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ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER VIEWS

ABORIGINES AND TECHNICAL AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Report by
Aboriginal Consultative Group
March 1976

The following extracts have been taken from the Preliminary Report on the investigation of Aboriginal use of Technical and Further Education resources.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Although the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission acknowledged the educational disadvantage experienced by Aborigines, no enquiry in this field was undertaken at that time. However, it did suggest that the permanent Schools Commission when appointed should assist in developing "a co-ordinated policy" to promote action between the Schools Commission and the relevant agencies with interests in Aboriginal education.

In order to obtain Aboriginal opinion on this area, the Schools Commission formed an Aboriginal Consultative Group to advise on the present needs and future provisions for the education of Aboriginal people in Australia. The Aboriginal Consultative Group which has met regularly since December 1974 has been exploring all aspects of Aboriginal education; but it has been particularly concerned about the educational plight of the "excluded": that is, those Aborigines who have not had the opportunity or the resources to take advantage of post compulsory schooling, or who have been forced to withdraw because of the failure of the conventional educational systems to meet their particular needs.

As a result of this concern, in 1975 the Consultative Group approached the Technical and Further Education Commission (TAFEC) requesting that provision be made to fund a study to determine the real factors associated with the specific disadvantages suffered by Aboriginal people in the field of post compulsory schooling and the resulting needs, as the Group felt that the Kangan Report did not adequately cover this area.

This report refers briefly to Aboriginal technical and further education (TAFE) (Sect. 5.31), stating that

"Aboriginal adult education is another area of TAFE activity that should be expanded... but more research and innovation is needed in this area."

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

This investigation, although necessarily limited in scope, was designed to explore the TAFE needs of Aborigines and where appropriate to recommend broad guidelines for future possible action-research and developmental programmes. The Aboriginal Consultative Group was hopeful that this investigation would result in greater understanding of, and sensitivity to, such needs and provide a stimulus to national and State TAFE institutions to allocate appropriate resources or to adapt existing programmes to serve Aboriginal communities more efficiently and effectively.

1.3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group undertook to:

- . investigate the extent to which current TAFE resources meet Aboriginal needs in the field of adult education and the extent to which these resources and opportunities are used by Aborigines;
- . identify factors that inhibit Aboriginal involvement in and utilisation of TAFE programs;
- . present specific recommendations to TAFEC on the above issues in terms of policies and programmes.

1.4 MONITORING COMMITTEE

Although the Aboriginal Consultative Group had resolved that this investigation would be designed and conducted by Aborigines, it is recognised that not all the necessary skills and resources were available within its own membership to carry out the planning and implementation of the tasks involved. Accordingly, the Consultative Group established a monitoring committee of professional and technical resource persons who provided appropriate advice and assistance to the Group throughout the course of the study.

1.5 THE DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation was designed to produce a reflective statement on the current situation, which would provide a foundation for the development of recommendations for future action research and suitable programmes. This involved the design and scheduling of the investigation, data collection and analysis.

(a) Schedule of the Investigation

The investigation commenced in November 1975.

(b) Data Collection

Information was collected from six sources:

- . available national statistics on the Aboriginal and general Australian population;
- . the responses to a questionnaire sent to all TAFE institutions in Australia, requesting information on enrolment of Aboriginal students in courses offered;
- . responses (230) to structured interviews with Aborigines drawn from a number of urban, rural and tribal communities;
- . written submissions received in response to a general invitation to Aboriginal organisations, TAFE institutions and individuals; and
- . discussions with a number of TAFE staff working in institutions at: Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth, Port Hedland, Swan Hill, Sydney ;
- . relevant literature.

(c) Interpretation of Data and Development of a Recommended Programme of Action

The Aboriginal Consultative Group has had primary responsibility for the analysis and interpretation of the data collected, as it became evident that the interpretation and the resultant assumptions and principles suggested by non-Aborigines, e.g. in submissions, differed in varying degrees to the perceptions of many members of the Consultative Group.

1.6 DEFINITION OF ABORIGINE

For the purposes of this investigation, the Aboriginal Consultative Group has adopted the current government practice of self identification.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 PRIMARY SOURCES OF INVESTIGATION

The major thrust of the investigation concentrated on the surveys of TAFE institutions and of eight selected Aboriginal communities. An analysis of written submissions is also included in this chapter.

