



NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES

**Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Education
Evidence Base**

May 2016

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[About the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples](#)

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples ("Congress") welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into the National Education Evidence Base.

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (Congress) is a representative voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Established in 2010, Congress has grown steadily and by 2015 consisted of over 180 organizations and 8,500 individual members, who elect a board of directors.

Congress opposes legislation or policy that is or may be discriminatory (directly or indirectly) and or may limit the rights of Australia's First Peoples. Many of the social problems faced by First Peoples today are the result of a history of coercive government policies, notably forced removal from land, relocation to reservations and missions, assimilation, stolen generations, stolen wages and income management regimes.

Congress advocates self-determination and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration). Congress believes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be central in decisions about our lives and communities, and in all areas including our lands, health, education, law, governance and economic empowerment. It promotes respect for our cultures and recognition as the core of the national heritage.

[Education provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)

The Australian Government endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2009, and renewed its support at the United National World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014.

The Declaration contains three articles specifically related to education, as follows:

- Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

States shall take effective measures to ensure this right is protected and also to ensure that indigenous peoples can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.¹

- Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.²

¹ UNDRIP, art 13

² UNDRIP, art 14

- Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.³

Background

In 2012, Congress began extensive consultations with its members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and education organisations, followed by state and territory Departments of Education, and representatives of Catholic and independent schools. The following year, Congress released its Education Policy⁴. In brief, the document identifies seven key themes that together form a blueprint for closing the gap in educational attainment between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other Australians. The policy focuses on seven key areas, each of which has implications for the collection of educational data:

- Social determinants of educational attainment
- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators
- Resources
- Collaboration
- Culturally affirming schools, and
- Language and cultural maintenance

Congress was surprised to receive feedback from a number of education systems that not only did they support the ideas contained in the policy, but furthermore, they were already implementing them. While there are several positive programs around the country, few cover all of these issues, and particularly so at the system level.

Just as parents and carers have a responsibility to send their children to school, Congress believes that schools have a responsibility to serve their communities with tailored, appropriate and quality educational and support programs. To assist schools and other educational institutions in this process, Congress embarked on an accountability project, designed to assess education programs oriented toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A vitally important aspect of this proposal is that it proposes to measure accountability from a client community perspective, i.e. judgements made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders.

Congress engaged the Australian Council for Educational Research as consultants, and established a reference group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education advocates from around the country to establish metrics to for an educational accountability report card.

In brief, the education accountability project includes four domains:

Domain 1: Collaboration

- Participation in planning decisions
- Participation in funding decisions
- Participation in program delivery

³ UNDRIP, art 15

⁴ <http://nationalcongress.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CongressEducationPolicyWeb.pdf>

- Participation in program evaluation

Domain 2: Culture

- Cultural maintenance
- Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Staffing
- Diversity

Domain 3: Attainment⁵

- School readiness
- Basic skills
- School completion
- Vocational education and Training
- University graduates

Domain 4: Social Indicators

- SES
- Attendance
- Retention and progression
- Transition (including workforce participation)

It is an incontrovertible truth that the education system in Australia is fragmented and uncoordinated. Firstly there are four levels – early childhood, school, vocational and higher education. Within the school level, sitting side by side large systems run by states and territories, are Catholic and independent schools. We can add to this mix urban, regional and remote schools: each of these sectors has its own characteristics and challenges, and as a whole they are unintegrated.

It is also the case that many millions of dollars are spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and other programs which do not have widespread support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders. These are often the result of “top-down” policies, adopted by paternalistic governments, imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which are wasteful in that they have been ineffective in closing the gap in educational attainment. Examples are truancy programs, no school-no sport programs, punitive welfare management programs, or the huge resources poured into developing ever more refined measures of school attendance.

Congress began a project to coordinate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and leaders across these many sectors to develop a unified approach for the establishment of priorities and representation of interests. Unfortunately, this project has been suspended -- a casualty of the Commonwealth’s decision in 2013 to discontinue funding Congress. However, some progress had been made in developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Accountability Report Card, as indicated in response to the specific questions listed in the National Education Evidence Base Issues Paper prepared by the Productivity Commission.

⁵ The Reference Group recommended that duplication of reporting be avoided. At present, this is most likely to occur in Domains 3 and 4.

General comment on current education data collection practices

The gap in educational attainment

As indicated in Table 1 of the National Education Evidence Base Issues Paper, there is currently a significant number of periodic data collection exercises. Many of these differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. The story these data tell in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is consistent and show little, if any significant change over time as would be expected. In brief, they show that there is a great gap in educational attainment between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australian students. In general the gap is not decreasing over time. Further, the gap increases with the age of students, as well as for those students in remote locations.

This story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deficit and disadvantage is a recurring theme in educational (and other social) statistics. It is extremely well documented, and it could be argued that a proportion of this documentation is redundant. Two issues arise: (a) the endless litany of relative stagnation regarding the gap in educational attainment is discouraging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents, carers, elders and community members, and (b) could some of the funds used to collect redundant data be better spent on positive programs?

Attendance data

While the social determinants of educational attainment are outside the brief of the inquiry, it is important that the context of data collection is made clear. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and community members have had negative experiences with schooling. In the worst cases, schools were sites where children were removed to form part of the stolen generations. In other cases, schools have functioned as institutional instruments of domination and cultural dispossession. Even where overt racism does not operate, many schools function as agents of assimilation. In general, schools do little to assist in cultural maintenance and development for to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in contrast to the service they provide to the dominant culture.

Alienation from the education system is likely to constitute part of the explanation for lower attendance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In recent years, huge amounts of time and resources have been poured into refining attendance data. Congress questions the amount of resources devoted to this single category of education data and recommends that some of those resources be shifted to focus on what schools are doing to improve their relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and community members.

Socio-economic status

It is indisputable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a whole are in the poorest segment of Australian society. To what extent is the gap in educational attainment a result of ethnicity and to what extent is it correlated with socio-economic status? As mentioned above, many data sets differentiate between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. Differentiation by socio-economic status is much less common, and data which take both factors into account are rare. Congress urges a shift in data collection resources to show the relative contribution or intersection of these factors.

