

NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING THE HEARING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2008

Copies of the Aboriginal Education Review and Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008 to be tendered to the Inquiry (from page 84 of the transcript)

Copies of the following documents are attached:

- Report of the Aboriginal Education Review 2004
- Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006-2008

Reviews/evaluations for Schools in Partnership and Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy (from page 85 of the transcript)

In Term 4 2006, Schools in Partnership phase one schools undertook assisted self-evaluations of progress against targets in 2006.

In Term 4 2007, schools participating in the Targeted School Initiative and phase two of the Schools in Partnership initiative undertook assisted self-evaluations of progress against targets in 2007.

Schools participating in the Targeted Aboriginal Student Strategy and phase one of the Schools in Partnership Initiative undertook self-assessments of their progress against targets in 2007 in consultation with their School Education Directors.

The following documents are attached.

- 2006 individual school evaluation reports for phase one Schools in Partnership schools.
- 2007 individual school evaluation reports for schools participating in the Schools in Partnership initiative, Targeted Aboriginal Student Strategy and Targeted School Initiative. Reports are provided by region, within each region they have been ordered initially by initiative and within this alphabetically by school.

Data on Aboriginal student performance over a decade, including regional information (from pages 85 and 90 of the transcript)

A copy of the document, Office of School Targets, is attached. This document outlines targets and proficiency for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in NSW government schools. It should be noted that present Department of Education and Training regions, as administrative units, only commenced in 2004 so earlier regional trend data is not really applicable.

Documentation is also attached which provides information on Aboriginal student performance for Basic Skills Tests Years 3 and 5, in both Literacy and Numeracy, between 1998-2007.

**Issues specific to Aboriginal communities in addition to socio-economic disadvantage – ‘what is happening to these kids?’
(from page 86 of the transcript)**

Reasons for and nature of the Priority Schools Programs

Priority Schools Programs provide additional resources to identified schools. Schools that receive Priority Schools Programs resources are identified every four years from a voluntary survey. In 2008, 1090 schools are participating in this survey.

The Priority Schools Programs survey is a well tested instrument that identifies the socio-economic status of individual school communities. The school communities with the highest concentrations of low socio-economic status families will be those that receive Priority Schools Programs resources.

Priority Schools Programs are fundamentally targeted to particular school communities in recognition of the fact that there is a well documented link between socio-economic status and educational achievement. For this reason, the NSW Government maintains its commitment to ensuring a fair distribution of resources through the Priority Schools Programs and quality support mechanisms at state and regional levels.

Approximately 500-580 schools representing 21% of the total student population will receive Priority Schools Programs resources between 2009-2012. The Department will be announcing the new list of Priority Schools in Term 3 of this year.

Needs of Aboriginal students in Priority School communities

45% of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in NSW Government school attend Priority Schools Programs schools.

All students in Priority Schools benefit from the use of Priority Schools Programs resources through a whole school approach to student learning in the critical areas of literacy and numeracy as well as participation. This participation includes student engagement in learning as well as development of genuine partnerships between the home, the school and the wider community.

In order to achieve improved student learning outcomes all Priority Schools work through strategies in the inter-related areas of quality teaching and learning, classroom and school organisation and school culture and home school partnerships.

Priority schools can participate in the Schools in Partnership initiative, Targeted Aboriginal Student Strategy, Targeted School Initiative, Kids Excel and Youth Excel as well as engaging in Accelerated Literacy, Count Me in Too and other programs specifically targeting literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students.

How many teaching hours are delivered by people with Aboriginal backgrounds in TAFE?
(from page 88 of the transcript)

Data to address this question was sourced from all TAFE NSW Institutes. It is based on staff who have self identified as Aboriginal by completing the EEO form stating that they are of Aboriginal descent. It should be noted that it is not mandatory for an employee to provide this information.

TAFE NSW Institutes provided a list of Aboriginal teachers, their employment status (that is whether they were full time or part time), and the number of teaching hours each had worked during 2007.

Teachers in TAFE NSW in 2007 with Aboriginal background

Total number of Aboriginal teachers (both full time and part time)	233 ¹
Total number of full time equivalent (FTE) Aboriginal teachers	149.6 ²
Percentage of Aboriginal FTE teachers	1.38 per cent ²

Hours taught by teachers with Aboriginal background in TAFE NSW in 2007

Total number of teaching hours by all TAFE NSW teachers	77,329 ¹
Total number of teaching hours by all TAFE NSW teachers	5,937,459 ²
Percentage of hours taught by Aboriginal teachers	1.3 per cent

¹ Information provided by Human Resources Directorate

² Information provided by TAFE NSW Institutes

What support services are available to Aboriginal students in TAFE NSW?
(from page 88 of the transcript)

TAFE NSW provides a range of support services to Aboriginal students.

An Aboriginal Education and Training Unit is based in each of the ten TAFE NSW Institutes to develop programs and courses designed specifically to suit the needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Aboriginal Education and Training Unit is managed by an Aboriginal Development Manager who provides strategic advice to Institute management on the implementation of vocational education and training policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal Coordinators are employed to negotiate with communities to develop, monitor and evaluate courses targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Aboriginal Student Support Officers are often the first point of contact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They provide advice to students in relation to their courses, assist in organising study support and assist with Abstudy enquiries.

All Aboriginal students in TAFE NSW have access to all of the above staff to support and advise them. All Aboriginal students enrolled in Commonwealth or State funded courses are interviewed, advised and supported by the Aboriginal Coordinator.

Additional support

Each TAFE NSW Institute has a range of other specialist staff who provide additional support as required to all students enrolled in a TAFE NSW course including Aboriginal students.

