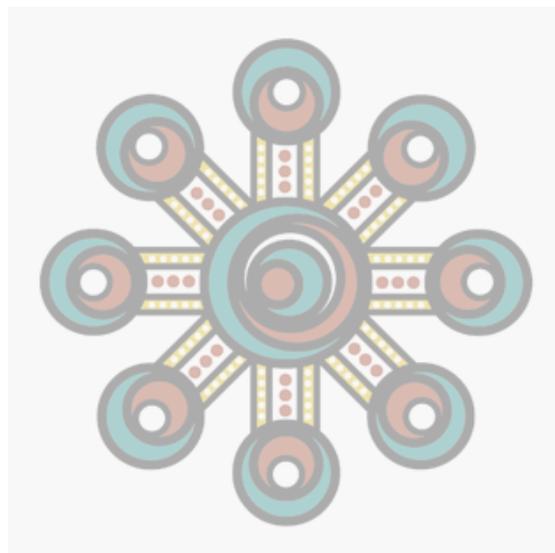


# Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Body



## Position Paper *Boarding Schools*

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## Position Paper

### ***Boarding Schools***

#### **1 Position**

In recent years, there have been some encouraging inquiries and policy developments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education at the Australian and State levels. Among these are numbered the *Katu Kalpa* (2000) and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2000) inquiries, and the *Partners for Success* (2002) initiative at the State (Queensland) level. However, unless these policy frameworks and findings are given the capacity to make a difference 'on the ground', they will not achieve optimum effectiveness. This is borne out by the policy initiatives announced through the Australian Minister of Education, Science and Training's vision for 2005-2008 (DEST 2004). The challenge indeed is to find ways of making a difference to the most disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

This position paper outlines strategies and processes which operate within the policy initiatives of Australian and State Governments, with the needs of the most disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as the primary focus.

Educators working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students urge that there be a policy adjustment at the system level to improve service delivery for remote communities. Integral to this dialogue is a need to investigate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' access to boarding schools. Recent dialogue and media reports have focused considerable attention on the issues of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in boarding school settings; however this debate needs to be expanded to include the multitude of issues impacting on schooling provision in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

#### **2 Recommendations**

The QIECB, through this position paper, recommends that Australian and State Ministers of Education

- a) institute immediate investigations into:
  - the range of post-primary schooling options that might be considered viable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote Queensland communities;
  - increasing the accessibility of current boarding schools to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - the adequacy of the current funding and resourcing of boarding places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - identifying the critical success factors and support models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students; and
- b) action relevant findings of these investigations as a matter of urgency.

In addition, the QIECB recommends the following actions surrounding boarding schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Policy:**

- Research to be undertaken on how boarding school policies/ strategies impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities including the identification of policy 'gaps' and effective strategies.

**Culture:**

- Support for greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on Isolated Children's Parents Association (ICPA); particularly in light of increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from rural/remote communities attending boarding schools.
- regular cross-cultural boarding school conferences to enable open dialogue and networking on issues impacting on Indigenous boarding students.
- raising of awareness of issues around racism, cultural isolation etc. amongst boarding school staff, students and communities through increased cultural awareness/cross-cultural training activities.
- Through relevant agencies, utilise the knowledge and skills of Health Workers to play a greater role in follow-up between school and home community.
- Establish and support a whole school and community approach to managing transitions and associated issues in Indigenous students attending boarding schools.
- Investigate 'like-school' initiatives/networking with other schools/ professional learning circles, 'reach in reach out' as models for Indigenous student support.

**Financial:**

- In light of change of directions within the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training Indigenous Education Direct Assistance (IEDA) programs, some of these issues may need revisiting to reflect current funding programs and their respective administrative guidelines.
- Because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' learning issues are exacerbated in mainstream boarding contexts, IEDA funding, e.g. ASSPA, ATAS/ITAS to be based on student's home location (remote) and not school location (urban).
- Abstudy payments need to consider contextual factors, i.e.:
  - living-away from home allowance to be made available for Year 7 students;
  - retrospective and proportional payments to schools to encourage boarding schools to put strategies in place that support retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - eligibility to take into consideration parent/caregivers financial responsibilities, including caring for extended families; e.g. both parents working but they have four children of their own as well as caring for another two children; despite both parents working and the lack of high school availability in their community, they still cannot send their children to boarding school.

