

Introduction

The focus of this literature review is on issues and solutions connected with the transition from school to work and/or further education and training for 12-19 year old Indigenous young people. The literature is not vast in terms of evidence of viable and proven solutions to transition problems in this age range. Some literature has been included that covers a wider age range, because the principles and practices involved have relevance to young people, and also because Indigenous peoples of all ages are confronted by similar transition issues.

A search of the literature was undertaken using the facilities of the ACER Library, including a search of the Australian Education Index which is compiled by the library. It was decided to limit the search to articles over the last 10 years, back to 1988, with a particular focus on recent years.

An email was posted to the general email list of VECO, Vocational Coordinators Online (<http://www.ash.org.au/veco>) which asked members of the online community for suggestions of published and unpublished reports regarding successful programs and strategies which assisted the transition of Indigenous adolescents from school to work. A number of replies included useful comments, suggestions and descriptions of programs, some of which have been included in the literature review. The world wide web was also used to gather references, with searches undertaken on the following sites:

- National Centre for Vocational Education Research's VOCED database (<http://www.ncver.edu.au>)
- Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (<http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr>)
- Australian National Training Authority (<http://www.anta.gov.au>).

The Context of Transition for Young Indigenous People

As has been stated many times over, and was reiterated in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia' (Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), (1989, p. 3). *The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (DEET, 1995) reported that 'While participation in education has increased in the last five years, the size of the gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' participation and all other students' participation remains largely unchanged' (p. 81).

Indigenous youth drop out of school earlier than non-Indigenous youth. This was reflected in school retention rates reported in the *Nation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey* (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1996a): 81 per cent of

Indigenous 15 year olds are in school compared with 92 per cent all students; 57 per cent of Indigenous 16 year olds compared with 80 per cent all students; and 31 per cent of Indigenous 17 year olds compared with 60 per cent of all students. Overall, 57 per cent of Indigenous people aged 15 to 24 years had left school at Year 10 or earlier; 10 per cent of Indigenous 15 to 24 year olds had some form of post-school qualification compared to 23 per cent of all 15 to 24 year olds.

In 1994, the unemployment rate for Indigenous people aged 15 to 19 years was 50 per cent and for 20 to 24 year olds, 46 per cent. For all Australians aged 15 to 19 years, the unemployment rate was 22 per cent and for 20 to 24 year olds, 13 per cent (ABS 1996a).

Taylor and Altman (1997) point out that the Indigenous population is increasing in size at a much greater rate than the non-Indigenous population resulting in an expanding working-age population. The unemployment rate for all Indigenous people is likely to increase from 39 per cent to 47 per cent by the year 2006 (the non-Indigenous unemployment rate is currently 8.5 per cent). Employment opportunities will need to increase substantially for Indigenous Australians just to maintain the status quo.

Hunter (1996) cites employment statistics provided by the ABS and states that, for Indigenous people, completing Year 10 or 11 increases employment chances by 40 per cent, a post-secondary qualification increases employment chances by 13-23 per cent, and education also reduces the likelihood of arrest, which itself significantly reduces the probability of employment. In a later publication, a detailed examination of the determinants of Indigenous employment outcomes, Hunter (1997) states:

Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for indigenous employment. Indeed, the influence of education dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables. (p. 189)

The need for attention to be paid to school to work transition issues is emphasised in the listed priorities of the *National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996-2002* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, chair P. Hughes, 1995). The following key outcomes for the priorities include:

- 'improved articulation of learning pathways between schooling and post compulsory education and training' (p. 4);
- 'increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the full range of subjects in senior secondary schooling, higher level award studies and employment-focused courses' (p. 4); and
- 'increased numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully complete Year 12 or equivalent . . . [and] gain employment after participation in education and training' (p. 5).

Transition Barriers and Difficulties

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) (1998) publication on school-industry work placements clearly outlined the barriers to access and success in school education, an important determinant of successful transition to employment, faced by Indigenous students. These barriers include:

- concentration of senior secondary certificates of education upon traditional academic subjects and assessments designed to produce a Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER);
 - confinement of educational outcomes to assessment scores and the TER;
 - highly centralised and relatively limited range of senior secondary subjects;
 - recent moves of a number of TAFE authorities to use the TER as a means of selection for their advanced courses;
 - concentration of school education upon classroom and didactic teaching styles;
 - relative absence of curriculum related to Indigenous cultures;
 - lack of cross-cultural understanding of Indigenous cultures;
 - lack of Indigenous people employed as teachers and trainers, and the lack of senior secondary schools in some areas;
 - relative isolation of many Indigenous communities;
 - high levels of poverty amongst Indigenous communities; and
 - lack of attention given to the retention of Indigenous students post Year 10.
- (pp. 5-6)

Interviews with Indigenous students completing the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) identified a number of barriers including racism, lack of parental support, lack of available tutors, transiency, poverty and competing responsibilities. The lack of support and training for Aboriginal Education Workers at the schools meant that they were not always able to give adequate support for students. SACE-specific factors which inhibited access and participation included a confusion regarding the structure of the SACE and associated terminology, inflexibility of SACE and time demands having a negative impact on student/teacher relationships (Rigney, Rigney and Hughes, 1998).

A report by Ainley and Robinson (1994) on enrolment patterns in Years 11 and 12 showed that Indigenous students tended to have much lower enrolments than other students in the physical sciences, languages other than English, mathematics, economics and business; they had higher enrolments in the Technology and Health and Physical Education Key Learning areas.

Course choices in TAFE show similar limitations. Golding, Volkoff and Ferrier (1997), in a stocktake of equity literature in vocational education and training, pointed out

that Indigenous people are over-represented in TAFE in terms of commencements, but participation and qualifications are at the lower skills levels, and they are under-represented in a range of vocational streams, particularly at the higher skills levels. Most Indigenous TAFE students are enrolled in preparatory courses.

Golding et al went on to list the barriers to access and participation in TAFE, including the lack of recognition and understanding of cultural differences by course providers, and the failure to address literacy and numeracy issues in an appropriate way.

A barrier discussed by Kirkby (1993) was the focus on competency based training (CBT) in the delivery of vocational education:

Aboriginal world views tend to be relational and holistic - the antithesis of the reductionist and positivist world view inherent in CBT. It is . . . the context which gives meaning to knowledge. In such a view the learning of discrete competency skills alone becomes meaningless. (p. 8)

Schwab (1996) looked at Indigenous participation in higher education, and found similar trends to those in the school and TAFE sectors - Indigenous students were markedly over-represented at the lowest end of the course continuum in non-credit courses and under-represented at the upper levels. Indigenous students chose Arts and Education courses in preference to Business, Engineering and Science. These trends in all sectors translate into barriers for Indigenous people to participation in many areas of the workforce.

In a slightly later publication, Schwab (1997) warned that in the context of the new political economy of education, 'the advantages of diversity are likely to be down-played and uniformity promoted in the name of fiscal responsibility, fairness and equity' (p. 11). McNamara and Valadian (1994) were aware of this danger also; they commented that there may be as much variability between learners within a particular category (such as Indigenous people) as there is between different groups, and that the failure to recognise this may be a real barrier to continuing Indigenous participation in education. The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (1995) noted the diversity already present in Australian education provision, and urged education providers to 'extend this diversity to meet the aspirations, needs, circumstances and cultures' of Indigenous people (p. 80).