- All Aboriginal students enrolled in TAFE delivered vocational courses in schools (TVET programs) are supported by the TVET Coordinator, who advises them about choice of course and supports them in their studies.
- All Aboriginal students with a disability are provided with additional support by a specialist Teacher/Consultant who is qualified to assist with their particular disability.
- Aboriginal students in Juvenile Justice or Correctional Services Centres are provided with additional support by the Institute Correctional Centre Liaison Officers.
- All TAFE NSW students have access to Counselling and Career Services, which assist students in making sound educational and career choices, in identifying any problems which may interfere with student progress and in developing strategies to overcome them
- All TAFE NSW students who are parents have access to child care facilities, to assist them in completing their courses.

In addition, TAFE NSW has developed a number of courses designed to provide additional support to students as required. These include Tutorial Support and Learner Support, which are available to all students, and Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme Learner Support for Aboriginal students enrolled in courses at Certificate III and above. In addition, courses specifically designed for Aboriginal students such as Aboriginal Vocational Preparation and Aboriginal Access to Further Study, include additional support.

All students enrolled in State or Commonwealth funded courses, including those in Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice Centres, are given additional support and advice.

The table on the next page provides details of Aboriginal enrolments in courses for which additional support is provided.

What support services are available to Aboriginal students in TAFE NSW? (Continued)
(from page 88 of the transcript)

Enrolments by Aboriginal students which include support

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Courses which provide additional support										
Learner Support	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,197
Tutorial Support	232	270	264	271	457	474	363	399	377	n/a
Aboriginal Vocational Preparation	481	529	672	820	979	629	805	974	824	n/a
Aboriginal Access to Further Study	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45	105	75	24	90	16
Total number of Aboriginal students accessing courses providing additional support	713	799	936	1,091	1,481	1,208	1,243	1,397	1,291	1,213
% of Aboriginal students accessing courses providing additional support	4.9%	5.1%	5.9%	6.3%	7.8%	6.2%	6.2%	6.5%	5.6%	4.9%
Courses which include additional advice and support from an Aboriginal staff member										
Aboriginal Education (Commonwealth)	1,224	1,159	1,331	1,674	1,988	2,131	2,723	2,399	2,169	2,056
Aboriginal Education (State)	695	600	715	1,039	1,853	2,297	2,040	1,804	2,151	1,731
Aboriginal - Corrective Services	675	737	644	723	893	741	896	1,395	1,292	1,311
Total number of Aboriginal students accessing additional support	2,594	2,496	2,690	3,436	4,734	5,169	5,659	5,598	5,612	5,098
% of Aboriginal students accessing additional support	17.9%	15.9%	17.0%	19.9%	25.0%	26.3%	28.3%	26.0%	24.1%	20.7%
TOTAL Aboriginal enrolments	14,476	15,715	15,787	17,274	18,899	19,624	19,968	21,567	23,246	24,580

Trend data 1998 – 2007, including data about programs for Aboriginal youth and Aboriginal students with Disability
(from page 90 of the transcript)

Trend data information is attached in three separate tables.

NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

RESPONSES TO FURTHER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE LODGED BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

What was total cost (in \$) of the following:

o **DET Aboriginal Education Policy (1996)**

No costings are available for the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy in 1996.

o **DET Aboriginal Education Review (2003 – 2004)**

Estimated expenditure for 2003-2004 financial year for the Aboriginal Education Review was approximately \$192,000 from the then Aboriginal Program Unit's budget.

o **Aboriginal education review and the New South Wales Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2006 – 2008.**

At the conclusion of the review a total of \$53 million over four years, commencing in 2005/2006, was provided by the NSW Government to implement the recommendations of the review. This increased to \$65 million over four years for the 2006/2007 financial year.

An amount of \$13,200 was incurred in direct printing and distribution costs for the *NSW Aboriginal Education and Strategy 2006-2008*. The development of the strategy utilised significant staffing resources from several Directorates across the Department of Education and Training.

In 2007/2008 a total of \$67.6 million has been allocated to the Department of Education and Training to support a range of initiatives designed to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal school students.

Since 1997, identify (by name and date of commencement) the programmes that have been implemented or continued by the Department to advance the health educational outcomes and/or wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales. In respect for each such programme, identify the costs of each such programme for each financial year in which the programme operated.

Since 1997, identify (by name and date of commencement) the programmes that have been terminated or completed by the Department to advance the health educational outcomes and/or wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples in New South Wales. In the case of each such programme terminated or completed, identify the reasons for each such termination or completion, and the date of such termination or completion.

An Otitis Media Strategy was developed by the Department of Education and Training in 2001 providing \$276,000 over the calendar years 2002-2004. The Strategy supported a framework for key health and education providers and Aboriginal communities to work in partnership to deliver culturally appropriate Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss programs for Aboriginal children and their families.

TAFE NSW Institutes provide a large number of specific programs to advance the educational outcomes and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in NSW. In addition, Aboriginal students enrol in a wide range of 'mainstream' vocational courses across all award levels, which lead to employment outcomes and/or advance their health, educational outcomes and wellbeing. **TAB A1** lists the courses that Aboriginal students have enrolled in over the 10 year period 1998 -2007. Aboriginal students are exempted from payment of TAFE NSW fees and can enrol in more than one course in a year.

TAFE NSW courses are developed in two main ways: centrally via Curriculum Centres and locally by individual Institutes. **TAB A2** details all courses that have been developed centrally for Aboriginal students through TAFE NSW Curriculum Centres for the period 1997 – 2007, including commencement and completion dates, the cost of each program and the reason for termination where applicable.

For the years 2001 to 2007, detailed information from TAFE NSW Institutes about 'locally developed/ designed' courses specifically for Aboriginal students is provided at **TAB A3**, including commencement and completion dates, the cost of each program and the reason for termination/completion. Where available, financial data for specific programs is also provided for the years 1998 – 2000, but in most cases such data is no longer available.

TAFE NSW stores records in accordance with the State's 'General Retention and Disposal Authority – Administration records' which requires records of budget allocation for individual programs to be maintained only for a period of seven years after the action is completed, when they can be destroyed. Therefore for the years 1998 – 2000 the total amount of funding allocated to each TAFE NSW Institute for Aboriginal education and training is provided, rather than details of expenditure by program. This information is attached at **TAB A4**.