Additional data as indicated in the accountability framework discussed above would support a much more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of educational outcomes and inform policy development and evaluation.

Responses to specific questions asked in the brief

1. What has the Commission been asked to do?

Scope of the Inquiry

- *Should the evidence base include data on young people who have left school before completing Year 12, or who do not attend school for other reasons (for example, home schooled children)?*

Congress recommends that the evidence base should include data on young people who have left school before completing Year 12 or who do not attend school for other reasons.

One important function of school education is to prepare students for adult life. Those who do not complete high school are at a disadvantage for employment, income and a host of other social indicators of wellbeing. It is useful to document the antecedents of life course trajectories as a tool for the development of social policy.

2. Objectives and framework

Determinants of education outcomes

- *Do you agree that the objective of a national education evidence base should be to improve education outcomes? Are there other objectives that should be included?*

Yes, but Congress favours a broader definition and interpretation of successful outcomes other than school completion. In particular, we are interested in transition to VET, higher education or employment, as well as cultural maintenance and development.

- *What education outcomes do you see as relevant? For example, outcomes in traditional academic domains (such as literacy and numeracy), outcomes in non-cognitive domains (such as communication and interpersonal skills).*

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills, essential for full participation in society. A range of other skills are also important in adult life such as knowledge about healthy lifestyles and employment skills. Congress has a particular interest in cultural maintenance and development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but recommends that knowledge in this area of national heritage is appropriate for all students. Indigenous knowledges should not be limited to history and art and dance, but apply to all curriculum areas, and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is not uniform, but varies from place to place across the nation.

Congress also recommends that in accordance with the education provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and recognition and valuing of the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, that local communities choose the content of what is taught in schools that primarily serve our communities.

- *Can all relevant education outcomes be measured? What approaches can be used in accounting for outcomes that may be difficult to measure?*

Certainly some outcomes are easier to measure than others, but there should be documentation of all of the most important outcomes in order to assess the degree to which they are being achieved. For some indicators, it may be appropriate to use proxy measures until more robust measures are developed. Consideration also needs to be given to measurement burden on the part of schools, students and education systems.

Costs and benefits

- *What data should be collected nationally?*

As mentioned earlier, it is useful to obtain data that show the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. However, this does not need to occur *ad nauseam*. Congress would like to see a rechanneling of some of these resources into collecting:

- more refined evidence (e.g. controlling for socio-economic status, perhaps using a proxy measures for SES) and
- robust evidence about programs which are effective in closing the gap.

A similar argument can be made about attendance data. In recent years, a huge amount of resources have been poured into ever more refined measures of attendance, yet relatively little analysis has been done to produce solid evidence of the factors which affect attendance.

- *How would these data support the objective of improving educational outcomes?*

If the purpose of data collection is to improve educational outcomes, in addition to documenting educational deficit and disadvantage, it would be useful to document and affirm with families and students successful programs for improving outcomes.

- *What characteristics should the data possess in order to support the processes of monitoring progress, evaluating policies and programs and/or informing policy development?*

In the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes, Congress commends to you its work on accountability in order to demonstrate expenditure and improvements in outcomes. See Appendix 1

- *Which aspects of administrative datasets are likely to be most useful to inform policy development?*

In the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes, Congress commends to you its work on accountability in order to demonstrate expenditure and improvements in outcomes. See Appendix 1

- *What additional research or policy activity would be enabled by this data collection?*

Disaggregating the effects of socio-economic status and related indicators (poverty, prolonged unemployment of adults and care givers, crowded housing, education level of parents and care-givers etc) and “Indigeneity” on educational outcomes would assist policy makers in targeting interventions to close the gap and improve outcomes. Similarly, solid data on programs that work would be helpful for policy makers to wisely and efficiently assign resources.

- *Who would use this data and who is the beneficiary of any additional activity?*

Commonwealth, State and Territory Departments of Education would use the data, as would the Catholic Education Office and the Independent school sectors. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet which is responsible for Indigenous Affairs, as well as similar State and Territory government agencies would find such data useful, as would professional organizations such as Principals’ Associations, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Principals Association, teachers’ unions, lobby groups, and specialist programs like the Stronger-Smarter Institute, ACARA and the Clontarf Foundation.

- *What costs and benefits fall on the broader community?*

Congress is unable to estimate the costs of various data collection protocols but given the need to use limited funds effectively, and given that Closing the Gap in educational outcomes is a national priority, the benefits should benefit all Australians. Congress urges a thorough cost benefit analysis be conducted and involvement First Australian organisations and expertise.

4. Issues and opportunities

- *Which datasets (from the both education and non-education sectors) would be of highest priority to include in the development of an enduring educational database?*

In the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes, Congress recommends adoption of its education accountability framework.

- *What are the existing and prospective barriers to the facilitation of data linkage in education data? What are the main challenges and impediments to implementing data linkage in the education sector?*

Consideration of issues of privacy and ethics should be prominent in the development of data linkage protocols. Some guidance may be available from policies development by the Indigenous section of the NHMRC and Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW. Having said that, a major potential benefit of data linkage of educational records at the national level would be the ability to capture data related to student mobility.

- *How could governance and/or institutional arrangements impacting on data collection and access be streamlined or otherwise improved to enable better cooperation among stakeholders for the delivery of education information?*

Congress recommends that proposed data linkage projects require approval by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ethics Committee, and that Congress be consulted about the membership of such a committee.

- *Would the Australian Longitudinal Learning Database deliver the type of research dataset that contemporary education researchers and policy makers need?*

Congress would like to see implementation of the measures contained in its educational accountability framework (see Appendix 1).

- *What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of using probabilistic or deterministic linkage techniques to link datasets?*

A potential disadvantage is that inadequate attention is given to the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in terms of socio-economic status, residential location (i.e. remoteness) and mother tongue.

Privacy

- *In what circumstances should consent be required from individuals regarding the provision and linkage of data concerning them?*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history since 1788 is replete with examples of domination, dispossession and exploitation. It may be timely to paraphrase a comment by Australian Human Rights Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda who observed that we have had almost 230 years of people doing things to and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, many of which have resulted in very poor outcomes. Arguably, some of the worst outcomes are in the field of education. Accordingly, Congress is a strong advocate of free, prior and informed consent. Having said this, it may not be essential to obtain consent at the individual level on all occasions, but Congress would wish to insist on approval of data collection and data use by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ethics Committee, constituted according to advice from Congress.

