

**REVIEW OF**  
Indigenous Education  
Strategic Initiatives Program  
—Supplementary Recurrent Assistance  
**(IESIP—SRA) FUNDING**

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this review is to examine how IESIP—SRA funds are managed and distributed currently, and to recommend a new allocative methodology that is appropriate to a variety of settings and that has the capacity to enhance the educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous students and people.

## 1.2 Background to the review

The review was prompted by:

- concerns about the appropriateness and equity of the current allocative methodology;
- a statement in *Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland* that ‘a review is needed of the allocation model used to distribute IESIP funds to schools’; and
- recent changes and developments in Education Queensland strategies and policies that have significant implications for improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students in Queensland. These include:
  - *Queensland State Education — 2010* (QSE—2010)
  - *Destination 2010*
  - *Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland*
  - *Partners for Success: Strategy for the Continuous Improvement of Education and Employment Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland*
  - *Cape York Justice Study*
  - *Queensland the Smart State: Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF).

## 1.3 Context

### 1.3.1 Commonwealth systemic framework

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) is Australia’s national policy on Indigenous education. It lists 21 national goals which are supported by all state and territory governments. The policy’s primary objective is to bring about equity in education for Indigenous Australians.

The Commonwealth Government funds a variety of mainstream and targeted programs that support the AEP. The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) is one of the targeted programs.

IESIP provides funding under five discrete elements including:

- Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA);
- Targeted Outcomes Program (TOPs);
- English as a Second Language — Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ESL—ILSS);
- IESIP Away-from-base; and
- National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS).

IESIP—SRA, the subject of this review, provides supplementary per capita funding to education providers (such as Education Queensland) across the preschool, school and vocational education and training sectors.

It is intended that funding provided during the 2001–2004 quadrennium will build on the results achieved through IESIP over the previous quadrennium and will continue to focus on:

- making educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians similar to those for non-Indigenous Australians;
- meeting literacy, numeracy and employment targets;
- involving Indigenous parents in their children’s education;
- improving preschool education outcomes;
- expanding secure employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels, particularly for Aboriginal and Islander education workers;
- ensuring appropriate professional development of staff involved in Indigenous education;
- developing and extending culturally inclusive curricula;
- involving Indigenous Australians in educational decision making; and
- achieving similar literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous Australians as for non-Indigenous Australians.

The per capita SRA funding allocation to Education Queensland is based on the number of full-time equivalent Indigenous students enrolled in state preschools, primary and secondary schools at the time of the July census collection.

The Commonwealth uses a differential model to determine the total funding to each service provider. This differential is based on factors of remoteness and age of schooling, as indicated in Table 1.

A wage cost index may also be added to payments from time to time. The indexed figures for 2002 are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: IESIP—SRA per capita amounts (base and indexed)**

Education sector	Government rate (\$)	Indexed government rate — 2002 (\$)
Preschool remote	600	641.22
Preschool non-remote	300	320.61
Primary remote	600	641.22
Primary non-remote	300	320.61
Junior secondary* remote	800	854.96
Junior secondary non-remote	400	427.48
Senior secondary remote	1000	1068.70
Senior secondary non-remote	500	534.35

\* Years 8 to 10

The remote/non-remote status of schools is determined on the basis of the school meeting one of the following definitions of ‘remote’:

- located on an island (other than Stradbroke Island or Bribie Island);
- in a location from which one of the following is required in order to reach a city with a population of 50 000 or more:
  - a journey by road of more than 300 kilometres
  - a journey by air
  - a journey by water;

- located in a community of Indigenous people that has developed as a result of decisions of those people to return to live on land with which they identify; or
- situated in a township or settlement that is culturally distinct because it is occupied by Indigenous people and managed by a council constituted by Indigenous people.

### 1.3.2 State systemic framework

Education Queensland, along with all other state and territory governments, endorses and promotes the 21 common and agreed national goals of the AEP.

The State Government provides funds for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education through including these students in the base and enrolment growth funding models used by Treasury to provide general recurrent funds to Education Queensland. These funds provide infrastructure, human resources, support services and a variety of grant allocations for Queensland state schools.

Education Queensland distributes the bulk of its Commonwealth funds for Indigenous education directly to schools. A notional 20% is retained centrally to cover administration costs and to fund strategic initiatives of statewide significance.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit is maintained within the Inclusive Education Branch of the Curriculum Directorate to lead, coordinate and support the implementation of the Partners for Success strategy to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. The Unit is responsible for the management of IESIP—SRA funds.

State schools deliver education services within a government and agency-specific framework. The major documents that provide schools with strategic direction include:

- *Queensland State Education — 2010*
- *Destination 2010*
- *School Planning and Accountability Framework (SPAF)*, currently being replaced by *School Improvement and Accountability Framework (SIAF)*.

Other important planning and strategy documents include:

- *Partners for Success: Strategy for the Continuous Improvement of Education and Employment Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland*
- *Education and Training Reforms for the Future*
- *IESIP: A Guide for Schools*
- *Future Directions for School-based Management in Queensland State Schools*

IESIP funds are distributed to schools at a rate of \$300 per student per annum based on the Indigenous student enrolment identified in the previous July census collection.

### 1.3.3 School and community framework

State schools operate on the principle of school-based management within a systemic framework. School-based management allows school communities to manage the school's resources in ways that best meet local needs and help students achieve high-quality educational outcomes. This flexibility in resource management gives schools the capacity to innovate and match educational activities to the individual needs of students.

One of the key principles of school-based management is that school decision making should involve the local school community. This principle is reinforced by the focus on community partnerships in QSE—2010 and Partners for Success, and the planning processes outlined in SIAF.

The School Planning Overview/Partnership Agreement and the School Annual Report and Operational Plan (SAROP) document each school's long-term and short-term planning, budgeting and reporting strategies. In developing these documents, schools are guided by SIAF which requires that targeted funds such as IESIP be specifically identified. SIAF provides scope for schools to include additional performance indicators, targets and data collections that are critical to the school. The cohort of

Indigenous students could well be the focus of such additional indicators in schools with significant Indigenous populations.

## **1.4 Methodology**

The review was conducted from July to October 2002.

Using the Education Queensland Bulletin Board, key stakeholders were advised of the review and invited to provide input through participating in one of a number of focus group meetings or providing a written submission.

Qualitative and quantitative information and data were collected from a number of sources including:

- 25 focus group meetings, conducted in 11 districts across the state, attended by school administrators, registrars, community education counsellors, Indigenous teacher aides and other education workers, Aboriginal Students Support and Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committee members, Indigenous elders and parents, representatives of the Torres Strait Islands Regional Education Council (TSIREC), executive directors (schools), district community education counsellors, senior finance officers, managers (education services), principal education officers (student services and performance measurement), and officers from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST);
- written submissions;
- interviews with central office staff who manage IESIP funds;
- analysis of statewide data including Year 2 Net; Years 3, 5 and 7 Tests; attendance and apparent retention rates; socioeconomic status;
- Education Queensland reports, projects, strategies and policy documents; and
- academic literature.

## **1.5 Consultations**

A reference group was established as a representative group of stakeholders to consider and respond to the review methodology, the issues raised by focus groups and other sources, the findings of the review, and the recommendations.

Reference group members included representatives from schools, district offices, central office and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A list of the members of the reference group is included at Appendix 1.

Opportunities to respond to the findings and recommendations of the review were also provided to districts that were involved in the focus groups and to individuals who provided written submissions to the review.

## **1.6 Major findings**

The review identified a variety of issues regarding the current methodology. Of particular concern were the quantity of funds retained centrally and the lack of transparency with respect to the application of, and outcomes derived from, these funds. There were concerns about the lack of alignment between the Commonwealth methodology (differentiated) and the EQ methodology (undifferentiated).

Of equal if not greater concern were a significant number of issues associated with the management, application and reporting of IESIP funds at the school level. These issues included community involvement in school planning and accountability processes, Indigenous employment and training, and continuity of funding.

Major findings of the review included the need for:

- a transparent process around the centrally retained funds;
- maximising the quantum of funds distributed to schools;

- support for the establishment of a differentiated funding methodology; and
- alignment of funding to current year student populations.

The review also uncovered a number of other issues that schools and Education Queensland must deal with to maximise the benefit to Indigenous students of IESIP funds.

# 2 Executive summary

## 2.1 Key issues

### 2.1.1 Context

There are substantial and unacceptable differences between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and those of the general student population. As well, Indigenous people are underrepresented within the Education Queensland workforce.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) is Australia's national policy on Indigenous education. Its primary objective is to bring about equity in education for Indigenous Australians.

The Commonwealth Government provides funding for a variety of mainstream and targeted programs in support of the AEP. One of the targeted programs, Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program — Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (IESIP—SRA), provides supplementary per capita funding across the preschool, school and vocational education and training sectors. IESIP—SRA is the subject of this review.

The review was designed to assess the appropriateness of the current IESIP—SRA allocative methodology; its effectiveness in contributing to achieving the outcomes of QSE—2010 and meeting the priorities of the National Strategy for Indigenous Education; and its alignment with Partners for Success (Education Queensland's strategy for the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Indigenous peoples).

Through a series of consultations, the review identified issues regarding the current allocative methodology. Of equal if not greater concern were a significant number of issues associated with the management, application and reporting of IESIP funds at the school level.

The review has produced a set of recommendations for more equitably allocating state IESIP—SRA funds. Implementing these and other review recommendations should lead to improved accountability and enhanced outcomes in the management and application of IESIP funds.

### 2.1.2 Centrally retained funds

A notional 20% of IESIP—SRA funds is retained centrally each year to contribute to operational and administrative costs (4%) and statewide strategic initiatives, imperatives of government and short-term developmental projects (notional 16%). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit within the Curriculum Directorate manages these funds.

Because the outcomes of the centrally funded projects and activities have not been published or otherwise made available to the broader education community, schools are suspicious of their management, application and outcomes. Schools are generally unable to identify any benefits accruing to them either directly or indirectly. There is consequently a strong feeling that 20% is an excessive proportion to retain. Some areas mounted strong arguments for schools to receive 100% of funds. Overall, however, there is a general acceptance that some funds need to be retained centrally.

There is a very strong feeling that the schools and communities intended to be the beneficiaries of the centrally funded projects have no input into the identification, prioritisation, delivery or review and evaluation of these projects.

