Department has developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters: Strategic Plan 2010-2013*. The strategy supports the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* and will assist ACT public schools in adopting a targeted approach to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Initiatives to address the ACT's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students include:

- » increasing literacy and numeracy support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- » assistance to students during the transitions between primary school, high school and college;
- » scholarship funding for Year 11 and 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who wish to study at university and mentoring of all Year 11 and 12 students;
- » professional development for teachers to support them in the development of culturally inclusive curriculum plans and activities;
- » improving early years access to preschool, including Koori preschool programs; and
- » targeted support to students not meeting attendance, literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

### Web link

- » [ACT Department of Education and Training](http://www.det.act.gov.au)  
<http://www.det.act.gov.au>

## 4. Tracking Progress and Building on What Works

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### Overview

The objective of this Plan is to assist education providers to accelerate improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes and contribute to the achievement of the COAG closing the gap targets. The Plan is part of a broader COAG reform agenda for school education that will contribute to closing the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their peers.

Under this reform agenda, governments and education providers will work in close collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure that targets are achieved and experiences and success are shared. In this way, good practice and lessons learnt can be identified.

In accordance with the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement's* accountability principle, government and non-government education sectors are committed through this Plan to improved transparency in reporting on educational outcomes. They will contribute data and information to enable the tracking of progress and the production of a detailed annual report by MCEECDYA.

It is also important that an evaluation is conducted to assess the overall impact of the Plan. The Plan requires concerted and coordinated action by governments, education providers and individual school communities in six priority domains over the life of the Plan. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of this approach in accelerating the rate of improvement in educational outcomes.

### Trajectories

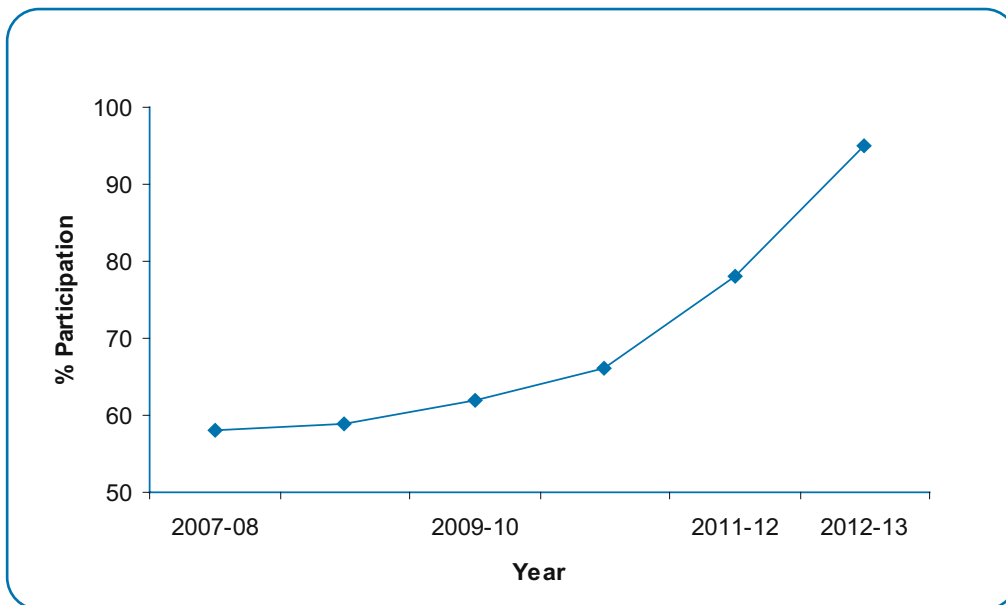
The following graphs provide an indication of the national trajectories (projected annual performance targets) in relation to the closing the gaps targets that directly relate to this Plan. Progress against these targets will be monitored by Ministers and the COAG Reform Council.

Data improvements may also lead to the development of more refined measures and reporting of performance against the closing the gaps targets. For example, there is currently no agreed trajectory associated with the target to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote communities have the opportunity to access to an early learning program in the year before school. The COAG Reform Council has recommended that data development in this area be given high priority. However, as an indication of work in this area, Figure 1 presents an Australian Government estimate based on Commonwealth funding for Universal Access to early childhood education. Once this data is refined to report on children from remote areas, reporting to Ministers will also be updated.