Rurality is salient factor for many Indigenous young people in their transition through school and on to further education or work. Indigenous youth in rural and remote areas may experience additional barriers in their experience of school and subsequent transition from school to work or further education. Ainley (1994) found that the difference in the average literacy and numeracy achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was greater in rural than in urban areas. The literature review carried out as part of the *Desert Schools* project identified a number of key issues in the educational disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in remote

schools including culturally inappropriate teaching strategies and forms of assessment, the relevance of school, teacher training, teacher expectations, student motivation, student-teacher relationships, language issues, attendance, housing, health, substance abuse and community funding resources (National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA), 1996). The drop-out rate for all Australian youth from rural areas is greater than for urban areas (Ainley et al, 1997); and Indigenous students from remote areas are less likely to be in school (Hunter and Schwab, 1998). One study found that Indigenous students from rural areas have a lower self-esteem than urban Indigenous students (Lazarevic, 1992).

A report by the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory (1996) documented the barriers faced by Indigenous students from remote communities. These included poor housing and health, which in turn is related to poor attendance and unpunctuality, low English literacy and numeracy achievement levels (11-16 year old students averaged at about a Year 3 level) and the fact that although many speak English as a second language, this is not fully acknowledged in funding for ESL programs. Poor attendance levels of students also had the effect of reducing funding levels for school education. Provision of a full secondary education was not possible in a number of communities. The Review Committee could find no evidence of a child from a remote school completing Year 12 in the Northern Territory.

A report on VET delivery in rural and remote Indigenous communities found that training providers often continue to deliver training in inappropriate ways and fail to develop meaningful relationships or adequate consultation processes with communities (ANTARAC, 1998). Coles (1993) also expressed concern regarding the delivery of training to Indigenous students from remote communities along with the relevance of course content and the adequacy with which the courses addressed students' literacy and numeracy needs (not just English survival courses but subject/field-specific English courses).

Employment prospects for Indigenous people who live in rural and remote Australia are generally poor. Communities experience multiple forms of economic burden in areas where long-term unemployment is chronic, there are few jobs and competition for employment is high. While the likelihood of employment for Indigenous people in rural areas does not appear to be significantly different from urban areas, this is mainly due to the presence of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) employment in rural areas (ABS, 1996a; ABS, 1996b; DEETYA, 1996)

The concept of multiple disadvantage is one which has been explored by Golding and Volkoff (1998) who stated that:

Indigenous people . . . are more likely as a result of past policies and past legacies, to also be members of other disadvantaged groups such as those with low literacy and numeracy skills, long term unemployed, in custody, rural and isolated, and to have a disability. (p. 5-6).

The barriers to equitable access to and participation in education for Indigenous students are clearly identified in the literature. What is equally clear is the widespread support of education that prevails in Indigenous communities. More than a decade ago, Sturman (1985) reported that, despite low achievement levels and retention rates, Indigenous students and their parents had quite high educational and vocational aspirations. In 1989, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) document made a strong statement on this issue:

Numerous reviews, inquiries and consultations conducted in recent years have all demonstrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people place a high priority on education. They want for themselves and their children no less by way of educational opportunity than is afforded to other Australians. They expect that educational processes should lead them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to realise their individual potential, lead satisfying lives, and contribute actively to the community. They look to education as a means of moving out of poverty and welfare dependency, enabling them to earn income through employment or enterprise and to manage the development of their communities. (DEET, 1989, p. 6)

The report on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey conducted in 1994 included commentary on employment and education outcomes for Indigenous youth (ABS, 1996a; ABS, 1996b). The survey looked at predictors of Indigenous employment (such as age, family size, education, location, English proficiency, and social factors). For young people, as well as for other age groups, level of education was the biggest predictor of having a job. Having been arrested was a large disadvantage in terms of employment. The unemployment rate was higher for 15-19 year olds than for any other age group, and it was much higher than for all Australian youth (50 per cent compared to 22 per cent). The main difficulties in getting work reported by Indigenous youth were transport problems, lack of jobs, and insufficient education or training. Half of the Indigenous youth surveyed reported that they wanted to undertake further study and, of these, two thirds indicated that they would have difficulty in realising their study ambitions. The main difficulties relevant to studying mentioned were travel or lack of transport, and, for females, lack of child care.

The evaluation of Working Nation (DEETYA, 1996) reported that Indigenous people's potential for employment was affected by family responsibilities, cultural obligations, homelessness and isolation. There were few employment opportunities for youth in remote communities, and young Indigenous women in particular 'were expected to undertake a range of family and domestic responsibilities which could affect their employment prospects' (p. 66).

A longitudinal study of a group of Indigenous jobseekers found that, in addition to low levels of educational achievement (at compulsory and postcompulsory levels) and low literacy and numeracy levels, further barriers to employment included the impact

of Indigenous values on their lives (such that education and employment is a lower priority than family obligation and meeting immediate social and financial needs), problems with access to transport and financial resources, lifestyles with less routine and more unpredictability than most non-Indigenous people, high levels of mobility, health and substance abuse issues and low levels of self confidence (DEETYA, 1998).

Despite some improvements to Indigenous employment levels, which have been achieved since the implementation of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) described below, reviews of the policy indicate that many of the barriers to employment experienced by Indigenous people remain (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), 1994; ATSIC, 1996).

The remaining sections of this review look in some detail at the literature on programs and practices that have sought to reduce the disparity between Indigenous educational and vocational aspirations and the current and continuing reality of low participation and achievement in education, training and in the workplace.

Commonwealth Government Programs

The Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) was established in 1987 in response to unacceptably high levels of Indigenous unemployment and economic disadvantage. The major programs covered by AEDP were the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), the Training for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders Program (TAP) and general labour market programs. A review of the AEDP was undertaken in 1994 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1994), which included program reviews by agencies, analysis of census data, and consultation with Indigenous people. The review outlined a strategic approach to ensure the future success of the AEDP, with a primary emphasis on ensuring that program delivery empowered Indigenous people. What was required was a more flexible service provision to meet the information, support and outcome requirements of Indigenous people, and more attention to be given to locally driven objectives in developing programs. Comment was made on educational participation:

The current review of indigenous education programs suggests that while there have been significant improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in education, equality in educational outcomes for indigenous people is unlikely to be achieved in this century. In the interim, strategies including training and school-to-work transition arrangements will need to play an important role in bridging the gap. (p. xv)

A subsequent discussion paper covering policy direction of economic development notes that despite an increase in the numbers of Indigenous people obtaining post-secondary qualifications and increase in employment levels, participation in the workforce is still low (ATSIC, 1996). Improvements have not occurred in the private sectors and there has been a high reliance on CDEP schemes. It is acknowledged that the development of an economic base for many Indigenous communities, particularly those in distant areas, will be influenced by remoteness, underdeveloped technical and entrepreneurial skills, sometimes contradictory cultural values, lack of local and regional infrastructure, and a lack of capital. For many communities in areas which have weak or non-existent primary labour markets, CDEP will remain the only employment option. As a result, employment and income outcomes for Indigenous people can not be expected to mirror, in any statistical way, those of non-Indigenous people.