- *Are there issues surrounding the ownership of education data particularly with respect to aggregate data?*

To the extent that ownership of data confers usage rights, yes, there are issues. Congress does not support any usage which may be disadvantageous to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as

defined by legitimately elected representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First Peoples intellectual property should be held by First Peoples.

- *How can access arrangements to education data be otherwise improved, to ensure data can be used effectively by governments, researchers, parents, schools and teachers?*

In the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, access should be approved by legitimately elected representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. An agreement should be negotiated about access, contrast or comparative analysis and use for benefit only.

- *Are there opportunities to streamline access arrangements through mutual recognition (between data-custodian organisations) of processes for vetting users? For example, mutual recognition of 'trusted users'.*

In all likelihood, streamlined access arrangements could be made for some uses or users but Congress recommends that in the case of data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, that advance approval be approved by legitimately elected representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or by an agreed arrangement.

- *Are there opportunities to increase consent rates by changing the way in which participants provide consent? For example, by moving to an 'opt-out' model.*

Congress advocates any default participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students be approved in advance by legitimately elected representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that opt-out provisions apply for individual students or their parents or carers.

- *Would a consent waiver for data used in education research (similar to that available for health and medical research) introduce new risks to privacy? Are such risks manageable?*

Where individuals are asked to provide consent, Congress would like to be assured that such consent is free, prior and informed in nature and that an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ethics committee (constituted according to advice from Congress) be established to oversee the process.

Data comparability

- *What are the comparability issues in the national education and training data collections?*

It is commonplace for comparisons to be made between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students without any qualification. As mentioned earlier, Congress favours such comparisons to be cross-tabulated with socio-economic status data in order to disaggregate the effect of social class issues from those relating specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- *Are these comparability issues significant? If yes, how can they be improved in the most cost-effective manner?*

In all likelihood, the crude measures mask salient patterns relating to education outcomes. Proxy measures of SES are likely to be readily available and cost-effective, though they should be tested for adequacy.

- *How could education data quality and consistency be improved, either through modifications to existing processes or via new approaches?*

Another category that may bear fruit by disaggregation is the "remote" and "very remote" groupings. In most cases, the vast majority of residents in these jurisdictions are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It would be helpful to know if there is variation in the educational outcomes within this category, and if so, to identify the correlates of any observed variation. Having said that, because of the small size of these communities, privacy issues may arise as a result of disaggregation.

- *Are there instances of data providers being required to collect or provide the same data at different times?*

This is a question best addressed to the actual providers of data. From experience, it is not uncommon for such people to complain about duplication. Even if this is a misperception, better education about specific data collection and uses may assist in obtaining better quality data.

- *Are there areas of current investment in the creation of education data or evidence that do not provide value in meeting the objectives?*

Although Congress supports the collection of attendance data and comparisons of data pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with non-Indigenous students, it may be that too much emphasis is placed on these data at the expense of obtaining additional data which could lead to explanation rather than simple description.

Data capture, processing and management

- *How could the creation and processing of national education data be improved to reduce system administrative or financial costs and better meet education objectives?*

Rarely, if ever, does the process of national education data collection in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students assess the performance of schools and school systems from the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and community leaders. If we are to close the gap in educational outcomes, it is essential that educational institutions begin to work in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and community leaders to ensure that the education services offered meet community needs and expectations. While this process may indeed add to administrative and financial costs, Congress believes that it would go a long way to better meeting the education objectives of Closing the Gap program.

- *Do data custodians have sufficient resources to transform existing data assets into research datasets?*

Given the limited amount of research into the correlates, causes and solutions to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes, it appears that data custodians either lack the resources, will or ability to transform data assets into research outcomes which policy development. The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples would be happy to assist data custodians in these regards, but it should be noted that Congress is resource poor and therefore has limited capacity at present.

- *Is a fear of exposing program failure a serious impediment to data development and use? What can be done to overcome this?*

If the fear of exposing program failure is an impediment to data development and use, emphasis should be placed more positively on the identification of program successes. This orientation would be more beneficial for all concerned.

- *What characteristics of education data restrict or enhance the scope for using randomised controlled trials to create evidence about the effectiveness of education policies and programs in Australia?*

It may be the case that cell size becomes very small in the case of data pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly if it is disaggregated according to SES, location and other variables. Small cell sizes could cause difficulties in drawing conclusions in RCT. Issues of privacy and equity in resourcing may also be impediments for RCT studies.

- *What lessons can be learned from other countries, or other sectors within Australia, about effective and efficient data collection and processing?*

Congress expects that lessons could be learned about the benefits of collaboration with Indigenous peoples in improving educational outcomes. The imposition of curriculum, pedagogy, attendance and other requirements without community “buy in” is likely to lead to frustrating results, wasted resources, and poor outcomes.

Technology

- *What are the main barriers to the greater adoption of technology (including mobile devices) to improve the quality and/or timeliness of data collection, processing and use?*

The digital divide may be a barrier to the data collection. ICT facilities in remote and very remote areas may be limited. Limited access and facility with ICT may also be an issue to the extent that parents, carers or community leaders may be called upon to provide data.

- *How can these barriers be best overcome?*

Education, training and resources would assist in overcoming barriers, but these of course come at a financial cost. Local engagement would assist in obtaining efficiencies.

- *Should the Australian Government play a greater role in supporting technology adoption in resource constrained schools? Or should this be pursued collectively amongst State and Territory jurisdictions?*

Congress supports Commonwealth involvement to ensure that there is a high degree of equity in educational resources and the quality of educational programs, as measured in outcomes.

- *What form should that support take?*

Financial support tied to outcomes might be trialled, provided that consideration is given to how to improve outcomes in schools that fail to meet targets. Additional support in terms of quality staff, ancillary services (speech pathologists, community development and liaison officers etc) and other resources are likely to be required in so called “disadvantaged” schools where challenges to the provision of education services are often great.