### 2.1.3 Remoteness

The current allocative methodology Education Queensland uses to distribute funds to schools does not provide any differential based on remoteness. This is in contrast to the Commonwealth methodology, which incorporates a differential based on schools classed as remote.

Examination of the Commonwealth definition of ‘remote’ suggests that there are two parts to the weighting — one designed to compensate for costs directly related to a school’s geographic location and one that acknowledges environmental aspects (setting) that can have an adverse impact on student learning outcomes.

The bulk of IESIP funds are spent on wages and salaries. The cost of employing casual staff varies little across the state. Freight is not a major cost within IESIP either, as the program does not support capital acquisitions.

However, some legitimate IESIP activities and services do cost more to deliver in remote locations. Examples include professional development and training, student health and nutrition programs, and vocational education programs.

While some remote schools argue that they should receive per capita funding that is twice that of non-remote schools, a contra view is that remote schools are already adequately compensated for remoteness through other grant payments.

#### **2.1.4 Setting**

There are significant differences in learning outcomes among groups of Indigenous students based on the settings from which they come and in which they are schooled. In broad terms, differences in setting can be identified on the basis of, for example:

- how remote the setting is;
- whether the setting is an Indigenous community; and
- whether the setting is rural, provincial or metropolitan.

Within the various settings there are many factors that have an impact on student learning outcomes and the difficulty of raising student performance to benchmark levels. These factors include student attendance and mobility, access to alternative programs and other provisions for students at risk of suspension and exclusion, capacity to provide literacy teaching in response to English as a second or foreign language, tracking and reporting student performance, availability and proficiency of Indigenous personnel for employment, capacity to provide vocational education and some specialist classroom subjects, student health and preparedness for learning, the quality of the relationship between the school and its community, differing levels of infrastructure and social capital, difficulty in participating in programs available to students in other locations, identification of and access to appropriate training and professional development opportunities for employees, level of staff turnover, experience of principals, and administrator and staff awareness of issues of cross-cultural pedagogy.

The review found there are identifiable differences in student need as a consequence of setting and that there should be differentiation within the model on this basis.

#### **2.1.5 Ages of schooling**

While the Commonwealth methodology differentiates on the basis of ages of schooling, no such differentiation is made within the current EQ methodology. Interestingly, focus groups identified legitimate arguments for enhancing allocations to each and every stage of schooling.

As a consequence, no clear consensus position emerged from the focus groups other than a recognition of the importance of the early years of schooling in developing literacy and numeracy skills. Most also agreed that the specialist nature of secondary schooling made it more expensive to deliver and that this was most evident at the post-compulsory level as a consequence of the need to provide for appropriate alternative pathways. However, it was also argued that secondary schools were already comparatively well resourced and had access to other funds for post-compulsory education.

At the systemic level, the broad-based consultation that informed the development of QSE—2010 identified priorities that have relevance for Indigenous students and that could be met, in part, through the application of IESIP funds. These priorities include focusing on the early years of schooling, having more students completing Year 12 in high schools or obtaining qualifications in training or further education, and giving support to young people who need it most.

### **2.1.6 Student mobility and fluctuating enrolments**

High levels of student mobility are a characteristic of Indigenous student enrolments in many parts of the state, particularly in rural and remote areas. This mobility is evident during the school year, as well as from one year to another. Some schools experience significant increases in Indigenous student populations from year to year.

The current EQ methodology is not responsive to mobile student populations or to significant increases or decreases in student populations from year to year. This is because funding in a particular calendar year is based on the Indigenous student population as at the July census from the previous year.

The impact of fluctuations in Indigenous student populations is most noticeable in schools with only small Indigenous student populations. In extreme situations, funding can be totally or substantially out of alignment with the actual student population.

### **2.1.7 Schools with small Indigenous populations**

In July 2001 there were 435 schools with Indigenous student populations of fewer than 10. Their collective enrolment was 1866 students. These small student populations represented situations in which they accounted for the entire student population through to schools in which they represented only 0.1% of the total school population. Their contribution to total school funds similarly varied from significant to negligible.

At the individual school level, funding for small Indigenous populations raises issues that include: difficulty in applying small amounts of money in a worthwhile manner but funds still need to be separately tracked and accounted for; onerous accountability and reporting processes; and difficulty in meeting the requirement for 25% of the funds to be spent on Indigenous employment and/or training. Sometimes schools decide it is easier to simply return the money.

### **2.1.8 Unspent funds**

Some IESIP—SRA funds distributed to schools remain unspent at the end each school year. Schools are required to return these funds to central office. Analysis of schools returning funds between 1998 and 2001 does not reveal any particular trends — all districts, school sectors and bands are represented, with none being predominant.

Returned funds have either been incorporated into the centrally retained funds or, in some years, redistributed as supplementary grants. Such supplementary grant payments often arrive unexpectedly in schools and late in the school year. Schools indicate that such late distributions reduce the potential effectiveness of the funds and are difficult to incorporate into current school planning.

### **2.1.9 School planning, budgeting, reporting and accountability**

Planning, budgeting and reporting documents for some schools with Indigenous populations do not include any specific reference to IESIP—SRA funds. As a consequence, some school communities experience great difficulty obtaining information on how IESIP—SRA funds were spent and what outcomes were achieved.

School planning around IESIP funds often appears to be rather short-term (one year).

Schools do not always adopt an holistic approach to budgeting and appear to focus on inputs. Also, some schools appear not to recognise that IESIP funding is supplementary and that core funds must be applied in an inclusive manner.

Completion of the IESIP School Statement Acquittal and the Performance Report are generally not seen as onerous tasks, with the possible exception of some schools with small numbers of Indigenous students. Many schools do, however, view the acquittal as a rather 'loose' document — that is, it does not require schools to demonstrate that the funds have been spent in a way that has contributed to improved student outcomes.

The current methods of monitoring the expenditure of IESIP—SRA funds have no great capacity to ensure that the way schools spend funds complies with the guidelines or systemic priorities.

#### **2.1.10 Community involvement**

Past experiences (segregation, protection, assimilation) and some more recent issues (native title, land rights) inhibit community involvement in school decision making and student participation in education programs.

Under school-based management, schools have a responsibility to deliver quality education services that are responsive to local circumstances. Central to such a responsibility is the need for schools to develop and maintain effective partnerships with their communities.

In some locations, schools and the Indigenous communities have effective partnerships, and community members have a high level of involvement in school planning, budgeting and reporting. In others, schools have made some progress towards enhancing their relationship with the community, and are working towards involving the community in a meaningful way.

Nevertheless, there is a high level of concern across the state about the level of community involvement with IESIP processes. This is particularly apparent in instances where the Indigenous population is small and/or highly mobile. The difficulty of fostering community involvement in these circumstances is recognised, however, lack of community involvement appears not to be restricted to these situations.

#### **2.1.11 Indigenous employment and training**

Indigenous employees are clearly recognised and valued for the significant role they play in delivering education services, affirming diversity and contributing to enhanced student learning outcomes and participation rates. The importance of these people as role models is substantial and, as a consequence, a significant proportion of IESIP—SRA grant funds is used to employ Indigenous people, mainly as part-time, casual teacher aides.

While the use of IESIP funds increases the opportunity for Indigenous employment, a major concern is that these people are not permanently employed. This can cause problems for them as individuals and difficulties for the schools that employ them.

Teacher aides often report being requested, or feeling obliged, to take on roles outside their position description. Most commonly they perform duties that are more appropriately the responsibility of guidance officers, community liaison officers or community education counsellors (CECs). Taking on these additional responsibilities can be a cause of considerable stress and/or a feeling of being 'used'.

Many consequently seek a greater level of job security and/or higher rates of pay by moving to positions outside Education Queensland. This can lead to high casual teacher-aide turnover rates.

CECs and community liaison officers are not equitably distributed among schools, with primary schools particularly disadvantaged.

While principals value the contribution of Indigenous personnel, many report difficulty in identifying suitable personnel for employment. This may be in terms of either personal suitability or having the appropriate skills. Some schools appear to be unaware of the opportunity/obligation for them to provide training for Indigenous employees using IESIP funds. Others indicate difficulties identifying and/or accessing training opportunities that are tailored to the needs of Indigenous personnel.

#### **2.1.12 Cluster and district opportunities**

Some districts have well-established and effective networking and cluster/district organisational arrangements that bring schools together, often with the involvement of the district office. These arrangements allow schools to share good practice and discuss issues such as school capability building, school accountability, curriculum initiatives and the development of pedagogy. They also provide opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. In some districts, schools are networking and entering cooperative arrangements with community, business and government agencies.

Some schools, however, are only at the early stages with respect to networking and clustering. It appears to be particularly difficult for inexperienced principals and/or principals of small schools to see ‘the big picture’, to identify the opportunities for and benefits of clustering, and to initiate clustering arrangements.

In situations without networking and clustering arrangements, it is likely that opportunities to maximise the outcomes achieved from IESIP funds are being missed.

### **2.1.13 Continuity of funding**

Schools frequently indicate that they are unsure about whether IESIP—SRA funding will continue past the end of the current year. There is also a broader concern of what will happen if the Commonwealth decides to discontinue the program. Unless an alternative source of funding could be identified, schools would lose a particularly valuable resource — their part-time, casual Indigenous support personnel employed under the program.

### **2.1.14 IESIP Guidelines**

The current *IESIP: A Guide for Schools*, published in February 2000, is out of date. There are principals who are unaware of the guidelines or who have difficulty accessing a copy, even though the document is posted on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website.

## **2.2 Major recommendations**

The following are the recommendations for change resulting from the review.

### **2.2.1 Centrally retained funds**

- (1) That the allocation of funds to be retained centrally in any one calendar year be determined by an annual consultation process incorporating a conference of key stakeholders (chaired by the Director, Inclusive Education Branch) that:
  - a. reviews progress and achievements of current projects/activities; and
  - b. agrees on recommendations to the Deputy Director-General for project/activity priorities for the coming year.
- (2) That project/activity priorities be established by reference to a set of principles that are agreed to, and reviewed from time to time, by the meeting of key stakeholders.
- (3) That the Deputy Director-General be responsible for ensuring that project/activity priorities are consistent with those of the Director-General and the Minister.
- (4) That the quantum of funds retained centrally in any one calendar year be no more than 20% of the total allocation of IESIP—SRA funds from the Commonwealth to Education Queensland in that calendar year.
- (5) That any funds available to the centrally retained pool that are not committed through the annual conference process be added to the pool (minimum 80% of total IESIP—SRA funds) to be distributed to schools in the next calendar year.
- (6) That the results of the annual conference (i.e. outcomes achieved through IESIP central funds in the current year and recommended projects/activities for the coming year) be communicated to key stakeholders through posting on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website.
- (7) That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit provide operational support for the conference process.