Are there plans for further Aboriginal educational policy releases? If so when are they scheduled for release?

Yes. Details on the development of a new Aboriginal Education and Training Policy is attached at **TAB B**. The working group is currently reviewing submissions received. It is anticipated the draft policy will be submitted to the Director-General in July 2008.

Are there plans for another Aboriginal education review? If so when?

There are no current plans for another Aboriginal education review.

Are there any current reviews underway? What stage is the current review up to?

Schools participating in the Schools in Partnership initiative, Targeted Aboriginal Student Strategy and Targeted Schools Initiative undertake an annual evaluation process. All schools have completed individual evaluation reports for 2007.

A state report on the outcomes and recommendations of this report is currently being drafted.

How many recommendations made by previous inquiries, including previous social issues inquiries, have been implemented within your department? What were those recommendations and how did you implement them?

See response to Question 14 on Page 10 of the section titled "Responses to the 14 questions, which were supplied prior to the hearing and were not answered during the hearing".

How many Aboriginal teachers are employed in NSW?

As at 30 June 2007 there were 415 full time equivalent Aboriginal school teachers (Source: Workforce Profile).

What percentage of teachers employed by the department are Aboriginal?

The percentage of Aboriginal people employed in the Department in 2007 was 1.9% up from 1.7% in 2006.

The Department's Equal Employment Opportunity workforce statistics are provided by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. They apply a weighting methodology and do not delineate teachers as a separate group.

Identify the programmes implemented since 1997 by the department to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers.

The Department of Education and Training's commitment to improving employment opportunity for Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders (Aboriginal people) particularly in teaching positions in NSW government schools has been supported through a wide range of strategies over the past 10 years. These strategies were developed and implemented as part of the Department's Equal Employment Opportunity program.

Examples of the Department's key initiatives to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers include:

- In 1997, the Department launched an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment* program which provided priority for up to 30 positions in NSW government schools to be filled each year by Aboriginal teacher employment applicants. In 2002, the provision of priority employment for Aboriginal teachers was increased to 50 positions per year.

- In 1997, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Transfer Scheme* was also introduced which provided priority transfer for Aboriginal teachers who meet service requirements.

The priority recruitment and priority transfer provisions were included in the *1997 Staffing Agreement*. Both of these initiatives are ongoing.

- In 1998, the Department sponsored a group of 13 Aboriginal employees including Aboriginal Education Assistants, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers and Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers to undertake the *Bachelor of Education (Secondary) Indigenous Studies* at the Australian Catholic University. Graduates were appointed to schools in 2002.
- In 2000, a second group of 19 Aboriginal employees and community members were sponsored to undertake the *Bachelor of Education (Secondary) Indigenous Studies* at the Australian Catholic University. Graduates were appointed to schools in 2004. Personalised support and employment advice was offered to these graduates by Aboriginal Human Resources Project Officers.
- Provision of Special Leave, a form of paid leave, for Aboriginal employees undertaking an approved Aboriginal education/teacher education course that include compulsory residential or block attendance (such as the course mentioned above) was introduced. This initiative is ongoing.
- The *Aboriginal Students' University Links* program was implemented for a number of years. The program provided an opportunity for Aboriginal high school students in rural and isolated areas to visit universities and to learn about teacher education programs and the support available for Aboriginal students. A number of these students subsequently expressed interest in undertaking tertiary study.
- Since the inception of the *Teacher Education Scholarship Program* in 2002, 30 scholarships were dedicated to Aboriginal people each year. The program encouraged and supported Aboriginal people to become teachers in NSW government schools. In 2004 the number of scholarships for Aboriginal people increased to 35. The graduates were appointed as permanent teachers following successful completion of all university requirements of the teacher education program and fulfilling the Department's recruitment requirements.
- The Department's campaign promoting teaching as a career was significantly enhanced in 2003 by the development and promulgation of culturally appropriate promotional material by teach.NSW. The material featured images and quotes from practising Aboriginal teachers and used the slogans 'Join our Mob' and 'Teaching is Deadly' to encourage Aboriginal people to consider teaching as a career. The material was distributed to all secondary schools, former district offices, career centres in universities, TAFE institutes and communities through various Aboriginal networks.

Culturally appropriate promotional materials continue to be developed including online materials that promote teaching, and other career opportunities in the Department, for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008

The Department of Education and Training's Human Resources Directorate developed the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008. A main focus of the plan is to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed and retained in positions at all levels of the organisation.

Highlights of the achievements under this plan to date, along with programs aimed at continuing to increase the number of Aboriginal people employed and retained, (particularly Aboriginal teachers) by the Department include:

- Representation of Aboriginal staff in the Department's workforce continues to increase. As at 30 June 2007, Aboriginal people represented 1.9% of all permanent and temporary staff in the Department, an increase from 1.4% in 2005 [EEO Annual Report and June 2007 Workforce Profile, weighted estimates].
- *Teacher Education Scholarships* for Aboriginal people doubled to 60 in 2006 with the provision of mentoring and network support for Aboriginal scholarship holders. In 2007, 61 scholarships were offered to Aboriginal people and 54 teaching scholarships were taken up by Aboriginal students. There have been over 100 applications from Aboriginal people for the 2008 teaching scholarship program, with 68 scholarships being offered and 60 accepted as of 18 March 2008.
- Advertising for vacant positions, including teaching positions, now includes a statement encouraging Aboriginal people to apply for positions with the Department.
- All people applying for promotions, including teaching positions, within the Department are now required to demonstrate knowledge of and commitment to the implementation of Aboriginal education and training policies and programs.

All newly appointed Aboriginal teachers receive induction, mentoring and network support. The support program includes an orientation resource package, mentoring, a two-day workshop, and personalised support through regular telephone and email contact from Aboriginal Project Officers in the Department's Human Resources Directorate.