- *What new or alternative technologies could be utilised to improve the quality, timeliness and cost of data collection, processing and its use?*

Congress is not recommending particular hardware or software options, but it does recommend the social technology of inclusion and collaboration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and community leaders.

Analytical and research capability

- *How do parents use the data provided on My School?*

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers do not have a choice of school for social, geographic or other reasons. Others do not have access to the Internet and some may lack adequate literacy abilities to take advantage of the site. Accordingly, the data provided on the My School website has limited utility for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers.

- *How has My School affected parents’ engagement with schools?*

For the reasons discussed immediately above, but also because of a high degree of disengagement with schools in some communities, the My School site has made no difference to many parents and carers in many schools which have the poorest outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- *What are the most effective ways of enhancing the capabilities of parents, schools and teachers to use the education evidence base to improve student outcomes?*

There is a massive job for schools to reach out and establish respectful and positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers. Only after this has occurred will there be an opportunity to enhance capabilities to use education evidence to improve outcomes for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

5. Institutions, data governance and prioritising reform

What data governance arrangements might work best?

- *What institutions should be assigned responsibility for, and be held accountable for, the different aspects of the national education data resource? Are new institutions needed?*

As discussed above, Congress would support the development of new bodies to facilitate the collection and use of education data, as follows:

- (a) An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ethics Committee, constituted according to advice from Congress, to approve the collection and use of data pertaining to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students⁶.
- (b) Representative bodies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stake holders at each level of the education system (namely national, state and territory, school systems and individual schools) which can make independent assessments of the relevance and quality of education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students using Congress' education accountability framework (see Appendix 1).

- *Are there areas of overlap or duplication in data collection and provision in Australia? What costs arise as a result? How might these overlaps, and areas of duplication best and most cost-effectively be addressed?*

As mentioned earlier, collection of data describing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students may be excessive.

- *Are improvements to transparency or oversight required?*

Congress would like to see data collection and reporting against hard targets in relation to accountability of education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and reports of assessments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders (see [b] above).

Assessing costs and benefits to prioritise reform

- *What reforms are likely to be the most beneficial?*

In order to improve education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there is no doubt that there needs to be close collaboration between schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders and leaders. Congress recommends that this be achieved via the institution of its education accountability framework, and that reports against the indicators contained in the framework be assessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. There are many challenges toward achieving these goals, particularly at the individual school level, however, if the will to do it exists, it should be possible to quickly establish national, state and territory panels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessors.

- *How should reform options be prioritised?*

Congress recommends the following:

⁶ Obvious participants would have been the Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECB) and the National IECB Network. However, in most jurisdictions, these have been casualties of Commonwealth budget cuts. However, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group continues in NSW and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association continues in Victoria. The IECBs in most other states were appointed or closely associated with state and territory governments but the AECG and VAEA are independent of government and accordingly have higher credibility as independent assessors.

- a. Implementation of the education accountability framework (see Appendix 1).
- b. Establishment of panels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders at the national, state and territory and school system levels to assess education programs against the indicators contained in the education accountability framework
- c. Reports of these assessments
- d. The articulation of hard targets and timelines to improve assessments against the education accountability framework
- e. Reports of these assessments
- f. An emphasis be placed on successful programs and their characteristics over deficit and disadvantage
- g. Disaggregation of data covering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to control for socio-economic status and location variables.
- h. Building capacity at the school level along the lines of (b) above.

- *How long would these reforms take to implement?*

Refining measures and developing data collection protocols for indicators in the education accountability framework could be done within a year. The technical work could be done much sooner but liaison and establishing buy-in by diverse stakeholders across state, territory, education systems will take time and resources. At the other end of the spectrum, it is likely to take time to build respectful, trusting relationships with stakeholders in the most disadvantaged schools and to build capacity to effectively engage in assessments of education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

APPENDIX 1

DRAFT⁷ REPORT CARD

ACCOUNTABILITY OF EDUCATION SERVICES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES



NATIONAL CONGRESS
OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST PEOPLES

MAY 2016

⁷ It is vitally important to recognize that much more liaison is required among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, carers, elders, community leaders, educators and other stakeholders to establish a consensus about the content of this document. As it stands, this document may only be considered to be a tentative draft.

PREAMBLE

From time immemorial, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have educated our children to become productive members of our societies. Proof of our success is provided by our history as the longest surviving peoples and cultures known to humankind and our record of adaptation and change over the millennia.

Although initially excluded from Western education, since the Invasion and attendant destruction of our economies, societies and way of life, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have gradually been incorporated into the present school system. While the institutional racism and cultural genocide inherent in the Australian educational system is often overwhelming, in recent years, we are proud to have produced a cohort of academics, professionals, business and tradespeople.

Generations of our Peoples have had negative experiences with schooling, the worst abuses being forced assimilation and schools used to remove children from their families. Overcoming the poverty to which many of our Peoples have been condemned remains an issue for many of us. Attendant problems such as over-crowded housing, health status, food security, support for education, inter-generational unemployment and family challenges remain as barriers to successful participation in schooling.

In spite of these obstacles, education remains vitally important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In surveys of its members conducted by The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (Congress), education has consistently been ranked as an issue of the highest priority. Members see education as a path to employment and prosperity, and a facilitator of cultural maintenance and development. For this vision to be achieved, all of our Peoples need to experience success in schools and vocational, technical and higher education. While increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are obtaining qualifications, we believe that changes to education are required to overcome what remain as fundamental barriers for many of our young people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education organizations contributed to the development of an education policy released by the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples in 2013 (see <http://nationalcongress.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CongressEducationPolicyWeb.pdf>). This policy provides a blueprint for changes to the education system in order for it to overcome the challenges summarized above and to provide an environment that welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and facilitates their success. The first specific proposal to emerge from Congress' education policy is the implementation of an accountability framework, or report card, to measure the responsiveness of the education system to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Congress is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the best educational opportunities possible, including access to a quality education system that teaches our languages and cultures. Congress believes that meaningful, empowering and culturally sustaining education for our Peoples will be possible only when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have the choice to determine, as well as the resources to develop and deliver, curriculum and pedagogy that are culturally sustaining as provided for in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. See <https://nationalcongress.com.au/the-declaration/>.

