

Crossing Cultures — PowerPoint presentation handout

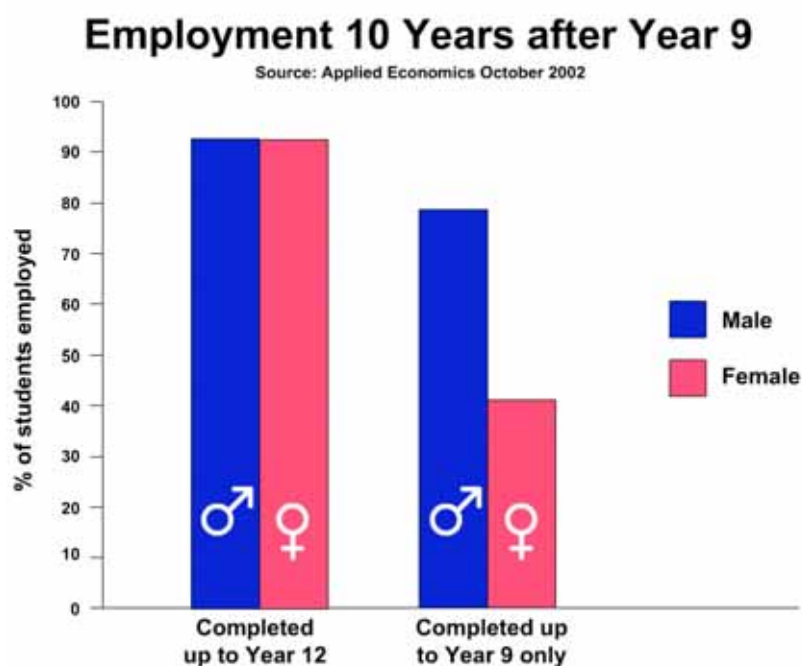
Crossing Cultures — A cultural learning toolkit to support *Partners for Success*

This Is Everyone's Business. Why?

Despite improvements over time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are significantly over-represented among early school leavers.

Retention in 2004		
	Indigenous students	Non-Indigenous students
to Yr 10	86.4%	98.5%
to Yr 11	61.4%	89.5%
to Yr 12	39.5%	77.1%

(ABS Schools Data, Cat. 4221.0)



Analysis of the results from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) indicates that people who obtain a Year 12 qualification are more likely to continue their involvement in further education and training, have better employment prospects and enjoy other social advantages (ACER 2003). Enrolment and attainment data show that Indigenous youth continue to have markedly lower retention and completion rates than non-Indigenous youth and are therefore more likely to have lower employment opportunities.

(Productivity Commission. 2005. Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2005)

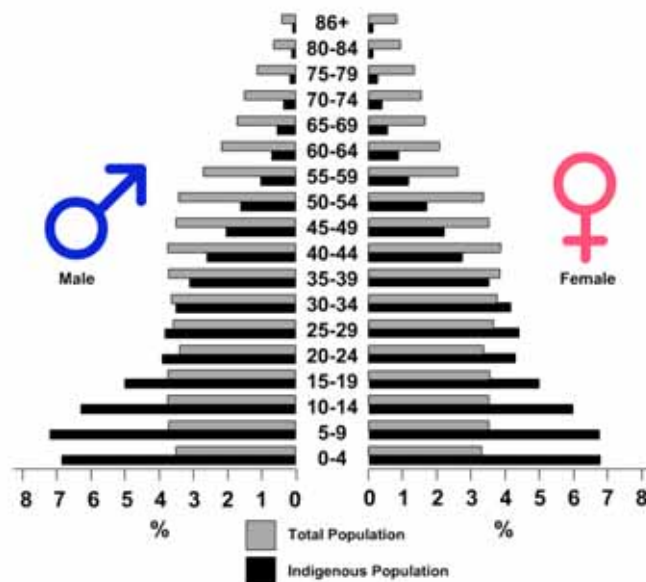
Indigenous people live all over Australia, but a comparatively high proportion (about 30%), including most Torres Strait Islanders, live in Queensland. When the additional year of schooling comes into full effect our schools will have close to the highest number of Indigenous students of any state or territory. Most of these students go to state schools.

