

# Remote Education Systems

Catherine Maughan

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For additional information please contact

Ninti One Limited  
Communications Manager  
PO Box 154, Kent Town  
SA 5071  
Australia

Telephone +61 8 8959 6000 Fax +61 8 8959 6048

[www.nintione.com.au](http://www.nintione.com.au)

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Catherine Maughan



An Australian Government Initiative



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## Executive summary

This purpose of this paper is to initiate discussion about remote education as a system. The school is an integral part of any education system, as are the political, economic, cultural and socioeconomic factors that generally occur outside of the school boundary.

In particular, this paper discusses initiatives and programs that have shown positive outcomes in Indigenous education. Some initiatives are occurring internationally, some are national and others are localised to a single school.

The Norwegian, New Zealand and Canadian Governments have recognised the role schools played in the implementation of their past assimilation policies. They also recognise the significant role schools have to play in re-dressing the disadvantage created as a legacy of these policies. The political basis for school reform has come about on the basis of a constitution (Norway), treaty (New Zealand) and legislation (Canada).

Politically, different countries have very different views about the value of bilingual or plurilingual education programs and the language competence for Indigenous students. International experience suggests that multi-lingual Indigenous students frequently perform better than mono-lingual Indigenous students, making bilingual education a superior alternative for Indigenous students. Today, there are schools in Norway, New Zealand and Wales where the curriculum is taught, in varying degrees, in the language of its Indigenous peoples.

In New Zealand, the United States, Norway and Australia, students in schools that are specifically focusing on Indigenous education are achieving academic success. However, in all countries (with the probable exception of Norway) the vast majority of Indigenous students are attending mainstream schools that are not oriented toward promoting Indigenous culture, history and involvement. Very rarely do the published data distinguish between schools that are focusing on Indigenous education and those that do not. The result is that the aggregated data do not highlight where the successes are.

Economic modelling in Canada and Australia indicates that the cost of Indigenous people not succeeding academically is more than the extra costs involved in ensuring an education that results in Indigenous people achieving similar educational outcomes as non-Indigenous people. Using Social Rates of Returns there is a very strong financial case for justifying the upfront investments in education.

The Australian and international literature suggests that models of shared governance between the school (principal, teachers, students), the community (parents, Elders, wider community) and others (education department personnel and researchers) result in improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

Educational leadership was central to the success of school innovations with both principal-leaders and teacher-leaders being important in successful school reform. Programs operating in Australia that specifically address leadership capacity to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students include the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program and the Dare to Lead School Leadership framework.

School systems that are providing positive educational outcomes for Indigenous students often have very strong and positive links with families and communities. One of the key messages from an international seminar on

Indigenous education was that local solutions and local commitment were part of effective solutions. Communities that had some ‘ownership’ of their schools had a feeling of responsibility for their success or failure.

Many of the schools in Australia, New Zealand and the US that had high participation, retention and academic achievements of Indigenous students had embedded cultural identity throughout the school and the curriculum. Often this was as a whole-school philosophy that embraced Indigenous values and ways of working.

Effective schools display high quality teaching strategies delivered by effective teachers. Factors that contribute to the improvement of student learning outcomes include:

- Shared pedagogy throughout the school
- Curriculum and instruction based on locally defined needs
- High expectation of staff, students, parents
- Essential knowledge
- Innovative teaching strategies and practices
- Administration and other organisational processes that operate in a manner supportive of quality education
- Appropriate matching of skills and people to meet needs and challenges in a remote and small school setting
- Using evidence, such as monitoring and feedback.

The premise of Indigenous programs is that when provided with resources, Indigenous students achieve at levels comparable to students who already have access to these resources. Resources may be financial (e.g. scholarships), physical (e.g. sporting academies, laptops) and human (e.g. tutors, mentors and role models). There is a lack of rigour around the collection, reporting and evaluation of the value of these programs and initiatives. There is a need for high quality independent monitoring and evaluation models based on continuous improvement where schools and communities are rewarded for significant achievements in educational indicators such as attendance and retention as well as literacy and numeracy outcomes.

There has not been a systemic approach to remote education. This has resulted in case studies and lists of ‘what works’ with ‘the answers’ often considered in isolation from each other. While there is much that schools can and are doing to provide an effective education in remote Australia, schools do not have control over the political and financial factors that play a large part in the education system as a whole.

As a public-good research centre with a wide partnership embracing governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, non-government organisations, universities and private businesses, the CRC-REP has the capability and mandate to make a significant and independent contribution to researching and understanding how the parts of the remote education system work.

## Introduction

This purpose of this paper is to initiate discussion about remote education as a system. The school is an integral part of any education system, as are the political, economic, cultural and socioeconomic factors that occur outside of the school boundary. While acknowledging that not all the challenges facing remote education are specific to the provision of quality education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, much of the discussion in this paper refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education for three reasons.

Firstly, the challenges of remote education are ‘often compounded when considering the aspirations and needs of Indigenous communities, especially where there is a very significant adherence to traditional culture and lifestyles’ (MCEETYA n.d.).

Secondly, there is very little research that looks specifically at remote education *systems*, while there is a plethora of written material about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

And finally, while some factors may at first glance be specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, many are actually relevant to all students. For example, the discussion about the importance of pride in one’s cultural heritage is applicable to all students, not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