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) Congress asserts the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to establish and control our educational systems and institutions providing education in our own languages and in a manner

appropriate to our cultural methods of teaching and learning (Article 14). Congress asserts the right of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to education that supports:

- the maintenance and development of our cultures
- the determination of our own futures
- the achievement of our full potential as citizens of Australia, participants in the economic, political and social affairs of the nation, and as members of our communities.

Congress further asserts that the Australian Government's endorsement of the Declaration obliges it to take a new approach to the provision of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. The Expert Mechanism Advice No. 1 (2009) on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Education (EMRIP) (see <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Indigenous/EMRIP/Pages/ExpertMechanismDocumentation.aspx>) provides further direction on how these rights specifically apply to education, such as the right to provide and receive education through traditional methods of teaching and learning, and the right to integrate our own perspectives, cultures, beliefs, values and languages in mainstream education systems and institutions.

Congress also understands that a commitment to education occurs when families and communities believe that the education system is serving their needs.

Accountability should overlay all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs. Congress and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts and organisations have continually highlighted the importance of ensuring that funds allocated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs are actually used for their intended purpose, and to measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs.

The report card, which follows, contains four sections: Culture, Collaboration, Social Indicators, and Attainment. The emphasis is on quality outcomes rather than inputs. At this stage the tool has been developed to assess accountability at the national level. In future, it is anticipated that it could be extended for use by educational systems and institutions. Congress wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in the development of the report card.

Congress also wishes to acknowledge the good work of organizations that have contributed to the Closing the Gap program and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan, much of which is mirrored in Congress' education policy. Congress does not wish to reproduce the reporting requirements of these initiatives. Readers will note important differences in this proposed report card and data collected by governments, although there are substantial overlaps in the areas of attainment and social indicators. Nonetheless, even if those data are reproduced as part of Congress' report card, we think it is important for the dataset to be comprehensive and to include information on attainment. Two of the most important aspects of Congress' report card are that it constitutes external review (i.e. it avoids education systems reviewing their own performance), and that it takes a consumer perspective (i.e. it allows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to use measures that are important to us).

It is Congress' hope that in time, all education systems will qualify for very favourable evaluations on the measures proposed in the report card. Were this to occur, as a nation we could make great progress toward a just and equitable society in which there is reconciliation between Australia's First Peoples, immigrants and their descendants. This prospect would allow us to establish a future in which all Australians can take pride in our unique heritage and many accomplishments. We look forward to that day.

Congress and its members (for this purpose, most notably the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium, the National Indigenous Education Consultative Body Network, and Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Childcare (SNAIC)) are ready to assist educational systems and institutions to achieve success in providing educational services to Australia's First Peoples.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

At this stage of its development, it is proposed that the accountability report card could include four domains, as follows:

Preamble

Domain 1: Collaboration

- Participation in planning decisions
- Participation in funding decisions
- Participation in program delivery
- Participation in program evaluation

Domain 2: Culture

- Cultural maintenance
- Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Staffing
- Diversity

Domain 3: Attainment

- School readiness
- Basic skills
- School completion
- Vocational education and Training
- University graduates

Domain 4: Social Indicators

- SES
- Attendance
- Retention and progression
- Transition (including workforce participation)

The Reference Group which was overseeing the development of this framework recommends avoiding duplication of reporting. At present, this is most likely to occur in Domains 3 and 4. However, if this tool were to become the national standard, other reporting systems would be superseded and could be retired in favour of this one.

We are at very early stages in this project. Extensive consultation needs to occur and through that process, we anticipate that there will be changes, refinement and development of the project.

DOMAIN 1: COLLABORATION

In the absence of established measures, and in light of the education provisions in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is proposed to seek the opinion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about educational services. Ultimately, this question should be asked at the community level and of each educational institution, but because of the Commonwealth's interest in seeking Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander opinion regarding school funding, at this initial stage we are focusing on the calibre of education services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students, and in particular, self-determination, at the levels of accountability by the Commonwealth Government and school systems.

The following questions are predicated on the presumption that the issue of independent, representative and knowledgeable opinion can be provided. They apply to participation in education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (funding decisions, planning, implementation, and evaluation). For each question, there are four, five or six response options.

Please select the one response that most closely describes the level of participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or which situation is most common. Place a ring around the letter of that response option.

Participation in funding decisions

1. How does the government/system involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in decisions about *funding* for education programs designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
 - a) The government/system does not ask us.
 - b) We are told about funding decisions before the program is announced but after decisions are made.
 - c) We are told about a total funding for the program, then help to decide how the funds are distributed.
 - d) We are told about the program and help determine the total funding and how the funds are distributed.
 - e) We help develop the program, the total funding and how the funds are distributed.
 - f) We develop programs, then determine the total funding and how the funds are distributed, and the government/system supports us.

Other comments (box will expand):

Consider adding a measure of representation on decision making bodies.

Participation in program planning

2. How does the government/system involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when *planning* education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
 - a) The government/system does not ask us.
 - b) We are told about the program before it is announced but after decisions about the program are made.
 - c) We are given ideas about the program, then work with the government to plan the program.

- d) The government/system gives us initial thoughts for a new program, then asks us to plan the program.
- e) Our members develop a program, and the government/system supports us to get the program operating.

Other comments (box will expand):

Consider adding a measure of representation on decision making bodies.

Participation in program implementation

3. How does the government/system involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples when *implementing* education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?
 - a) The government/system does not ask us.
 - b) The government/system asks Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to help implement the program as it has been designed.
 - c) Program funds are distributed and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can implement the program as they see fit.

Other comments (box will expand):

Consider adding a measure of representation on decision making bodies.

Participation in program evaluation

4. For this question on program evaluation, each option can be answered with 'No/Never', 'Sometimes' or 'Yes/Always'. Please select one response for each row.