- Wider training and support for parents and communities to access Abstudy and completion of paperwork; field officers undertake visits to communities with follow-up at schools.
- Greater resources for health and social support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at boarding schools, including student emotional health and well-being.

### **3 Background**

While conducting the QIECB's research and consultative projects, researchers interviewed school administrators, teachers and support staff, students, parents/carers and community members. Through these forums, researchers reported a number of issues relating to the access, participation and retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners with regard to boarding schools.

The issues identified relate to cultural, social and community issues which impact on Indigenous students; as well as on parent and community relationships with boarding schools.

In response to the emergent issues around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' participation in boarding schools, the QIECB conducted a forum with selected boarding schools and key stakeholders. The forum developed into an action learning circle, during the course of which, representatives of participating schools discussed issues pertaining to:

- Current recruitment practices and strategies;
- Access to funding and targeted assistance schemes eg. Abstudy;
- Boarding school partnerships with home communities and parent participation;
- Cultural and social isolation and homesickness;
- The transition to boarding schools;
- Retention rates and specifically return to boarding school after holidays;
- Support structures for students at boarding school;
- The culture of boarding schools;
- Safety issues (in the community and the school); and
- Readiness of boarding school staff to successfully cater for Indigenous learners.

Learning circle discussions provided the opportunity to identify:

- social and cultural factors which both impede and enhance access, participation and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in boarding schools;
- policy gaps and barriers impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' access to and participation in boarding schools; and
- a need to explore operational and policy solutions to the identified issues.

Currently, there are not enough secondary places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their Cape York and Gulf communities. For example, it has been estimated that in the isolated communities of the Western Cape College area alone, there are 160 students who require access to education and training opportunities. Even with the boarding school and hostel strategies which have been implemented, there is a 2004 shortfall for 130 students (Mackie, 2003). Boarding provision across schools in North Queensland and the South East corner could have provided additional capacity for approximately 20 students for the 2004 school year. It is acknowledged that cases of informal 'boarding' arrangements exist in centres such as Cairns and Townsville where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities stay with extended families. The Spinifex Residential College in Mt Isa has addressed some of the boarding school needs in the Gulf communities.

2001 census statistics show that in Aurukun, 85.1%-95% of Indigenous people who are of working age have no educational qualifications. Further, the *Aurukun Youth Strategy* reveals that less than 30% of school age young people in Aurukun regularly attend school and that no young person has passed Year 12 in the past ten years (Mackie, 2004).

In Far North Queensland communities, not only is there sparse provision of secondary schooling options, but the number of students enrolled does not reflect the numbers of students requiring a secondary place. Of the nineteen school campuses operating in the Cape York region, only seven have a secondary section. Of these secondary schools, the February 2004 census reveals that on average, less than 22 percent of students eligible to be in secondary studies were enrolled. This is not very different from the primary sector where the proportion of primary enrolments in the highest grade level stands between ten and twenty percent, with some as low as 8.7%. (Education Queensland, 2004)

The statistics speak for themselves about the perilous journey awaiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who embark upon secondary education. A submission by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs in response to a briefing paper for the HREOC Inquiry (2000) shows that a significant number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not complete the compulsory years of schooling: they are fifteen times more likely (than non-Indigenous students) to leave school between Years 8-9, and six times more likely to leave between Years 9 and 10. For those who arrive at the end of Year 10, there is further significant attrition, compared with non-Indigenous students in the senior years of schooling (HREOC, 2000).

While most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment rates are increasing, the gap between enrolment of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is still clearly apparent. In particular, the disparity of enrolment occurs during the senior secondary years. The greatest fall and the most noticeable difference occurs in the movement from Year 10 to Year 11 (DEST 2003, p. 41). Within the Education Queensland context the Year 8-11 apparent progression rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is only 73.5% while the Year 10-11 apparent progression rate is 71.3% (Education Queensland Corporate Data Warehouse). There is an exponential loss of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to senior secondary study.

When apparent retention rates (i.e. a comparison between students enrolled in either Year 7 or 8 as a proportion of those enrolled in either Years 10, 11 or 12) are considered, there is a demonstrated overall improvement in all figures,

notwithstanding the continuing differential between Indigenous and non-Indigenous percentages.

The *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training* (DEST, 2003) makes the following analysis of Indigenous students' education compared with that of non-Indigenous students.