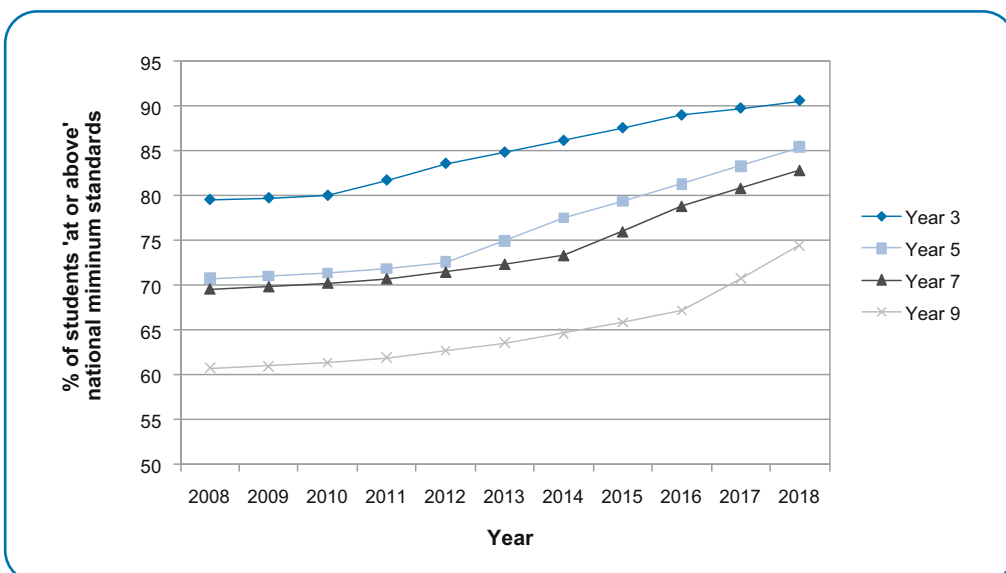
Other national trajectories contained in Figures 2-5 have been agreed by all governments.



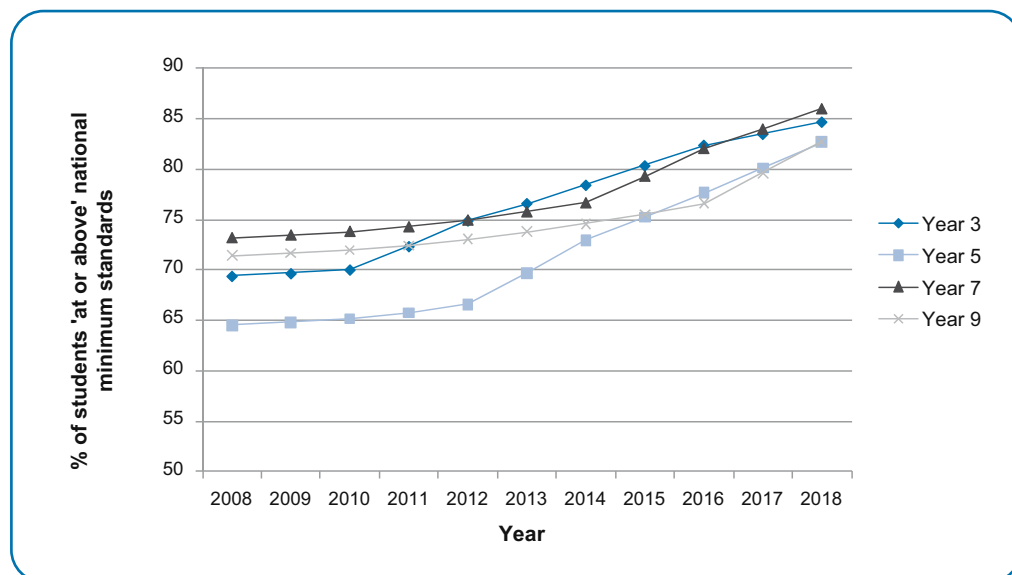
**Figure 1: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children participating in an early learning program in the year before school**



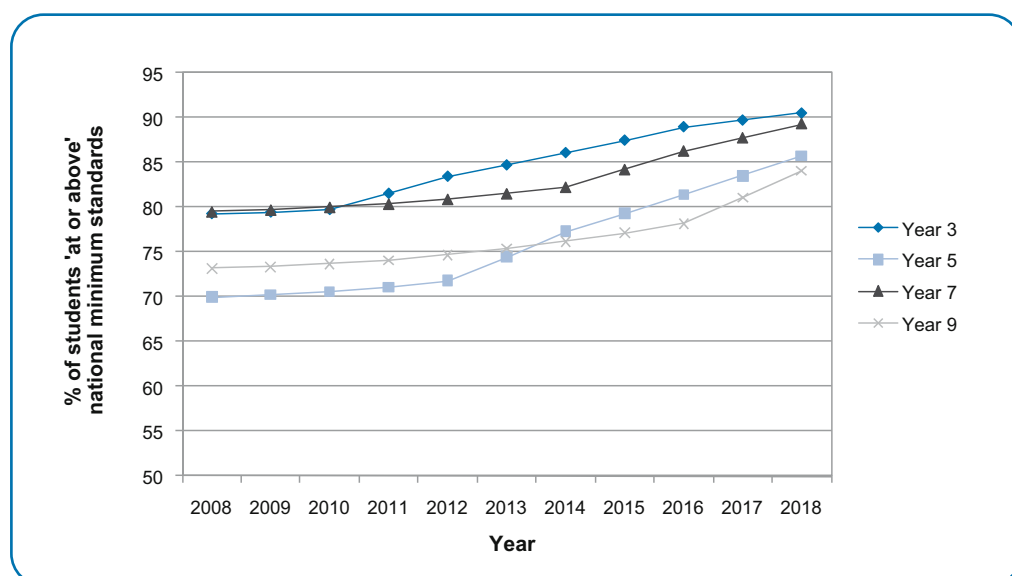
**Figure 2: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard in national assessment of writing**



