



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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REPORTS AND RESOURCES RECEIVED

A most welcome publication is the summary document of the *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*, published by the National Aboriginal Education Committee.

The document reflects the national philosophy and national aims of the NAEC which form the introductory section and which are reproduced fully here:

The National Aboriginal Education Committee recognises that there exists a common feeling of 'Aboriginality' among all the descendants of the indigenous people of Australia, both traditional and non-traditional. We believe that education for our people must be a process which builds on what we are by recognising and developing our natural potential and cultural heritage.

By any acceptable educational standard in Australia today the education of Aboriginal people is seriously inadequate. A major reason for this inadequacy is that the educational theories and processes used in Australia have been developed by and for non-Aboriginal people. They are largely inappropriate for our people. School and further education authorities must develop an education theory and pedagogy that takes into account Aboriginal epistemology. Only when this occurs will education of our people be a process that builds on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identity.

In promoting the need for educational processes to work from an Aboriginal world view, we must emphasise the growth of the person as a whole. We further recognise the need for educational processes to develop the academic and technological skills so necessary for our people to take their place in the Australia of today. To be effective, the acquisition of those skills and learning must be acquired in harmony with our own cultural values, identity and choice of lifestyle, whether we reside in an urban, traditional community or homeland centre.

The NAEC believes that Australia will never develop its true nationhood until it recognises the prior ownership and the culture of its indigenous people and their descendants. We therefore consider it essential that a knowledge of this be given to every Australian. To do this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island studies must

become part of the curriculum in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education. It must be taught with a high level of respect and understanding so that an accurate knowledge of Australian history and indigenous culture can be obtained.

The NAEC further contends that a corollary of Aboriginal Studies would be the promoting of programs for cross-cultural understanding. These programs must aim to develop understanding, tolerance and respect for the differing cultural viewpoints held by the peoples of Australia. In doing so the uniqueness of our people becomes the core of such studies, from which will grow the cross-cultural awareness so important in a multi-cultural Australia.

The development of all or any of the above philosophies dictates that our people must be given the responsibility for planning policies to implement such programs. An integral part of any education policy is the arrangement made for funding and administering the policy. It is essential that our people be involved, and it is to this end that we advocate the development of local, State and national consultative networks to carry out this function.

It is also essential for our people to play a major part in the actual service delivery of the various educational processes. It is therefore imperative that opportunities be created for training and employing Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders so that we can be effectively involved in developing policies and in planning, implementing and delivering services.

The NAEC wishes to make very clear that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The time has come for us to take the major responsibility for its development. Our people's futures are at stake. We cannot be a part of this country unless we ensure that education allows us to take our place as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with pride in our own identity and with confidence that we can play our part in Australian society.

The NAEC therefore identifies the following aims:

- * That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education be a process that builds on our cultural heritage and world view.
- * That educational programs be developed using Aboriginal learning styles accompanied by an appropriate pedagogy.
- * That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education lead to personal development and the acquisition of the skills and learning needed for Australia today.
- * That Australia as a whole become aware of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and history.
- * That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies be the core of further cross-cultural studies for a multicultural Australia.
- * That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be given the responsibility for planning and implementing policies on Aboriginal education.
- * That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be trained for and employed in education service delivery.

Education is a process which never ceases. To this end the Committee embraces the notion of the importance of community education defined as

any learning process which is identified, developed and controlled by Aboriginal and Islander people and which contributes to the more effective living for individuals in that community

and that

everyone has the right to education...education shall be directed to the full development of human personality...it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship amongst all national, racial or religious groups

(Article 26 Universal Declaration
of Human Rights)

While the formal educational processes are identified and commented on later in this document, the significance of 'non-formal' education requires separate attention.

Non-formal education courses are generally provided for mature-aged Aboriginal people, those belonging to the generations that were denied access to formal education in their formative years by various State, Territory and Federal Government policies. The importance of non-formal educational courses and the expression of educational 'self-determination' within the courses must not be underestimated. The provision of access to such educational programs is a step toward redressing the educational imbalance by past generations of Aboriginal people. A central aim of non-formal community education is to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve self-determination and self-management. Non-formal education can also serve educational purposes.

Non-formal community education aims to meet the expressed needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

While some courses aim at developing literacy and numeracy skills, others provide a facility for personal growth and interest outside a formal pedagogy. Certain non-formal courses help maintain specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural context.

Non-formal education expands the world view of participants in much the same manner as the more formal institutionalised courses; the significant difference is the degree to which non-formal courses can be adapted to allow for the individual needs and objectives of each particular community. Non-formal community education programs can bridge the gap between formal educational courses and the expressed educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by stimulating participants towards personal development that is immediately relevant.

A significant community benefit of broad participation in non-formal community education courses is the revaluing of education, and the stimulation of involvement at the community level of our youth. Support structures should

be developed to allow participants in non-formal education to proceed to the more formal structure of education as desired.