The discussion paper suggests a number of strategies to further increase employment for Indigenous people including the following:

- education and training (in remote communities, through participation in education and training opportunities, community development opportunities, local enterprises, and infrastructure development; in urban areas, obtaining skills and qualifications required by employers through labour market programs and educational institutions);
- private sector (supporting case management practices which adequately prepare Indigenous job seekers for private sector opportunities; increasing

- joint venture arrangements between industry and labour market programs; supporting the establishment of Indigenous business enterprises);
- public sector (eg ensuring that government agencies meet their EEO obligations);
 - community sector (continued use of current programs eg CDEP and ABSTUDY to improve full time jobs and income levels as well as continued support of informal economic activities and community enterprises in remote areas with limited employment prospects); and
 - maximising the use of funds directed towards the Indigenous economy.

The report acknowledges the link between education/training and employment prospects and sees the AEP (DEET, 1989) as providing an important foundation to achieve improved educational outcomes. The AEP, endorsed by all states and territories, which aimed to raise Indigenous participation and success in education to the same levels as the rest of the community. The policy outlined the education principles, long-term goals and priorities for Indigenous education and arrangements for implementation.

The CDEP scheme, one component of the AEDP, applies over a broader age range than Indigenous youth. Altman (1997) commented on the popularity of the scheme and its ability to create a mechanism to facilitate productive activity in many contexts. The limitations of the scheme included the lack of tangible evidence of success, and, often, the lack of training provided to participants. Taylor and Altman (1997) call for a continuation of CDEP along with strategies to move people from CDEP employment and into mainstream employment. They also support the continued underwriting of labour market programs, the encouragement of greater business opportunities and support for Indigenous business ventures, and a greater input of resources to improve areas such as education, housing, health and incarceration, which in turn affect employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians. Boughton (1998, in preparation) suggested that there was a need for research into ways of linking education and training programs to CDEP schemes. Daly (1993) described the potential conflicts between the aims of two government schemes:

There is some danger of a conflict between the incentives offered under the AEDP employment programs (eg the CDEP scheme) and the AEP programs to promote school retention. The offer of part-time employment within the community under the CDEP scheme may discourage individuals from leaving home in pursuit of further education. While not wishing to underestimate the wider social benefits which may arise from this choice, it may have important implications for an individual's future income potential. (p. 36)

Daly also notes with some concern the role of programs like CDEP in creating the impression that Indigenous employment rate is increasing; however increased employment is mainly in part-time jobs (mostly CDEP) requiring lower skills and providing lower income.

An independent review of the CDEP scheme found evidence that it was effective in facilitating the transition of participants to other employment but noted that projects are not funded to provide accredited training or individual case management to assist participants to secure full-time employment. The review recommended that CDEP projects be given access to more flexible, community focused on-site training delivery by TAFE systems and training providers, and develop linkages with employment placement providers (Spicer, 1997).

Another component of AEDP was the Training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program (TAP), a key element of which was Employment Strategies. Commonwealth assistance was given to employers or organisations to enable them to develop medium to long term strategies for Indigenous employment, recruitment and career development programs. A review of Employment Strategies (Rich et al, 1994) did not make specific mention of Indigenous youth, but did report on a series of case studies of Employment Strategies sponsored by the program, covering a range of employment areas, including catering, travel, telecommunications, state and Commonwealth public sectors, and a university. The report commented on the difficulties encountered in the program in matching the available supply of Indigenous people in the workforce to employer requirements.

The literature on transition also refers to DEETYA funded education programs:

ABSTUDY provides funding for Indigenous people in secondary and post secondary study. A recent review of *ABSTUDY*, mentioned in a later section on the transition of students to higher education, affirmed the importance of *ABSTUDY* in improving Indigenous educational outcomes (Stanley and Hansen, 1998).

The *Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme* (VEGAS) provides funding to sponsor organisations which conduct projects which help Indigenous students and their parents make decisions about their education, training and employment. Positive accounts of VEGAS programs are given in the later section on successful programs (Penny, 1995; and Eason, 1998).

The *Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme* (ATAS), which provided supplementary coaching and other kinds of study help. Wren (1992) undertook an ethnographic study of ATAS as it operated in the Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies at the Northern Territory University. While issuing a note of caution in generalising from the outcomes of the study, Wren stated that there were indications that the regular interaction with an ATAS tutor did enhance student confidence, and led to improvements in attendance, retention and the quality of academic work. An evaluation of the scheme by Keys Young (1994) identified positive outcomes for Indigenous students including increased self-esteem, confidence and motivation, improved quality of work, enhanced social skills, reduced absenteeism and increased parental participation in schools. The report also identified a need for greater uniformity in application of guidelines, improved promotion of the scheme, measures

to increase parental support, improved staffing and resourcing in remote and rural areas and improved training for the Indigenous education workers.

The *Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness* (ASSPA) program was established in 1990 as part of the AEP, alongside VEGAS and ATAS. By 1996, 62,000 secondary Indigenous students and 28,000 primary students were covered by ASSPA. An evaluation of the program undertaken by Elliott and Kable (1998) found that, although statistical evidence was lacking, case studies provided evidence of the potential of ASSPA to improve Indigenous student attendance and retention. ASSPA action overcame the cost barrier for students, increasing their access to school programs and activities, thus expanding students' educational horizons and raising self esteem and confidence in the classroom context. Through ASSPA, Indigenous students were becoming more familiar with and taking pride in their own culture. The evaluation team recommended that ASSPA committees should be helped to be better informed about allied programs such as VEGAS and ATAS so that they could encourage student participation in these programs.

A review of the AEP in 1995 made a number of specific recommendations regarding improvements to the Commonwealth programs, some of which have been subsequently implemented (DEET, 1995). For example, the recommendation to extend ASSPA to pre-schools (p. 73) and to pay AESIP (Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program) on a per capita basis (p. 117) have both been implemented.

Ferrier (1998) evaluated the government policy initiative in VET referred to as User Choice. She reported overwhelming support for the User Choice idea among Indigenous communities involved in pilot projects, because it 'had enabled them to articulate what sort of training they wanted more confidently and had raised their expectations that the training program would be customised accordingly' (p. 6). Customisation applied to the content of the program, its mode and place of delivery, and assessment procedures. Ferrier concluded that in all the projects 'it was apparent that customisation of a training program to produce culturally relevant and appropriate training is very important to, and increases the effectiveness of learning by, Indigenous students' (p. 8). Some concern was expressed about the emphasis given by User Choice to the interests of employers: 'An emphasis on the needs of employers and enterprises will not necessarily produce equal benefits for students' (p. 12).

In a review of the transition from initial education to working life, Ainley, Malley and Lamb (1997) reported on the success of Group Training schemes, under which the provision of training is organised through groups of firms rather than through individual employers. From 1990-94, 'whilst there was a 23 per cent decline in the numbers of apprentices across Australia the number of Group Training apprentices increased by 28 per cent' (p. 26). This scheme, together with the New Apprenticeships in schools, which enables an individual to be a secondary student and a paid employee, has the potential to ease the transition from school to work for

Indigenous young people. The Group Training Companies were set up to provide additional apprenticeships/traineeships by allowing small employers to operate in group arrangements. One of their roles is to promote apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities for people who traditionally experience disadvantage in the labour market. Indigenous people are more likely to be involved in Group Training schemes in the public sector than with private sector employers, and more likely to undertake traineeships than apprenticeships (ANTA, 1997). Group Training Australia (GTA)(1997) had documented a number of success stories, including a horticulture training program for Indigenous juvenile offenders. The Western Australia GTA network employed an Aboriginal Project Coordinator to be responsible for allocating 50 apprenticeships a year to Indigenous people. At the end of the first year the network reported that this target had been easily achieved due to the efforts of the coordinator who had worked to locate and place candidates with employers close to their communities.