*Enrolment and attainment data shows that Indigenous students have, on average, lower retention and completion rates than their non-Indigenous counterparts. Many Indigenous students leave school before completing Year 10, and of those who enter the senior secondary years, results show that Indigenous students are less likely to obtain a Year 12 certificate ...*

*The disparity affects the ability of Indigenous students to access university education and other learning pathways, which in turn impacts upon employment opportunities, future engagement with education and economic stability* (DEST 2003, pp. 34-35).

The Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Body (QIECB) believes that increasing post-primary options to include improved access to boarding school should be seen as one of a range of effective strategies which could be deployed to achieve an improvement in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Not only is it highly likely that increasing the numbers of students accessing boarding schools would be a successful strategy in itself (for the students, families and communities involved) but it would support a number of current initiatives at work, such as the work of the Cape York Leadership Institute and that being undertaken in Cape York community schools. Recent media reports have re-opened the discussion on the merits of boarding schools for Indigenous students, with Noel Pearson advocating for boarding as a means of addressing 'chronic academic under-achievement' (The Weekend Australian, 30-31 October 2004). While there have been comments against this proposal by known identities such as Sir Ronald Wilson and Boni Robertson, there have been no comments recorded from the rural and remote Indigenous communities or their representatives. As pointed out by Hart, Herbert and Tripcony (National Indigenous Times, 26 November 2004), further actions surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students needs to be cognisant of the voices of parents and students from remote communities.

The above contextual factors can also be viewed in conjunction with data from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (2000), which has pointed out that:

- Completing Year 10/11 increases an Indigenous person's chance of employment by 40%;
- Completing Year 12 increases employment prospects by a further 13%; and
- Having a post-secondary qualification increases employment prospects by between 13% and 23%.

If remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are to develop the capacity required to achieve self-determination, there is a critical need to maximise the post-compulsory opportunities for students.

One clue as to why boarding schools are a viable pathway lies in Professor Herbert's (Herbert, 2002) outline of issues impacting on Year 12 retention: she states that in addition to issues impacting on all schools, students at boarding schools identified safety, identity, consistency and the desire to complete senior schooling, as well as that there was more to do at boarding school [compared with living in their community]. If these issues associated with boarding schools indicate some possible value-adding, then further investigation of the boarding school pathway is warranted.

*Partners for Success* (2002a) and *The National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education* (HREOC, 2000), confirmed the right of Indigenous students to education. The QIECB proposes an elaboration of this right to support those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who choose the boarding school option; and strongly advocates their right for to participate in education at quality boarding schools.

However, if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are going to be successful at boarding school, there are some policy issues especially around resourcing, in need of urgent modification.

- The student/houseparent ratio for Indigenous students needs to be acknowledged as requiring to be about 8-10:1 rather than the 25:1 ratio on which most boarding schools operate, in recognition of the high demand nature of the special care and interventions needed to successfully transition these students.
- The additional support needed for Indigenous students with regard to mental health, social skills, substance abuse, sexual health, anger management require the employment of skilled professionals for these boarding students; current funding models do not recognise that these roles are needed or required in schools which enrol any number of Indigenous students.

Boarding schools that enrol Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students already have their resources stretched in order to deal with some challenging health issues and behaviours brought into the boarding school context by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. For a boarding school strategy to be examined fairly, some further resources would need to be directed to those boarding schools that demonstrate significant Indigenous participation. This includes measures such as increasing the ratio of boarding staff to students and provision of English as a Second Language support to facilitate the engagement of Indigenous students with learning at boarding school.

There are some signs of hope emerging 'on the ground'. McGinty (2002) points out that while a United Nations report of March 2000 found that most Indigenous students last only one term in Queensland boarding schools, Abergowrie College's average student tenure as at 1999 was two years and one term. In the Torres Strait, there is an innovative approach that seeks to 'empower' the community as a user of the boarding school product. By way of a 'memorandum of understanding', boarding schools commit to provide a set of services to families from remote communities. This serves as a charter for these schools in relation to the families.

Community schools are reconfiguring their current funding to explore ways of moving students beyond some of the barriers confronting their education. Western Cape College has funded a Transitions Strategy which has provided liaison between the community school and boarding schools to assist students to adapt to the boarding school context, and provides the boarding school with an external support mechanism for students, as well as relevant links between the student, family and community.

Emerging strategies are aimed at 'thinking outside the square' and taking on a whole of government approach so that there is a capacity for action, unimpeded by potential bureaucratic inertia.