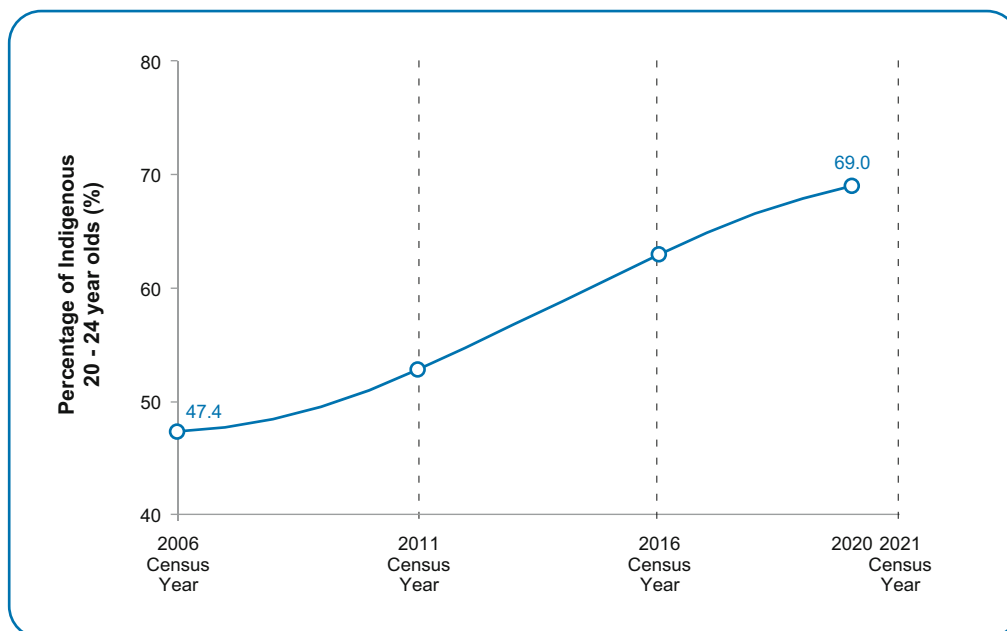
**Figure 3: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard in national assessment of reading**



**Figure 4: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at or above the national minimum standard in national assessment of numeracy**



**Figure 5: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 20-24 year olds having attained at least a Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II**



## Annual report

An annual national report will be produced for MCEECDYA within 12 months of the end of the calendar year. The report will be published on the MCEECDYA website. The report will present:

- » a national picture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education focusing on the closing the gap targets, agreed national performance indicators and other relevant national data;
- » information on progress in implementing the national collaborative actions of the Plan and a report on Australian Government activities in support of the Plan;
- » reports from each education provider covering:
  - progress against the trajectories for the closing the gap targets;
  - information against the performance indicators for the Plan;
  - summary information on progress in implementing systemic and local level actions set out in the Plan;
- » feedback from Indigenous education consultative bodies on the progress of the Plan and outcomes achieved; and
- » good practice and relevant research undertaken by government and non-government education providers over the reporting year, including any available information from the evaluation of the Plan.

Wherever possible, existing data sources and reporting arrangements agreed through national agreements and partnerships will be used for the annual report.

## Ongoing evaluation

The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the Plan and the extent to which improved educational outcomes can be achieved through coordinated actions across the priority domains. Key stakeholders will guide the development of an ongoing, independent evaluation.

The broad objectives of the evaluation will include:

- » An overall assessment of the effectiveness of the Plan on policies and process in terms of lessons learnt for the improvement of educational outcomes and service delivery.
- » An in-depth analysis of student outcomes in focus schools, tracking progress prior to school and through school to develop a greater understanding about success and challenges in achieving the closing the gap targets.

The evaluation will consider appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency issues at the national, systemic and local levels in accordance with the levels at which the Plan is being implemented. It will pay particular attention to focus schools, consistent with the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (NIRA) recognition of the value of place-based approaches.