Transition Issues and Solutions

Transition issues emerge at different points in the education/work continuum for students from 12 to 19 years. There is the transition from primary to secondary school, from compulsory to post-compulsory secondary education, from school to work, from school to further or higher education, and from unemployment to further education or training and work.

Primary to Secondary School Transition

The context of learning for Indigenous primary school children may include a number of factors which affect learning and subsequently influence their transition to secondary school. Indigenous children may have health problems, speak English as a second language or dialect and have different ways of learning which are not recognised or valued at school (Batten et al, 1998). A Special Indigenous Sample of Year 3 and 5 students in the *National School English Literacy Survey* (drawn from schools with at least five Indigenous students in each of Years 3 and 5) had very low levels of English literacy achievement, 3 to 4 levels below the students in the main sample in relation to the English profile for Australian schools, and relatively high rates of absence from school (Masters and Forster, 1997a). A further report on the results of the survey set a 'minimum acceptable standard' in literacy. For reading, the minimum acceptable standard was met by 19 per cent of Year 3 students and 23 per cent of Year 5 students from the Special Indigenous Sample (compared with 73 per cent of Year 3 students and 71 per cent of Year 5 students from the main sample). For writing, the minimum acceptable standard was met by 29 per cent of Year 3 students and 24 per cent of Year 5 students from the Special Indigenous Sample (compared with 72 per cent of Year 3 students and 67 per cent of Year 5 students from the main sample). It should be noted that, due to sampling requirements, the Special Indigenous Sample were students from mainly rural and remote areas (Masters and Forster, 1997b).

Groome and Hamilton (1995) found that in some instances the final years of primary schooling were positive ones for Indigenous students, who were 'accorded independence and responsibility on a level which is comparable with that which they enjoy at home' (p. 54), and the students had established good relationships with their teacher. The researchers found that this sense of security and affirmation could be easily lost in the transition to secondary school: 'In this change, Aboriginal students can experience confusion, a loss of responsibility, choice and freedom and a lack of recognition as a person' (p. 55).

A number of publications cover teaching programs and strategies designed to enhance the learning experiences of primary and secondary school students. They encourage teachers to recognise the individuality of students and to acknowledge and accommodate for socio-cultural differences, differences in home backgrounds, ways of learning, and language and literacy needs through developing positive relationships with students and incorporating a variety of teaching and assessment methods into their programs (eg Groome, 1995; NLLIA, 1994; Harris and Malin, 1994; Batten et al, 1998). One school program featured videos, guest speakers and special classes for Indigenous students to promote the value of education and enhance the students' self esteem (Courtney, 1989). A smoother transition from primary to secondary school increases the possibility of students remaining in secondary school. Back to school programs were also found to be useful for students who had dropped out of school prior to or at the beginning of secondary school (Groome and Hamilton, 1995).

Junior to Senior Secondary School Transition

There are substantial differences in the average literacy and numeracy achievement levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous secondary school students (Ainley, 1994). Secondary school retention rates have improved over the last decade for Indigenous youth, but they are still comparatively low. The *1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey* (McLennan, 1996) found that the participation rate of Indigenous 16 year olds was 57 per cent, compared with 80 per cent for all Australian youth; and for Indigenous 17 year olds the rate was 31 per cent compared with 60 per cent for all Australian youth.

Daly and Liu Jin (1995) examined the extent of private rate of return to post-compulsory education for Indigenous compared to non-Indigenous Australians. They found that, for Indigenous Australians, the private rates of return (in terms of income from employment) were lower for post-compulsory schooling and higher for post-secondary schooling.

In a review of the literature on Indigenous attrition in higher education, Bourke, Burden and Moore (1996) emphasised the need to improve secondary education:

The literature suggests that the first step in improving attrition rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be to create an education environment in which the students want to remain. (p. 9)

There have been several studies of Indigenous students who have stayed on at school beyond the compulsory years. A study by Munns, Mootz and Chapman (1996) looked at reasons why Indigenous students at an inner city secondary school chose to stay on at school. The main influencing factors were: a school environment that acknowledged, and sought to preserve, cultural identity; the effort made by the school to find appropriate ways for Indigenous students to achieve academic success; and teachers who offered interesting lessons and treated Indigenous students with respect.

A study by Day (1991) showed similar findings - the Indigenous students who stayed on at school had strong Indigenous and personal identities as well as Western school cultural knowledge, a determination and desire to succeed at school, and long-term career goals.

Students completing the SACE interviewed by Rigney, Rigney and Hughes (1998) identified a number of factors which supported them in their senior years including supportive parents and peers, role models, positive relationships with teachers/counsellors and support mechanisms introduced by schools for Indigenous students (Nunga rooms, homework centres, tutors and the ASSPA program), provision of ESL where appropriate and the strengthening of inclusive practices through Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum.

McInerney (1991) investigated the determinants of motivation in non-traditional Indigenous students in urban and rural school settings. The key motivational factors to staying at school beyond the compulsory years were self-reliance, confidence and goal direction. These factors in turn were influenced by: parental support and help; teacher and peer support at school; and general affect, a liking for school. The research did not show support for some factors previously thought to be important in influencing Indigenous students to stay at school or leave, such as:

- affiliation and social concern - while affiliative strategies, like co-operative learning styles and group work, had some influence, it was not as strong as the literature suggests, and social concern (placing a high value on social relationships) was not related to the intention of continuing at school;
- competition - much of the literature describes the prevailing ethos of competition in schools as antithetical to Indigenous ways of learning, but dislike of competition was not a crucial element in the student's decision to stay at school;
- extrinsic motivation - some of the literature suggests that extrinsic rewards are more important to Indigenous students than intrinsic rewards, but McInerney found that extrinsic rewards were not a motivating factor for students staying on, 'but merely maintain (for the short term) the attention of those who have already decided to leave school' (p. 163).

Groome and Hamilton (1995) conducted interviews with staff and Indigenous students in 22 urban schools in five states in order to identify the educational needs of Indigenous adolescents. Their observation of schools where Indigenous students were retained and achieved success led the researchers to identify supportive policies, programs and strategies, including the following:

- a school environment which encourages 'a developing sense of identity of their Aboriginal students';
- positive relationships 'between staff and these young people, in which all are viewed as individual persons rather than through stereotypes, and the individual needs and aspirations of students are recognised';
- effective communication with Aboriginal families;
- the setting of high standards of behaviour and achievement, 'yet still giving "chances" to those who fail to meet expectations';
- 'develop imaginative courses and pathways which are serious and rigorous alternatives to those which support tertiary admission;
- 'foster the development of strong supportive bonds among Aboriginal students'. (pp. xii-xiii)

The authors stressed the importance of supporting students when they reached the transition point from compulsory to post-compulsory schooling. This support must come from home and school:

At this important point, when students and parents need to be consulted about future options, the communication gaps between schools and parents can become lethal for the academic progress of Aboriginal students. A decision to go on to Years 11 and 12 may be a major one for Aboriginal students . . . There is often a great deal of encouragement needed from home and school for this step to be taken. (p. 55)

Regret was expressed by the authors that so few Aboriginal Education Workers were employed in secondary schools - in schools where they operated, they were 'offering vital support for students and their parents and helping to establish bridgeheads between the Aboriginal community and the school' (p. 63).