### **2.2.2 Remoteness**

- (8) That the IESIP—SRA allocative methodology include a weighting to compensate schools in rural and remote locations for additional costs incurred in accessing and providing resources and services within IESIP expenditure guidelines.
- (9) That the weighting be based on the school grant index that is used to compensate schools, based on school size and location, for additional freight costs.

### **2.2.3 Setting**

- (10) That the IESIP—SRA allocative methodology include a weighting that differentiates funding on the basis of how difficult it is for each school to raise the performance of its Indigenous students to systemic target levels.
- (11) That this weighting be achieved through a learning enrichment index for each school that is derived from appropriate, available systemic data sets that could include student performance, attendance, apparent retention and/or socioeconomic status.
- (12) That the learning enrichment index be recalibrated at the end of the current quadrennium and remain in place for the whole of the 2004–2007 quadrennium.

### **2.2.4 Ages of schooling**

- (13) That the allocative funding methodology be based on actual Indigenous student enrolments (count or FTE\*2) for preschool and Indigenous full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolment numbers for Years 1 to 12.
- (14) That no other differentiation on the basis of age of schooling be incorporated in the allocative methodology.

### **2.2.5 Student mobility and fluctuating enrolments**

- (15) That the IESIP—SRA funding allocation be based on current year Indigenous student populations as collected in February and July.
- (16) That four grant payments be made each year as follows:
  - February 80% of estimated Semester 1 allocation based on previous July census
  - April Balance of actual Semester 1 allocation based on end February enrolment
  - July 80% of estimated Semester 2 allocation base on February enrolment
  - October Balance of actual Semester 2 allocation based on July census.

### **2.2.6 Schools with small Indigenous populations**

- (17) That Education Queensland continues to allocate IESIP—SRA funds to schools based on all Indigenous student enrolments as identified by February and July collections.
- (18) That the requirement to spend at least 25% of funding on the employment and training of Indigenous people be relaxed in those instances where an individual school allocation is less than \$3000 in a calendar year.
- (19) That schools receiving only small amounts of IESIP—SRA funds work together at a district/cluster level to:
  - a. consider options for pooling funds; and
  - b. identify employment opportunities, activities and/or projects that align with participating schools' priorities, and could best be achieved collectively.

### **2.2.7 Unspent funds**

- (20) That schools, assisted by improvements in the funding methodology, work within the framework provided by SIAF and the revised IESIP Guidelines to reduce the amount of funds that remain unspent/uncommitted at the end of each calendar year.
- (21) That district offices work with schools, as appropriate, to ensure that planning, budgeting and financial management processes minimise the risk of IESIP funds being unspent.
- (22) That schools be encouraged to identify and record 'committed funds' in the School Statement Acquittal as a means of providing some flexibility of funding across calendar years.
- (23) That uncommitted funds be recouped by applying a discount against the Semester 1 (April) grant payment of the next year and that these funds be included in the pool of funds for distribution to schools in Semester 2.

### **2.2.8 School planning, budgeting, reporting and accountability**

- (24) That principals ensure that IESIP funds are separately identified in school planning and financial accountability documents (as required by SIAF), and that consideration be given to including additional performance indicators, targets and data collections relating to the Indigenous cohort in the School Planning Overview and Operational Plan.
- (25) That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit commission a redesign of the school accountability framework and pro formas for IESIP—SRA funds.
- (26) That Education Queensland investigates options for collating and disseminating data relating to Indigenous cohort performance at the district level.
- (27) That school principals be required to provide the Indigenous community with an annual report, in appropriate format, detailing how IESIP—SRA funds have been spent and the outcomes that have been achieved.

### **2.2.9 Community involvement**

- (28) That, in accordance with Education Queensland policy and guidelines (see *School Improvement and Accountability Framework, Partners for Success* and *IESIP Guidelines for Schools*), principals ensure that strategies are in place that encourage and facilitate the participation of the Indigenous community in decision making, reporting and accountability processes associated with IESIP funds.

### **2.2.10 Indigenous employment and training**

- (29) That Education Queensland refers issues and concerns identified by the review with respect to Indigenous employment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Reference Group.
- (30) That schools use IESIP funds to provide appropriate training and professional development programs for Indigenous support staff and community representatives to ensure they have the necessary skills to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

### **2.2.11 Cluster and district opportunities**

- (31) That district office staff work with schools in receipt of IESIP—SRA funds to:
  - a. facilitate school strategic planning;
  - b. identify additional performance indicators, targets and data sets, for inclusion in SIAF planning documents, that are critical to the school in respect of its Indigenous cohort;
  - c. achieve an integrated approach to school budgeting that establishes clear links between planned outcomes and funding sources;
  - d. provide skilling in school financial management;

- e. facilitate the analysis and evaluation of performance data to inform strategies for improving student learning outcomes;
- f. build school workforce capability;
- g. ensure schools know and understand their responsibilities and expectations with respect to school improvement and accountability (as required under SIAF and IESIP Guidelines);
- h. develop productive partnerships in support of collaborative and transparent decision making;
- i. promote school networking and clustering;
- j. identify activities/projects that are best undertaken at a cluster/district level; and
- k. monitor alignment between allocated budgets and actual expenditure.

### **2.2.12 Continuity of funding**

- (32) That Education Queensland monitor the situation with respect to continuity of IESIP and, if necessary, develop contingency plans to protect the Indigenous employee resource currently provided to schools through the program.

### **2.2.13 IESIP Guidelines**

- (33) That a comprehensive revision of *IESIP: A Guide for Schools* be undertaken as a matter of urgency.
- (34) That the revised guidelines, *Review of Education and Employment Programs, Partners for Success* and this report be placed on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website in PDF format.
- (35) That the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website be updated to include:
  - a. links to other relevant policy and guidelines, such as *Destination 2010* and *School Improvement and Accountability Framework*;
  - b. current IESIP reporting and accountability frameworks and pro formas; and
  - c. results of the annual conference (i.e. outcomes achieved through IESIP central funds in the current year and recommended projects/activities for the coming year).

# 3 Key principles

The outcomes of the review are underpinned by a set of principles developed from focus group meetings, interviews conducted during the review, a scan of submissions to the review and relevant Education Queensland policies and documents.

These principles are:

- *Queensland State Education—2010* (QSE—2010) is the endorsed statement of policy and strategic direction for state education in Queensland. The goals of QSE—2010 are to improve the quality of educational experience for all students and to increase the number of students who complete 12 years of schooling or its equivalent.
- *Destination 2010* provides the action plan to implement the changes outlined in QSE—2010.
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) is Australia’s national policy on Indigenous education. Its 21 goals, endorsed by all state and territory governments, are designed to bring about equity in education for all Indigenous Australians. The document *A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2002* lists the priority areas to be targeted in achieving equity in education.
- School-based management provides the opportunity for a school community to effectively manage its resources and develop programs and practices that meet the needs of the local community and contribute to the achievement of quality student learning outcomes. School-based management operates within a systemic framework.
- The provision of financial resources directly to schools carries with it a number of planning, monitoring, reporting and accountability responsibilities for principals and their school communities. It is possible for schools to demonstrate to government, parents and community, in a clear and comprehensible way, that resources have been used effectively to achieve outcomes.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students come from diverse backgrounds (i.e. urban, rural and remote) and should be supported to achieve equitable educational outcomes.
- A range of factors, including health, socioeconomic status, family situation, employment and location, can affect student learning outcomes.
- IESIP—SRA funds are, by definition, supplementary. All funding resources — core, targeted and other — need to be identified in school planning documents and links between financial and non-financial outcomes established.
- School planning, resource allocation and curriculum provision will reflect and respond to the educational needs of all students.
- Partnerships between schools and communities are crucial to achieving continuous improvement in educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

# 4 Key issues and solutions

## 4.1 Introduction

The following is a discussion of the issues and concerns that emerged from the focus group meetings, central office interviews and literature scans undertaken during the course of the review. Also included in the discussion are suggested strategies and solutions on which the recommendations detailed in the previous section are based.

It should be noted that participants in the focus group meetings generally did not voice a high level of concern with the current methodology Education Queensland uses to distribute the IESIP—SRA funds. School personnel were happy that this funding was available, that the guidelines were sufficiently flexible to allow specific local needs to be met, and that the funds provided a significant opportunity for the employment of Indigenous personnel. When asked to talk about their concerns, group members often focused initially on issues of management, accountability, reporting, community involvement and Indigenous employment.

While these non-financial issues are not specifically the focus of this review, they are nevertheless significant in terms of the overall outcomes for the program. They have therefore been included in the following discussion, and a set of recommendations has been developed relating to possible further action by Education Queensland subsequent to this review.

The level of concern expressed by focus group members about the current allocative methodology appears to be in direct correlation with their knowledge and understanding of the current Education Queensland methodology and, in particular, the Commonwealth methodology used to allocate IESIP funds to Education Queensland. The highest level of concern surfaced in those cases where the Commonwealth methodology was viewed as the basis of entitlement.

Almost all focus group members were aware of the level of funding provided to schools, but a significant number did not know that some funds were retained centrally. Very few had any knowledge of the Commonwealth methodology and its differentiated nature.

The discussion is organised around the following 13 clusters of issues/concerns and solutions, the first seven of which relate specifically to the allocative methodology and the remainder to associated areas:

- Centrally retained funds
- Remoteness
- Setting
- Ages of schooling
- Student mobility and fluctuating enrolments
- Schools with small Indigenous student populations
- Unspent funds
- School planning, budgeting, reporting and accountability
- Community involvement
- Indigenous employment and training
- Cluster and district opportunities
- Continuity of funding
- IESIP Guidelines

## 4.2 Centrally retained funds

### Issues and concerns

A notional 20% of IESIP—SRA funds is retained centrally each year to contribute to operational/administrative costs and statewide projects of strategic significance.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit administers these funds.