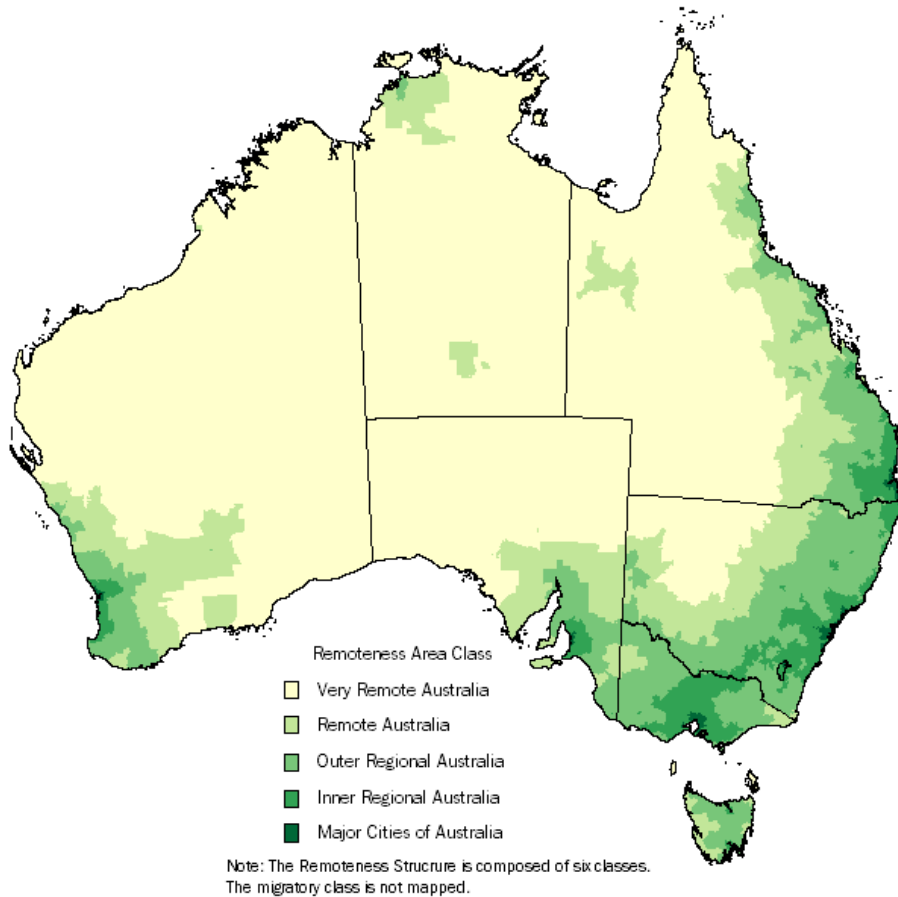
The author has specifically looked for and discussed initiatives and programs that have shown positive outcomes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The reason for this approach lies in the research on motivational psychology. Martin (2006) believes that approaches which excessively focus on what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students lack rather than on their strengths has led to an unbalanced deficit approach. Martin (2006) states this approach is dangerous because it can lead to reduced teacher expectation, a compromised curriculum, and restricted academic demands.

Against this deficit model are ‘positive psychology’ approaches that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students’ strengths. Martin (2006:38) states that in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, positive psychology recognises that ‘there are gaps in their lives and the system more generally but that there are also dimensions on which Indigenous students do not under-perform and in many cases succeed.’ According to Martin (2006), the key principles for underpinning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education should be:

- Building on strengths
- Encouraging pride in a person’s cultural heritage
- Proactive (rather than reactive) approaches to education
- Fostering of key catalysts (such as healthy family and school environments, adaptive intrapersonal factors, positive motivation and engagement, and constructive interests and attitudes).

Taking a positive psychology or strengths-based view, the paper highlights some positive initiatives – some of which are occurring internationally, some nationally, and others which are localised to a single school. What is common to all the initiatives and programs discussed in this report is that they work to ‘change the tide of low expectations in Indigenous education’ (Stronger Smarter Institute 2010).

The research indicates that there are differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in urban, regional and remote areas. While some of the discussion in this paper has included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in regional and urban environments, the main focus of the discussion has been on remote and very remote areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



Source: ABS 2010

Finally, this paper looks at Indigenous education in an international context. While the United Nations reported that globally the majority of Indigenous children do not have access to education that is ‘specifically designed for their needs, taught in their languages or that reflects their world view’ (2009:138) some countries are doing exactly this, namely Norway and New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent, Canada in some parts.



## Exogenous factors

The education system is complex and is made up of many factors that are exogenous (or external) to the school. Some of the main drivers include physical, political, economic, socioeconomic and cultural factors, as depicted in Figure 1.