In their visits to 22 schools, Groome and Hamilton saw 'plenty of evidence to indicate that Aboriginal students enjoyed courses which have a strong vocational and practical component' (p. 61). They commented that there were many excellent programs operating to help Indigenous students make informed career choices, and spoke of the significant input of Careers Aspirations Programs and Tertiary Aspirations Programs, although some teachers were concerned about too heavy a focus on tertiary study in these programs. The Australian Vocational Centres run by the Commonwealth Employment Service, which provided experiences in work linked to local needs, were highly praised by students and teachers.

School to Further Education Transition

Vocational education and training issues were the focus of many studies. Some of the studies used interviews with students and staff to identify factors that inhibited or encouraged successful participation and completion of further education courses by Indigenous students. In one research project, 22 focus group discussions with Indigenous and NESB students, parents and community members were held in three states (NSW TAFE, 1995). It was found that Indigenous school students had a better perception of TAFE than of schools, and that language and literacy proficiency was the main barrier to VET for these students. Students felt that VET contributed to their employability and career options, but the quantitative and qualitative data showed that 'the employment outcomes from VET for the target communities are not as good as for the general community' (p. 54). In a 1993 Client Follow-up Survey, the percentages of VET graduates without a job were 46 per cent for Indigenous graduates compared to 31 per cent for all graduates.

Teasdale and Teasdale (1996) expressed concern that VET pathways for Indigenous students were mainly non-vocational: two thirds of the Indigenous students enrolled in VET were completing catch-up or pre-vocational programs, and 'statistics continue to show that Indigenous people are under-represented in all vocational streams and fields of study' (p. v)

Several reports identified the major factors necessary to overcome barriers to successful Indigenous participation in VET (Coles, 1993; Golding et al, 1997; McIntyre et al, 1996; and Teasdale and Teasdale, 1996). There was agreement on the importance of the following factors:

- a recognition of Indigenous culture and values in course planning and implementation;
- furtherance of Indigenous ownership and control of the direction of vocational education, and involvement of communities in course development;
- provision of support services in educational institutions for students as well as in their own communities;
- programs to improve literacy and numeracy skills;
- flexible course structure and delivery, without sacrificing rigour and quality.

Course flexibility was seen to incorporate modularisation and recognition of prior learning (Lester, 1994), as well as the use of new technologies and computer-based learning, particularly for students in rural and remote areas (Lester, 1994; McNamara and Valadian, 1994; and Moran, 1998). An example of the use of a modular approach was described by Mountney (1990). The Automotive Modular Integrated Training System enables trainees in remote areas to undertake trade training without leaving home for lengthy periods of time to attend a TAFE institution, and to proceed at their own pace through the course. The system was trialed in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory with enough success for the evaluators to recommend that it should be implemented more widely. As an ATSIPTAC Discussion

Paper (1997) stated, the problem with VET participation for Indigenous people in remote communities did not lie in the content of courses, but in the delivery. A field research report on literacy and language in remote secondary schools and their communities (NLLIA, 1996) included a discussion of the difficulty of young people in these communities in making a commitment to learning because there was no clear relationship between formal schooling and employment: 'The starting point for many teenagers may in fact need to be social and economic activity incorporating appropriate educational provision, rather than the reverse' (p. 332).

Teasdale and Teasdale (1996) suggest that, in order to overcome barriers and achieve more productive and workable VET pathways for Indigenous students, significant shifts were needed in policy and practice. Their recommendations for positive action include the following:

- 'Ownership and control of all VET provisions for Indigenous Australians will need to be transferred progressively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander management.' Coordination of the transfer, and the determination of national funding provisions and priorities will depend on the cooperative efforts of ATSIC, ANTA and DEETYA. However, the 'real "grass roots" developments should occur at the local level as Indigenous communities deliberate on jobs, job creation and vocational training needs for their own people.'
- 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups should be encouraged . . . to redefine the concept of "vocational training" . . . In this way VET might become just one aspect of a more integrated and inclusive approach to community education that is open to all adults regardless of age and prior schooling.' Local groups should be encouraged to review their total adult education and life long learning needs, so that broader programs could be developed in response to the social and cultural life of the community.
- Staffing will be a central issue. 'More Indigenous staff will be appointed, and non-Indigenous staff selected and culturally sensitised by Indigenous mentors.' Indigenous knowledge and learning will be incorporated into the teaching/learning process, and will be more experientially based. 'Facilities and services within VET institutions will reflect Indigenous values, and will continue to respond to the specific needs of Indigenous clients.'
- 'Processes will need to be established to recognise prior Indigenous learning. . . If English literacy and numeracy are sought they will need to be taught in contexts that are both meaningful and realistic. . . New technologies should be explored and adapted for use in Indigenous contexts - remote, rural, urban and suburban. Successes of individuals, programs, communities and institutions should be celebrated.'
- 'Any barriers to smooth articulation from school into VET, and from VET into work, should be removed. A collaborative approach based on shared facilities and integrated programs should ensure a seamless transition for young people from school to VET to work. . . Study in the VET sector should become an end in itself for those who want it that way. Smooth articulation between VET and

higher education must be ensured by developing more effective transfer and cross-credit arrangements for Indigenous students.’ (pp. 91-92)

School to Higher Education Transition

Some of the literature referred to the transition to university life for Indigenous students. Hester (1994) discussed equity of access, comparing Australia to the United States of America where quota systems apply, and concluded that Australian special entry schemes were unlikely to reduce to any great extent the social imbalances apparent in universities, even for Indigenous students, for whom the greatest concessions were made. Hester stated that it was not enough to simply increase opportunities of access for disadvantaged students: ‘It will be necessary to select them ahead of better qualified students, to provide adequate tertiary preparation courses, and to provide ongoing financial, social, and academic support’ (p. 113). Schwab and Campbell (1997) stated that forthcoming changes to ABSTUDY could lead to declining participation, which would result in declining employment opportunities for Indigenous young people. A research study of more than 100 Indigenous university students was undertaken by Bourke, Burden and Moore (1996). The major problems identified by students were: the need for improved support services; the attitudes of some staff; student feelings of isolation; irrelevant courses; and inadequate career counselling. A Higher Education Council (1996) report acknowledged the need for change in the university sector to ensure a higher incidence of good equity practice; a strategic plan was developed to address specific equity issues.

A report on off-campus study (Grant, 1996) highlighted the difficulties of Indigenous degree and diploma students in trying to balance study with family and community responsibilities. New initiatives by the course developers resulted in increased use of email and the Internet for interactive contact and teaching, and as learning resources.

A review of ABSTUDY (Stanley and Hansen, 1998) included a discussion of the general context of education and employment. The returns, in terms of additional income, for Indigenous people from acquiring certificates, diplomas and degrees were all higher than for non-Indigenous people, and the highest of all for those with degrees. The employment status of Indigenous TAFE graduates was not as good as for Indigenous university graduates, and the unemployment rate of Indigenous TAFE graduates (33 per cent) was double the rate of non-Indigenous TAFE graduates. In higher education, little specific data was available to the review on employment outcomes for Indigenous graduates. Two exceptions were Deakin University and Batchelor College. At Deakin University, there had been a steady increase in Indigenous graduates during the 1990s. Among living graduates from 1987 to 1996 (115 in number), the employment rate was more than 90 per cent. The employment statistics for the 210 Indigenous graduates of Batchelor College, taken in 1993, were that 83 per cent were employed (nearly all in an area linked to their qualifications), 12 per cent were engaged in further study, and 6 per cent were unemployed.