In the period to 2001, staff from the unit developed project profiles and funding bids for possible inclusion in the central funding allocation. A prioritised listing was submitted through the Director, Student Services Branch, to the Assistant Director-General (Education Services), with final approval being given by the then Executive Management Group.

For 2002, the senior management team in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit developed the list of approved projects. To arrive at the final list, all proposed activities/projects were matched against existing commitments, political givens, the objectives of QSE—2010, and the Partners for Success strategies and policies.

Table 2 shows the approximate amounts that have been administered centrally since 1998. Due to the fact that per capita allocations to schools during this time have been fixed at \$300, there has been some creep in the proportion of funds actually available to the central pool. From 1998 to 2001, the proportion of funds retained centrally has averaged approximately 25%.

**Table 2: Centrally retained funds 1998–2001**

Year	Funds retained
1998	\$2.7M
1999	\$3.2M
2000	\$2.2M
2001	\$3.6M

Currently, 4% of each year's IESIP funds are used to meet administrative costs. This standard is applied across all Commonwealth funding sources.

The balance of centrally retained funds has been applied to a variety of statewide strategic initiatives, imperatives of government and short-term developmental projects including:

- the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP)
- the Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program (AITAP)
- the Aboriginal and Islander Career Aspirations Pathways Program (AICAPP)
- the Leadership and Executive Development Program
- the Learning Engagement Centres (South, North and Far North)
- various Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA) developmental projects
- the Crock Eisteddfod
- implementation of Partners for Success
- various Partners for Success projects
- Cape York Partnerships Plan.

The outcomes of the centrally funded projects and activities have not been published or otherwise made available to the broader education community. Responsible officers within the unit have monitored expenditure against each project/activity and met Commonwealth accountability requirements.

Although identified in *IESIP: A Guide for Schools*, significant numbers of school-based personnel appear to be unaware that 20% of funds are retained centrally. Only a handful of people can identify any activity previously or currently supported by these funds.

From a school and district perspective there is a total lack of transparency around these centrally administered funds. Consequently, a very high level of suspicion is attached to their management, application and outcomes. Schools are unable to see any benefits accruing to them either directly or indirectly.

Within this context, the following concerns emerge:

- Who is accountable for these funds?
- What are the management and reporting accountabilities? Are they the same as those for schools?
- Who makes/has input into the decisions on how these funds are to be spent?
- How have the funds been applied?
- Are the outcomes monitored, evaluated and reported?
- What outcomes have actually been achieved?
- What is the value for schools?

The review has been unable to clearly identify how it was originally determined that 20% of total funds available was an appropriate amount to be retained centrally. There is a strong feeling, driven by the concerns outlined above, that this amount is excessive. Strong arguments are mounted in some areas for 100% of funds to go directly to schools.

In certain instances, there is a perception that some of the centrally funded projects are not truly statewide in their application, that services can not be equitably accessed statewide, or that the projects duplicate/interfere with local initiatives.

There is a very strong feeling that those who are intended to be the beneficiaries of the centrally funded projects (i.e. schools and their communities) have no input into how the projects are identified, prioritised, delivered, reviewed and evaluated.

Overall, however, there is a general acceptance that some funds need to be retained centrally. Possible applications of these funds could include:

- program administration;
- activities/projects that are most effectively managed centrally and that are of statewide strategic significance;
- emergent issues arising at specific locations; and
- short-term, sharply focused initiatives related to literacy, numeracy, vocational education and professional development/training that are intended to identify aspects of best practice that would be readily portable to other similar contexts.

## **Solutions**

For the central retention of a portion of IESIP funds to be fully accepted, and for schools to identify benefits accruing to them, either directly or indirectly, it is imperative that Education Queensland implements a transparent process, involving key stakeholders, for managing centrally retained funds.

The amount of funds to be retained in the central pool each year should not be a fixed percentage of the total available IESIP funds. Rather, a percentage should be established that represents the maximum amount that can be retained. On the basis of expenditure patterns during the previous and current quadrenniums, it is recommended that the maximum for the central pool be set at 20% of available funds.

A process that establishes priorities for activities and projects to be managed centrally is critical to:

- gaining and maintaining acceptance of the concept by schools;
- ensuring alignment with priorities of government, Education Queensland strategic directions and school needs;
- achieving best value for money;

- minimising potential for unspent funds; and
- maximising the quantum of funds available for distribution to schools.

All central funds expenditure should be directed only towards the agreed priorities. It is the responsibility of the Deputy Director-General to ensure that these priorities are consistent with those of the Minister and the Director-General, as well as being understood by the Senior Management Team.

An annual consultation process (to be conducted late in each calendar year) must be established by way of a conference chaired by the Director, Inclusive Education, where the manager and principal education officers of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit meet with representatives from district offices, schools, peak organisations and communities to:

- review progress on and achievements of current year activities/projects; and
- agree on recommendations to the Deputy Director-General for activities/projects for the coming year.

Any funds from the central pool that are not committed through the conference process should be added to the pool of funds to be distributed to schools in the next calendar year. An ongoing objective of the unit and the conference process should be to progressively reduce the need to retain and administer funds centrally and to direct the greatest possible proportion of funds directly to schools.

While the conference process must commit funds each year to cover administrative costs and agreed activities/projects of statewide strategic significance (including commitments of government), it should have discretion with respect to allocations for emergent issues and funding of short-term initiatives.

In prioritising and recommending funding, the conference must refer to a set of principles that it agrees to, and reviews from time to time. These principles must be aligned with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP), the national priorities for Indigenous education and training, and the strategic directions of Education Queensland as outlined in documents such as *Queensland State Education — 2010*.

The principles guiding the annual conference process could include, but not necessarily be restricted to, the following:

- Projects may be ongoing, long-term or short-term.
- All projects, irrespective of duration, are subject to annual review.
- Projects must be of strategic significance.
- All projects must have statewide application or, if developmental initiatives, have the potential to be of significance at a statewide level.
- Projects must align with national and state policies and priorities for Indigenous education and employment.
- Maximising the quantum of funds available for distribution to schools must be a priority.
- Priorities of the Minister and/or government must be accommodated within the process.

Operational support will be needed to collect and collate performance information and provide a fully costed listing of possible activities/projects for the conference to prioritise and recommend. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit should be responsible for coordinating these activities.

## 4.3 Remoteness

### Issues and concerns

The current allocative methodology used by Education Queensland to distribute funds to schools does not provide any differential based on remoteness. This is in contrast to the Commonwealth methodology used to distribute funds to education providers, which incorporates a differential based on schools classed as remote.

While it has not been possible to identify the rationale for the Commonwealth decision to differentiate on the basis of remoteness, examination of the definition of ‘remote’ as used by the Commonwealth suggests that there are two parts to the weighting — one designed to compensate for costs that are directly related to a school’s geographic location (distance from major centres) and one that acknowledges the existence of environmental aspects (or setting) that can have an adverse impact on student learning outcomes.

The first two Commonwealth definitions of remote (refer to 1.3.1 above) are directly related to distance and isolation. The third and fourth definitions, however, refer to particular types of communities that may not necessarily be geographically remote. This suggests that the Commonwealth has the intention, in these instances, of compensating for higher levels of risk (or need) that are related to factors other than remoteness.

Since IESIP funds must not be used for capital works or the purchase of plant and equipment, vehicles, sporting equipment, computers or other hardware, freight (which can be substantial in remote areas) cannot be argued as a major cost within the IESIP program.

The bulk of IESIP funds are spent on wages and salaries. The cost of employing casual staff varies little across the state.

However, an examination of legitimate expenditures under IESIP reveals certain activities and services are more expensive to deliver in remote locations. These activities and services vary from school to school. They include, but are not necessarily restricted to:

- providing professional development and training;
- providing student health and nutrition programs; and
- delivering vocational education programs.

Some remote schools, which are aware of the Commonwealth methodology, view it as the basis of entitlement and argue that they should receive per capita funding that is twice that of non-remote schools. The above analysis does not support this view.

A contra view is that remote schools are already compensated for additional costs resulting from their location through weightings in other grant payments (e.g. the school grant) and/or the provision of other targeted grants (e.g. Priority Country Area Program).

## **Solutions**

In considering the issue of differentiating on the basis of remoteness, it is important to recognise that IESIP is supplementary funding. School grants include a freight component related directly to the size of the school grant. It can therefore be argued that this freight component is designed to compensate rural and remote schools only for additional costs due to distance that are incurred in expending their school grant funds. Supplementary funds, such as IESIP, should therefore incorporate their own ‘freight’ costs.

In respect of other targeted funds, these generally carry their own specific accountabilities and reporting requirements. As some are submission based, they are not guaranteed from year to year. In addition, not all rural and remote schools have access to the same targeted grant funding sources.

Given the above, it is not appropriate to argue that all rural/remote schools in receipt of IESIP funds are adequately and equitably compensated for the additional costs of service delivery in such areas through other funding sources.

While the review does not deny that there may be some ‘double dipping’, it is not appropriate to expect that a review of the IESIP methodology, in isolation, should resolve this issue. What is needed is a whole-of-department strategic approach to Commonwealth and state grants methodologies to deal with issues of targeting and overlap.

Until this occurs, a weighting should be applied within the IESIP—SRA allocative methodology to compensate schools in rural and remote areas for additional costs incurred in accessing or providing resources and services within the IESIP expenditure guidelines.

## 4.4 Setting

### Issues and concerns

There are substantial and unacceptable differences between the learning outcomes for Indigenous people and other students in state schools. As well, there are significant differences among groups of Indigenous students, based on the settings from which they come and in which they are schooled. In broad terms, differences in setting can be identified on the basis of, for example:

- how remote the setting is;
- whether the setting is an Indigenous community; and
- whether the setting is rural, provincial or metropolitan.

Focus groups identified many factors that affect student learning outcomes and the difficulty of raising student performance to benchmark levels.

These factors, which can take on local characteristics and be of varying significance at individual schools, include:

- student attendance and mobility;
- access to alternative programs and other provisions for students at risk of suspension and exclusion;
- capacity to provide literacy teaching in response to English as a second or foreign language;
- tracking and reporting student performance;
- availability and proficiency of Indigenous personnel for employment;
- capacity to provide vocational education and some specialist classroom subjects (e.g. music, drama) as significant pathways for secondary students;
- student health and preparedness for learning;
- the quality of the relationship between the school and its community;
- differing levels of infrastructure and social capital;
- difficulty in participating in programs available to students in other locations;
- identification of and access to appropriate training and professional development opportunities for employees;
- level of staff turnover;
- experience of principals;
- administrator and staff awareness of issues of cross-cultural pedagogy.