Other educational areas on which policy guidelines have been established are -

Curriculum

Early childhood education

Primary education

Secondary Education

Bicultural/bilingual education

Tertiary education

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Studies

Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander schools

Research

Administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander education

Each develops a theoretical basis for the recommendations which follow. For example, the section devoted to curriculum stresses the general claim that

successful curriculum should involve three separate notions - it should be directed towards society, the individual, and selected parts of one's cultural heritage (p.8).

and sees that effective curricula and materials to teach Aboriginal children and Aboriginal Studies must be developed and constantly evaluated for "quality, accuracy and appropriateness". This necessarily involves the development of an Aboriginal pedagogy which "is essential for the proper development of curriculum for Aboriginal people." (p.8).

Appropriate early childhood education is viewed as essential in strengthening the child's Aboriginal identity and fostering transition from the child's home to the preschool and primary school.

Preschool programs should build on and be an extension of the child's home.

Preschool education should provide an opportunity for children to:

- . relate to a group of adults and children
- . acquire language
- . develop particular concepts and skills
- . develop and/or maintain an interest in self-motivated learning. (p.10)

More specifically, preschool education programs should enhance physical, cognitive, language and affective development by being based upon the children's past experience, by being related to their present interests and future needs, within their particular Aboriginal communities.

As there is such variability in provisions for preschool education services across the States, the NAEC views as imperative that

State and Territory Aboriginal education consultative groups become the major reference point for government agencies with responsibility for early childhood education services.

PRIMARY EDUCATION

As in early childhood education, the NAEC stresses the need in primary education for a cultural context in which education must be embedded:

Primary education should give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students the opportunity to develop their academic potential. It should provide a basis for a broad education and adequate academic and social preparation for future educational achievement, by developing a positive self-identity and by promoting our own cultural mores.

For primary schools to achieve these objectives, there are a number of important issues that must be considered. Educators in the primary sphere need to realise what the social and cultural aims of primary education are within their home school. They also need to understand the philosophical aims necessary for the students' growth.

Because of the cultural differences of Aboriginal children educators must understand the negative impact on Aboriginal students of their inflexibly enforcing rules, aims and standards.

All people learn to behave in a manner peculiar to their own culture. Implicit in these learnt behaviours are concepts and directional thinking which maintain and promote the individual's home culture. Hence, Aboriginal children bring to primary school all the aims, aspirations and concepts developed within an Aboriginal framework. The framework disallows certain attitudes and behaviours which are implicit in the school day and general environment. This framework will continue to force Aboriginal children into failure situations unless educators begin to articulate its detail.

Acceptance of the culture rules Aboriginal children bring to school must be emphasised, even if those social rules are not the 'norm'. The cultural rules relate to learning, personal interactions and aspirations as a whole.

An important facet of Aboriginal home culture, which is very strong in Aboriginal children and which needs to be accommodated within the classroom, is child-adult relationships.

Aboriginal children, and other children from extended family cultures, develop very mature and sophisticated child-adult relationships. Essentially this means a tactile, friendly, honest interchange of anything and everything that is happening to the child. As can be imagined, this form of cultural exchange often causes problems between students and teachers, especially at those times when a formal, authoritarian approach is taken. Implicit in Aboriginal society are the obligations and rules which bind members of the same family inexorably to each other. So strong are these obligations that, at times, individual Aboriginal students who are deemed 'capable' by their teachers deliberately fail, misbehave or underachieve because their peer group, frequently their brothers, sisters and cousins, are not as 'capable' as they are. There is a need for tolerance and acceptance on the part of teachers, especially when they perceive that the 'potential' in an Aboriginal student is not being met.

CONCLUSION - As this document is of such importance to the future effective provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, further chapters will be included in subsequent issues of *The Aboriginal Child at School*.

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The second newsletter *Clevo Koorie* has been published. *Clevo Koorie* is a magazine produced, published and distributed by Koori students at Cleveland Street High School in New South Wales.

It's a very useful classroom resource as it contains students' reports on activities experienced, projects undertaken, historical notes, a pen-friend page, student profiles, interviews and information, material and activities appropriate for Aboriginal Studies, and a 'Dear Wombat' column.

The editors of *Clevo Koorie* are keen to receive articles from other students throughout Australia. If you would like to be placed on their mailing list (\$1.00 per copy), the address is:

The Editor  
Clevo Koorie  
Cleveland Street High School  
Alexandria NSW 2015

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Else Jagst of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Aborigines Branch has compiled a very useful bibliography (57 pages) up to December 1985, of studies of Aboriginal languages and vernacular material. This replaces the 1981 edition.

The recorded material can be found in two sections. Section I is labeled 'Technical Works' and consists of articles, monographs and book reviews on linguistics, anthropology, literacy and education. It is primarily a listing of works by current members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Aborigines Branch (SIL-AAB). But it also includes:

- a) works by former members of SIL-AAB written or based on research carried out mainly during their membership;
- b) works by members of SIL, but not of the AAB, produced in conjunction with workshops organised by the AAB;
- c) works by non-members included in collections edited by SIL personnel in collaboration with the AAB;
- d) works co-authored by members and non-members.