***Factors inhibiting positive outcomes from current policy responses in Indigenous education in Queensland***

The inquiry undertaken by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission identified some limits regarding access for students to 'successful classroom learning', among them several which apply most particularly to Indigenous students, namely:

- The cultural, linguistic and sociolinguistic differences between many of the teachers and the children;
- Extremely high prevalence of conductive hearing loss due to *otitis media*;
- The hindrances to distance education study created by unreliable radio or computer connections or expensive infrastructure requirements;
- No accessible secondary schools or secondary school curriculum;
- The language of instruction being English;
- Inadequate information technology infrastructure, especially with regard to the time taken to repair equipment (HREOC, 2000).

These factors will take too long to remedy for this generation of students who are moving through primary education.

The Queensland Government *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF) (2002b) initiative promises much to Queensland students about the way in which their education is going to be managed into the future. However, the twin possibilities of 'learn' and/or 'earn' of this policy initiative ring hollow for Indigenous students living in remote communities.

They often do not have geographical access to secondary schools or training providers, nor to employment opportunities. In addition, there may be significant cultural, health, emotional, psychological and sociological factors in students not being able to effectively 'learn' or 'earn' until the age of seventeen.

Issues of participation and attendance present ongoing challenges for community schools as consistent absence means that young people are not able to gain basic skills in literacy and numeracy. For others, there are barriers to educational attainment due to hearing loss and/or language difficulties.

For students moving from primary education to secondary education, there are limited options. Compared to most Queensland students, they will have fewer pathways accessible to them, and the ones they choose will be more fragile for them than others generally accessible to non-Indigenous students.

The legislated reforms described in the ETRF policy are currently impossible to deliver on, given the factors operative in educational delivery in remote communities.

It is recognised, however, that the policy's focus on transitions and planning and the imperative of 'earning or learning' until the age of seventeen years, is a positive if it can be made real for Indigenous students. Additionally, the support mechanisms envisaged through the policy are likely to be of assistance to Indigenous students, particularly initiatives that are aimed at increasing participation such as:

- creation of local models to support young people away from home to access Year 12 or equivalent or full-time work;
- provision of targeted support, such as transition brokers; and
- use of mentors who will work with young people at risk of not achieving (ETRF 2002, pp. 8-9).

The *Katu Kalpa* (2000) and HREOC (2000) inquiries have produced several commendable recommendations but they are mostly resource-hungry, long-term, global changes which, if implemented, would take a decade or so to begin influencing the context of Indigenous education.

There must be immediate implementation of action which has the capacity to turn around not only Indigenous education outcomes in general, but make a significant difference in the lives of young people of compulsory participation age.

### ***Factors affecting access to boarding schools as a way forward***

'Boarding can never replace home', reminds the Brisbane Grammar School website (Brisbane Grammar School, 2004). Most families who access boarding schools do it reluctantly, but for the reason that it will ensure that students are able to continue to grow and learn, regardless of where their family might usually reside.

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) policy on Boarding Schools and School Term Hostels reads thus:

*ICPA (Aust) seeks to have boarding schools and school term hostel facilities as recognised forms of access to education for geographically isolated students from rural and remote areas who must live away from home for appropriate primary and/or secondary education and that these facilities offer a standard of pastoral care appropriate to their needs (ICPA 2004).*

This is similar to the vision articulated by Western Cape College:

*All Indigenous students on Cape York have a right to achieve an education at quality boarding schools.*

*For Indigenous students from Cape York to be successful at boarding school, policy and resourcing changes must occur at a systemic level (Western Cape College, 2003).*

Boarding school is one option chosen by families who live in remote and rural areas. It is able to provide education and care to students. Boarding schools' capacity to offer a holistic response to the situation of students from remote and rural areas is based on their curricular, co-curricular and pastoral systems and their physical and human resources. For Indigenous students whose home community often lacks infrastructure, boarding schools offer infrastructure for living and learning.

Boarding schools are ideally a safe place where students are able to engage in programmed curricular and co-curricular activities. The regular routines promote consistent learning and there are minimal distractions. This can contrast with learning context of the home community.

Those Indigenous students who are able to access boarding school experience significant challenges as do the enrolling boarding schools. Some might discount the efficacy of boarding school as an option for Indigenous students because students are known to leave and return to their communities after a short period of time at the boarding school. However, it is important to examine the reasons for students choosing to leave, and for policies to be put in place to better assist boarding schools to support Indigenous students. This includes increasing funding to boarding schools so that they are able to increase the ratio of carers so that issues can be identified and tackled.