Included in the workshop is an Aboriginal cultural awareness and education session, held for principals, school executive members and non-Aboriginal mentors. This training assists them to support their newly appointed Aboriginal colleagues and to enhance cultural inclusiveness in partnership with local Aboriginal communities.

Mentoring training is also included in the training and provides participants with a clear understanding of the mentoring process, establishing the mentoring relationship, identifying goals and developing a plan, and provides insight into possible challenges faced during the mentor program. It also addresses intercultural issues and concluding the mentoring relationship.

- In 2007, 16 Aboriginal staff, including school teachers, TAFE-based, regional and state office staff, have been trained as facilitators for mentoring training using the *Mentoring Essentials* training course. These participants will be designing and delivering training for Departmental staff. More facilitators will be trained in semester 2 2008.
- A review of Human Resources policies, including recruitment policies, is currently underway. This will support initiatives across the Department to further increase employment and participation of Aboriginal people. Key Aboriginal staff and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated will contribute to this review.

At 30 June 2007 there were 128 full time equivalent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher's aides (special) employed by the Department in schools across NSW. [June 2007 Workforce Profile, based on those who identified through Equal Employment Opportunity survey or were in an identified position.]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher's Aides may or may not be working directly with Aboriginal students.

Employing more Aboriginal people in schools, TAFE Institutes, regional and state offices provides a greater diversity of role models for young Aboriginal students. The visibility of such role models encourages young Aboriginal students to see and hear the value of learning and achievement from Aboriginal people and the life opportunities available to them. Greater Aboriginal representation in the school based positions contributes to the development of teaching and learning practices that recognise and meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

There are also more than 400 people in Aboriginal identified positions employed by the Department. Nine of these are employed in juvenile justice education and training units. More than 300 are Aboriginal Education Assistants, employed in schools across the state. These Aboriginal Education Assistants are responsible for providing assistance to Aboriginal students and parents and also to teachers.

The remaining Aboriginal identified positions include those working in the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate, Aboriginal Education Consultants, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers and Quality Teaching Indigenous Engagement Consultants and targeted programs such as Commonwealth Development Employment Program and tutors.

NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

RESPONSES TO THE 14 QUESTIONS SUPPLIED PRIOR TO THE HEARING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2008

Please note that these questions were not answered during the course of the hearing on 12 February 2008. As such, answers are provided below.

- 1. Your submission outlines some of the successful initiatives that have helped to lift level of literacy and numeracy, such as Schools in Partnership (SiP). Is it planned to introduce these same initiatives for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?**

There is no intention at this stage to introduce initiatives such as Schools in Partnership more broadly. Other measures, however, are being systematically embedded into the delivery of Aboriginal education in NSW, and these include: the development and implementation of Personalised Learning Plans; delivery of cultural education programs; and the implementation of the Quality Teaching Framework.

- 2. Does the Department have any programs to assist students with adequate study space, equipment and lighting for their studies?**

The Department does not implement any specific programs to assist students with study space, equipment and lighting for their studies.

However, NSW schools can access funding through the Australian Government's Whole of School Intervention Strategy to establish and resource Homework Centres which provide a supervised after school supportive environment for Indigenous students to complete their homework and to study.

- 3. What early intervention programs are available for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait students? Are there specific intervention programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait students with a disability, particularly those residing in rural and remote communities?**

Children from age 3 years to school entry who have a disability are eligible for the support class (early intervention) service. Each support class (early intervention) supports between 20 and 30 children over a week to a fortnight period. These children may be attending an early intervention class at the school or are receiving support in government funded early childhood settings.

Priority for access to the service is given to:

- children requiring a high or moderate level of support
- younger children for sessional attendance, with older children provided resource support in early childhood settings
- eligible children attending a Department of Education and Training pre-school.

There are no specific early intervention programs for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a disability.

An Otitis Media Strategy was developed by the Department of Education and Training in 2001 providing \$276,000 over the calendar years 2002-2004. The Strategy supported a framework for key health and education providers and Aboriginal communities to work in partnership to deliver culturally appropriate Otitis Media and Conductive Hearing Loss programs for Aboriginal children and their families.

Whilst Otitis Media is not designated as a disability, Aboriginal communities and the NSW Government identified the condition as a significant problem impacting on Aboriginal children's capacity to learn. School Education Directors through their local Otitis Media working parties have been requested to be responsible for formulating action plans and budgets to deliver community and school awareness workshops about Otitis Media Conductive Hearing Loss and to share community experiences, knowledge and resources.

In 2005, the Department's Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate contributed to the production of and distributed copies of the 'Otitis Media Awareness' Kit to Health, Catholic Education Office and DET officers. The Kit was also distributed to community health workers to raise awareness of Otitis Media in Aboriginal communities and assist community health workers to identify kids at risk of Otitis Media.

Within the Department of Education and Training, Itinerant Support Teachers: Hearing, received copies of the Kit and Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers were responsible for establishing local Otitis Media Committees involving community, Health and Education experts in order to raise awareness of and increase understanding about Otitis Media. Itinerant Support Teachers: Hearing provide assistance to primary and secondary school students with Otitis Media. Regular class teachers are provided with specific information and training in Otitis Media in schools where there is a large enrolment of Aboriginal students.

4. What is the attrition rate among young Aboriginal and Torres Strait students in schools? What have been identified as the main reasons and how has the government responded? Has there been improvement in retention rates as a result of this response?

When speaking of retention rates, the term 'apparent' is used as individual students are not tracked. Apparent retention rates measure the retention of one cohort compared to the same cohort in previous years. That is, they measure the ratio of the total number of full-time equivalent school students in a designated year (i.e. Year 12 in 2006) divided by the number of full-time equivalent school students in an earlier year (i.e. Year 7 in 2001).