Section III, the 'Vernacular Section', consists of several categories of works in Aboriginal languages. They are:

preprimers - for preparing people for literacy instructions;
primers - for teaching pre-literates to read in their own language;

transition primers - for teaching people literate in English to read in their own language; and people literate in one orthography to read a different orthography;

teachers' guides - for instructing literacy teachers in the use of specific literacy materials;

readers - for providing stimulation and practice in reading.

The readers are mostly written by Aboriginal speakers of the various language groups SIL-AAB has worked in or is working in at present. They are labeled as 'readers, literature, (rdr:lt)' and contain fiction, dreamtime stories, fairy tales retold from English, personal narratives and such like. But some readers are designed for use concurrently with primers and they are classified as 'supplementary'.

As this is a bibliography, the Summer Institute of Linguistics: Australian Aborigines Branch is not able to provide copies of many of the works listed. Further information about the bibliography itself might be obtained from: Summer Institute of Linguistics, P O Berrimah, NT 5788.



ABORIGINAL SCHOOLS CAPITAL GRANTS FOR 1987

The Commonwealth Government will again be making available funds for approved building and equipment projects in connection with schools serving predominantly Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. \$5,665,000 has been allocated in 1986 to government schools and \$2,266,000 to non-government schools. The funds were provided under the States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1984 as amended. It is anticipated that this level of funding will be maintained in real terms in 1987.

Grants under this program will be allocated to schools after consideration of priorities recommended by a National Advisory Committee set up to assess the relative priority of applications received from State/Territory Departments of Education in respect of government schools, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and schools themselves in respect of non-government schools.

State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups will be consulted in the assessment of relative priorities of projects, and it is expected that applicants will have involved the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group in their State in the planning process for a project.

Grants will be limited to schools which, in 1987, will have a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children amongst their students. Grants will be available to upgrade and extend existing primary and secondary schools as well as to assist with the building of new schools.

A priority in the allocation of these capital funds will be the provision of permanent or transportable buildings to communities whose present facilities for educating their children are inadequate or non-existent. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to incorporate school buildings within planned community centres to make the most effective use of facilities.

Assistance will also be available for communities to undertake the planning for a project. This assistance may be by means either of a planning grant, or the provision of the services of a building or other consultant.

Projects involving regional curriculum resource centres to serve schools with a significant number of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students may also be funded.

The Commonwealth Government recognises the desire of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to participate in the planning and operation of educational services to their children. Communities connected with a government school should consult with the State/Territory Department of Education. Communities connected with a non-government school can make application direct to the Commonwealth Department of Education. The Department will arrange for assistance in the completion of a formal application if required.

A number of community schools may have applied for and/or received assistance from the Commonwealth's general capital grants program. It is intended that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander element will augment support from State/Territory sources and from the Commonwealth's general capital grants program.

If your school or community wishes to participate in this scheme but does not have firm plans at this stage, you may wish simply to advise the Department of your intention to apply, and supply the following information:

- 1) The name of the group making the proposal.
- 2) A brief outline of the intended project and its aim.

- 3) What discussion of the project took place in the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community and what degree of support there was for this project.
- 4) Whether you need further advice on preparing the application.
- 5) The name and address of a person in the group who can be contacted about the application.

If you wish to make an application now, please contact the nearest office of the Commonwealth Department of Education where further advice as well as application forms can be obtained.

In submitting an application, the following specific information will be required:

- a) An indication of the form of consultations held with the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community to be served by the project and the degree of support expressed by that community. This information is not necessary where a community is lodging an application on its own behalf.
- b) Where a school is already operating, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students estimated to be enrolled in 1987. For a new school, give an estimate of the number of children who will enrol.
- c) An indication of the extent to which the project will help meet the special needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- d) A sketch plan of the proposed facilities together with an estimate of the total cost of the project.

Applications in respect of non-government schools should be forwarded by 15 April* to the Director, Commonwealth Department of Education in your State or Territory.

* Unfortunately this release did not reach us in time to be included in the February/March issue of *The Aboriginal Child at School*.

*Information about the Commonwealth Department of Education
and its programs may be obtained from:*

Director, Commonwealth Department of Education -

NSW	-	59 Goulburn Street, Sydney 2000	Tel.(02) 9294933
Vic	-	17 Yarra Street, Hawthorn 3122	(03) 8181531
Qld	-	167 Eagle Street, Brisbane 4000	(07) 2295077
SA	-	Red Cross House, 230 North Terrace, Adelaide 5000	(08) 2741022
WA	-	P O Box 6032, Perth Hay St. East 6000	(09) 3255259
Tas	-	4th Flr Australian Govt. Centre 188 Collins St, Hobart 7000	(002) 205011
NT	-	NML Bldg 43 Cavenagh St, Darwin 5794	(089) 276133

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