The focus groups generally agreed that different settings created different needs (although this was more strongly supported in rural/remote areas than in provincial/metropolitan areas) and that this should be reflected in the model.

### Solutions

A weighting should be applied within the IESIP allocative methodology to compensate for aspects of setting that have an impact on how difficult it is to raise student performance to benchmark levels.

Readily available and reliable, objective measures are needed that reflect the impact of setting and that can be used as a means of differentiation.

While setting has been identified as having a significant impact on student learning outcomes, it is important that data used to differentiate on this basis relate directly to individual students and not to characteristics of the school and its location. This is particularly significant for those schools that cater for students whose homes (their principal setting) are well outside the school's natural feeder area. Examples include schools, particularly with or near boarding facilities, that enrol secondary students from rural/remote areas, and schools with high mobility populations caused, for example, by students moving among members of the extended family. Students from many localities in the Torres Strait, Cape York and the Gulf must leave home to undertake secondary education. This is often highly

stressful for these students because of cultural, social and language differences. These students are more likely to reflect the level of risk attaching to their traditional home setting rather than that which attaches to the setting of the school they are currently attending.

There are a number of data options currently available. At the primary level the Year 2 Net and the Years 3, 5 and 7 Tests provide measures of Indigenous student performance.

At the secondary level, no similar statewide scaled measures of Indigenous student performance are administered and collected. What is available are indicators such as Indigenous student attendance and apparent retention rates. On the basis that, if students are not in school they are not learning, these attendance and retention figures can be regarded as indicators of risk with respect to attaining an appropriate standard of Indigenous student performance at the secondary level.

Another possibility is data related to socioeconomic status. Such data is shown to have a direct correlation with student learning outcomes and is used by Education Queensland in some other grant allocative methodologies. Currently, Education Queensland is not able to provide a comprehensive socioeconomic data set that relates specifically to the cohort of Indigenous students, but this may become available in the future. If such data becomes available, it could be used in place of, or in addition to, the other data detailed above.

It is proposed that the above student performance, attendance and apparent retention measures be used to develop a 'learning enrichment index' for each school that would be used to calculate a weighted student enrolment as the basis for a differentiated funding model.

To avoid operating a deficit funding model (as could occur using Net and Test results), the learning enrichment index should not be calculated annually. It should be calculated at a point in time and remain in effect for an extended period of time. Ideally the index would be calibrated at the beginning of each Commonwealth quadrennium and remain operative for the whole of that quadrennium.

Calculation of the index should be based on three years of most recent data. This should help overcome issues related to small student populations, schools with fluctuating and/or highly mobile populations and apparent anomalies in test results. It will also provide a sufficient number of measures as to be statistically reliable.

The risks of incorporating, in the future, socioeconomic status data for a single year student cohort should also be carefully considered. The appropriateness/reliability of such data would be of particular significance for schools with small and/or highly mobile populations.

## **4.5 Ages of schooling**

### **Issues and concerns**

While the Commonwealth methodology for allocating funds to education providers differentiates on the basis of ages of schooling (there are enhanced per capita amounts for junior secondary and senior secondary), no such differentiation is made within the current Education Queensland methodology.

When focus group members discussed the issue, their responses were generally aligned to the schooling sectors that the individual members represented. This outcome was not unexpected, as school-based personnel know their own area of schooling best and are generally passionate about the contribution that their particular sector makes to the total schooling experience. District office personnel and representatives from P-10 and P-12 schools often presented broader perspectives.

Arguments for enhancing allocations to particular stages of schooling (or for not providing enhancement to other stages) included the following:

- the early years of schooling are significant in establishing literacy and numeracy foundations;
- ongoing difficulties with literacy and numeracy emerge in lower and middle primary school;
- behaviour management issues are becoming more significant in the primary school;
- dealing with issues related to literacy and numeracy, behaviour and relevance of schooling at the primary level will reduce the incidence of problems in later years;

- delivering vocation education is expensive;
- career education programs need to commence in middle to upper primary school years as a means of assisting students to recognise the relevance of schooling;
- retention rates are an issue for secondary schools and their improvement is a priority for both the state and the Commonwealth;
- post-compulsory students require substantial individual support services that are very expensive to deliver;
- students require a high level of support to participate effectively in vocational education programs;
- vocational education and other specialist programs are the most relevant pathways for many Indigenous students;
- at the post-compulsory level, students need to see schooling as relevant, worthwhile and supportive for them to be encouraged to remain at school;
- secondary schools are already better resourced than primary schools.

No clear consensus position emerged from the focus groups other than a recognition of the importance of the early years of schooling in establishing the basics of literacy and numeracy. Most also agreed that the specialist nature of secondary schooling made it more expensive to deliver and that this was most evident at the post-compulsory level as a consequence of the need to provide for appropriate alternative pathways. However, it was argued that secondary schools were already comparatively well resourced and have access to other funds for post-compulsory education.

At the systemic level, the broad-based consultation that informed the development of QSE—2010 identified a number of clear priorities that have relevance for Indigenous students and that could be met, in part, through the application of IESIP funds. These priorities, which have been considered by interdepartmental working parties and are now the focus of ETRF, include:

- a sharper focus on the early years of schooling;
- having more students completing Year 12 in high schools or obtaining qualifications in training or further education; and
- giving support to young people who need it most.

Research indicates that participation in early childhood education provides for a smoother transition to formal schooling, enhances thinking skills, leads to long-term improvement in learning outcomes, and enhances social development reducing the later incidence of disruptive behaviour and delinquency.

Although there has been some improvement in recent years, preschool enrolment levels for Indigenous children remain low. The reasons for this are many and complex. They include:

- a lack of understanding on the part of parents of the importance of preschool education in preparing children for the regular classroom environment;
- parents' prior negative experiences at school;
- a heightened level of parental anxiety in those instance where preschool represents the first contact with a formal, mainstream education institution; and/or
- a lack of understanding on the part of some teachers of the problems experienced by some Indigenous children entering a traditional school environment for the first time.

Indigenous students are less likely than others to complete 12 years of schooling. The participation and retention rates for Indigenous students in secondary education are significantly below those for the general student population.

It has been difficult to retain students through to Year 12, with some students being lost to the system as early as the transition from primary to secondary. This is particularly evident for many of the Torres Strait Islands and some of the Aboriginal communities where students have to leave home to obtain secondary education. This can be a traumatic experience for these students who have difficulty coping with the social, cultural and language differences. Many fail to make the transition, return home and subsequently quit schooling.

The lack, or limited availability, of relevant curriculum offerings in some schools deters some Indigenous students from remaining at school. It is imperative that post-compulsory students, who are legally able to leave school, appreciate the relevance of schooling and see their schools as providing alternative and worthwhile pathways within a supportive environment. Schools report that, for a significant number of post-compulsory Indigenous students, vocational education and training (VET) provides the most relevant learning experiences.

There are, however, significant barriers to their participation in VET in some situations. Opportunities can be limited by a number of factors, including:

- geographic isolation that restricts access to TAFE colleges, work placement opportunities;
- limited availability of suitable employers which, in some areas (e.g. communities), requires students to travel considerable distances and/or spend time away from home;
- reluctance of employers to accept Indigenous students for work placement because of stereotyping or inappropriate expectations;
- the need to provide incentives to potential employers;
- difficulties in negotiating suitable service provision and cost-sharing arrangements with other service providers such as TAFE colleges;
- poor standards of literacy and numeracy that limit students to courses that lead to lower-level qualifications;
- lack of parental/mentor support for engaging in schooling at this level;
- cost of providing resources to support some VET programs;
- obtaining suitable staff;
- costs and difficulties of accessing/providing training for staff, especially in areas of high staff turnover;
- achieving program certification;
- the need to provide significant support services for students — for example, to ensure that they are suitably clothed, that they are transported to and from workplaces.

The educational disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous students is exacerbated by family circumstances including poverty, substance abuse, mobility, health issues and poor nutrition. Schools report that, as students become older, their support needs increase in both magnitude and complexity. This places a considerable demand on student support services in terms of time and cost, reaching its peak in the post-compulsory years.

This view of student support needs is reinforced in the ETRF document which states, under ‘Strategy one — School as the local coordinator for learning and youth support’:

We think that a student’s participation in some form of learning should be the joint responsibility of the individual student, parents, carers and the school involved. In future, we want the whole school system to work with a student and his or her parents and teachers. The system should assist that young person to remain enrolled with school or access training, further education or work and achieve senior qualifications.

And further, under ‘Strategy two — More support for young people and teachers’:

Young people need more assistance in finding the education and training that is right for them. Some also need help in re-building their self-confidence and optimism.

## **Solutions**

In recognition of the significance of the early years of schooling in providing the foundation for long-term improvements in student participation and learning, and in response to the fact that improving the participation rates of Indigenous students in preschool education is a systemic priority, it is appropriate to provide a level of enhancement to IESIP—SRA funding in support of this area of schooling.

This enhanced level of support should be achieved by using the actual number of Indigenous preschool enrolments, as opposed to the full-time equivalent (FTE) that will be used for other year

levels, in the funding formula. Applying such a weighting will also have the effect of maintaining the current practice of including actual preschool numbers in the model.

As the focus group consultation provided no strong consensus opinion on applying a weighting to any particular level of schooling, the review recommends that no further differentiation be applied within the proposed methodology.

Including apparent retention rates in the calculation of the learning enrichment index for secondary schools responds to the need to improve Indigenous retention rates.

Schools must ensure that their curriculum offerings are relevant to the needs of the students and the community they serve. They can do this, in an inclusive manner, by making best use of funds targeted specifically at providing alternative pathways and VET programs or overcoming remoteness.

The review recognises the importance of providing appropriate student support services, at all year levels, so that students appreciate the relevance of schooling and remain in school. Further comment on student support services is made in the section on Indigenous employment and training (see below).