One case study which illustrates a creative response through additional resourcing comes from a boarding school where a violent incident between two Indigenous students resulted in both students being expelled. The school principal dealt with this issue by engaging an Indigenous person to work across the boarding school population – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – as a liaison officer between all groups in the school. This has worked effectively to not only defuse anger and violence in the school, but also as a proactive measure to build understandings between Indigenous students and between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and staff.

At this school, there is a strong awareness that when particular initiatives are put in place, they should be matched by other mechanisms that allow outcomes to be optimised. For example, the provision of learning support for Indigenous students needs to be matched by cultural support to mitigate against the social and emotional difficulties experienced by students being away from the home community.

As indicated above, boarding school infrastructure must be adapted to the needs of the students who enrol in the school. In the case of Indigenous students, this will involve the provision of intensive pastoral care and educational support to include areas such as:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) and/or English as a Second Dialect (ESD) teaching, so that students can engage fully with the teaching program and increase their capacity to operate successfully in Australian society;
- Health and personal development support through instruction in health and nutrition, support in treating sexually transmitted diseases or psychological difficulties;
- Liaison officers who will link the school with the home community so that students can maintain their community links while they are away at boarding school;
- Transition officers who will work between the school, student, family and community to optimise the educational outcomes of the student through the development and implementation of individual transition plans; and
- Recruitment and selection practices which enhance and maintain a high standard of cross-cultural understanding among the boarding school staff.

*Boarding schools are funded on the assumption that all students coming to boarding are fully functioning people who have great coping skills and well developed moral, ethical and social standards. This is not the case (Djarragun College 2003).*

In all of these examples, there are significant funding implications, but also potentially successful outcomes for Indigenous students' educational attainment.

As long as boarding schools are effectively resourced and are accountable for their Indigenous students' learning outcomes, they will continue to be an option that Indigenous families wish to access.

The administration and guidelines for Abstudy is another significant issue. The structure of Abstudy is significant not only for Indigenous families' capacity to pay for boarding school, but for boarding school's capacity to meet the needs of enrolling students. One example is where boarding schools lose the funding attached to a student if the student is suspended from school. While the non-payment of Abstudy while a student is suspended may be regarded as sound stewardship of public funds, it penalises most the boarding schools that are marketing specifically to Indigenous students.

Currently, access to quality boarding schools is limited by a number of cultural and funding barriers and additionally, no government systemic structure to ensure the accountability for delivery of education/training from 'learning to earning', as articulated in the Queensland *Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2003*, Act No. 62 of 2003.

The other boarding school related limit to access is the potential shortage of boarding school places should the recommended policy initiatives be put in place. Projections will need to be done, and possibly some boarding school places tagged for Indigenous students. If the current other barriers to access can be removed, what the take-up will be from Indigenous families remains to be seen. This will require monitoring by Governments and also the boarding schools.

Other options for remotely located Indigenous students are distance education and programs attached to the local community school. These options are generally more restricted than those available to non-Indigenous students in Queensland due to the degree of remoteness of Indigenous communities such as those on Cape York. Distance education options also rely on the fact that to continue secondary education through distance education, students need to have achieved standard primary school levels and live in supportive home environments and communities in which conditions are conducive to study. In addition, distance education materials are usually predicated on the assumption that there will be on-site tutors, cultural understandings to support the curriculum, a good grasp of Standard Australian English and a readiness for the level of study. Recent initiatives such as community-based VET programs, e.g. Lockhart River Art Gang and Aurukun/Koolkan Community School (Western Cape College) have proved successful in the provision of post-schooling options.

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer some possibilities for enhancing distance education as well as the boarding school experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The 'reach in reach out' initiative is an example of an effective strategy to support Indigenous boarding students.

The Australian Government has championed the right of every Australian family to exercise choice in the type of school to which they send their children. When choice is restricted due to intersecting factors of remoteness, negligible secondary provision and community poverty, the imperative is to recognise this and optimise the effectiveness of the education which remote Indigenous students are able to access.

Boarding schools are difficult for remote Indigenous students to access, and then difficult for them to remain in. However, when compared with other 'pathways' which they can access, and given the provision of adequate support mechanisms, this is currently the path which promises them a capacity to move through to Year 12, its equivalent or full-time employment.