For the period 2002-2006, the full-time apparent retention rate for Aboriginal students and all students for Years 7-10 showed little fluctuation. The all student full-time apparent retention rate was approximately 13% higher than that for Aboriginal students.

During the period 2002-2006, the gap between Aboriginal students and all students apparent retention rate for the Years 7-12 was more than double that for the Years 7-10 apparent retention rate.

For the same period, female Aboriginal students had a higher full-time apparent retention rate for Years 7-10 and Years 7-12 than male Aboriginal students.

During this time there was an upward trend in the proportion of Aboriginal students achieving a Year 12 certificate.

The reasons for poor school retention and completion by Aboriginal students are many and varied. Aboriginal student school retention and completion rates can be positively impacted if Aboriginal students have access to:

- early learning opportunities and successful transition programs from prior-to-school to school and from primary school to high school
- an education which prioritises cultural appropriateness and relevance
- a learning environment which is characterised by cultural awareness and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and cultures by educators, the broader school community and policy makers
- an education which prioritises community partnerships and engagement with the community.

Programs such as Schools in Partnership, the Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy, the Targeted School Initiative, Kids Excel, Youth Excel and Aboriginal Student Scholarships all focus on improving engagement, attendance and retention, and literacy and numeracy achievement. Final evaluation of these programs will occur at the end of 2008 in order to determine their definitive impact on all these priority areas.

The Department has given itself a deadline of 2012 to close the achievement gap in education between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It is acknowledged there is much more work to be done before 2012 to improve current retention rates.

5. Are there specific programs that support retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a disability? Does this differ for urban and rural/remote communities?

There are no specific programs targeting the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a disability as all students have full access to all services provided for students with disabilities.

6. Your submission discusses the impact of the lack of transport on school attendance, particularly in remote areas. How is the Department addressing this?

Many Schools in Partnership schools have reported that by establishing a morning bus transport service there have been improvements in student punctuality and attendance.

As part of the Government's focus on improving the school readiness and participation in pre-school and early childhood services by Aboriginal children, the Department is working with other agencies to extend the provision of a before school transport service currently targeting four communities to a further five communities. This will be completed through implementation of the Priority Delivery Plan for F1 of the State Plan.

7. In areas where there is a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is the school curriculum modified so that it is more culturally appropriate for these students? What kind of modifications are they? What has been the outcome for teaching and learning?

Aboriginal education is largely about making the education delivered to Aboriginal children and young people culturally relevant and appropriate in order to engage them in the learning process and maintain their interest in education and in their achievement of educational success.

This cultural appropriateness and relevance is imperative whether schools have low, medium or high levels of Aboriginal student enrolments.

One of the key anticipated outcomes of strategies such as the Schools in Partnership Initiative, the Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy and the Targeted School Initiative, is that participating school communities will value, respect and appreciate Aboriginal culture and student identity as an intrinsic part of each school community's culture.

A number of Phase 1 Schools in Partnership schools have reported on the changes they have made to their planning processes for and their delivery of Aboriginal education. They have also reported on the outcomes of these changes.

Schools in Partnership schools variously report:

- A commitment to quality teaching and personalised learning plans (which include the students' personal as well academic goals) has focused teaching and learning and provided a structure for school and home to work together to improve student outcomes;
- A review of literacy programs has given classroom teachers the opportunity to reflect on their teaching practice and implement the Accelerated Literacy pedagogy, a significant quality teaching strategy, to better engage students in their classrooms;
- Student attendance rates have improved and, with the support of tutors and a focus on quality teaching, students are more engaged in their learning;
- Focusing on supporting literacy learning, with an emphasis on the early years, has resulted in improvements in students' literacy;
- An emphasis on cultural understanding and quality teaching to engage all students;
- Strong gains from personalised support in the early years with increasing numbers of students achieving satisfactory results in the Reading Recovery program; and
- Improvements in student punctuality with the introduction of morning bus transport and breakfast programs

Along with the Schools in Partnership initiative, Aboriginal Languages Programs are being delivered in 25 schools throughout NSW. The programs operate to enable Aboriginal communities to preserve, teach and utilise traditional language and to provide opportunities for Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Year 12 to learn an Aboriginal language.

In 2007, funding to support Aboriginal Languages Programs in schools almost tripled the amount provided in 2006, with close to \$300,000 being allocated due to community demand. Funding relates to the employment of an Aboriginal Language Teacher and for the development of resources.

The total number of students studying one of eleven NSW Aboriginal languages in 2007 was 3,686. Languages include: Bundjalung, Wiradjuri, Dhurga/Djamanj, Dharug, Gambaingir, Yawaalaraay/Gamilaraay, Ngiyampaa, Thunghutti/Dunghutti, Paakantji, Wanghumarra and Ngamba.

Implementation of the NSW Quality Teaching Framework throughout NSW schools is making a significant impact on teaching and learning in the area of Aboriginal education.

Implementation of the Accelerated Literacy pedagogy (which has been proven to improve the literacy achievements of Aboriginal students at an accelerated rate, while improving outcomes for all students) has strong potential to close the educational achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Accelerated Literacy provides opportunities for the additional benefits of improved attendance, engagement and behaviour as students experience success and engage at the same level as their peers.

The Department's Curriculum K-12 Directorate provides a comprehensive range of services to deliver quality education and training to meet the diverse needs of all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The following programs illustrate this:

Count Me In Too Indigenous Program

This is a Mathematics program which incorporates a specific focus on community involvement in supporting students' numeracy learning.

Through this program, Aboriginal community members, Aboriginal workers within the school and members of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, work together with classroom teachers to develop culturally appropriate resources and teaching activities that are appropriate for the local community. These activities align to the Count Me In Too Learning Framework.

Assessment processes have been modified to take account of research which highlighted the importance of visual learning for Aboriginal students. Also assessment tasks were modified to include the concept of sharing, as it was recognised as an important aspect of Aboriginal culture.