## **4.6 Student mobility and fluctuating enrolments**

### **Issues and concerns**

High levels of student mobility are a characteristic of Indigenous student enrolments in many parts of the state, particularly in rural and remote areas. This mobility is evident both during the school year as well as from one year to another, as whole families move from location to location for various reasons, or students move among members of the extended family.

Since 1997, statewide Indigenous students populations have shown annual increases of between 3% and 7%. Some schools have seen significant increases in Indigenous student populations from year to year. By the time schools receive their July IESIP grant payment, there is a 12 month lag in the student population data on which the grant payment is based.

The current Education Queensland methodology is not responsive to mobile student populations or to significant increases or decreases in student populations from year to year. This is because funding for a particular calendar year is based on the Indigenous student population as at the July census from the previous year.

The impact of fluctuations in Indigenous student populations can be further magnified in the case of schools with only small Indigenous student populations. In extreme situations, funding can be totally or substantially out of alignment with the actual student population.

### **Solutions**

Funding needs to be allocated on the basis of current (not past) Indigenous student populations.

A more responsive grant allocation can be made using Indigenous student enrolment figures from February collections and the July census.

Four grant payments should be made each year. The first, in February, would be a proportion (possibly 80%) of the estimated Semester 1 allocation based on the previous July census figures. A second payment in April would provide the balance of the actual Semester 1 allocation based on the end of February enrolment figures. A similar process would be followed in July and October for the Semester 2 allocation.

## **4.7 Schools with small Indigenous student populations**

### **Issues and concerns**

As at the July 2001 census there were 435 schools with actual Indigenous student populations (Years P–12) of fewer than 10. Their collective enrolment was 1866 students. At the current per capita rate of \$300 per annum, they would have collectively accounted for \$559 800 of IESIP—SRA funds.

These small student populations represented situations in which they accounted for the entire student population through to schools in which they represented only 0.1% of the total school population. Their contribution to total school funds similarly varied from significant to negligible.

Table 4 (below) provides a further analysis of these schools.

These small student numbers and the amount of funds they generate at the individual school level raise a range of issues that include:

- small amounts of money that, even though supplementary in nature, are difficult to apply in a worthwhile manner;
- a quantum of funds that represents an insignificant proportion of the total school budget, but still needs to be separately tracked and accounted for;
- accountability and reporting processes that are onerous when compared with the amount of money involved;
- difficulty in meeting the requirement for 25% of the funds to be spent on Indigenous employment and/or training.

Some schools decide to simply return the money.

As these small student populations are often synonymous with fluctuating/mobile student populations, funding can vary from year to year. Given the current methodology (based on previous year enrolment figures), these funds can be poorly aligned to actual student populations. This situation will be largely corrected under the new methodology and funds distribution process.

## Solutions

One solution to these issues would be not to provide funding to schools with Indigenous populations below a certain number (e.g. 10), except in those instances where these small Indigenous population represent a substantial proportion (e.g. more than 50%) of the total school population. This would have the effect of redirecting approximately \$552 000 (under the current methodology) to schools with more substantial student populations and also possibly reducing the quantum of funds returned unspent.

**Table 4: Schools with small Indigenous student populations (<10 by July 2001 Count)**

<b>% ATSI students in total school population</b>	<b>No. of schools</b>	<b>Collective ATSI population</b>	<b>Collective funding allocation</b>
< 1%	81	285	\$85 500
1.00% to 4.99%	222	992	\$297 600
5.00% to 9.99%	83	363	\$108 900
10.00% to 19.99%	41	175	\$52 500
20.00% to 29.99%	4	23	\$6 900
30.00% to 39.99%	1	2	\$600
40.00% to 49.99%	0	0	0
50.00% to 50.99%	1	9	\$2 700
100%	2	17	\$5 100
<b>Totals</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>1866</b>	<b>\$559 800</b>

This approach would align with the Commonwealth methodology for funding non-systemic schools. To be eligible for funding, these schools must have at least 20 Indigenous students enrolled for the funding year.

However, any proposal to withdraw funds from schools with small Indigenous populations assumes that none of these schools is able to use its allocation effectively. It can also be argued that, on the basis of equity, funding should be provided for each and every Indigenous child irrespective of whether or not there are other Indigenous students enrolled at the school.

The preferred solution is that funding continues to be allocated to all schools with Indigenous student populations and that processes be put in place at the district level to ensure the most effective application of these funds. One scenario would be for districts, each year, to:

- identify schools with small Indigenous populations;
- facilitate a conferencing process whereby these schools could agree to:
  - surrender their funds to a district pool for reallocation; or
  - pool funds at a cluster/district level; and
- identify, in collaboration with participating schools, appropriate activities, projects and/or employment opportunities that would maximise the outcomes to be collectively achieved.

Such a process should ensure that IESIP funds are retained and applied in the district to which they have been allocated rather than being returned unspent.

While employment and training of Indigenous personnel must remain a key priority for IESIP expenditure, the requirement for at least 25% of the funds to be applied in this manner in schools receiving only small grant amounts is not practical. Under their conditions of employment, casual teacher aides must be employed for a minimum of five hours per week and in blocks of no less than two hours per day. Alternatives, such as short-term employment of Indigenous artists, are not always possible or aligned to school priorities.

This requirement should therefore be relaxed for those schools receiving less than \$3000 in a calendar year.

## 4.8 Unspent funds

### Issues and concerns

Each year some of the IESIP—SRA funds distributed to schools remain unspent at the end of the school year. These funds must be returned to central office. This is generally effected by applying a discount to the first grant payment in the following year.

Table 5 provides information regarding the quantum of funds unspent in recent years.

**Table 5: IESIP—SRA grant funds unspent by schools 1998 to 2001**

Year	Unspent funds
1998	\$183 288
1999	\$274 588
2000	\$233 201
2001	\$217 539

Across the four years approximately 350 schools returned funds totalling \$300 or more. Actual amounts returned by individual schools in individual years vary from the insignificant through to slightly in excess of \$21 000.

Further analysis of schools returning funds between 1998 and 2001 does not reveal any particular trends. All districts, school sectors and bands are represented with none being predominant. The funds are not being returned predominantly by schools receiving only small grant allocations. Only one

school returned funds in all four years and only 22 were represented in three of the four years. Just over 200 schools are represented in only one year.

Without querying individual schools, it is not possible to determine why funds are returned. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the following circumstances may have an impact:

- IESIP funds not being separately identified in school planning and budget documents;
- IESIP funds not being appropriately tracked in financial records;
- inexperienced principals not being aware of guidelines, processes and responsibilities/accountabilities;
- misalignment between student enrolments and funding;
- time/labour commitment required to track comparatively small amounts of money;
- payment of supplementary grant amounts late in the school year;
- gaps in employment caused by staff turnover.

Returned funds have either been incorporated into the centrally retained funds or, in some years, redistributed in the form of supplementary grants.

Supplementary grant payments often arrive unexpectedly in schools and late in the school year. This reduces the potential effectiveness of the funds and makes it difficult for schools to incorporate into either current or long-term plans, the latter since there is no capacity to carry over funds from one year to the next.

## **Solutions**

The following measures should help reduce the incidence of funds being unspent and having to be returned:

- basing school IESIP allocations on current year student enrolments;
- updating the IESIP Guidelines and making them available online in PDF format;
- the SIAF requirement for IESIP funds to be separately identified in school planning and budget documents;
- pooling of funds at district/cluster level;
- district offices providing appropriate induction and training to newly appointed principals;
- schools making more effective use of the capacity to commit funds at the end of a calendar year and expend the funds in the next calendar year.

Funds that remain uncommitted at the end of the school year should be returned by applying a discount to the second grant payment in the following year. These discounted funds should then be added to the pool of funds being distributed to schools and incorporated into the second semester payments. This process will ensure that these funds remain in the pool being distributed to schools and should eliminate any necessity to make late supplementary grant allocations.

## **4.9 School planning, budgeting, reporting and accountability**

### **Issues and concerns**

*Queensland State Education—2010* (QSE—2010) is the endorsed statement of policy and strategic direction for state education for the period to the year 2010. Its two major goals are to:

- improve the quality of the education experience in state schools for all students; and
- increase the proportion of young Queenslanders who complete 12 years of schooling or its equivalent.

*Destination 2010* is Education Queensland's action plan for implementing the changes outlined in QSE—2010.

*School Planning and Accountability Framework: Statement of Policy 2002* (to be replaced by *School Improvement and Accountability Framework*) provides an integrated approach for improvement and accountability in Queensland state schools.

School planning and accountability with respect to IESIP funds is informed by *Resource Booklet 1: Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) — A Guide for Schools*, which is derived, in part, from *Commonwealth Programmes for Schools*.

While SPAF refers to schools providing opportunities for community involvement in school planning and encourages schools to respond to local needs, it does not include any specific reference to:

- tracking and reporting targeted funds;
- tracking and reporting performance of specific cohorts of students;
- requirements for involving Indigenous communities in the development of various SPAF processes and documents.

Planning, budgeting and reporting documents for some schools with Indigenous populations do not include any specific reference to IESIP—SRA funds, the priorities to which those funds are to be directed, or the outcomes that have been achieved. As a consequence, some school communities find it very difficult to get information on how the funds have been spent in their schools and what outcomes have been achieved.

School planning around IESIP funds often appears to be short-term (i.e. one year). This is largely a consequence of schools experiencing uncertainty about the continuity of IESIP funding. Schools are either not aware that Commonwealth funding is provided on a quadrennial basis or they are not confident that Education Queensland will continue to distribute funds directly to schools. The short-term planning outlook can also result from variability of funding from year to year as a consequence of fluctuating enrolments, the fact that grants are based on the previous July enrolments and are therefore out of alignment with actual enrolments, or because schools are reluctant to put in place long-term strategies that are dependent on funds that may not be available after the end of a quadrennium.

Long-term planning, achieving best value for money and casual employment strategies can also be affected by the restrictions placed on carrying over funds from one school year to the next.

Schools do not always adopt an holistic approach to budgeting and appear to focus on inputs.

Some schools feel constrained by restrictions in the IESIP Guidelines on how the funds can be spent. Of particular concern are the restrictions placed on the purchases of computer hardware.