While the review found it difficult to demonstrate specifically the significance of ABSTUDY in promoting access to education, the report did cite past reviews and reports which recognised the success of the scheme (and its predecessors) in increasing secondary school retention rates and post-secondary education outcomes. The Indigenous students interviewed for the review spoke positively of the educational opportunities provided by ABSTUDY that were not accessible in any other way. The students also spoke of the importance of the role models they presented in their communities.

School to Work Transition

Comment was made in the literature on several particular programs or strategies that were introduced to support the transition from school to work:

- *Work Placements for Secondary Students, and VET in Schools Programs.* A discussion paper on school to work pathways (ATSIPTAC, 1998) concluded that ‘a body of evidence is emerging on the considerable potential of these programs in improving the educational, personal and employment outcomes’ for Indigenous students and others who face educational disadvantage (p. 10). It was felt that more needed to be done by state and Commonwealth governments to standardise Work Placement policy and practice across states, and to integrate Placement programs and assessment into the senior certification process, as had been achieved with VET in Schools programs.
- *New Apprenticeships in Schools* is a government initiative that is to be trialed at the post-compulsory school level during 1998. ATSIPTAC was supportive of the principles of this scheme, although the Council wanted resources to be directly dedicated to programs specifically designed for Indigenous students (ATSIPTAC, 1997, 1998). It was seen as important that, in order to ensure maximum participation of Indigenous students in New Apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship programs should be introduced in the middle years of secondary schooling, ‘designed to articulate with post-compulsory VET in schools and apprenticeships in schools programs’ (ATSIPTAC, 1998, p. 19).
- *Competency Based Training (CBT).* It was suggested that an inherent problem with CBT for Indigenous students was the lack of contextual relevance of a set of pre-determined vocational skills. Indigenous students were more likely to engage in learning if the skills or knowledge to be learnt was set in or related to a context familiar to the students (Kirkby, 1993; Rizzetti, 1995).
- *Landcare Environment Action Program, and Skillshare.* Courses like these were seen to be important in ‘helping people build bridges between one kind of education and training experience and another’ (McIntyre et al, 1996, p. 75). Sometimes the undertaking of such courses resulted in an individual re-entering general education ‘in order to lift their academic skills to a higher level . . . needed for a certain line of work’ (p. 75).

The authors stressed that, in all these programs, there was a need for a literacy and numeracy component to be incorporated in the programs, and for Indigenous people

to be involved in the development and delivery of the programs. Boughton (in preparation, 1998) maintained that Indigenous people need a different set of education and training pathways 'which may well include "mainstream" options, but whose fundamental characteristics are their close fit with locally and regionally determined Indigenous development needs' (p. 19).

A recent report which looked at selected Indigenous Specific Training Projects to identify processes and outcomes relevant to the New Apprenticeships identified a number of indicators of best practice in vocational education and training involving Indigenous communities and trainees. Factors associated with successful programs included: the embeddedness within the Indigenous culture; adequate consultation with the community; use of existing support structures; support for the program from committed advocates; culturally appropriate courses developed through consultation and negotiation with communities; trainers and educators committed to meeting the needs of the individuals; training embedded in work expedience and delivered by the Indigenous sectors or specialist training units in mainstream organisations; traineeships managed by group training companies incorporating trainee case management; appropriate recruitment of trainees and ongoing evaluation of the program.

Barriers to the successful uptake and completion of traineeships occurred when: the idea for the traineeships was generated externally to the Indigenous community; course modules were mainly developed by non-Indigenous people or outside the community; the process was rushed and took place without adequate negotiation; key parties were not involved in consultation or consultation was seen to be selective/tokenistic; undue attention on factors such as literacy, numeracy and work ethics in a deficit approach rather than paying attention to creating a supportive environment; lack of cross-cultural awareness or training responsibilities by employers; lack of continuity; mismatch between training outcomes and employer/industry expectations; lock-step and inflexible off-the-job training; and breakdowns in communication.

Several writers spoke of the need for the school to work and further education transition to be a 'seamless web'. ATSIPTAC (1997), writing about apprenticeships, referred to it as a 'holistic approach':

Apprenticeship and traineeship development needs to be integrated into the emerging school VET pathways as well as into pathways beyond VET, in order to provide upward, transferable skills and vocational mobility for Indigenous people. (p. 22)

Unemployment to School or Work

It should be noted that while a significant proportion of Indigenous participation in VET and higher education is in preparatory or pre-vocational courses (Golding, Volkoff and Ferrier, 1997), there did not appear to be any literature documenting the success of these courses in terms of transition to employment or to further education involving courses of a higher skill level.

Transition to employment may also be from unemployment. A slight increase in Indigenous youth accessing labour market programs was reported in an evaluation of the Commonwealth government's Working Nation policy (DEETYA, 1996). The report also listed barriers to employment prospects for Indigenous youth which included educational and social factors (low literacy and numeracy levels, family and cultural responsibilities, homelessness and isolation). The difficulty that some Indigenous job-seekers had in approaching the CES for assistance was shown to be due to a lack of confidence, non-English speaking background and the lack of Indigenous staff in centres was also mentioned.

The interim report of a study documenting the experiences of a group of Indigenous job-seekers (DEETYA, 1998) examined the way in which case management services dealt with their Indigenous clients and identified a number of limitations with their processes. These included a failure to address clients' pre-vocational needs (by focussing solely on employment outcomes), inappropriate reliance on written communication, failure to develop personal relationships with the participants, not using Indigenous informal networks and placing Indigenous people in environments and situations which they found uncomfortable (in group situations or interviews). The report recommended the use of employment services which involved community-based Indigenous organisations, had access to informal networks, acknowledged the significance of Indigenous values (particularly regarding family), addressed pre-vocational needs of clients (eg confidence building and assertiveness courses), were aware of substance use issues and support programs, established relationships with clients, communicated in person ('It is commonly understood that the Indigenous culture has been and remains an oral culture'), acknowledged sociocultural differences in lifestyle and provided post service follow-up.

Back to school programs were seen to be effective for some early school leavers. One school visited by Groome and Hamilton had established a program for long term non-attendees in the 12-16 age range, some of whom had been away from school for six years. Their main reasons for dropping out were increasing feelings of failure and the constant pressure of racism on their lives. The program was run as an 'Open House' with a flexible timetable. After one year of operation, 12 students of the 43 on the roll had been won back to full time schooling. According to the staff, the main reason for

the success of the program was that 'the Aboriginal young people involved had claimed ownership of the project' (p. 63).

Examples of Programs that Appear to be Successful in Addressing Transition Issues

The following brief descriptions give some idea of the types of programs that are seen to be operating with some success for their Indigenous participants. Included are: programs which provide vocational information and education support for secondary school students; TAFE courses in Western Australia; school-industry programs in NSW, northern Queensland and Alice Springs; and a land conservation course offered by the Institute for Aboriginal Development.

Penny (1995) *Aboriginal and Islander Career Aspiration Program*

The Aboriginal and Islander Career Aspiration Program (AICAP), originally developed in Queensland, was established in South Australia in 1994, funded by VEGAS. The program, targeting Years 6-12 students, aimed to address low Year 12 completion of Indigenous young people, low retention beyond Year 10, high unemployment rate, and disproportionate representation in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. The program received wide support through the state from Indigenous education staff, Indigenous parent groups and school communities.