Indigenous enrolment in Australian schools, 2004		
	Number	Percentage
NSW	39 004	3.5
QLD	36 304	5.7
WA	20 467	6.1
NT	13 777	36.7
SA	7 495	2.9
VIC	7 266	0.9
TAS	5 036	5.8
ACT	1 098	1.8
AUST	130 447	3.9

(ABS Schools Data, Cat. 4221.0)

There are marked differences in the demographic patterns and age distribution of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Age Distribution



There are two important features of this data to note.

The first is the shockingly low rate of life expectancy among Indigenous people, about 17 years lower than the population as a whole. The recent Productivity Commission report (2005) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Some Key Indicators* notes the strong relationship between life expectancy and levels of education and income.

The second is the much higher birth rate for Indigenous people, meaning that the number and proportion of school age Indigenous young people is growing rapidly.

- Indigenous population aged 0–14: 39.7%
- Non-Indigenous population aged 0–14: 20.3%

(ABS Census data, 2001)

- Indigenous people as a proportion of the total population: 2.8%
- Indigenous students as a proportion of school population: 3.9%

(ABS data, 2004)

Some Basic Facts

There are many misconceptions about Indigenous peoples which are widespread in the Australian community.

As one would expect in an area the size of Europe, Indigenous peoples have extremely **diverse cultural backgrounds and histories**. There were Koori settlements in Victoria, for example, which consisted of stone buildings. The Palawa peoples of Tasmania had many inventive ways of managing the cold climate. The Yolngu peoples of Arnhem Land had been trading with Macassans for centuries before Europeans arrived.

Desert peoples had developed quite different styles of food gathering and management to the coastal groups. People of the Tiwi Islands off the coast of the Northern Territory have a very different understanding of the Dreaming to their mainland neighbours. Northern Rainforest people have moved successfully along tracks between the inland forests, the rainforest and sea for many centuries. The Bunya festival was a regular event in southern Queensland where Aboriginal peoples were known to gather in large numbers having travelled vast distances.

And of course, Torres Strait Islanders have some very basic differences in their cultural heritage.

Torres Strait Islanders were seafarers, traders, gardeners and hunters. They believed that the Land, Sea and Sky were all interrelated. They were continuous observers of their environment, using the constellations to predict the seasons and to survive and prosper in their environment. The most notable of these was Tagai, a huge constellation whose left hand we know as The Southern Cross.

One measure of the diversity amongst Indigenous Australians is to be found in **languages**. Language is a major marker of cultural identity, and, perhaps especially for Australia's Indigenous people, a way of defining their environment, their relationships to it, and the intimacy of that connection. It is estimated that in pre-contact times there were at least 250 distinct languages with more than 600 apparent dialectal variations.

Another aspect of the diversity among Indigenous peoples relates to the length of time different groups have had contact with European settlers. Some Indigenous peoples in northern Australia had contact with Asians and some Europeans prior to the 18th century. Most people however date settlement from the establishment of the colony of New South Wales at Port Jackson in 1788.

Many Indigenous peoples did not experience the impact of European settlement until much later. The first white settlers reached the south-west of Western Australia in 1825. Port Hedland in the north was not established until 1863. In

Cape York, missions and reserves were established much later still; the mission at Aurukun for example was established just over a hundred years ago in 1904.

Media images are often preoccupied, either romantically or sensationally, with the idea that Indigenous peoples today live traditional or semi-traditional **lifestyles** in very remote areas. This notion is basically untrue. The big shift in the last 40 years has been from non-urban to urban settings.

While a higher proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous people do live in remote areas, nearly three-quarters of all Indigenous people live in urban situations. Many live in regional cities and towns; in fact, about 25% of all Indigenous people live in Sydney and Brisbane.

Since 1966, there has been an almost complete reversal in the figures relating to location: in 1966, only 27% of Indigenous people lived in urban locations; in 2005, only 27% of Indigenous people lived in non-urban locations.

Unemployment is far higher among Indigenous than non-Indigenous people, but there are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors, lawyers, teachers, public servants, artists, plumbers, and so on. To assume all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are unemployed is to feed a pattern of stereotyping which constitutes one of the worst problems Indigenous peoples face.

The changes that have occurred do not mean that the **cultural heritage** of Indigenous peoples has been abandoned. All cultures are dynamic; change is a constant feature of cultures around the world and throughout history. In all Indigenous communities, no matter what their location, there are interesting and important new cultural forms and practices continually evolving. It is erroneous to assume that Indigenous cultures were static for thousands of years prior to European settlement; but it is also wrong to assume that connections to history and tradition have been lost. Many Indigenous families and communities retain a powerful sense of country and kin, which has resonances which are markedly different from those ideas among non-Indigenous people.