Completion of the IESIP School Statement Acquittal and the Performance Report are generally not seen as onerous tasks, with the possible exception of some schools where there are only small numbers of Indigenous students who make up a comparatively small proportion of the total student population. Schools do, however, view the acquittal as a rather 'loose' document that can be completed in compliance mode — that is, it does not require schools to demonstrate that the funds have been spent in a way that has contributed to improved student outcomes. Schools express concern that national priorities and performance indicators can change without any prior notification. They also question the relevance of some of the indicators (e.g. around literacy and numeracy) and the inability within this framework to report on outcomes that they would consider to be of greater relevance and/or significance.

In some instances it appears that targeted funds are spent on basic educational provision rather than supplementing these provisions.

The current methods of monitoring the expenditure of IESIP—SRA funds do not ensure that the way a school spends funds complies with the guidelines or with systemic priorities.

## **Solutions**

IESIP—SRA funds and the school priorities they support must be included in the school's strategic planning, budgeting and reporting framework as part of a cycle of continuous improvement and accountability.

The new SIAF, implemented in association with *Destination 2010*, and a revised edition of *IESIP Guidelines for Schools*, will deal with many of school planning, budgeting and accountability issues outlined above. Schools need to focus on their priorities, the outcomes to be achieved and the strategies to use to meet established targets. Through sound financial planning, schools can then determine how best to apportion the various funding sources (core, targeted, other) across the strategies. Within this process it is important to recognise that IESIP funding is supplementary and core funds must be applied in an inclusive manner.

The progress of Indigenous students and employees towards agreed targets can also be effectively monitored and reported using the new framework. Schools can include performance indicators (additional to those in *Destination 2010*) in relation to particular student/employee cohorts (e.g. Indigenous) to track and report on educational, participation, attendance, retention, completion and employment outcomes.

Performance data, action research and information from best practice collections can then be used to plan for improved practice.

Having district data available on school cohort indicators, targets and performance would help executive directors (schools) when working with principals on matters to do with Indigenous education and employment outcomes. This data could also be used to:

- identify, document and disseminate examples of outstanding practice;
- inform decision making on possible district/cluster initiatives that will assist schools to better meet the needs of Indigenous students; and
- facilitate liaison with local DEST officers and other government agencies with respect to developing, implementing and supporting joint initiatives.

Principals need to provide an annual report to the school's ASSPA committee and/or IESIP consultative group detailing how IESIP—SRA funds were spent and the outcomes that were achieved. The report also needs to be made available to the wider school community. The report's information should be provided in ways that are meaningful to the recipients. Schools will need to assess whether the information presented in the annual report is sufficiently inclusive of Indigenous students and whether the performance measurement information will be easily understood by the Indigenous community. Outcomes information needs to highlight improvement in student outcomes rather than reporting in deficit terms.

The IESIP—SRA pro-forma documents required centrally to meet Commonwealth accountabilities need to be redesigned to ensure that they:

- do not duplicate other performance data collections;
- are appropriate within the context of school-based management;
- have the capacity to demonstrate that funds are being spent in accordance with guidelines and identified systemic priorities and outcomes;
- make clearer the capacity to commit funds; and
- provide the opportunity for reporting on the broad range of outcomes that can contribute to the main priority — improved student learning outcomes.

## **4.10 Community involvement**

### **Issues and concerns**

Past experiences of segregation, protection and assimilation along with the more recent issues of native title, land rights and social welfare have created barriers between some schools and their

Indigenous communities, and inhibited community involvement in school decision making and student participation in education programs.

Under the principles of school-based management, schools have a responsibility, within a systemic framework, to deliver quality education services that are responsive to local circumstances. Central to such a responsibility is the need for schools to develop and maintain effective partnerships with their communities. Working in partnership with the community is part of the Schools objective in QSE—2010 and is a requirement of the development of the School Planning Overview/Partnership Agreement under SPAF/SIAF.

The IESIP Guidelines indicate that ‘Aboriginal communities and Torres Strait Islander communities are being encouraged to participate in the decision-making process associated with IESIP’. This is on the basis that community participation in education enhances student participation and performance. The document advocates for community involvement in deciding how funds are to be spent and monitoring outcomes achievement.

In some locations, particularly where Indigenous people are in the majority, effective partnerships with the community are in place and there is a high level of involvement in school planning, budgeting and reporting with respect to IESIP—SRA funds. In other locations, schools have made some progress towards enhancing the quality of the relationship with their communities, and are working towards involving the community in IESIP processes in a meaningful way.

Nevertheless, there is a high level of concern across the state about the level of community involvement with IESIP. There are reports of ASSPA committees having no knowledge of the availability or application of IESIP funds and of situations in which no formal consultation group or process has been established. In other instances the level of involvement can be regarded as little more than tokenism or compliance.

The issue of lack of involvement is particularly apparent in instances where the Indigenous population is small and/or highly mobile. The difficulty of establishing dialogue in these circumstances is recognised both by this review and the IESIP Guidelines, however, lack of community involvement appears not to be restricted to these situations.

The problem is exacerbated by the lack of Education Queensland policy specifically relating to Indigenous education and employment. Policy written in the context of mainstream schools fails to provide sufficient flexibility, accountability and support when applied in an Indigenous context.

## **Solutions**

Long-term and short-term priorities, strategies, targets and performance indicators involving the expenditure of IESIP—SRA funds should be negotiated with the Indigenous community.

Partnerships with Indigenous communities are critical to improving education outcomes and standards. In some locations, Indigenous communities need to be more closely involved in school IESIP planning and accountability processes and documentation.

The Partners for Success strategy provides a framework for improving the educational and employment outcomes of Indigenous peoples in Education Queensland. The strategy ‘provides a set of new policies designed to enable schools and their communities to develop solutions responsive to local circumstances within a statewide monitoring and accountability process’. A central platform of the strategy is the establishment of partnerships between schools and their Indigenous communities.

The implementation of Partners for Success and the new SIAF in all schools with Indigenous student populations should, over time, solve the current problems relating to community involvement.

The requirement for, and benefits of, community involvement need to be made more explicit in the revised IESIP Guidelines.

## 4.11 Indigenous employment and training

### Issues and concerns

Indigenous employees are clearly recognised and valued for the significant roles they play in delivering education services, affirming diversity and contributing to enhanced student learning outcomes and participation rates. The importance of these people as role models is substantial. Across schools, a significant proportion of IESIP—SRA grant funds are used to employ Indigenous people, with some schools using 100% of their funds in this manner.

IESIP funds support the employment of mainly part-time, casual teacher aides, with a few other employment categories represented.

While the use of IESIP funds increases the opportunity for Indigenous employment, a major concern is that these people are not permanently employed. This can cause problems for them as individuals and create difficulties for the schools that employ them.

Their status as casual employees means that:

- they receive no benefits such as sick leave;
- they have no income during school vacations;
- their ongoing employment is subject to the availability of sufficient IESIP funds in their school; and
- there are no guarantees of employment past the end of the current quadrennium.

Some schools appear to hand all responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to their Indigenous staff rather than assuming a collective responsibility. People employed through IESIP as teacher aides often report being requested, or feeling obliged, to take on roles outside their position description. Most commonly they perform duties that are more appropriately the responsibility of guidance officers, community liaison officers or community education counsellors (CECs). This situation is more common in primary schools than in secondary schools. Taking on these additional responsibilities, for which they have no training, can be a cause of considerable stress and there is also a feeling of being ‘used’ as these other roles are generally filled by permanent officers on higher rates of pay.

It is little wonder then that many seek a greater level of job security and/or higher rates of pay by moving to positions offering permanency, mostly outside Education Queensland. There can therefore be fairly high casual teacher-aide turnover rates.

CECs and community liaison officers are not equitably distributed among schools. CECs were originally appointed to secondary schools and in most areas, in keeping with the generic position description, continue to work exclusively in this sector. In those areas where they are incorporating the primary sector as well, they find it difficult, if not impossible, to spread their service in a worthwhile manner across the larger number of schools. Primary schools feel particularly disadvantaged with respect to the provision of CEC services.

While many principals value the contribution of Indigenous personnel employed through IESIP, many report difficulty in identifying suitable personnel. This may be in terms of either personal suitability or having appropriate skills. This leads some schools to employ non-Indigenous personnel to work with Indigenous students, although this is not widespread. Under the IESIP Guidelines, this should only occur as a last resort and must be approved by the school’s ASSPA committee, IESIP consultative group or the district CEC.

Some schools appear to be unaware of the opportunity/obligation for them to provide training for Indigenous employees using IESIP funds. Others indicate difficulties identifying and/or accessing training opportunities that are tailored to the needs of Indigenous personnel.

## **Solutions**

Schools should consult with Indigenous community representatives to identify, recruit and select Indigenous people to employ using IESIP funds.

There is a need to increase the number of permanent Indigenous teacher-aide positions. In addition, the permanent employment of Indigenous casual teacher-aides must be a priority whenever permanent positions become available.

Indigenous support staff, both new and continuing, must receive appropriate training and professional development to ensure that they have the necessary skills to contribute to meeting school priorities.

The services of, for example, staff colleges, IETA and TAFE colleges can be used to identify and access training and professional development opportunities for Indigenous employees in schools.

The role statement for CECs, contained in the generic position description, is equally applicable in both secondary and primary settings, yet the position is currently attached only to selected secondary schools. The position of CEC must be made available to primary and secondary schools. There then needs to be a more equitable redistribution of the CEC resource across the state, preferably in tandem with an increase in the total number of positions.

Schools must adopt a team approach to meeting Indigenous students' support needs. All Indigenous support personnel need to be employed under job titles and position descriptions that match the duties they are expected to perform, and they must be provided with training that fully equips them for their roles in providing learning and personal support.

## **4.12 Cluster and district opportunities**

### **Issues and concerns**

Some districts have well-established and effective networking and cluster/district organisational arrangements that bring schools together, often with the involvement of the district office. These arrangements allow schools to share good practice and discuss issues such as school capability building, school accountability, curriculum initiatives and the development of pedagogy. They also provide opportunities for cooperation and collaboration. In some districts, schools are networking and entering into cooperative arrangements with community, business and government agencies. Highly developed and formalised examples of such arrangements include the Torres Strait Islands Regional Education Council (TSIREC) and the Western Cape College. Other examples of clustering, networking and cooperation include the Indigenous Students Links with Industry Project (ISLIP— a Mackay partnership between DEST, schools, TAFE, the Indigenous community and employers), the Johnstone and Tablelands Focus Groups, and JINDA (a collective of schools and the Indigenous community in Cherbourg and Murgon).