The planning and implementation of the program was based on a recognition of:

- the need to provide increased opportunities for Indigenous youth and their parents to access career information;
 - the need to raise awareness of the availability of a range of career and educational guidance and support services, both mainstream and specifically Aboriginal and Islander;
 - the need to deliver career information and guidance in a culturally appropriate manner;
 - the need to encourage greater use of mainstream services by Indigenous people.
- (p. 12)

Part-way through the year-long pilot program described by Penny, the program developed and distributed 4000 copies of a Career Information Kit to Indigenous students, school staff, parent groups, Indigenous organisations, CES offices and university/further education support services. There was a positive response from students, parents and school staff, and many enquiries had been received about the Program. There were positive responses also to a series of 21 workshops which were given to more than 1000 Indigenous students. Penny reported that 'in addition to providing career information and exposure to positive role-models, the Career Workshops enabled students to come together and reaffirm their cultural identity' (p. 13). The development of a training package for school staff was planned for the following year.

Nasir (1996) *Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program*

The Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program (AITAP), initially developed in Queensland, began operating in Northern Territory schools in 1994. The aims of the program were to:

- enhance the academic achievement of Indigenous students during their secondary school years;
- increase participation and maximise attendance of Indigenous students during secondary school, particularly at the senior secondary level;
- enhance the education expectations and aspirations of Indigenous students;
- increase the number of Indigenous students successfully completing Year 12 studies and gaining a Northern Territory Certificate of Education. (p. 7)

The program (which relied on student self-nomination for involvement) focused on students' academic skills, cultural identity, educational and career aspirations, and personal development. The adults involved in the program were teachers, mentors, Aboriginal Education Liaison Officers and parents. Nasir reported on the outcomes of the first three years of the program, as identified by teachers and parents: positive reaction from student participants; development of leadership skills; increased awareness and knowledge of career and educational options; development of student support network; increased students' confidence in their own ability and sense of responsibility for their own actions.

Ison and Gillies (1997) *'My son reckoned I'd never get one of these'. New directions for Aboriginal Education*

To solve the problem of high student drop out, staff at South West Regional College of TAFE in Western Australia changed their approach in 1995, with the result that, at the end of the year, capacity enrolment was maintained, attrition rates dropped dramatically, and 'unprecedented numbers of Nyungar students achieved academically measurable outcomes' (p. 11).

Changes in approach made by staff included:

- emphasis on the need for non-Indigenous teaching staff to undertake cultural awareness training;
- attendance by Program Manager of the General Studies Section at monthly meetings of the Aboriginal Education, Employment and Training Committee to establish two way communication between course and community members; and
- delegation of a high level of responsibility to the Aboriginal Support Officers at the TAFE for active involvement in course development and student contact.

A key factor in the success of the new strategies was the introduction of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), a full time literacy course as a

preliminary to bridging courses, which 'provided the flexible framework to allow Nyungar people to determine their own educational and vocational goals and actively work to achieve them' (p. 12).

The features of the new course included: flexible entry and exit; self-paced learning; individual programs; collaborative learning; integrated programs; the transfer of power from the teacher to the learner; and the potential for simpler timetabling, a home room and a limited number of teachers. The most far-reaching factor was seen to be the transfer of control from teacher to student. The collaboration and cooperation among students encouraged in the course was mirrored in the close communication between teachers in the course.

Kearns et al (1996) *Industry Education Partnerships: Innovation and Learning*

The Hospitality Industry Aboriginal Recruitment and Training Program is the Western Australian Hospitality Industry Training Council's strategy to increase the participation of Indigenous people in the industry and to develop an understanding of Indigenous people and their culture in the existing workforce. Care was taken to adapt the program to Indigenous learning styles, and support was provided for trainees in the workplace and for their families through a mentor support program. Indigenous communities were involved in the planning and implementation of the program, exemplifying 'the two-way learning concept which involved interactive learning between the hospitality industry and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' (p. 21).

Eason, (1998) *Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre Inc. An Overview of our Programs and Structure*

The Macleay Valley Workplace Learning Centre is an umbrella organisation for integrated vocational education programs for students in Years 6-12 in three high schools. Indigenous students are involved in many of the programs, such as:

- Creating Real Employment Skills through Training (CREST) (25-33 per cent Indigenous student enrolment). The program caters for students at risk of not gaining a basic high school education. Full School Certificate credentials are available for student exiting at Year 10. The program has academic, social and vocational components, and relies heavily on multi-media delivery. Students work at their own pace through individualised programs that are essentially competency based. Between 1995 and 1997, 79 at-risk students were successful in CREST.
- VEGAS (100 per cent Indigenous student enrolment) comprises motivation programs with vocational, educational, social and cultural goals. The programs have been developed after consultation with Indigenous elders, community members and schools in the North Coast area.

- TRAC (25 per cent Indigenous student enrolment), a program which provides dual accredited training in retail, office, hospitality and automotive areas. This was first offered in 1993, along with Work Studies, a New South Wales, a Content Endorsed Course HSC course. From 1993-97 367 school students and long term unemployed gained employment from these programs. In 1998, 715 students are enrolled in the programs.
- Health Care Course (90 per cent Indigenous student enrolment), a Board Endorsed Course which targets Indigenous students in Years 10-12. It is taught on site at the Booroongen Djugun Aboriginal Aged Care Hostel. This is its first year in operation.
- Koori Career Expo, planned for June 1998. It will take the form of a Koori Career Market for 400 students and with 100 employers.
- Workplace Supervisor Skill Challenge is a pilot program planned for 1998 to provide ongoing accredited training for school students and workplace supervisors. The Centre will work with the Hunter Valley Training Company and Workskill Australia to develop the Challenge. If successful, the pilot will become an open Workplace Supervisor Skill Challenge regionally and nationally.

The Centre's TRAC and CREST programs have received national and international recognition and awards.

The organisation is in the process of establishing a research project which will include the outcomes for VEGAS, in its second year, as well as the blend of VET courses working together as a integrated package from Year 6 to 12.

McDonald (1997) *The Gulf Schools Strategy*

McDonald, a field officer in Queensland for the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation, developed the Strategy for implementation in 1998-99, working with the communities of Doomadgee, Mornington Island and Normanton.

The aim was to develop a strategy that:

- enhances the interface between the three schools in the Gulf and the developments at Pasminco Century Project;
- ensures the strategic use of the substantial education and industry resources that are available for the benefit of students, youth, school, community and industry;
- addresses issues of change in the schools to enable the use of the emerging social and economic opportunities that result from the mining developments and future industry developments. (p. 2)

The urgency of the need for the Strategy was underlined by the retention statistics for Indigenous students in the schools (50 per cent from primary to secondary school,

and 10 per cent from Year 10 to Year 11) and an absenteeism rate of 75 per cent at Years 8-10 at various times of the year.