There are very many ways in which **Indigenous cultures contribute** to mainstream contemporary Australian cultural identity. The opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games drew very heavily on this heritage to define the special qualities of this country.

Access Economics estimates that about one-third of the market in visual arts in Australia consists of Indigenous, mainly Aboriginal, work. Cultural tourism is a very important aspect of visits to many parts of Australia. It is hard to imagine successful AFL or NRL football teams without Indigenous representation. Yothu Yindi is perhaps just the best known of the increasing number of popular Indigenous musical performers. Leah Purcell, Deborah Mailman and Aaron Pederson appear on our television screens and stages. Jackie Huggins, Boni Robertson, Martin Nakata and Noel Pearson are among well-known Indigenous public figures.

Calls For Action

Another misconception that is sometimes encountered is that Indigenous families don't care whether their children succeed at school. All the evidence suggests otherwise. Indigenous families are just as likely as non-Indigenous families to want their children to succeed in this way.

As Bob Collins noted in *Learning Lessons*, his recent review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory:

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

The National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (the 'Adelaide Declaration', 2002) reflect the agreement of all Australian Governments that these are issues which must be attended to in schooling.

The goals state in part:

Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students.*
- *All students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.*

The view taken by the Queensland Government is no different. The landmark document, *Queensland State Education—2010*, refers consistently to the need to recognise and accommodate the diversity of the student population, to be inclusive in approach, and to proactively foster social harmony and the development of all sectors of society and their young members.

Here are some examples of these views:

- There is a growing complexity in the background and circumstance of students coming to state schools... schools must work directly with this diversity and complexity to make sure all students have a successful experience of school. In short, the approach taken by different schools must match the characteristics of their communities, schools must be flexible enough to accommodate the individual learning needs of different students, and the curriculum must be sufficiently forward-looking to anticipate their future life pathways and needs. Schools need to differentiate...
- Skills for engaging with diverse communities, cultures and worldviews are essential to ensuring social harmony.
- Knowing who we are will come through understanding our cultural origins, reconciliation with our past and drawing strength from our cultural diversity.

Strategies For Increasing Success

Partners for Success is the Education Queensland strategy for improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. Workforce development is a key priority of this strategy. This includes providing staff with **cross-cultural training** to enable them to work more effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities.

There are many factors affecting the ways in which schools respond to calls for improvement in this area. Some of the major factors are:

- The scale of their Indigenous enrolment.
- The location and size of the school.
- Community context and socioeconomic profile.
- The health status, language background, age and gender of their Indigenous students.
- The experience, expertise and expectations of the teaching workforce.

School 'Levels'

One of the ways of managing the support strategy for *Partners for Success* has been to recognise the differences in school context generated by the scale of Indigenous enrolment and other related contextual factors (e.g. geographic location, socioeconomic status).

It is quite obvious, for example, that Indigenous student numbers and the density of concentration in school settings varies and so will the local strategies required. South-East Queensland has approximately 27 000 Indigenous students, but these are spread over many schools.

There are some schools in small population centres that have high proportions of Indigenous students (e.g. Central West, Central North, South West, South Burnett). Those schools with the highest densities of Indigenous enrolment are mainly located in the seven most northerly districts (Cairns Coastal, Cape York and Torres Strait, Mt Isa, Tablelands-Johnstone, Townsville, Mackay Hinterland and Rockhampton).

To support schools identifying key strategies for improving the outcomes of Indigenous students across the state, schools have been divided into five 'levels' as follows.

Level	Percentage identifying as Indigenous students	Percent of all Qld schools
1	0	17
2	< 5	32
3	5 – 19	40
4	20 – 60	7
5	> 60	4

Level 1 schools — no students identify as Indigenous

Suggested Strategies

Unpack *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools* document.

Consider *Crossing Cultures* resources

Provide opportunities to enable students to learn more about Indigenous people, perspectives, culture, history and contemporary issues.

One of the best ways to do this is through personal contact.

Responses

Context	Increase student contact with Indigenous people and perspectives.
Cultures	Model acceptance and respect for diversity and difference.
Classrooms	Update teacher knowledge and skills in relation to embedding Indigenous perspectives in their classroom.
Curriculum	Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the key learning areas.
Communities	Develop local area learning experiences that engage students with people in local communities.
Celebrations	Participate in events designed to support reconciliation.