Independent evaluations of the Count Me In Too Indigenous program found that:

- the program improved learning outcomes for those Aboriginal students involved in the program across all constructs of the assessment process
- the program varied from school to school, however the program was pivotal in fostering the Aboriginal community's involvement

- student outcomes in the areas of Numeral Identification, Forward Number Word Sequence, Backward Number Word Sequence and Early Arithmetical Strategies showed an even greater improvement during the second year of implementation
- the techniques, activities and procedures implemented are associated with improved student learning outcomes.

The Count Me In Too Indigenous evaluation can be downloaded from the Curriculum Support website at:

http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/primary/mathematics/countmeintoo/indigenous/indig_evaluations.htm

Science Curriculum, Years 7-10

The school Science Curriculum in Years 7-10 is developed around contexts that are chosen by schools to be relevant to their school population. Where high populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students occur the contexts are generally chosen to be inclusive of the needs and views of these cultures.

Teaching and learning units have been developed in partnership with local Aboriginal community members around a culturally relevant theme such as ecological management and environmental sustainability of the land and waters utilising Aboriginal knowledge. *Science in Context: Schools working with Aboriginal Communities* is an example of teaching and learning resources modelling successful local school curriculum modification.

When Teaching and learning is more relevant to communities, students are more engaged with the learning. Attitudes to, acceptance of and understanding of, cross cultural differences are enhanced and Aboriginal knowledge is considered valuable. Students and communities also develop an awareness of alternative perspectives of the natural world.

The Science and Technology K-6 syllabus, the Technology (Mandatory) Years 7-8 syllabus and the range of elective technology subjects have been developed to provide flexibility for schools to utilise contexts of relevance and significance to their students. Technology learning is characterised by sustained project work, with students designing and producing solutions to identified needs and opportunities. Teachers are able to negotiate with their students or community to identify needs and opportunities.

Cross Curriculum Content

Each of the Year 7-10 technology syllabuses include Aboriginal cross curriculum content. The approaches schools use to address this content are varied. For example a teacher and her Food Technology class at Coonamble High School participated in the Food In Australia Digistories project.

The class prepared a digital story about bush tucker filmed at a local property and narrated by a local Aboriginal elder. The teacher reported that student engagement and participation in Food Technology, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, was enhanced through this authentic learning activity. Interaction with the Aboriginal elder significantly increased Aboriginal students' confidence in discussing their own culture. Non-Aboriginal students were able to benefit from this sharing of knowledge. More information on this can be found at:

https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoratesaz/curriculum supp/digistories/food_in_aus/bush_tucker.html

Technology Subjects

A number of resources have been developed by Curriculum K-12 Directorate for technology subjects that showcase the work of contemporary Aboriginal designers such as *Case studies in design, technology and cultural diversity*

<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/hsc/main.htm> and *Australian designers at work*
<http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/designersatwork/intro.php?ID=9>.

In 2007 the Office of the Board of Studies initiated a project to explore Aboriginal perspectives in the technology curriculum, involving a small number of teachers from DET schools with significant Aboriginal populations developing units of work for their schools. Outcomes from this project are yet to be finalised.

English Curriculum

In English, units of work have been co-written by teachers in schools with support from Curriculum K-12 Directorate. These units focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity through the study of texts by Aboriginal writers which draw upon cultural perspectives. Materials aim to ensure that teaching and learning programs are relevant, significant and engaging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Additional support materials are available for teachers including text reference lists and other resources. These resources include work by Aboriginal writers as well as film and novels that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Students engage with and respond to texts that are culturally relevant and offer alternative perspectives.

8. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers have been trained and how many are currently employed? Where are they located? Has this made a difference to teaching outcomes and retention of students in these areas?

At 30 June 2007 there were 415 full time equivalent Aboriginal school teachers 2007. [Workforce Profile]

While Aboriginal teachers have priority for employment, they may be appointed anywhere in the state depending on vacancies and curriculum requirements. They may or may not be teaching in schools with Aboriginal students.

Employing more Aboriginal people in schools, TAFE Institutes, regional and state offices provides a greater diversity of role models for young Aboriginal students. The visibility of such role models encourages young Aboriginal students to see and hear the value of learning and achievement from Aboriginal people and the life opportunities available to them. Greater Aboriginal representation in the teaching workforce contributes to the development of teaching and learning practices that recognise and meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

9. How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher's Aides have been trained and how many are currently employed? Where are they located? Has this made a difference to teaching outcomes and retention of students in these areas?

At 30 June 2007 there were 128 full time equivalent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher's aides (special) employed by the Department in schools across NSW. [June 2007 Workforce Profile, based on those who identified through Equal Employment Opportunity survey or were in an identified position.]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher's Aides may or may not be working directly with Aboriginal students.

Employing more Aboriginal people in schools, TAFE Institutes, regional and state offices provides a greater diversity of role models for young Aboriginal students. The visibility of such role models encourages young Aboriginal students to see and hear the value of learning and achievement from Aboriginal people and the life opportunities available to them. Greater Aboriginal representation in the school based positions contributes to the development of teaching and learning practices that recognise and meet the needs of Aboriginal students.

There are 312 Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs) currently employed in schools across the state, nine of which are employed in juvenile justice education and training units.

Schools consistently report that having access to Aboriginal support staff is critical to the educational achievement of Aboriginal children and young people and to the successful implementation of the *NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy*. Schools report that all students, and the school community as a whole, benefit from the knowledge, expertise and involvement of Aboriginal support staff in education and training. Schools regularly make submission to the Department seeking either the introduction, or additional provision, of AEA support.

10. Has vocational training, with links to the TAFE system, been introduced within the school system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students? Is this possible in rural and remote areas? If so, is it successful and how is this success measured?

There is a strong Vocational Education and Training in Schools program operating in NSW.

The TAFE NSW preliminary 2007 data shows there were over 1,000 enrolments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in TAFE Delivered Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses across the state.