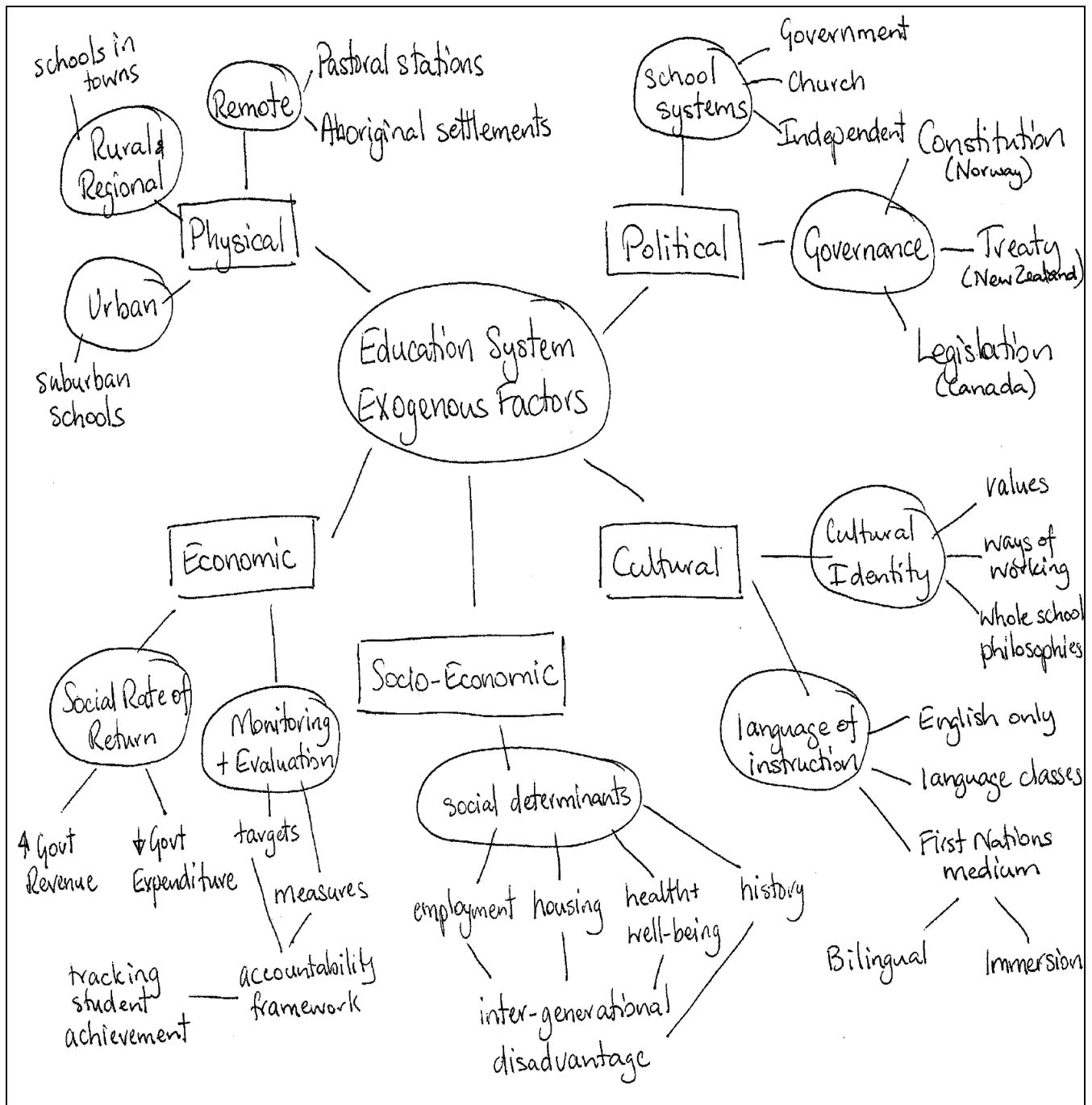


Figure 1: Education systems exogenous factors

## Political factors

Many countries, including Australia, had assimilation policies towards Indigenous peoples from the late 1800s to the late 1900s. For example, the Norwegian government had a policy of assimilation towards their Indigenous peoples, the Sami, from 1860 to 1970 (Todal 2003). According to Armitage (1995), the New Zealand assimilation period went from 1847 to 1960, Canada from 1867 to 1950 and Australia from the late 1800s to 1972.

Schools played a significant part in the enforcement of assimilation policies. For example, Australian and Canadian Governments had laws that separated Indigenous children from their parents, and then institutionalised them in residential schools and settlements and forced them to learn English language and culture. Although Māori children were not separated from their parents, schools were still used as the ‘chosen vehicle’ for assimilating the next generation of Māori. From 1871, instruction in New Zealand schools was only allowed in English, and children sometimes faced corporal punishment if they spoke Māori language within the school grounds (Armitage 1995).

The Norwegian, New Zealand and Canadian Governments have recognised the role schools played in the implementation of their assimilation policies. They also recognise the significant role schools have to play in redressing the disadvantage created as a legacy of these policies. The political basis for school reform in these countries has come about on the basis of a constitution (Norway), treaty (New Zealand) and legislation (Canada).

In Norway, the basis for reform has been the Norwegian Constitution, which states that ‘the government must create conditions so that the Sami people themselves can protect and maintain their own culture, their own language and their way of life’ (Valle 2008). This led to the adoption of the Sami Act in 1987 (Keskitalo 2010) and the Sami Parliament in 1989 (Todal 2003). In 1997 a comprehensive school reform was carried out that resulted in two national curricula, one for the Sami areas and one for the main area of Norway. This reform meant that Sami students had the opportunity to follow their own syllabus in all subjects. In 2000, jurisdiction for the Sami school system was partially transferred from the Norwegian government to the Sami parliament (Todal, 2003).

In New Zealand, the basis for education reform has been the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty of Waitangi is an agreement entered into by representatives of the Crown and of Māori iwi and hapu. It was a broad statement of principles upon which the British officials and Māori chiefs made a political compact or covenant to found a nation state and build a government in New Zealand (NZ Government 2010). New Zealand’s National Education Guidelines require schools to operate consistently with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. A change to the National Administration Guidelines places explicit requirements on schools to plan for improving the achievement of Māori students, to carry out a process of self-review, and to report to the community on this self-review and on Māori students’ achievements (NZ Ministry of Education 2010a).

In New Zealand, a ‘Māori potential approach’ is focusing on maximising opportunities, not just solving problems. The approach includes investing in success and building on what works to spread that success more

widely. The NZ Ministry of Education (2010b) states that this does not mean ignoring problems; it means taking every opportunity to build on success. The three key underlying principles of the Māori potential approach are:

- Māori Potential: all Māori learners have unlimited potential
- Cultural Advantage: all Māori have cultural advantage by virtue of who they are – being Māori is an asset, not a problem
- Inherent Capability: all Māori are inherently capable of achieving success.

Indigenous education in New Zealand and Norway is underpinned by a Government legislative framework that says that the Indigenous people (i.e. Māori and Sami) have a fundamental right to an education that is inclusive of their identity, language and cultures.

In Canada, the Federal Government passed the *First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act* in December 2006. This Act allows First Nations people in British Columbia (BC) to set up their own school boards to operate their schools, develop curriculum and exam standards, and certify First Nations teachers (Lopez, 2007 cited in McRae, 2007).

### First Nations Curriculum and Language

The choice of curriculum and language of instruction is a political decision, so while it is implemented at the school level and is an integral part of quality education and pedagogy, ultimately it is decided by political forces. Politically, countries have very different views about the value of bilingual or plurilingual education programs and the language competence for Indigenous students.

In Australia, instruction in English is seen as the way to improve students' educational outcomes. For example, the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training policy on language states that 'Teaching and learning programs in Northern Territory (NT) schools are to be conducted in English for the first four hours of each school day, in order to improve literacy and numeracy results, particularly for Indigenous students. The teaching and learning of Indigenous languages and culture may be scheduled during afternoon sessions' (NT DET 2008).

Reviews of international bilingual education programs found, however, considerable evidence that bilingual programs can be successful, including in minority communities (Dutcher & Tucker 1994, Kosonen et al. 2007, Walter et al. 2009, all cited in Simpson et al. 2009). The United Nations (2009:143) reports that multi-lingual Indigenous students frequently perform better than mono-lingual Indigenous students making bilingual education a 'superior alternative for [I]ndigenous students'. Today, there are schools in Norway, New Zealand and Wales where the curriculum is taught, in varying degrees, in the language of its Indigenous peoples.

In the Sami administrative district in Norway, the Sami curriculum is used in all public schools. These schools, known as the Sami schools, may be Sami-medium, bilingual, or Norwegian-medium, with the students and teachers representing both the Sami and the majority population (Keskitalo, 2010).

In Wales, demand for Welsh-medium education has flourished since its ‘modern’ inception, with the opening of *Ysgol Gymraeg Aberystwyth* in 1939. Figures published in 2007 showed more than a third (36.5%) of primary school children speak Welsh, compared to 24.6% in 1987 (Evans 2010). As bilingual education in Wales increases in popularity, an increasing number of non-Welsh-speaking parents are sending their children to Welsh-medium schools, and learning the mother tongue is increasingly seen as the best way to a bright future. The Assembly Government launched the nation’s first Welsh-medium Education Strategy in April 2010, which is indicative of its ongoing desire to safeguard the language (Evans 2010).