Level 2 and 3 schools — fewer than 20% of students identify as Indigenous

Suggested Strategies:

- Develop a culture of high expectations for teachers and students.
- Ensure that support is provided to Indigenous students to assist them to achieve expectations.
- Unpack *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools* document.
- Induction program for new staff should include a focus on Indigenous student issues (e.g. use a *What Works* workshop).
- Plan and organise a *Crossing Cultures: the Big Picture* training program (at least 0.5 day).
- Use *Crossing Cultures* resources to support teaching and learning initiatives.
- Provide specific professional development in language teaching strategies for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners.
- Encourage co-operative planning of curriculum program, assessment tasks and student performance criteria between staff and community.
- Make use of community expertise and local sites for relevant activities.
- Build effective relations with Indigenous education workers, parents and community members.

Responses

Context	Improve understanding between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students and school community.
Cultures	Acknowledge and respect local cultures and knowledge, and encourage their inclusion in the life of the school.
Classrooms	Make high expectations for Indigenous students the rule. Use Indigenous role models and mentors: Elders, teachers, community representatives and support staff. Increase knowledge and skills to support the embedding of Indigenous perspectives in the school.
Curriculum	Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in the key learning areas. Provide intensive support for Indigenous students to enable successful transitions across the phases of learning.
Communities	Increase knowledge and skills to engage successfully with communities.
Celebrations	Participate in community events (e.g. NAIDOC celebrations) and support an Indigenous presence at school.

Level 4 and 5 schools — more than 20% of students identify as Indigenous

Suggested Strategies:

- Ensure *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools* document informs school practice.
- Develop strong and effective school–community partnerships.
- Foster high expectations of teachers for Indigenous students in the school and the community.
- Plan and organise a staff induction program (at least one day program for remote schools).
- Provide comprehensive orientation programs (throughout the year) with community involvement.
- Use *Crossing Cultures* resources to support teaching and learning *initiatives*.
- Provide specific professional development in language teaching strategies for ESL (English as a Second Language) students.
- Encourage collaborative program planning to agree on common emphases, strategies, tasks and performance criteria.
- Develop an approach to student support which emphasises high outcome expectations and increased independence.
- Build effective relations with community teachers, teacher aides and Indigenous support staff.
- Undertake workshops from *What Works* program.

Responses

Context	Prioritise home–school linkages and effective use of Indigenous support staff.
Cultures	Acknowledge and respect local cultures and knowledge, and ensure their inclusion in the life of the school.
Classrooms	Make high expectations for Indigenous students the rule. Plan with and effectively utilize the skills of Indigenous staff. Increase knowledge and skills to support the embedding of Indigenous perspectives in teaching and learning
Curriculum	Ensure language and cultural issues are catered for in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across the curriculum. Provide intensive support for students to enable successful transitions across the phases of learning.
Communities	Value and use the cultural knowledge of Elders to enhance Indigenous group identity. Build and maintain positive community relationships, by respecting community values and observing cultural protocols.
Celebrations	Participate actively in community events.

Support For Your Work

Crossing Cultures toolkit

The *Crossing Cultures* toolkit will be available later in 2006 and will include the following:

- A set of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workshop posters providing visual cues for interactive discussion and analysis.
- *Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools*. Education Queensland. 2006.
- *Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework*.
- *What Works* material.
- Online courses:
www.education.qld.gov.au/learningplace/onlinelearning/courses

Additional resources will be developed and available on the *Partners for Success* website: www.education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atsi/success

Workshops to support the use of the toolkit will be available from 2006 onwards. These workshops will provide a wide range of interactive activities. Trained facilitators will be available in regions across the state.

Contact to secure this support can be made through:

- Your local regional/district office.
- Learning Engagement Centres (Townsville, Rockhampton, Nambour, Inala – Brisbane).
- Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit (07 4044 5600).

Additional Resources

Websites

www.education.qld.gov.au/tal/atsi
www.eddept.wa.edu.au/abled/cross.htm
www.dest.gov.au
www.oipc.gov.au
www.whatworks.edu.au
www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_teachers/index.html
www.education.qld.gov.au/tal/atsi/bandscales
www.racismnoway.com.au
www.education.qld.gov.au/students/jnt-venture/atsi/success
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Publications

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