In addition, over 700 of these enrolments represented students located in rural and remote areas in the New England, Riverina and Western Institutes of TAFE.

In addition to the TVET program, all school students are able to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships as part of their studies.

The success of vocational training for Aboriginal students is measured in terms of:

- students' completion of units of study
- attainment of their HSC
- articulation to further study or employment, and
- continued engagement in Stages 5 and 6 of schooling.

11. Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait students with a disability provided with vocational training for the opportunities that are available to such young people?

TAFE NSW employs specialist Teacher/Consultants for Students with Disabilities. The Teacher/Consultants provide support for students and prospective students including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent ensuring they have equal access to Vocational Education and Training across TAFE NSW.

Teacher/Consultants are specialised in six areas of disability. These are intellectual disability, psychiatric, neurological, vision impairment/blind, physical and deaf/hearing impairment.

Teacher/Consultants provide a range of services to assist students including the provision of pre-course advice, assistance with the enrolment process and support in determining the most appropriate classroom support. Reasonable adjustments and modifications can include tutorial support, the use of adaptive technology, sign language interpreters, note-takers and/or disability assistants. With regards to Aboriginal deaf students, Teacher/Consultants where possible try to ensure that the Auslan interpreter is also Aboriginal.

Teacher/Consultants liaise closely with TAFE NSW Institute Aboriginal Development Managers and Aboriginal Liaison Officers to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with disabilities in selecting appropriate vocational training and in successfully completing their training.

In 2007, enrolment of Aboriginal students with a disability represented almost 14% (3,433) of total Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE NSW (24,563).

Aboriginal disability enrolments in 2007 continue to mirror state and national trends with the majority of enrolments (1,705) skewed towards Access and General Education courses.

However, enrolments to the end of 2006 indicated growth in the Business Arts and Information Technology (851) as well as Community Services, Health, Tourism and Recreation (567) curriculum areas.

In 2007, data revealed a sharp decline of Aboriginal students enrolled in TAFE NSW with a disability from 4,438 in the previous year down to 3,433 in 2007. Changes to the TAFE NSW enrolment forms around disclosure of Aboriginality and Disability may well have contributed to this decrease given the large increase in 2007 of those 'not stating' a disability but still identifying as Aboriginal.

12. Does the TAFE system provide cultural awareness training for organisations? If so how does this affect the delivery of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people?

The Course in Aboriginal Cultural Education, available through TAFE NSW, provides a framework which can be utilised by a range of public sector agencies to build the capacity of staff at all levels to work effectively with Aboriginal people and communities.

The course is competency based and participants must provide evidence to be considered 'competent' in each unit, marking a shift away from programs that require attendance only.

The effect on delivery of services for Aboriginal communities is greatly enhanced by providing participants with a greater appreciation and understanding of the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people, land, water and culture.

Participants also learn about current social, political, economic and cultural issues to improve service delivery to Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginal Cultural Education program is available for delivery to Schools, TAFE & other government agencies.

13. What percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students go on to university and gain a qualification that allows them to be employed in professional capacities?

Around 12 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students proceed directly from school to university. Note that these are 'direct transfers'; the number may be higher if students who enrol at university after a break are counted.

- 14. One of the terms of reference of this Inquiry requires the Committee to assess the implementation of previous Social Issues Committee recommendations. Can you provide details on how your Department has responded to these recommendations?**

The following information provides the Department of Education and Training's response to the Social Issues Committee Report Recommendations Relating to Aboriginal issues in three areas.

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO ABORIGINAL ISSUES

REPORT NO 8 1 SEPTEMBER 95 YOUTH VIOLENCE IN NSW

Recommendation 98:

That the Minister for Education ensure that, in areas with significant Aboriginal populations:

- Strategies are in place to develop appropriate links between schools and the Aboriginal community; and*
- Adequate numbers of both male and female Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are employed in schools to establish and maintain these links and increase awareness of Departmental practices and policies, support at-risk students, and encourage parental involvement in programs.*

Question

How has the Department responded to these recommendations?

Response

- In 2003 the NSW Department of Education and Training undertook the Aboriginal Education Review, a landmark consultation which focussed on examining what needed to be done to ensure equity in educational achievement for Aboriginal children and young people. The partnership between the Department and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated was critical to the Review's success. A Report of the Review, published in 2004, contained 71 Recommendations specifically aimed at improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in NSW.
- The Department's core business is the implementation of systemic and sustainable strategic approaches to eliminating the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student outcomes in NSW by 2012.

The *NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy, 2006 -2008* has been developed and is being implemented to focus the work of schools, colleges, regions, TAFE Institutes and state office directorates towards achieving the goal - by 2012, Aboriginal student outcomes will match or better those of the broader student population.

The Department intends to achieve this goal by improving:

- literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal students and
- attendance and retention rates of Aboriginal students

The Department is developing and implementing strategies to:

- increase the employment of Aboriginal people in education and training and
- increase the involvement of Aboriginal parents/carers/community members in educational decision making

The Department is also developing and implementing:

- Aboriginal cultural education programs
- Aboriginal student leadership initiatives
- programs to increase the professional development for staff involved in Aboriginal education and training and
- initiatives to expand culturally inclusive curricula.

Schools with below average rates of attendance are required to have Attendance Action Plans that outline resources, strategies and targets for reducing absences.

Regions are required to have a Regional Attendance Action Plan to coordinate the school plans and the use of regional resources to address priorities.

The *NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy* links to the NSW Government's Aboriginal Affairs Plan, *Two Ways Together*, and the NSW State Plan. Through the implementation of the Strategy, the Department is actively engaged in achieving the targets of the relevant State Plan priorities.

- Also in direct response to the Review Recommendations, the Department has developed and implemented the *Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008* to improve the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. The Plan specifically aims to increase the number of Aboriginal staff across all levels of the Department, to build the skills of Aboriginal staff and to support all staff to have a stronger understanding of Aboriginal peoples and their cultures.
- The NSW Government is fully committed to transforming the educational outcomes for this current generation of Aboriginal children and young people. The Government has committed \$67.6 million in the 2007/08 financial year for targeted Aboriginal education programs, an increase of \$2.6 million on last year's budget.