Māori language in education is a defining feature of New Zealand’s education system (NZ Ministry of Education 2010b). New Zealand has two distinct types of Māori language in education:

1. **Māori-language classes**, where students learn the Māori language in English-medium schools and universities. This accounts for approximately 82% of Māori students (Ringold 2005)
2. **Māori-medium education**, which involves students being taught either all or some curriculum subjects in the Māori language. This can be in immersion (Māori language only: 4% of Māori students) or bilingual (Māori and English: 14% of Māori students) programs (Ringold 2005).

The NZ Ministry of Education (2010b) reports that the data has consistently shown that Māori students attending Māori-medium schools achieve higher academically than their peers attending English-medium schools and at rates comparable with non-Māori students as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of Year 11 students in New Zealand who met both literacy and numeracy requirements

Year	Students in Māori-medium schools	Māori students at other schools	Non-Māori students at other schools
2006	81%	65%	81%
2007	83%	65%	82%
2008	84%	65%	82%

Source: NZ Ministry of Education 2010b

Because the vast majority of Māori students study in English-medium schools, the overall educational achievement figures for Māori students are below that of non-Māori students. This highlights the importance of looking at subsets of data when identifying the success factors for Indigenous education.

The academic success of the Māori-medium schools has influenced the way mainstream schools approach Māori education. It has demonstrated that ‘bilingual education can be effective for Māori students, and that Māori values and priorities can be incorporated into school management and teaching practices’ (Ringold 2005:57).

In addition, McPake et al. (2007) cite international research of the benefits that plurilingualism (competence in more than one language) brings to the individual, including positive effects on both linguistic and educational development. Intelligence studies (Bialystok 1991 and Baker 1993, cited in McPake et al. 2007) indicated that plurilingual children perform better than their monolingual peers in a range of areas, such as classification skills,

concept formation, analogical reasoning, visual–spatial skills and creativity, and that they exhibit other cognitive gains.

## Financial factors

Economic modelling in Canada and Australia indicates that the cost of Indigenous people not succeeding academically is more than the extra costs involved in ensuring an education that results in Indigenous people achieving similar educational outcomes as non-Indigenous people.

An economic analysis of investing in Aboriginal education in Canada to increase the educational attainment level of Aboriginal Canadians revealed that the Aboriginal population will benefit, as will Canadian governments and businesses. As illustrated in Figure 2, increased output will drive up productivity, decreased government cost and increased government revenue will provide Canadian governments with the fiscal flexibility needed to cut taxes, increase services or reduce debt (Sharpe & Arsenault 2009).

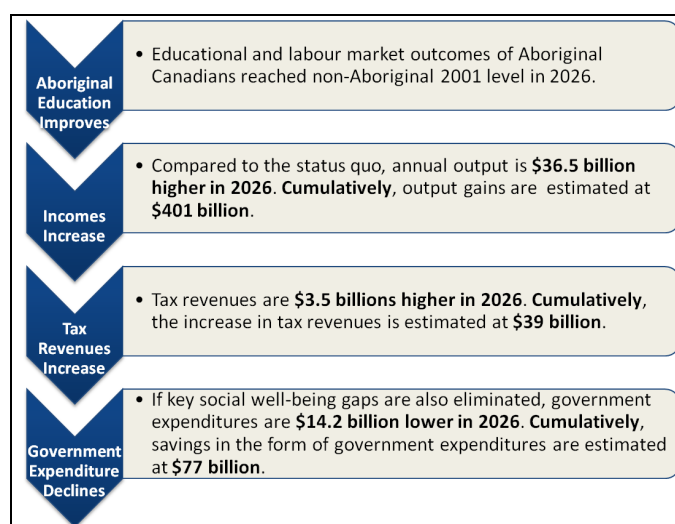


Figure 2: The effects of improving Aboriginal educational and labour market outcomes and Aboriginal social wellbeing in Canada

Source: Sharpe & Arsenault 2009

In 2003, Junankar & Liu attempted to compare estimates of the social rate of return to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with those for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. The social rate of return measures the net benefits to society of educating its citizens. The social rate of return for education was found to be generally higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians than for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In addition, in all cases the social rates of return were very high and clearly exceed the Department of Finance's recommended cut-off rate of 8% per annum (in real terms) for public projects. The authors recommended that, from a public policy perspective, the government should

allocate increased funding for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Junankar & Lui 2003).

Also in Australia, Access Economics (2008) found that raising the life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and increasing the proportion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the workforce in higher skilled and better paid jobs would result in increased Government revenue (through income taxation) and decreased Government expenditure (on public health, housing and the criminal justice system). From 2029, this would mean an additional \$8.3 billion available to governments annually. However, the economic benefits will only be realised when ‘the health and educational attainment of Indigenous Australians improves’ (Access Economics 2008). There is a case for justifying the upfront investments in education and health infrastructure but Access Economics (2008) believe it is vital that outcomes (such as child health and educational achievement) are monitored and evaluated in tracking whether the benefits are being achieved.

Tracking student achievement can also have more immediate benefits. For example, in the past decade the British Columbia education system has assigned each student a Personal Education Number (PEN) and their achievement is tracked every year they are in the K–12 system. For each student, up to 300 data elements are collected annually. The Ministry provides the data to schools that then identify areas for improvement, set targets for improvement and measure the success of their strategies. The data is also the foundation of the Ministry’s Accountability Framework, which is helping to shift the focus of education to results. And it appears to be working: Dosdall (2007 cited in McRae 2007) reports that completion rates of Aboriginal students have risen recently from 32% to 48%, and those students who do not complete school are staying longer than previously.

## The school system

The school sits at the centre of the education system. A review of the literature on remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education suggests that the main drivers that the school has control over include school governance, leadership, quality education, cultural expression and specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs as depicted in Figure 3.