3.2 SURVEY OF TAFE INSTITUTIONS

A survey of Aborigines 15 years and above in courses at TAFE institutions, during the year ending December 1975, is in progress. Over half of the TAFE institutions have responded. Information requested included the number of male and female Aborigines enrolled, the courses undertaken by Aborigines, and whether these courses were diploma, certificate, apprenticeship and other courses. The results to date are listed in Table 5.

Although the survey is still in progress, two general points can be derived from the information received so far.

- . There is a low rate of utilisation of TAFE institutional resources by Aborigines.
- . In this investigation it was found that most Aborigines enrolled in TAFE institutions were taking pre-vocational or other similar low level courses.

3.3 NON-TAFE PROGRAMMES

There are other Educational Institutions which offer TAFE training, e.g. Alice Springs and Darwin Community Colleges. It is expected that details of their programme will be presented in the final report.

3.4 SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

The main purpose of the community survey was to investigate the utilisation of TAFE facilities by Aborigines and their knowledge of the availability of TAFE services.

TABLE 5 - Preliminary Findings of the Number of
Aborigines Undertaking Courses at TAFE
institutions in 1975.

(Figures not yet complete)

Course Level	States*						ALL STATES Male & Female	TOTAL
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS		
Diploma:							To be completed	
Male	-	1	-	-	2	-		
Female	-	-	-	-	2	-		
Certificate:								
Male	-	25	2	2	11	1		
Female	1	2	-	5	6	2		
Apprenticeship:								
Male	-	4	14	5	15	-		
Female	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Pre-Employment:								
Male	109	17	19	2	18	-		
Female	50	4	33	7	59	-		
Other Courses:								
Male	34	4	-	84	68	-		
Female	48	3	-	51	474	-		
All Courses:	To be completed.							

Source: Questionnaire distributed to TAFE Institutions November, 1975.

* No responses have been received for the Australian Capital Territory
or the Northern Territory (3 TAFE Institutions are involved).

The communities surveyed were located in all capital cities except Brisbane, the rural areas of Swan Hill, Victoria, and Armidale, NSW, and the tribal areas around Darwin and Alice Springs. The basis of this cluster sample was the proximity of TAFE services in the localities surveyed.

Only Aborigines, including members of the Consultative Group, were used to survey communities where they were known or resident. The attempt was made to obtain a random sample although a balance was generally maintained between sexes and broad age categories.

The interviewers selected a sample in which approximately 50 per cent of the interviewees were male and 50 per cent female. Three age groupings (15 to 20 years; 21 to 30 years; 31 years and over) were to be selected in approximately equal numbers.

Very tentative conclusions can be drawn from the data in its present state of analysis. These are listed as follows:

- . The profile of the sample fits the profile of the Aboriginal population, i.e. Aborigines in this sample have spent less time in formal schooling (average years of schooling is approximately 8 years) and, the unemployment rate amongst Aborigines in this sample is high (45 per cent in Urban sample; 78 per cent in Rural sample; 93 per cent in Tribal sample).
- . The utilisation rate of TAFE facilities by Aborigines is very low.
- . Aborigines have little knowledge of available TAFE services and very little knowledge of how to obtain TAFE services.
- . Aborigines are reluctant to leave their home communities to take advantage of TAFE services, mainly because of family and tribal commitments or lack of financial resources

3.5 SUBMISSIONS

An advertisement was placed in the National Press inviting organizations and individuals to put forward submissions relevant to this investigation. Twenty three submissions were received, mainly from TAFE Institutions or interested educators.

The main issues raised in these submissions were:

- . That limited formal schooling of Aborigines was considered to be the major barrier to access to TAFE;
- . That there is a need to expand community based education programs because of the cultural differences between Aborigines and non-Aborigines and the unwillingness of Aborigines to leave home; and
- . That there is a need for positive steps that will increase Aboriginal access to TAFE institutions.

The content of these submissions tended to support the issues mentioned in the surveys.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 THE BASIC PROBLEMS

The discussion that follows is based on the Aboriginal Consultative Group's interpretation of material drawn from the reports, surveys and submissions referred to in Chapters II and III.

The Consultative Group believes that at this stage the discussion can be focussed on three basic problems:

- (I) the lack of adequate statistics in the area of TAFE enrolments for Aboriginal communities;
- (II) TAFE systems have failed to meet the TAFE needs of Aboriginal communities;
- (III) barriers to access to and low utilisation of TAFE resources by Aboriginal communities.

4.2 PROBLEM I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a lack of adequate, valid TAFE statistics for Aborigines at both the National and TAFE Institution level.