Some schools, however, appear to be only at the conceptual or developmental stage with networking and clustering. There are instances, for example, where individual principals have recognised opportunities to achieve enhanced outcomes through a pooling the IESIP funds of a number of schools but have been unable, through their own efforts, to engage their colleagues in a cooperative venture.

It appears to be particularly difficult for inexperienced principals and/or principals of small schools to see 'the big picture', to identify the opportunities for and benefits of clustering, and to initiate clustering arrangements.

In those situations where networking and clustering arrangements are not strongly in evidence, it is likely that opportunities to maximise the outcomes achieved from IESIP funds are being missed.

In a few instances there is a preference for IESIP funds to be distributed directly to a district office or central body to be managed at a district/cluster level. Such an arrangement could take account of local situations and characteristics that cannot be incorporated into a broader methodology, and maximise opportunities for implementing projects and activities at the cluster/district level.

## **Solutions**

District offices have a charter to support schools to develop their capacity to achieve the objectives of QSE—2010 and the outcomes and targets outlined in *Destination 2010*. To ensure that IESIP—SRA funds achieve maximum impact in supporting the achievement of systemic outcomes and those of the national AEP, district office staff — in particular, executives directors (schools), senior finance officers, principal education officers (performance measurement) and district CECs — need to work with schools to:

- facilitate school strategic planning;
- identify additional performance indicators, targets and data sets, for inclusion in SIAF planning documents, that are critical to the school in respect of its Indigenous cohort;
- achieve an integrated approach to school budgeting that establishes clear links between planned outcomes and funding sources;
- provide skilling in school financial management;
- facilitate the analysis and evaluation of performance data to inform strategies for improving student learning outcomes;
- build school workforce capability;
- ensure schools know and understand their responsibilities and expectations with respect to school improvement and accountability (as required under SIAF and IESIP Guidelines);
- develop productive partnerships in support of collaborative and transparent decision making;
- promote school networking and clustering;
- identify activities/projects that are best undertaken at a cluster/district level;
- monitor alignment between allocated budgets and actual expenditure.

School-based management in Queensland state schools is focused on student learning outcomes and based on principles of equity and flexibility. As far as possible, resources (both core and supplementary) are allocated equitably with schools having the flexibility to apply their resources according to local needs. Within this framework, the review recommends that IESIP—SRA grants continue to be distributed directly to schools. While strongly encouraging districts to work with their schools to identify potential IESIP district and cluster initiatives, any pooling of funds at a district or cluster level should be the result of a consultative process whereby schools agree to surrender some or all of their IESIP funds in support of such initiatives.

### **4.13 Continuity of funding**

#### **Issues and concerns**

Although the current IESIP Guidelines state that ‘funding will continue annually over the triennium 1997–1999’ and ‘Planning for achievement over the triennium should be considered in addition to planning for each year’, schools frequently indicate that they are generally unsure about whether IESIP—SRA funding will continue past the end of the current year.

Whatever the reasons for this perception (and the now dated statement referred to in the previous paragraph may be a major reason), it creates a number of problems in schools. Schools adopt a short (one year) timeframe for planning and budgeting, and those people employed using IESIP funds become anxious about their future employment.

In those instances where there is an understanding that funding will continue at least until the end of the current quadrennium (2004), the concern shifts to the broader issue of what will happen if the Commonwealth decides to discontinue the program. Unless an alternative source of funding could be found, schools would lose a particularly valuable resource — their casual Indigenous support personnel.

## **Solutions**

Schools need to be assured that their annual IESIP funding is guaranteed until at least the end of the current quadrennium in 2004.

Schools need a quadrennium-based, long-term plan for using IESIP funds for inclusion in the School Planning Overview in addition to planning for each year through the Annual Operational Plan.

Education Queensland must carefully monitor the likelihood that the Commonwealth will continue to fund the program past the end of the quadrennium, and must move quickly to establish a contingency plan to protect the Indigenous employee resource should there be any move to terminate the program.

As recommended previously in this review, Education Queensland needs to consider increasing the number of permanent Indigenous teacher-aide positions and moving current casual employees into these positions.

## **4.14 IESIP Guidelines**

### **Issues and concerns**

The current guidelines, published in February 2000, are now out of date.

They were published and distributed to schools in hard copy. Since then, copies have been lost or relocated and, as a consequence, some principals are not aware of the guidelines.

To overcome these problems, the guidelines (along with two other resource booklets in the same series) are now available on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website. However, they are not in a suitable format for downloading, storing and/or printing easily.

### **Solutions**

The IESIP Guidelines document must be revised so that:

- it aligns with the intent and recommendations of this review;
- all references that are now out of date are updated; and
- it includes links and cross-references to other relevant Education Queensland documents, such as *School Improvement Accountability Framework*, *Partners for Success* and *Destination 2010*.

The revised guidelines must be available in schools as soon as possible following endorsement of the recommendations of this review.

To reduce costs and to ensure the ready availability of the guidelines, only limited numbers should be published in hard copy with the full text being made available on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Unit website in PDF format.

# 5 The model for the future

## 5.1 Allocative methodology

### 5.1.1 Current situation

The current funding methodology is undifferentiated. Funds are distributed at a fixed per capita rate of \$300 per annum, based on Indigenous student enrolments identified in the July census of the previous year.

### 5.1.2 New model

The proposed methodology differentiates on the basis of remoteness and setting, and uses current year enrolments as at the end of February and July.

The model uses preschool enrolment counts (FTE \* 2) and full-time equivalents for all other year levels.

The model distributes a minimum 80% of state IESIP funds to schools using a weighted student enrolment for each school.

For a primary school, the weighted enrolment is calculated using the formula

$$WE = ((FTE_p * 2) + (FTE_{1-7} * LEI_p)) * DI$$

where

WE weighted enrolment

FTE<sub>p</sub> full-time equivalent Preschool Indigenous enrolment

FTE<sub>1-7</sub> full-time equivalent Indigenous enrolment Years 1 to 7  
(includes ungraded and ascertained students in integrated settings)

LEI<sub>p</sub> the school's learning enrichment index primary (see Section 4.4)

DI the school's distance index.

For a secondary school, the weighted enrolment is calculated using the learning enrichment index secondary and the formula

$$WE = (FTE_{8-12} * LEI_s) * DI$$

For P-10 and P-12 schools, the weighted enrolment is calculated using a combination of the primary and secondary formulae.

With the exception of Eagleby Learning Centre, all centres for continuing secondary education enrolments are included with the host secondary school/college and are therefore weighted by the learning enrichment index for the host school.

For special education units and classes, enrolments are included with the host school and are therefore weighted by the learning enrichment index for the host school.

## 5.2 Learning enrichment index

A learning enrichment index (LEI) is calculated for each school. For a primary school (Years 1 to 7 students), the index is derived from the results achieved by the school's Indigenous student population over the last three years for the Year 2 Net and the Years 3, 5 and 7 Tests. For a secondary school or secondary department (Years 8 to 12 students), the index is derived from the data for the school's Indigenous student population over the last three years with respect to attendance and apparent retention rates, Years 8 to 10 and 10 to 12.

## **Notional LEIs**

All special schools (for which there is no standardised student performance data) are given a notional LEI that is the maximum value.

All education units (for which there is no standardised student performance, attendance or retention data) are given a notional LEI that is the maximum value.

Eagleby Learning Centre is given a notional LEI that is the median value.

For schools of distance education, the data with respect to secondary attendance and apparent retention is unreliable, and these schools are therefore given an LEI secondary that is the median value.

## **LEIs for schools with small Indigenous enrolments**

For a number of both primary and secondary schools with small and/or fluctuating Indigenous enrolments, the number and/or quality of the data is not sufficient to produce a reliable LEI. In these instances, schools are given a notional LEI of 1 (one).

For primary population, the cut-off points are:

- average Indigenous population 1999–2001 of less than 5 students, unless that population represents 20% or more of the total school population  
OR
- fewer than 11 scores out of a possible 23.

For secondary populations, the cut-off points are

- average Indigenous population 1999–2001 of less than 5 students, unless that population represents 20% or more of the total school population  
OR
- fewer than 4 scores out of a possible 9.

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## **Statistical data provision and advice**

Michael Byrne	Principal Advisor, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch
Wayne Williams	Principal Advisor, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch
Don Catlin	Senior Information Officer, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch
Jeanette Johnstone	Senior Information Officer, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch
Trevor Kowitz	Principal Education Officer, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch
Colby McDonough	Policy Officer, Portfolio Performance Measurement Branch

## **Other data/information provision and advice**

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Brian O'Neill	Indigenous Strategies Branch, Department of Education, Science and Training

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## **Contributors**

Members of focus groups, submission writers and interviewees

Members of the reference group

All those who provided additional information and comment

# Appendixes

## Appendix 1: Review team and reference group members

### Review team

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Ned David	Chairman, Torres Strait Islander Regional Education Council (TSIREC)
Penny Tripcony	Chair, Indigenous Education Consultative Board
Linley Halliday	Gandu Jarjum, Queensland Teachers' Union

## Appendix 2: Relevant documents

- Australian National Audit Office 2002, *Indigenous Education Strategies*, Audit Report No. 43 2001-02, Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra.
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### **Appendix 3: Focus groups and submissions to the review**

Twenty-five focus group meetings were conducted in 11 districts during July and August.

These meetings involved a broad representation of people with an interest in the allocation, distribution and application of IESIP funds including:

- school administrators
- registrars
- community education counsellors
- Indigenous teacher aides and other education workers
- ASSPA committee members
- Indigenous elders and parents
- representatives of TSIREC
- executive directors (schools)
- district community education counsellors
- senior finance officers
- managers education services
- principal education officers (student services and performance measurement)
- officers from DEST.

The focus group meetings were held in:

- Thursday Island
- Cairns
- Weipa
- Innisfail
- Atherton
- Roma
- Murrumba
- Ipswich
- Kingaroy
- Murgon
- Mount Isa
- Townsville
- Mackay
- Rockhampton.

#### **Submissions to the review**

Judy Hill	Deputy Principal, Lowood State High School
Ian McKay	Principal, Cairns School of Distance Education
Jim Reay	Acting Executive Director Schools, Emerald District
Robin St John	Principal, Inglewood State School