How do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate in decisions about evaluating education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?	No/ Never	Some- times	Yes/ Always
The government/system conducts the evaluation, then discusses the results with us before releasing them to the public.			
The government/system sets the criteria for the evaluation, then invites Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be part of the evaluation team.			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people develop the criteria for the evaluation.			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people determine what aspects of the program should be evaluated.			
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are part of the evaluation team(s).			
We conduct the evaluation on our own.			

Other comments (box will expand):

Consider adding a measure of representation on decision making bodies.

The following questions are designed to provide advice to Commonwealth and State governments about the school systems which they fund and regulate.

DOMAIN 2: CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

What is taught in schools (curriculum) is oriented toward passing on cultural knowledge and providing children with skills they will need as adults in order to participate fully in our communities and in Australian society as well.

In considering this issue, we need to think about the many aspects of our cultures including our languages; our families structures and interactions; history told from our perspective; relationships with land and sea Country; our music, dance and art; our stories and beliefs; traditional games and sports; spirituality; our health practices; our law, and ways of making agreements and resolving conflict; and our ways of understanding the world. These issues affect every subject in schools and every aspect of the curriculum.

Our families and communities are the primary way that our culture is passed down to our children. Education could add to this learning by teaching other aspects of our culture.

There are many and diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia. To keep our cultures alive and strong, schools need to teach about the specific culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in their local areas. In some cases it may only be appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to teach this material.

There is also a need for all Australians to learn about some aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Please use the following scores from 0-7 to show how satisfied you are regarding the knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that is taught in primary school and middle school years.

Score:

- 1 Very little, if any, knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles
- 2 Basic knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles
- 3 Comprehensive content about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and lifestyles, and specific to local communities

1. How well are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and life-styles incorporated into each curriculum?

	Proportion of schools			
	None (0%)*	Few (<25%)*	Many (26-75%)*	Most (>75%)*
Years F-10^				
Learning Areas				

Languages

Geography (our land and sea Country)

Health and physical education (including our sports, games, medicine and health practices)

Creative arts (including music, dance, art)

Science (e.g. traditional ecological knowledge)

Technologies (including application of digital technologies to our cultural practices)

Mathematics

Civics and citizenship (including our laws, our lores, our decision making processes, our communities)

History (our histories from our perspectives)

Economics and business (including our principles for sharing resources)

English (including our stories and ways of speaking)

^ F-10 refers to the Foundation Year and Year 10. Foundation is the generic term used to consolidate the local terms Kindergarten, Prep and Reception as used in various States and Territories.

* Percentages are suggestive rather than definitive

Items to be completed by education systems within each jurisdiction

2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages

A. Percentage of schools that offer study of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language?

Primary Secondary Senior Secondary

B. On average, how many hours per week on average do schools devote to the study of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language?

Primary Secondary Senior Secondary

C. What specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are being taught in schools in your State or Territory? *(The boxes for each school level will expand as required.)*

Primary

Secondary

Senior Secondary

Teaching methods (or pedagogy) is also an important part of education and includes how we assess children, what type of learning spaces we use, and how we interact with children to teach them. How our children are taught affects school environments and how comfortable our children and communities are with their teachers and schools. Cultural values (e.g. how agreements are made and disputes resolved) are important aspects of how children are taught.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

1. Teaching methods used in schools reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
2. Our children are taught about mainstream Australian culture in schools in a way that is respectful of our cultures and our ways of thinking and behaving.
3. Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are taught enough about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and values.

STAFFING

There is widespread agreement that there needs to be more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators throughout education systems (e.g. teachers, principals, counsellors, administrators) and at all levels. There are several ways of measuring employment levels. Each has advantages and limitations.

A simple measure is to ask about the proportion of the total budget for salary that is spent on the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. This can be compared with the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in each jurisdiction.

TABLE 1: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES AND EDUCATION SECTOR EMPLOYMENT BY JURISDICTION (%)

STATE / TERRITORY	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population* (%)	Expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander salaries as percentage of total Education salary budget
NSW	2.5	
VIC	0.7	
QLD	3.6	
SA	1.9	
WA	3.1	
TAS	4.0	
NT	26.8	
ACT	1.5	
Commonwealth	2.5	

* See ABS Catalog Nos 2075.0 and 2076.0.

** Nationally, 49.5% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population nationally are between the ages of 20 and 64 years, compared with 67.8% of the total Australian population. This measure could be refined if agreed in principle.

Could also look at proportion of teachers and principals in schools (as opposed to salaries)

DOMAIN 3: ATTAINMENT

This section focuses on the educational attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and makes comparisons with non-Indigenous students.

Four indicators are examined:

1. School readiness, as measured by the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)
2. Basic skills, as measured by NAPLAN results
3. School completion, as measured by ATAR results, and
4. Vocational Education and Training qualifications, as measured by VET qualifications
5. University graduations.

SCHOOL READINESS

Domains 1 and 2 (Collaboration and Culture) examine the readiness of schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This section examines the readiness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to participate in what at present is a Western-oriented school system.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) reports on children's progress across five key domains of early childhood development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based), and
- communication skills and general knowledge.

In 2012, the AEDI was completed for 96.5 per cent of Australian children in their first year of school. The Language and cognitive skills domain is based on teachers' observations of school-related tasks.

Language and cognitive skills (school-based)		2012	
		Indigenous	Non-indigenous
Median score		8.1	9.6
Developmentally vulnerable	Below 10th percentile	22.4	5.9
	Between 10th and 25th percentile	19.5	10.1
On track	Between 25th and 50th percentile	24.0	21.6
	Above the 50th percentile	34.0	62.3
Developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain/s		43.2	20.9
Developmentally vulnerable on two or more domain/s		26.0	10.0

Source: Adapted from Australian Government 2013. *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia 2012 — AEDI National Report*. Australian Government, Canberra.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables on the other four AEDI domains, broken down by jurisdiction, system and location

BASIC SKILLS

This section relies on the results from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) managed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

TABLE 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students who scored at or above national minimum standard in each domain of the NAPLAN in 2012 (%).

		Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
Reading	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	74.2	64.7	75.4	67.2
	<i>Other students</i>	94.7	93.1	95.1	92.7
Writing	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	78.3	66.3	63.7	48.8
	<i>Other students</i>	96.4	93.6	91.4	83.4
Spelling	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	76.5	71.4	75.0	67.7
	<i>Other students</i>	95.0	93.9	94.2	90.8
Grammar & Punctuation	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	69.4	61.1	77.3	64.2
	<i>Other students</i>	94.3	92.2	96.1	91.6
Numeracy	<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	72.7	69.2	74.4	74.2
	<i>Other students</i>	95.1	94.6	94.9	94.7

Source: Adapted from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2012, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2012*, ACARA, Sydney.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables broken down by jurisdiction, system and location

TABLE 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students who scored at or above national minimum standard in the NAPLAN reading and numeracy domains in 2012, by jurisdiction (%).

Year 3 Reading	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	83.0	84.9	77.7	64.1	72.5	85.2	85.7	39.6	74.2
Non-Indigenous	95.4	95.5	93.9	93.8	93.5	93.4	96.3	90.8	94.7
Year 3 Numeracy	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	82.9	85.9	74.1	63.9	66.7	86.0	84.0	39.5	72.7
Non-Indigenous	95.7	95.9	94.2	94.5	93.0	94.5	96.8	92.9	95.1
Year 5 Reading	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	77.6	81.4	65.5	53.6	63.8	80.7	80.4	27.4	64.7
Non-Indigenous	93.7	94.4	90.9	92.4	91.8	91.4	95.3	89.0	93.1
Year 5 Numeracy	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	80.8	83.2	69.5	60.4	66.8	85.3	81.5	34.9	69.2
Non-Indigenous	95.2	95.3	93.4	94.1	92.7	93.1	96.2	92.3	94.6
Year 7 Reading	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	82.7	87.8	77.4	69.1	77.4	89.2	84.1	39.1	75.4
Non-Indigenous	95.3	95.7	94.5	95.4	94.4	94.5	96.0	90.8	95.1
Year 7 Numeracy	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	77.6	85.7	78.7	70.9	74.1	87.8	81.9	41.8	74.4
Non-Indigenous	94.6	95.3	94.9	95.5	94.3	93.9	95.4	91.6	94.9
Year 9 Reading	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	74.2	80.7	69.8	57.7	66.6	78.9	82.4	29.1	67.2
Non-Indigenous	92.8	93.3	92.0	92.8	91.8	91.1	94.9	87.7	92.7
Year 9 Numeracy	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous	78.1	83.1	78.1	67.7	72.0	84.3	86.8	44.7	74.2
Non-Indigenous	94.5	95.2	94.8	94.7	93.8	93.3	95.7	92.2	94.7

Source: Adapted from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2012, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2012*, ACARA, Sydney.

In each jurisdiction except Tasmania, the percentage of Indigenous students who achieved below the national minimum standard is more than twice the percentage of non-Indigenous students who achieved below the national minimum standard. For the Northern Territory, more than 60% of Indigenous students achieved below the national minimum standard in Reading and in Numeracy.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables broken down by system and location

SCHOOL COMPLETION

The Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) is calculated from an aggregate score on the senior secondary school certificate assessments in each state and territory, and is used as a university admission criterion.

Not all students who complete Year 12 at school are eligible for an ATAR. For example, in NSW HSC candidates may be studying less than a full load, or they may be undertaking a pattern of subjects that is not eligible for university entrance. In some jurisdictions Year 12 students may complete an alternate qualification, e.g. Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

TABLE 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students receiving an ATAR in 2012, by jurisdiction (%).

Year 12 completion	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Indigenous									
Non-Indigenous	78.8								

Source: NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee – Technical Committee on Scaling 2013, *Report on the Scaling of the 2012 NSW Higher School Certificate*, Universities Admissions Centre, Sydney.

Thus far, statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not reported on these measures in a number of jurisdictions.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables broken down by jurisdiction, system and location

TABLE 4: ATAR scores in 2012 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students, by jurisdiction (%).

ATAR score	Cohort	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
95+	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
90-94.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
80-89.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
70-79.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
60-69.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
50-59.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									
40-49.99	Indigenous									
	Non-Indigenous									

Source: NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee – Technical Committee on Scaling 2013, *Report on the Scaling of the 2012 NSW Higher School Certificate*, Universities Admissions Centre, Sydney.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables broken down by location and system

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are well represented the VET sector. Participation can be monitored as follows:

TABLE 5: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES AGED 15-64 PARTICIPATING IN VET YEARS BY SEX AND BY JURISDICTION, 2012 (%)

Age	Sex	Cohort	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
15-64	FEMALES	Indigenous									3.6
		Non-Indigenous									
15-64	MALES	Indigenous									4.0
		Non-Indigenous									
15-19	F & M	Indigenous									26.3
		Non-Indigenous									17.5
20-24	F & M	Indigenous									30.9
		Non-Indigenous									16.8

Source: Rothman, et al, 2013, *National Report on Social Equity in VET 2013*, NVEAC, Melbourne.

Note: Does not includes students still attending secondary school.

Additional tables to be added for each jurisdiction differentiating urban, rural and remote participation

The level of qualification completed is a measure of achievement for VET study. Qualifications at Certificate I and II are at lower levels and do not necessarily link directly to employment outcomes. Courses at Certificate III and above often lead to employment or other study. Over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET students are enrolled at the Certificate I or II levels, compared with less than one-quarter of other students.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables broken down by location.

TABLE 6: VET QUALIFICATIONS COMPLETED BY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND OTHER STUDENTS AGED 15-24 YEARS BY JURISDICTION, 2011 (% , n)

Qualification	Cohort	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	ACT	NT	AUST
Diploma or higher	Indigenous									3.1
	Non-Indigenous									13.9
Certificate IV	Indigenous									7.7
	Non-Indigenous									14.0
Certificate III	Indigenous									37.6
	Non-Indigenous									48.3
Certificate II	Indigenous									38.6
	Non-Indigenous									20.6
Certificate I	Indigenous									13.0
	Non-Indigenous									3.2
Other (including secondary ed)	Indigenous									0.1
	Non-Indigenous									0.1
Total certificates awarded	Indigenous									6,612
	Non-Indigenous									156,121

Source: NCVET National VET Provider Collection – Qualifications Completed, 2002-2011.