CAUSES

The Aboriginal Consultative Group has been handicapped in this investigation by the lack of accurate comprehensive national census statistics. The 1971 census data is inaccurate and now dated and cannot be regarded as a reliable statistical baseline.

It is difficult to obtain specific data on Aboriginal use of TAFE resources because TAFE Institutions tend not to identify Aboriginal students.

PRINCIPLE

For the purposes of forward planning there is a need for :

- . accurate comprehensive national baseline census statistics;
- . systematic collection of statistical data relevant to Aboriginal use of TAFE resources.

For the purposes of evaluation there is a need for:

- . TAFE Aboriginal statistical data to be up-dated annually.

ACTION REQUIRED

That TAFEC approach the appropriate authorities to request that 1976 census data relating to Aborigines be fully processed as soon as possible.

That TAFEC establish a small working group to determine the statistical needs for Aboriginal TAFE programming -

- e.g. .. enrolment data
- .. course level participation
- .. completion rate
- .. use of supportive services
- .. retraining etc.

and to develop an appropriate system for the collection of such data.

That TAFEC be responsible for the collection and maintenance of annually updated statistics on Aboriginal use of TAFE resources.

4.3 PROBLEM II

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

TAFE systems have failed to meet the TAFE needs of Aborigines.

CAUSES

TAFE institutions are generally uninformed about the TAFE needs of Aborigines. This is due in part to the fact that most Aborigines

are concentrated in the more remote areas of Australia where TAFE facilities are either non-existent or if available, are limited and generally over-taxed. The existing inflexible administrative and operational structures of TAFE institutions are not able to accommodate or service the particular needs of Aborigines.

PRINCIPLES.

- . TAFE institutions need to understand and be sensitive to Aboriginal needs.
- . TAFE institutions have a responsibility to meet the general and special TAFE needs of Aborigines.

ACTION REQUIRED

That TAFE systems take immediate steps to develop a programme that will enable:

- . TAFE staff to increase their understanding of local Aboriginal needs;
- . TAFE institutions to adapt programmes and provide appropriate support services to more effectively meet these needs.

4.4 PROBLEM III

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Barriers to access and low utilisation rate of TAFE resources.

CAUSES

The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that Aborigines' access to and use of TAFE resources is restricted because of the existing barriers which may be identified as follows:

1. *Inadequate Schooling:* The formal education systems have failed to provide adequate schooling for Aborigines either through deliberate assimilation policies or inadequate provision of services.
2. *Aboriginal Culture is Distinctively Different:* In the case of tribal communities, the difference between cultures is readily apparent in terms of language values and belief systems. Such difference may not be so obvious in the case of urban and rural

Aborigines. The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that significant differences do exist and have important implications for TAFE Institutions.

3. *Family and Community Commitments and Peer Group Relationships:* Aborigines are community-orientated, consequently family and peer group relationships are powerful restraining factors for many Aborigines who may otherwise wish to pursue further study away from home.
4. *Financial Hardship:* Whereas many Europeans can cope with financial problems by obtaining special help from banks and other sources to meet particular needs, this is not possible for Aborigines. Because of the many demands of family and community pressures and commitments on their income, few Aborigines can afford to finance their own study. Aborigines are entitled to financial assistance but most are uninformed about the special funding provisions which have been established.

The inflexibility of the present funding system can cause or create hardship because it does not cater adequately for the particular needs of the students.

5. *Lack of Adequate Accommodation:* The 1971 census data revealed that approximately one-third of Aboriginal dwellings (mainly rural areas) had no electricity supply or adequate sewerage disposal. Many of these dwellings lacked kitchen or bathroom facilities. In the urban areas Aborigines tend to live in over-crowded sub-standard housing.
6. *Lack of Knowledge about TAFE Opportunities and Programmes:* Aborigines are uninformed about TAFE problems and resources. This is due in part to the fact that Aborigines generally are not familiar with many of the normal channels used by TAFE institutions for advertising courses. Because there are so few Aborigines who have used TAFE resources, it is difficult for interested Aborigines to find members of their own communities who can advise them on the availability and location of TAFE programmes. It is also argued that most Aborigines do not appreciate the role of TAFE qualifications in career patterns. The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that this lack of information and the lack of suitable resources for interested persons, are significant elements in the problem of access for the Aborigines to TAFE institutions and programmes.
7. *Lack of Appropriate Support Services:* Aborigines independently enrolled at TAFE institutions, do not take full advantage of TAFE programmes because they are not provided with the necessary

support services. These students do not have access to (or fail to use) TAFE vocational counselling or job placement services. They do not have access to preparatory, bridging or tutorial courses, consequently many Aboriginal students fail to complete their studies.