An indicator that the educational divide between remote Indigenous and other Australians has been closed will be the achievement of Year 12 education by a significantly increased number of Indigenous students whose families live in remote communities.

While the majority of this position paper has focused on boarding schools, there is a need for Government at all levels to examine and facilitate investigations into the provision of education, including boarding school options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in rural and remote communities. Such provision should include a resourced and supported funding and access strategy in order to:

- achieve so that the attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and young people are deliverable expectations; and
- activate the positive policy initiatives promulgated in recent times to revolutionise current educational provision and provide positive futures for students who will, if existing parameters prevail, face welfare dependency and its resultant life limiting outcomes.

The provision of schooling services in remote communities needs to be cognisant of the findings from the Collins Report (1999) which identified the 'predominant goal articulated to the review by respondents was the need for Indigenous children to develop their English oracy, literacy and numeracy skills while maintaining their own language, cultural heritage and Indigenous identity'.

Features of remote service delivery include:

- Appropriate flexible curriculum that includes VET and community-based learning programs that respond to the future needs of the community;
- English Literacy and Numeracy skills development;
- Cultural heritage studies that incorporate language and culture;
- Direct involvement of parents and community members;
- Broad networks within the community/region to create sustainable career/vocational pathways;
- Quality teachers and appropriate resourcing (local/regional) to support schooling programs; and
- Development of middle schooling/transition programs that prepare students for secondary/post-secondary schooling.

The Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) has established the Secondary Provision In Remote Schools (SPIRS) initiative to support the delivery of secondary curriculum in remote communities. Central to this initiative is the development of Community Education Centres (CECs) in several remote centres based on 'two-learning' using community-based and flexible curriculum offerings. As their name implies, the centres provide an educational service for adults and community members, however their main focus is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student aspirations to achieve schooling success whether that be in the form of the Northern Territory Certificate of Education (NTCE), Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER), completion of VET modules/certification or attainment of skills/abilities for use in the community. Although the SPIRS initiative is only in its' early stages, the apparent successes indicate a model worthy of consideration in terms of possible application to Queensland contexts.

Education Queensland has previously undertaken studies into remote educational service delivery in the development of Homelands/Outstation Schooling policy and guidelines – this work provides a useful starting point for further research. The NT Community Education Centre (CEC) model incorporates homeland schooling sites

through a 'hub' approach based on a shared curriculum. This approach is similar to the Western Cape College multi-campus curriculum model.

In terms of hostel provisions, the Spinifex Residential College has been established in Mt Isa to support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students leaving their communities to attend secondary schooling. A key element of this approach is pastoral support which responds to the social, cultural and academic needs of boarders through the provision of both academic and social-emotional support through counselling, health workers and recreational activities.

Also within the Queensland setting, there has been some success in the joint Transition Officer initiative between the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training and Education Queensland. These positions prepare and plan transitions at a local community level and provide support 'on the ground' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community students who attend boarding schools in Brisbane and Cairns. There are plans to extend these transition officer positions to Rockhampton and Townsville and further bridge the gap between the home community and the boarding school. It is envisaged that a dedicated transition teacher position working at a local community level could assist community schools with the development of Individual Career and Learning Plans/Transition Plans, which will assist in matching the skills and abilities of students with new host schools; this is a critical element of the ETRF agenda. It is important that remote educational delivery is aligned to the directions of such 'drivers' as ETRF and Destination 2010.

*Experience indicates that at the very least, an individual needs to assume the role of building bridges and alliances with the larger learning community (Schwab and Sutherland 2001, p.18)*

In conclusion, the QIECB believes the above strategies can be further explored in the development of guidelines and principles to support educational delivery in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, any future initiatives need to be the outcome of quality investigation and extensive consultation with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Sustainability can only occur through Principals and staff of community schools working with all community stakeholders and specialist staff, given targeted resources committed long-term by Government.

*These parents are telling us that they want their children's education to lead to jobs, and a choice among many kinds of jobs including as lawyers, mechanics, musicians and clerks, whatever the child aspires to. To achieve this, they believe that their child must be strong in English, and able to operate in a wider world than the local community. Equally important, however, they want their children to remain strong in their own culture ... These aspirations ... have been repeated by Indigenous parents over and over, for the past two decades at least (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, p. 105).*

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