McDonald based the formulation of the Strategy on extensive consultations with the schools and their communities, and identified a number of issues to be addressed in future action, including the following:

- Currently, co-ordination of training to meet industry, enterprise and community needs is very limited. The identification of key leaders is a critical issue in terms of providing the focus at the community level.
- Awareness of the potential of schools and industry to work together to service career and training pathways is limited. The community will need assistance to map these pathways and training opportunities.
- The models of career pathways that students currently experience in the adult and youth community are very limited and that is likely to be the basis of their future career pathway unless a progression of training is identified and introduced.
- The application of funds alone will not change the opportunities in these communities unless leadership and ownership emerge to link learning to emerging pathways that will provide employment and enterprise development.
- A whole of community approach needs to be considered for the use of the limited resources so that the community benefits from the range of facilities available and that the traditional segmentation and duplication of government service providers and facilities is overcome. (p. 10)

Recommendations were made that related to the issues, and a reference group has met to develop a strategic approach to implementation. The group includes school principals, industry representatives, Community representatives, and DEETYA. The project is still in the process of being implemented and is included here as a model in terms of strategies for implementation.

In the Action Plan that has just been developed, the issue of data collection across schools regarding attendance, retention, literacy and numeracy has been addressed as well as the issue of a student profile/passport that documents the ongoing progress and experiences of students in school and in the workplace. The identification of training pathways is a priority in the mining, hospitality, and rural industries, as is the ability to have skilled and permanent staff in schools and industry who understand the issues in relation to the articulation of training in schools and industry.

In 1997, a number of students at Doomadgee completed part of an AQF level 1 course at Katherine TAFE and are involved in industry placement. A number of post compulsory students at Mornington Island increased participation at school through a work readiness program that involved some paid part time work.

Fitzsimons (1996) *Alice Springs Open Learning Partnership*

The Open Learning Partnership began operation in 1992 as an attempt to counter the attrition of students during Year 11. The majority of these students were Indigenous. Initially, the Partnership involved a three-way link between Alice Springs High School, the Central Australian Group Training Company (the link with industry), and Centralian College (the training provider). Key features of the program developed were: a stress on students being literate, numerate and technate; flexible teaching strategies based on a contractual model and a teacher/facilitator working with small groups and individuals; and the introduction of mentors drawn from the outside community.

The Industry/Education Liaison Officer contacted two hundred employers and civic and industrial personnel to assist students in being realistic about their career aspirations and plans, and in becoming 'work ready'. The Partnership offered 240 hours a year On the Job, complemented by 120 hours Off the Job. Each student had an Individual Training Plan, devised with input from student, parents and employers. From 1993-95, 160 students entered the partnership and 145 were retained in the education and training system, some of these in part time employment - the rest either moved interstate or took on parenthood duties.

Since then the program has expanded to include urban and remote students from Central Australia, and networks have been established with the Northern Territory Correspondence School, Alice Springs School of the Air, and urban educational institutions.

The success of this initiative with Indigenous students can be attributed to the focus on:

- establishment of a close relationship between the Partnership personnel and students' families;
- accredited NTCE and TAFE courses - both students and parents expressed a strong aversion to 'mickey mouse' courses;
- flexible teaching strategies, the use of negotiation, emphasis on a student directed learning environment where potentially destructive pressure situations have been avoided; and
- integral involvement of Indigenous organisations in the On the Job and Off the Job components of the program.

Ah Chee, D. (1997) *Good Practice means self-determination. A case study from central Australia.*

One of the courses offered at the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD) and described as an example of best practice is an adaptation of the Victorian Certificate II in Australian Land Conservation and Restoration which is delivered on the outstations themselves.

The goal of the program was to enable participants to develop skills and knowledge as well as the opportunity for personal development and identity building and to achieve sustainable employment and environmental land practices. The appropriate custodians were employed as well as the other senior people including supervisors and interpreters. Exhaustive consultation and learning meetings were held and a flexible timetable developed. Transport was provided as well as resources, including written materials in plain English (there was no funding for vernacular literacy materials). All decision-making is done in accordance with community processes including course delivery, assessment, content, resources, standards responsibilities and obligations.

This course was identified as 'good practice' because it:

- is controlled and managed by the communities themselves;
- integrated with community development;
- produced outcomes which stayed in the communities;
- was consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody;
- linked to employment opportunities in the communities;
- helped to build self confidence, self esteem and a strong Aboriginal identity;
- provided role models for others in the communities;
- helped reduce the death and destruction that is the daily reality for dispossessed Indigenous people;
- provided pathways to further study and to employment;
- was on-the-job, practical and relevant to people's needs;
- was a fully collaborative process.

Concluding Comment

The difference in the educational and vocational outcomes for Indigenous youth compared with non-Indigenous youth is well documented. The literature on pathways from school to work and further education contains information on strategies and programs which show promise for engagement and success among Indigenous Australians. There are well-researched recommendations on the directions that should be taken and the conditions that should apply to present and future programs for Indigenous young people. Education, training and labour market programs which are culturally sensitive and developed in consultation with Indigenous people appear to have widespread support.

In reviewing the literature it became apparent that:

- there is evidence of positive outcomes from programs for Indigenous students in terms of engagement in learning and personal and vocational development;
- quantitative outcomes data in terms of jobs obtained as a result of specific education or training programs is singularly lacking;
- access and participation data (quantitative and qualitative) are available;
- labour market outcomes data are absent in the literature.

To obtain these data, resources are needed to undertake follow-up evaluations (short and long term) to determine employment outcomes, cross-referenced to location and job availability for each program site.

Funding and operational arrangements for programs are not conducive to thorough evaluation. No sooner is one short term program completed than another is already under way, demanding all the time and energy of those involved in its operation. The Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory (1996) stated its conviction that 'it is not possible to evaluate short term education programs effectively' (p. 4). The program evaluations that came to the Committee contained information, easily and quickly obtainable, on the number of Indigenous people employed, the number of children receiving assistance, the resource provided, and funds spent according to approvals given - but changes to learning outcomes and transition to work or further education, involving a lengthier and more complex evaluation process, were not included in the evaluations.

In terms of crucial transition points for Indigenous youth, most of the literature surveyed for this review focused on school to work, and school to further education in VET or, to a lesser extent, in universities. There is a considerable amount of literature on the primary to secondary school transition, which could be the subject of a separate and interesting review on curriculum, classroom structure, and teaching and learning styles. Literature regarding the early years of education is also relevant in that factors such as the development of a 'school culture', support for school attendance and the development of English literacy skills in primary children provide a strong foundation for a successful introduction to, and experience of, secondary

school. Although these issues relate to the development of young Indigenous students, they were considered to be too far removed from vocational preparation to warrant more than passing reference.

The increasing size of the Indigenous population which will result in an expanding working-age population over the next decade has led to forecasts of the unemployment rate for all Indigenous people increasing from 39 per cent to 47 per cent by the year 2006 (the non-Indigenous unemployment rate is currently 8.5 per cent). There is a need for increased employment opportunities just to maintain the status quo (Taylor and Altman, 1997). While CDEP projects currently account for a substantial proportion of Indigenous employment, there was little evidence in the literature that CDEP projects provided a viable pathway from school to full-time employment for Indigenous youth, especially in places where other training/employment opportunities exist.

While a considerable number of Indigenous youth complete VET courses, many are in pre-vocational and preparatory courses. There is a gap in the literature regarding the transition from preparatory courses to undertaking further education for qualifications. Another gap in the literature relates to transition from incarceration to work, unemployment or further study.

Some writers referred to the need for a 'seamless web' of transition through schooling, study, training and work. Evaluation strategies should mirror this image, focusing on ways that have proved successful in smoothing the transition paths of young Indigenous people (short term evaluations), as well as following individuals right along the paths they take (longitudinal studies).