PRINCIPLES

- . TAFE institutions have a responsibility to ensure that Aboriginal students have an appropriate educational base as a pre-requisite to enrolment.
- . TAFE institutions must recognise, accept and accommodate the distinctively different culture of Aboriginal communities.
- . TAFE institutions must recognise that Aborigines are community-oriented and develop programmes that accommodate rather than compete with these community relationships.
- . Aborigines must have access to information about available financial aid and greater flexibility of funding schemes.
- . TAFE institutions must recognise the need for suitable housing as a necessary requirement of TAFE study.
- . TAFE institutions have a responsibility to ensure that Aborigines have access to all available information regarding TAFE programmes.
- . TAFE institutions have a responsibility to ensure that Aborigines have access to all necessary support services to ensure maximum use of TAFE resources and successful completion of TAFE studies.

ACTION REQUIRED

- . That TAFE institutions provide bridging and preparatory and tutorial courses where necessary.
- . That TAFE institutions develop in-service training programmes that will enable TAFE staff to become more sensitive to and understanding of the distinctive culture of Aboriginal communities and respond appropriately to the needs of these communities.
- . That TAFE institutions provide programmes that will not compete unnecessarily with family and peer group relationships.

- . That TAFEC prepare materials on available funding assistance and make this information available to Aboriginal communities.
- . That TAFE institutions accept the need for suitable housing arrangements for Aboriginal students and liaise with Aboriginal Hostels Ltd for the provision of adequate housing.
- . That TAFE systems develop and maintain an up to date information service on TAFE programmes to be made available to all Aboriginal communities.
- . That all TAFE institutions provide comprehensive support services for Aborigines enrolled in TAFE programmes.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAMME FOR ACTION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that steps should be taken immediately to implement a programme designed to maximise Aboriginal access to and utilisation of existing TAFE resources.

Many of the current TAFE resources and programmes are quite appropriate but Aboriginal communities are unaware of or lack the resources needed in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that the material examined so far would indicate two broad options for programming and action.

5.2 PROGRAMME OPTION 1 - The Rapid Development of Special Programmes.

Several submissions suggested that TAFE institutions should increase the number of special courses and programmes specifically designed for Aborigines (e.g. community-based projects, extension services etc.).

The obvious disadvantage is that such special programmes require additional staffing and support services for a scattered Aboriginal population. While the Consultative Group believes that special programmes are essential, at this stage it would be premature for the Consultative Group to advocate particular projects, although immediate exploration of this matter is urged.

ACTION REQUIRED

That TAFEC appoint a working group to examine in close consultation with State TAFE departments, the need for developing specific pilot study projects (e.g. community-based programmes or extension programmes in selected areas, such as Kalgoorlie, Kimberley, Alice Springs, etc.).

5.3 PROGRAMME OPTION 2 - The Re-orientation and Greater Utilisation of Existing TAFE Facilities.

There is an urgent need for TAFE institutions to develop appropriate measures to enable their staff to gain better understanding of the developmental needs of local Aboriginal community groups. The communication gap and lack of information applies to staff as well as Aborigines. It is felt that major advances are possible if Aborigines can gain information about TAFE programmes, facilities and services. Similarly, TAFE staff need access to information which will enable them to develop increased sensitivity to local Aboriginal needs and adapt their programmes to meet those needs more effectively.

ACTION REQUIRED

That TAFEC initiate appropriate action to implement the programme outlined in Section 5.4 of this report.

5.4 A SPECIFIC PLAN - For the Re-orientation and Greater Utilisation of Existing TAFE Facilities.

The Aboriginal Consultative Group believes that the plan outlined below would provide an appropriate mechanism to maximise Aboriginal use of TAFE resources.

5.4.1 The Plan as envisaged involves the following elements:

- a) *TAFEC to appoint a co-ordinator* who is to be responsible for:
 - . liaison with State TAFE departments;
 - . co-ordination and implementation of this programme;
 - . organising and co-ordinating the collection of statistics;
 - . supervising the monitoring and evaluation of Aboriginal TAFE development.