It is anticipated that the evaluation process will provide regular reports and feedback, culminating in a final report presented to MCEECDYA. Key findings of the final report will be used to inform the development of a new action plan for 2015–2019.

## Other national collaborative initiatives

### *Data improvement*

The ability to monitor progress in improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational outcomes over time will be enhanced by national efforts to improve the quality of national data sets.

Commitments made under a number of national agreements and national partnerships involve cooperation in improving the quality of national data sets. Improvements will be progressed in the areas of early childhood education, student identification and transitions from school to further education and training. In addition, school staff will be better supported to collect quality data and analyse and use data to inform strategies and actions.

Making progress with this work is a high priority for MCEECDYA and MCTEE to inform cross-sectoral education and training issues.

### *National clearinghouse on what works*

Through NIRA arrangements, governments agreed to work together to develop a single national online repository of reliable evidence on a broad range of topics related to improving the outcomes of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse contains information on good practice and success factors to improve coordination of future research and provide policy makers and program managers with an evidence base for achieving the closing the gaps targets. The What Works project will be able to link with the Clearinghouse's quality assured collection and general collection of research and reports. The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse can be found at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap/>

# Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms and Definitions

## **AIEW**

Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker

## **Education providers**

'Education providers' are defined as government and non-government early childhood education and schooling sectors in each State and Territory.

## **Students**

'Students' are defined as children and young people who are enrolled in a recognised educational setting including an early childhood service, preschool or school or are eligible to participate in these learning programs.

## **School – community partnerships**

Schools across Australia are increasingly working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve educational outcomes. These partnerships are sometimes formalised through written agreements, which vary significantly in format and content reflecting the negotiation that has taken place between individual schools and communities and the shared understandings that have emerged in relation to educational values, priorities and goals. Education providers have developed guidelines and facilitated training to support successful agreement-making at the school level. An agreement template has also been provided - <http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/publications,11582.html>

## **Cultural competence**

'Cultural competence' is a term that is used broadly across the education sector. The definition used in the Plan is that adopted by the Stronger Smarter Institute which 'sees' a distinct but cumulative relationship between cultural awareness (knowing), cultural sensitivity (appreciating), cultural competence (practicing, demonstrating) and cultural proficiency (embedding as organisational practice).

Cultural competence/competency, cross-cultural competence and bi-cultural competence are terms variously used to focus the ability to 'think, feel and act in ways that acknowledge, respect and build upon ethnic, socio-cultural and linguistic diversity' (Lynch and Hansen, 1998 cited in QDC, 2006). This also requires the ability to 'see' issues and experiences from another person's perspective and to know oneself in a cultural context, that is, to understand oneself as a cultural being.

Cultural competence is part of a developmental process that is underpinned by relationships and self-reflectivity. It evolves over time. At an individual level, cultural competence refers to the ability of mainstream service providers to respond optimally to the ethnic, socio-cultural and linguistic diversity of their clients. At an organisational level, cultural competence transforms into cultural proficiency where policies, practices and procedures actively seek and promote inclusiveness and diversity and

are built into all aspects of service delivery. A culturally proficient organisation is composed of culturally competent individuals who understand and respond to the communities in which they operate and has policies, procedures and structures that promote such culturally competent interactions and ways of working and support its staff to act in this way.

### Focus schools

‘Focus schools’ are those schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the greatest need and where effort should be focused to make the greatest difference.

The identification of ‘focus schools’ will be undertaken in a three tier process:

1. *75 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments in each State or Territory* - Potential ‘focus schools’ have been identified as the number of primary schools which cover 75 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school enrolments in each State or Territory. The 75 per cent cut is based on a ranking of the schools by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school enrolments in descending order and marking the point of a minimum of 75 per cent of enrolments. This cut will produce the list of potential focus schools for each State and Territory.
2. *Program - Literacy* - The most recent *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN) results are held by education providers. This stage involves identifying the ‘potential focus schools’ with 25 per cent or more of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students below the minimum national standard in any one of the reading, writing and numeracy domains.
3. *Special cases: adding or removing schools on the proposed list* – In determining the final list of focus schools, education providers and the Australian Government will reconcile and agree on ‘anomalous schools’ to be excluded from or included in the list of focus schools.

In the first instance, primary schools are to be targeted as ‘focus schools’ so that effort is concentrated in the early years of learning. However, education providers in all jurisdictions and sectors could extend activities at their own discretion to include secondary schools, particularly those that have focus primary schools in their feeder areas and are identified under the *Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership* and/or the *Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership*.

### NAPLAN

NAPLAN stands for the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy*. NAPLAN is a series of common literacy and numeracy tests conducted annually across Australia for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

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## Appendix 2: Selected References

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