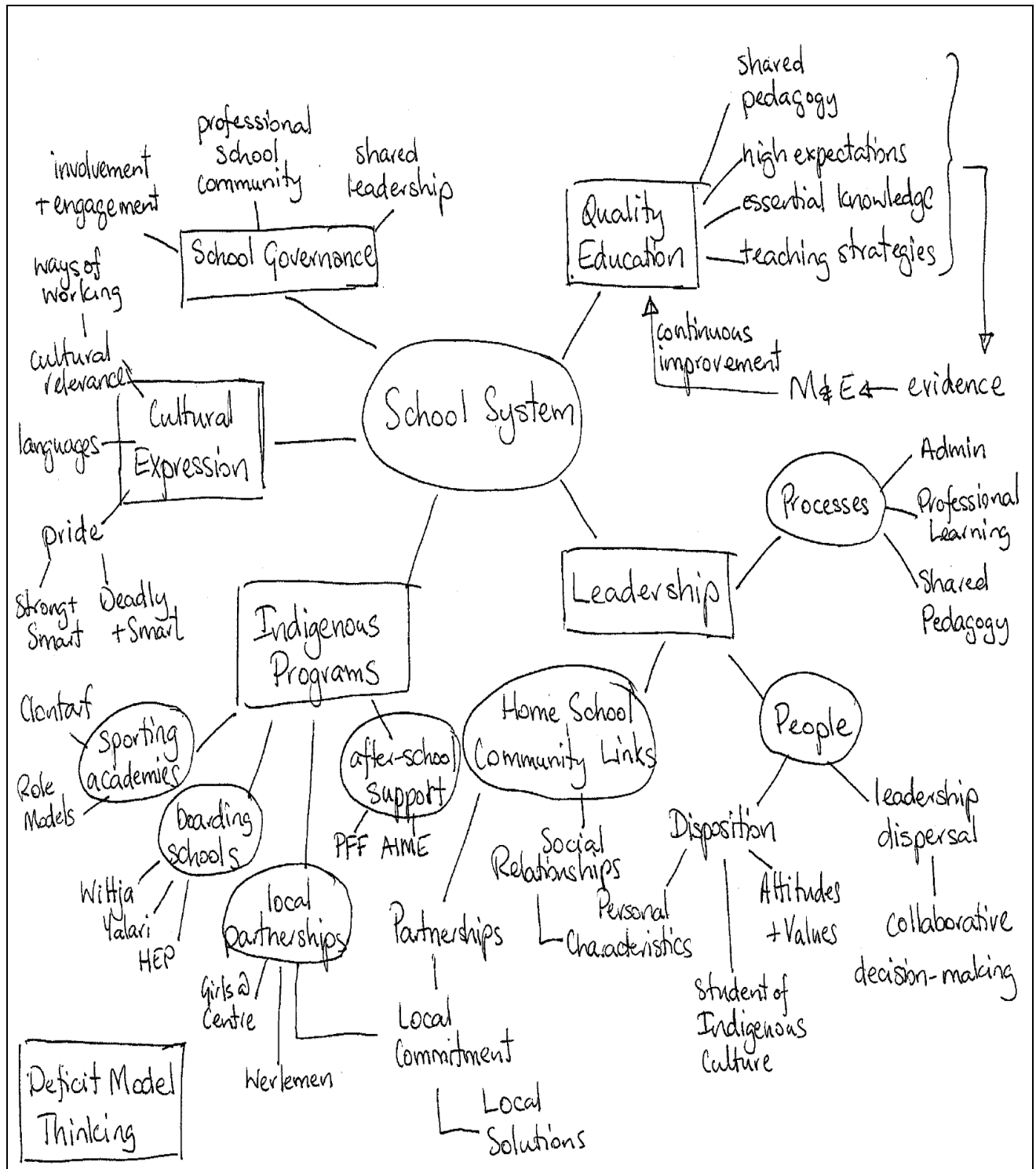


Figure 3: School system internal factors

## Professional school community and governance

The Australian and international literature suggests that models of shared governance between the school (principal, teachers, students), the community (parents, Elders, wider community) and others (education department personnel and researchers) result in improved outcomes for Indigenous students.

The involvement and engagement of Indigenous people (students, parents, care givers and other members of the communities) in the school was a key message from an international seminar on Indigenous education (including Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, USA and Australia) (McRae 2007).

In New Zealand, McNaughton & Lai (2008) developed a model of school change for culturally and linguistically diverse students. This model locates teachers and teaching in a professional school community, which includes teachers, leaders, other school professionals, and also researchers and local district managers.

In Australia, Gorringe and Spillman (2008) investigated sustainable school transformation for improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student learning outcomes. They extended the professional school community model to one of shared leadership between schools and communities – involving principals, teachers, parents, community members and students.

In the US, effective First Nations schools were found to have participatory management or shared governance by parents, students, staff, administration and tribe (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996).

In Australia there are a limited number of independent schools and colleges that are owned and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In the Northern Territory there are a number of independent schools, with the majority in the major urban centres of Darwin and Alice Springs. Independent schools (not including Christian schools) in remote areas of the NT include Nyangatjatjara College and Tiwi College (AISNT 2010).

Nyangatjatjara College is an Aboriginal-owned and operated secondary college in Yulara, NT. The College is an Aboriginal Corporation, governed by a board of directors. The directors are elected from each community that the College services: Imanpa, Mutitjulu, Docker River (Jorgensen 2010).

Tiwi College is owned and operated by the Tiwi people through the Tiwi Education Board, representing all Tiwi families and communities. The College is located at Pickertaramoor on Melville Island, where students are accommodated in family group homes. The College features '24-hr education', combining classroom learning with sport, life skills, outdoor education and contributions to the life of the College (AISNT 2010).

In Western Australia there are 13 Aboriginal independent community schools situated in the remote regions of the Kimberley, Pilbara, Murchison and Goldfields and one school in suburban Perth (Figure 4). The schools are autonomous and do not operate as a system. Despite different histories and social settings, the common thread that connects these schools is that each has an Aboriginal governing body responsible for staffing, curriculum, school buildings, staff houses and financial accountability. The make-up of the governing boards does differ between schools. Some boards consist of elected community members and the principal. The Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed Schools (CAPS) boards are made up of past and present Aboriginal parents.



Notwithstanding their obligations to comply with the State Education Act, curriculum framework and national education policy principles, these schools are independent of government and belong to the communities they service (AICS 2009).



Figure 4: Aboriginal Independent Community Schools in WA

A cornerstone of the effectiveness of the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools has been the Support Unit, which is accountable to the independent communities while providing a framework of support that achieves two fundamental objectives. Firstly, the Support Unit allows the community schools to maintain their autonomy within a network of funding and resource support. Secondly, it provides Government with security that the schools are viable, sustainable and accountable (AICS 2009).

## Links between home, school and the community

Following on from shared governance is the relationship between the school, the family and the community. School systems that are providing positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students often have very strong and positive links with families and communities.