- b) *State TAFE departments to appoint a State co-ordinator to be responsible for :*
 - . co-ordinating and monitoring of Aboriginal TAFE programmes within States;
 - . training of assistant co-ordinators and 'link' persons in TAFE institutions.
- c) *TAFE institutions to designate an appropriate number of 'link' persons to be responsible for :*
 - . developing effective communication with local Aboriginal communities;
 - . disseminating information to Aboriginal communities and to staff of the TAFE institution of which he is a member;
 - . co-ordinating efforts by staff to adjust programmes and services to meet needs of Aboriginal communities more effectively.

5.4.2 Schedule for Implementation of the Plan

The following steps are suggested as an appropriate way of implementing such a scheme.

- Step 1 :* National meeting of TAFEC and State Directors to discuss proposed programme.
- Step 2 :* National Committee on Aboriginal Education (NCAE) team to visit each State for meetings with State administrative personnel at which the general plan would be considered and each State asked to designate or appoint a State co-ordinator of Aboriginal TAFE.
- Step 3 :* NCAE Team to visit each State for Workshops at which an in-service training programme for trainers for TAFE 'link' personnel would be provided. The programme would cover areas such as :
 - . understanding of TAFE;
 - . function and potential of TAFE for Aborigines etc.
 - . job skills involved in their work and also that of link persons;
 - . knowledge of local areas.

Step 4 : Regional workshops conducted by trainers to develop in-service programme for up to 10 'link' persons.

Objective: To train 'link' personnel in required skills for their role.

Programme to include:

- . understanding of TAFE functions
- . job skills needed by 'link' persons
- . specific knowledge of community required
- . knowledge of community resources etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 *RECOMMENDATIONS* - for Implementation by TAFEC

1. That TAFEC approach the appropriate authorities to request that 1976 census data relating to Aborigines be fully processed as soon as possible.
2. That TAFEC establish a small working group to determine the statistical needs for Aboriginal TAFE programming -
 - e.g. . enrolment date
 - . course level participation
 - . completion rate
 - . use of supportive services
 - . retraining etc.and to develop an appropriate system for the collection of such data.
3. That TAFEC be responsible for the collection and maintenance of annually updated statistics on Aboriginal use of TAFE resources.
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4. That TAFEC prepare materials on sources of funding assistance and make this information available to State TAFE departments for distribution to Aboriginal communities.
5. That TAFEC initiate the necessary action to implement the program outlined in section 5.4 of this report.

6. That TAFEC appoint a working group to examine in close consultation with State TAFEC departments, the need for developing specific pilot study projects.
7. That TAFEC convene a national seminar for State Directors of TAFE during 1976:
 - . to plan an overall strategy for developing Aboriginal TAFE education;
 - . to examine the specific programme options outlined in this report;
 - . to examine the feasibility of appointing co-ordinators of State Aboriginal TAFE programmes for 1977-9.

6.2 *RECOMMENDATIONS* - For Implementation by State TAFE Departments.

8. That State TAFE Directors participate in a national seminar:
 - . to plan an overall strategy for developing Aboriginal TAFE education;
 - . to examine the specific programme options outlined in this report;
 - . to examine the feasibility of appointing a co-ordinator of State Aboriginal TAFE programmes for 1977-9.
9. That if the specific programme options outlined in this report are adopted, co-ordinators (and assistant co-ordinators for regions) be appointed.
10. That the planning and running of workshops throughout the State be co-ordinated as appropriate.
11. That the development of special State programmes or support services for Aborigines involved in TAFE courses be co-ordinated as appropriate.

6.3 *RECOMMENDATIONS* - For implementation by TAFE Institutions.

12. That TAFE institutions adapt programmes and provide appropriate support services to more effectively meet the particular needs of Aborigines.

13. That TAFE institutions provide bridging and preparatory and tutorial courses where necessary.
14. That TAFE institutions develop in-service training programmes that will enable TAFE staff to become more sensitive to and understanding of the distinctive culture of Aboriginal communities and respond appropriately to the needs of those communities.
15. That TAFE institutions provide programmes that will not compete unnecessarily with family and peer group relationships.
16. That TAFE institutions accept the need for suitable housing arrangements for Aboriginal students and liaise with Aboriginal Hostels Ltd for the provision of adequate housing.
17. That TAFE systems develop and maintain an up to date information service on TAFE programmes to be made available to all Aboriginal communities.
18. That all TAFE institutions provide comprehensive support services for Aborigines enrolled in TAFE programmes.

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Professor Watts' report -

*Access to Education - an Evaluation of the Aboriginal
Secondary Grants Scheme*

is now available from - The Australian Government Publishing Service
(see extract p. 45 this issue).

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