Note: Does not includes students still attending secondary school.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables for retention (attrition) by location

HIGHER EDUCATION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are well represented in the fields of social sciences, health, education and commerce/management.

TABLE 7: AWARD COURSE COMPLETIONS BY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND OTHER STUDENTS BY FIELD OF EDUCATION, 2011 (%)

Broad Field of Education	Cohort	2011
Natural and Physical Sciences	Indigenous	2.9
	Non-Indigenous	
Information Technology	Indigenous	0.7
	Non-Indigenous	
Engineering and Related Technologies	Indigenous	1.6
	Non-Indigenous	
Architecture and Building	Indigenous	1.0
	Non-Indigenous	
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	Indigenous	2.2
	Non-Indigenous	
Health	Indigenous	20.8
	Non-Indigenous	
Education	Indigenous	17.9
	Non-Indigenous	
Management and Commerce	Indigenous	17.6
	Non-Indigenous	
Society and Culture	Indigenous	29.5
	Non-Indigenous	
Creative Arts	Indigenous	8.7
	Non-Indigenous	
<i>TOTAL(a)</i>		102.9%, n=1,742

Source: DIICSRTE, 2013. <http://innovation.gov.au/highereducation/HigherEducationStatistics/StatisticsPublications/Documents/11Completions.xls>.

Notes: (a) The data takes into account the coding of Combined Courses to two fields of education. As a consequence, counting both fields of education for Combined Courses means that the totals may be less than the sum of all broad fields of education. np not published.

The Reference Group recommends adding tables for retention (attrition) by location

SOCIAL INDICATORS

The correlation between socio-economic status and educational attainment is well established⁸ though which is the cart and which is the horse is less clear. However, we can say that there is an inter-generational correlation between the two⁹. Furthermore, children experience years of a lifestyle associated with socio-economic status prior to beginning school, and as a result, have different levels of readiness and support for formal education. A similar link exists regarding residential location and educational attainment¹⁰. Those who live in rural or remote locations generally do not perform as well in exams and standardized tests of educational achievement.

Additional and appropriate support services are required to overcome the acute effects of poverty, disadvantage, poor health and attendant systemic problems such as overcrowded housing, hunger and food insecurity, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual abuse, disability and gambling. Formal education may not be a high priority for people and their families where social determinants of disadvantage are concentrated, where young people have limited access to role models in paid employment or to those who provide positive experiences of formal education; or where family dysfunction and issues relating to child protection result in significant disruption. These issues are not faced by all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, nor are they unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are over-represented in lower income brackets and do experience high levels of disadvantage compared to the general Australian population. To ensure equitable access to quality education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and particularly for those who experience life with interlocking disadvantage, additional support services need to be provided and coordinated appropriately through a multi-agency, community partnership approach. In particular there is a need for effective programs that support young people who are at risk of disengaging from education systems, as well as those who have already disengaged.

Because of the significance of this issue, it may be appropriate to consider socio-economic status and location as control variables in assessing the outcome of education programs.

The report card includes three measures that are likely to have a high association with socio-economic status background – attendance, progression and transition.

In addition to socio-economic status, there are cultural issues that may have a bearing on these indicators. Aboriginal people are likely to have a relative high rate of geographical mobility (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

⁸ Thomson, Sue; De Bortoli, Lisa & Buckley, Sarah (2013) *PISA 2012: How Australia Measures Up*. Camberwell: ACER.

Rose, Pauline et al (2014) *Education for All: Global Monitoring Report 2013-4* Paris: UNESCO

⁹ E.g. Thomson, S., Hillman, K. & Wernert, N. (2012). *Monitoring Australian Year 8 Student Achievement Internationally: TIMMS 2011* Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

¹⁰ E.g. Edwards, Ben & Baxter, Jennifer (2013). *The tyrannies of distance and disadvantage: Children's development in regional and disadvantaged areas of Australia* (Research Report no. 25). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Thomson, S, Hillman, K. & Wernert, N. (2012). *Monitoring Australian Year 8 Student Achievement Internationally: TIMMS 2011* Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Action Plan 2011 Annual Report, p.49) (*Include ABS data to compare mobility with general population*). This and other cultural practices (e.g. Sorry business) may affect attendance statistics. Mainstream educational systems often find it difficult to accommodate these cultural practices, and indeed, socio-economic status issues. It may be productive to consider how schools and the collection of educational statistics can adapt to these challenges.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

TABLE 2: FINANCIAL STRESS BY JURISDICTION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS AND TOTAL AUSTRALIAN POPULATION (%)

STATE / TERRITORY	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that ran out of money for basic living expenses in the past 12 months 2008* (%)	All households that ran out of money for basic living expenses in the past 12 months* (%)
<i>(Change this measure to income distribution)</i>		
NSW	29.7	
VIC	30.5	
QLD	23.9	
SA	31.4	
WA	29.1	
TAS	17.9	
NT	32.6	
ACT	18.4	
Commonwealth	28.0	

* See ABS Catalog Nos 4714.0 and 4159.0

ATTENDANCE

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia* provides attendance rates for government, Catholic and Independent schools in each state and territory. Currently, as “definitions and methodologies used by jurisdictions and sectors to collect the [attendance] data are not uniform, accurate comparisons... cannot be made (NRSA, 2010:50). We would like to see a nationally agreed process for collecting these statistics and for the lag in reporting to be reduced to 6 months.

TABLE X: ATTENDANCE RATES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND OTHER STUDENTS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS BY JURISDICTION*

Level	Jurisdiction							
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Primary (Year 6#)								
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	89	89	88	84	84	92	75	89
<i>Other students</i>	94	94	93	93	94	95	94	93
Secondary (Years 10)								
<i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</i>	78	80	77	70	62	82	61	72
<i>Other students</i>	89	90	87	86	88	87	87	87

* Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2012) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2010*, ACARA: Sydney. Based on Tables 42 and 7.2. Government schools enrol 88% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students and 81% of secondary students.

Data are available for each year level but aggregated data for primary and secondary are frequently not reported.

To be completed

RETENTION AND PROGRESSION

To be completed

TRANSITION

To be completed