The influence of links between the home and school have been understood for many decades. For example, Groome & Hamilton reported in 1995 that successful schools were characterised by strong links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and by recognition that poverty and alternative lifestyles can impact on students' academic lives (Groome & Hamilton 1995, cited in Martin 2006).

In the US, effective First Nations schools were found to have home/school/community **relations** that had open and active communication and involvement (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996).

In Australia, a review for the [\*Innovative Strategies for Small and Remote School Project\*](#) found that a recurring feature of successful programs was that they had grown out of partnerships between communities and schools. Successful partnerships were initiated by either a member of the school community or of the local community. For the program to be developed and implemented successfully, there needed to be active interest, as well as communication with and support from both the school and local community (Wildy & Clarke 2010).

Nyangatjatjara College at Yulara, NT found through research that Productive Leadership as a model required supportive social relationships within the school, between staff and students (Jorgensen 2010).

One of the key messages from an international seminar on Indigenous education (including Canada, Chile, Mexico, New Zealand, USA and Australia) was that local solutions and local commitment were part of effective solutions. Communities that had some ‘ownership’ of their schools had a feeling of responsibility for their success or failure (McRae 2007).

## Cultural factors

Education opportunities should affirm the history, culture and identities of [I]ndigenous peoples and provide opportunities for employment and work within both mainstream market economies and the mode of economy preferred by [I]ndigenous communities (UN 2009:149).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures are taught in schools across Australia as part of the curriculum of each state and territory. However, there is much variation between states, territories and schools in terms of how strongly cultural identity is embedded throughout the school and the curriculum. Some schools limit their expression of cultural identity to NAIDOC week, while other schools have developed whole-school philosophies and approaches to cultural identity.

An example of a whole-school philosophy is the ‘Strong and Smart’ approach developed by Chris Sarra while he was principal at Cherbourg School in Queensland. ‘Strong and Smart’ refers to being ‘strong in our hearts, proud of our identity, solid in our community and smart in the way we do things, focused on high achievement, determined to succeed’ (Stronger Smarter Institute 2010). At Cherbourg the ‘Strong and Smart’ approach was embraced by everyone involved in the school – the students, staff, parents and the wider community. As a philosophy it governed the way the school and the community worked together to demand a quality education that ensured each student reached his or her potential but not at the expense of their cultural heritage. Sarra is also a very strong leader and Aboriginal role model who encourages the staff and the community to take a ‘whatever-it-takes’ attitude to overcome the many challenges and disappointments they faced. The ‘Strong & Smart’ approach at Cherbourg resulted in the following educational achievements:

- 94% reduction of unexplained absenteeism within 18 months

- Real attendance improved from 63% to 94%
- 58% improvement in Year 2 literacy within 2 years
- 81% of students within the state average band for literacy in 2004, compared to 0% in 1999 (Sarra 2004, cited in Sarra 2010).

Other schools have developed whole-school philosophies that embrace student identity, including East Kalgoorlie's 'Deadly and Smart' philosophy. 'Being deadly means that you're proud to be Aboriginal and that you can achieve whatever you want to achieve. The smart part is about doing things smart ... being as smart as every other kid in every other school. Achieving your potential and making the most of the opportunities you've got.' Principal of East Kalgoorlie, Donna Bridge, says that Aboriginal students now feel valued and proud of who they are and that pride is reflected in attendance figures: 'Attendance for some students has risen from less than 50% to 70% and that is a huge shift' (Stronger Smarter Institute 2010).

Nyangatjatjara College is another example of a school with a whole-school philosophy towards education. The College has integrated Anangu ways of working into the way it structures its term and class structure. For example, the College has opted for short-term boarding to reduce the length of time students are away from their home community. They also have separate classes for males and females and are currently trying to organise it so that there are separate classes from each community (Jorgensen 2010).

In Western Australia, the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools (AICS) believe their successes lie in their capacity to deliver mainstream education in an environment where learning is nurtured by cultural identity, traditional language in many instances, and a sense of belonging to place. Thirteen of the 14 AICS implemented the Accelerated Literacy (AL) project in 2001, which has resulted in significant improvements in literacy. One measure, the percentage of students assessed as being readers (those who achieve a reading accuracy rate of 90% or greater of a pre-primary level text) had risen significantly across all year levels as shown below (AICS 2009).

Table 2: Percentage of AICS students assessed as being readers

Year	2001	2009
Years 1–3	0%	76%
Years 4–7	4%	93%
Years 8–12	56%	97%

Vastly improved literacy results for students in these schools over the past decade are an obvious measure of their achievements. Harder to measure but clearly evident are the improved community wellbeing and social functioning that are also important products of these schools (AICS 2009).

In New Zealand, the 'Māori potential approach' recognises that all Māori have cultural advantage by virtue of who they are. The academic success of the Māori-medium schools has influenced the way mainstream schools approach Māori education. It has demonstrated that 'bilingual education can be effective for Māori students, and that Māori values and priorities can be incorporated into school management and teaching practices' (Ringold 2005:57).

In the US, effective First Nations schools were found to have cultural relevance, with tribal culture integrated into all areas of school (St Germaine 1995 cited in Schwab 1996).

Sarra (2010) concluded that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage will only truly end when ‘our cultural identities (remain) intact, respected, understood and appreciated.’

## Leadership and direction

Almost all of the literature about effective schooling discusses the importance of leadership. Leadership involves both people and processes.

A large-scale research and development project found that Australian schools with enhanced outcomes were characterised by organisation-wide processes such as professional learning, culture-building and the generation of a shared pedagogy. In addition, school leadership provided a shared understanding and set of beliefs about best practice for their student population (Cuttance 2001). In the US, St Germaine (1995, cited in Schwab 1996) reported similar findings: First Nations schools with clear school missions and strong instructional leadership were the most effective schools.

In remote NT, Nyangatjatjara College has a commitment to leadership dispersal, which supports the spread of leadership practices and collaborative decision-making processes in building common vision and purposes (Jorgensen 2010). In addition, the leadership dispersal model encompasses a culture of care that encourages teacher professional risk taking (Jorgensen 2010).

Leadership at all levels is important, including from teacher-leaders. Jorgensen (2010), who is an experienced educational researcher and school principal, agrees that education in remote areas must have the ‘best’ teachers and leaders but she doesn’t necessarily agree that ‘best = most experienced’. Jorgensen’s experience tells her that early career teachers may be more suitable for remote teaching, and better able to sustain the challenges of living remotely.