This includes funding for the continuation of initiatives to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students through Schools in Partnership and related initiatives, Personalised Learning Plans for Aboriginal students and a focus on Quality Teaching to improve achievements in literacy and numeracy.

- On behalf of NSW Government as part of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy, the Department manages the Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program. The program provides government agencies and local government with funding for new employment opportunities targeted specifically for Aboriginal people. 65% of the salary is provided by the program for the first year of employment with the organisation taking over full responsibility for funding the position from the second year of employment.

For the 2007/2008 financial period 38 permanent positions have been created across two NSW local councils (eight positions) and seven NSW public sector agencies (thirty positions) with a total allocation of \$1,564,016.60.

A further four positions across three NSW public sector agencies were funded to provide a temporary placement opportunity for Aboriginal employees with a total allocation of \$201,372.55

- In addition, the Department employs Aboriginal support staff including:
 - o 312 Aboriginal Education Assistants employed in schools across the state. Nine are employed in juvenile justice education and training units and a number of Aboriginal Education Assistants are receiving support to participate in professional development activities such as teacher training.
 - o 13 Aboriginal Education Consultants
 - o 29 Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers
 - o 9 Quality Teaching Indigenous Engagement Consultants.
 - o 11 Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers
- Between 2007-2010, the Department of Education and Training, in partnership with schools and Aboriginal communities, will implement a coordinated range of broad and targeted strategies to support and improve Aboriginal students' knowledge and understanding of alcohol and substance misuse. In 2007, the project, School and Aboriginal Community Alcohol Project, involved a review to identify drug education strategies and materials currently available to support schools and communities with a significant Aboriginal population. Gaps in drug education strategies and materials identified as a result of this will guide the development of support strategies that engage Aboriginal communities with their school. Strategies will be trialled and evaluated. Development and distribution of support materials to schools and professional learning for teachers will follow.

Recommendation 22

That the Minister for Education ensure that Aboriginal students and students from a non-English speaking background are not unfairly targeted by disciplinary procedures in schools by:

- *providing adequate resources to schools ... to enable full investigation of incidents, and appropriate welfare and counselling support.*

Question

How has the Department responded to these recommendations?

Response

- Regions regularly review their school suspension and expulsion data to identify trends or issues, for example suspension rates of non-English speaking students, and develop appropriate strategies. As part of the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy: Actions and Responsibilities* - Strategy number KD3, regions will discuss any identified suspension and expulsion issues relating to Aboriginal students with key stakeholders including the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group.
- In 2006 *Student Discipline in Government Schools* was implemented. It required all schools to evaluate and review their School Discipline Policy during 2006 in consultation with the school community.

A process of review is incorporated in the policy stating that it is the Principals' responsibility to ensure that the school's policy is evaluated and reviewed by the school community at least every three years. It is also a requirement that parents and students are to be given a copy of the discipline code or school rules when the policy is developed or whenever it is reviewed.

- School counsellors in government schools as part of their ongoing professional development have been provided with specific training in supporting Aboriginal students with mental health issues. Training was also provided in supporting students from non-English speaking background with these problems.

Recommendation 22

That the Minister for Education ensure that Aboriginal students and students from a non-English speaking background are not unfairly targeted by disciplinary procedures in schools by:

- *advising principals to contact a nominated student advocate to assist in procedures for suspension, exclusion or expulsion, including appeal procedures...*

Question

How has the Department responded to these recommendations?

Response

- During 2006 and 2007 workshops were provided to regions for principals in Government schools related to the implementation of *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures* (2006).
- The following points from the *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures* (2006) were highlighted during the workshops:
 - In implementing the procedures, the principal must ensure that no student is discriminated against on grounds which include race (including colour, nationality, descent, and ethnic, ethno-religious or national).
 - Suspension allows time for school personnel to plan appropriate support for the student to assist with successful school re-entry. This may include access to appropriate support staff such as an Aboriginal community liaison officer and support teacher behaviour.
 - Should parent(s) or carer(s) require a support person in order to participate fully in the suspension resolution meeting, a person acceptable to both the parent(s) or carers(s) and the principal may be involved, eg a member of the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), disability worker. Parent(s) or carer(s) may be referred to the student welfare consultant if they require assistance.
 - Notification of suspension must be made to the parent(s) or carer(s) in writing within 24 hours following immediate verbal notification. Where there are difficulties contacting parents or providing notification, Departmental support staff such as the community liaison officers may be able to assist.
 - Key documents such as suspension notification letters are provided in a number of community languages and are available for download on the Department's website. This assists parents to understand and participate in the suspension process.
 - Students and parents/carers may appeal if they consider that correct procedures have not been followed or that an unfair decision has been reached. Where students, parents/carers require assistance in lodging an appeal, they should be referred to regional office personnel who should identify appropriate support personnel.

REPORT NUMBER 30 16 SEPTEMBER 03 *EARLY INTERVENTION INTO LEARNING DIFFICULTIES*

Recommendation 11

The Government should enhance funding for state funded services to promote access to children's services for children with a disability, children from a non-English speaking background, Aboriginal children and those with challenging behaviours.

Question

How has the Department responded to these recommendations?

Response

The Department of Education and Training established 21 new preschools for the start of the 2005 school year bringing the total provision to 100. Seven were established in communities with significant numbers of Aboriginal children: Batemans Bay, Windale, Briar Road, Casino West, Irrawang, Lethbridge Park and the Entrance Public Schools.

Since 2005 a total of 155 (21.6% of the total enrolment of 718) Aboriginal children have attended these seven preschools for one year before school entry. It is unlikely that any of these Aboriginal children would have attended preschool if it were not for the Department's provision.