The retention of teachers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been identified as a major issue throughout remote Australia. In WA, the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools have had success in retaining quality teachers with the assistance of the AICS Support Unit by developing a network of social and professional support, high-quality conditions and good community/school relationships, and promoting a culture of professional excellence. On average, teachers remain employed in the AICS in the Kimberley for 20 months, compared to seven months for teachers in remote Northern Territory Aboriginal communities (AICS 2009).

Much has been written about the disposition of good educators. These characteristics have been categorised as:

- **Personal characteristics:** warm, friendly, has high standards, imaginative, stimulating (Martin 2006) and develops positive relationships with students (Groome & Hamilton 1995, cited in Martin 2006)
- **Attitudes and values:** confidence in students, positive attitude towards Aboriginality, respect for Indigenous cultures (Martin 2006), open-minded, anti-racist (no deficit thinking, pathologising, pre-formed solutions), firm in views about what is important (for education; for Anangu) (Jorgensen 2010)

and shows respect for and values the individuality of students (Groome & Hamilton 1995, cited in Martin 2006).

- **Being a student of Indigenous culture:** becoming accepted by the community, an innovator of teaching techniques, an agent of social change (Martin 2006), taking a ‘cultural’ view of the world, willing to learn and engage new approaches and cultures (Jorgensen 2010).

## Quality education and pedagogy

While it would be challenging to definitively define what is meant by quality education, a good starting point is ‘a focus on pedagogy in which leadership in a school is focused on improving students’ learning outcomes and learning with the school as a whole’ (Jorgensen 2010). Some factors that have been found to contribute to the improvement of student learning outcomes are:

- **Shared pedagogy** throughout the school (Cuttance 2001)
- Curriculum and instruction based on **locally defined needs** (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996)
- **High expectation** of staff, students, parents and a belief that students can be successful learners and develop to their full potential (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996; Cuttance 2001; McRae 2007; Sarra 2010)
- **Essential knowledge:** knowledge of content, students and effective means of facilitating content acquisition (Martin 2006); ‘hands-on knowledge’ about how educational theory translates into strategic action and is aligned with community concerns and relationships outside of the school (Jorgensen 2010)
- **Innovative teaching strategies and practices**, including but not limited to individualised approaches, techniques for handling intergroup relations, incorporating traditional methods of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (Groome & Hamilton 1995, cited in Martin 2006; Martin 2006), opportunity to learn through intensive engagement (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996)
- **Administration** and other organisational processes operate in a manner supportive of quality education (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996; Jorgensen 2010)
- Appropriate **matching of skills and people** to meet needs and challenges in a remote and small-school setting (Wildy & Clarke 2010)
- Using **evidence**, such as monitoring and feedback of student progress, as a basis for continuous improvement (St Germaine 1995, cited in Schwab 1996; McRae 2007).

The Australian Government (DEEWR 2010a) believes that quality teaching can overcome location and other disadvantages and is the single greatest in-school influence on student engagement and achievement. To this end the Australian Government has committed an extra \$44.3 million over three years to the NT to help principals and teachers working in remote schools significantly improve Aboriginal literacy and numeracy outcomes.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational programs in Australia

In the past decade particularly, some educators have moved away from the deficit-based model that assumed Aboriginal children were not as capable academically. Instead there has been a flurry of programs working from the basis that by providing some or all of these resources (human, financial, physical) Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students can and do achieve at levels comparable to students who do have access to these resources.

Numerous educational support programs are operating throughout Australia. Some are located in regional and remote areas while others are located in urban schools for students from remote areas. Some programs operate nationally, some on a state or region-wide basis, and others are localised at the school level.

Examples of programs operating nationally include:

- The [\*Graham \(Polly\) Farmer Foundation's\*](#) program 'Follow the Dream/Partnerships for Success' provides after-school support to aspirational Aboriginal students. Since its inception in 1997, 259 Aboriginal students have graduated from Year 12. The program now operates in WA, NT, SA and NSW (Polly Farmer Foundation 2010).
- The [\*Clontarf Football Academy\*](#), whose premise is to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men by utilising the 'existing passion that Indigenous boys have for football to attract them to attend an Academy' (Clontarf Foundation 2007). Clontarf operates football academies for more than 2,200 boys in 36 schools across WA, NT and rural Victoria (Clontarf Foundation 2007). In 2009 the Foundation reported an attendance rate of 77%, retention rate of 93.5% and secondary graduation rate of 76% (Clontarf Foundation 2009).
- [\*Yalari\*](#) provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from regional and remote areas with scholarships to attend a boarding school in large urban centres. In 2010, 183 students from all states (except NT) are attending one of the 34 partnership schools (Yalari 2010).

Examples of programs operating on a State, Territory or region-wide basis include:

- The [\*Wiltja Program\*](#) is a secondary boarding program for Anangu students in the tri-state area (SA, NT, WA). An initiative of Anangu, the program has been operating since 1990 within Woodville High School in Adelaide and is responsive to the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Educational Committee (PYEC) (Woodville High School 2009).
- The [\*Higher Expectations \(Secondary\) Program\*](#) identifies and supports academically talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from Cape York, Palm Island and Yarrabah communities to complete secondary education at a Queensland partner boarding school. In 2007 HEP (Secondary) assisted 36 students from 12 communities (CYI 2007).
- [\*Role Models WA\*](#) has girls' sporting academies in Perth, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury and Broome (WA) that focus on improving the retention rates and education attainment of students in years 8–12. The Academy program has been developed specifically for girls, focusing on sports and life skills (Role Models WA n.d.).
- [\*Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience\*](#) (AIME) partners university student volunteers in a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a high school Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student for an hour a week over the course of a 17-week program. In 2009, 325 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from NSW, Queensland and Victoria were mentored in the program (AIME 2010).
- [\*Red Dust Role Models\*](#) visit remote communities to convey healthy lifestyle messages and deliver positive and educational programs. In 2010, tours have been to Central Australian communities (Kintore, Areyonga, Yuendumu), Top End communities (Daly River, Wadeye, Gapuwiyak, Ngiuu) and Warburton in WA (Red Dust Role Models 2010).

Some local communities are so concerned about students who have already dropped out of school that they have developed partnerships with the school to try and re-engage students. Because these programs are local solutions to local problems they are often contained to a single school. Examples of localised programs include:

- The [Girls at the Centre](#) project provides an individualised approach to engaging Aboriginal girls in Alice Springs Centralian Middle School through programs designed to tap into their areas of interest. The project commenced in April 2008 and approximately 35 girls participated in 2008–09 (NT Department of Health and Families n.d.).
- The [Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlemen](#) program helps severely disadvantaged young Aboriginal women in Kununurra who have dropped out of school. The Werlemen project is a joint venture between the school, the WA Department of Education and three local Aboriginal organisations, including the Native Title Representative Body.
- A whole-school program, [Gateways to Literacy](#), has been running at a Darwin primary school since 1995. The program was developed by teachers at the school in collaboration with speech pathologists and occupational therapists. All staff, parents and senior primary students take part in Gateways activities, which take place four days a week for half an hour. Learners at risk are assessed and intervention programs are designed to meet their needs, individually or in small groups (Victorian Government 2007).

## Monitoring and evaluation

While there is strong anecdotal evidence that the programs discussed above are resulting in improved attendance, participation, retention and educational outcomes for the students participating, there is a lack of rigour around the data collection, reporting and evaluation of the value of the programs and initiatives. Recent reviews (Purdie & Buckley 2010; Wildy & Clarke 2010) found that because there were very few high quality independent evaluations the evidence about attendance and retention strategies is not strong. Consequently, ‘without robust evaluations, claims of the program remain as merely claims and wide implementation by policy makers is seriously compromised’ (Wildy & Clarke 2010:113).

Monitoring and evaluation of programs needs to include both quantitative data and qualitative explanations. For example, in the first six months of operating, the Werlemen program had attendance rates of 44%. This may seem low and not a significant achievement. However, for a group of severely disengaged students with a previous attendance rate of virtually 0% (because they had dropped out of school completely), 44% is a significant achievement in a short period of time (Grundy & Gomm 2010). Therefore it is imperative that monitoring and evaluation is based on a continuous improvement model and schools and communities are rewarded for significant achievements in educational indicators such as attendance and retention as well as literacy and numeracy outcomes.

## Smarter Schools National Partnership

The [Innovative Strategies for Small and Remote School Project](#) is a new project (2009) within the Smarter Schools National Partnership. WA and SA are the lead jurisdictions for this project, which will identify and share successful strategies that address the challenges that small and remote schools face (DETTWA 2010).

The first stage of the project was a literature review of the publicly available information and literature on remote and small schools. Wildy and Clarke's (2010) review revealed a consistent picture of the experiences and challenges of educators, leaders, students and the communities linked to small and remote schools which they conceptualised as:

1. The school and the community: successful programs have grown out of partnerships between communities and schools
2. The school and other schools: clustering is a generalised strategy with many and diverse applications that are well suited to small and remote schools in Australia
3. The school and educators: with the appropriate matching of skills and people to needs and challenges in a remote and small school setting, there can be positive educational outcomes for students, teachers and administrators.

The second phase of the research will involve researching and mapping current activities in place in schools across Australia. The final reports will enable the project to identify and document promising innovative models, and take a national approach to their evaluation, with a view to understanding what works, where and under what circumstances. The Reports will provide recommendations for effective, sustained reform and suggested processes to move these forward at a national level.

The review conducted by Wildy and Clarke (2010) took an internal view of education in small and remote schools without considering the impact of exogenous factors such as political and financial factors, some of which have been discussed in this paper. In addition, they limited their review to Australian schools and there was no examination of remote education as a global phenomenon.

## Conclusion

Equity in educational achievements and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is a high priority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, schools, governments (policy), universities (teacher training) and industry (employers). While much of Australia appears paralysed by 'deficit-model' thinking surrounding remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, there are many schools and communities that are getting on with the job of 'changing the tide of low expectation'. These schools, often in partnership with their communities, the private sector and Governments, are achieving positive outcomes for students in remote Australia, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

There is anecdotal information that specific initiatives and programs are effective; however, most have not been rigorously evaluated and communicated to educators, policy makers and the general population. It is unreasonable to expect schools to undertake extensive monitoring and evaluation because they often lack the resources, expertise and time. In addition it would be extremely difficult for schools to provide an independent non-biased evaluation. However, schools remain an integral part of monitoring and evaluation, as they are a central stakeholder in the process and a key source of information.



An added dimension is that there has not been a systemic approach to remote education. This has resulted in case studies and lists of ‘what works’ with ‘the answers’ often considered in isolation from each other. While there is much that schools can and are doing to provide an effective education in remote Australia, schools do not have control over the political and financial factors that play a large part in the education system as a whole.

For example, educational policy in Australia is premised on the assumption that educational achievement is through mainstream education systems and instruction in the English language. This assumption is at odds with international evidence, which has shown that Indigenous students who have had an Indigenous-medium education have met literacy and numeracy requirements at rates much better than Indigenous students in mainstream education and at rates similar to non-Indigenous students. In addition, international evidence has also found that plurilingual children (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), perform better than their monolingual peers in a range of areas, such as classification skills, concept formation, analogical reasoning, visual-spatial skills and creativity, and that they exhibit other cognitive gains.

As a public good research centre with a wide partnership embracing governments, Aboriginal organisations, non-government organisations, universities and private businesses, the CRC-REP has the capability and mandate as a public good research centre to make a significant and independent contribution to researching and understanding how the parts of the remote education system work.

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## Appendix 1: Overview of programs operating in remote Australia

Organisation Name	Program/ Project Name	Began	Reach	Clients	Objectives
Polly Farmer Foundation	Follow the Dream/ Partnerships for Success	1997	WA, SA, NT & NSW	Aboriginal high school students	Provide support to Aboriginal youth to finish Year 12
Clontarf Foundation	Clontarf Football Academies	2000	2,200 boys in 36 schools across WA, NT & Vic	Aboriginal boys of predominantly high school age	Uses football as the lever to attract and retain young men at school
Principals Australia	Dare to Lead	2000	1,500 schools nationally – all states and territories	Schools and school leaders	Network of support for school leaders to work effectively with current programs and to initiate new models that will result in improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Stronger Smarter Institute	Stronger Smarter Leadership Program	2005	National – all states and territories	Schools and school leaders	Delivers leadership programs for school leaders to enhance the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students
David Wirrpanda Foundation	Wirra Club, Dare to Dream, On My Way	2005	WA – Perth and Pilbara		Mentoring by prominent Aboriginal role models, including David Wirrpanda, Troy Cook, Bianca Franklin and Shannon McGuire
Smith Family and Centralian Middle School	Girls at the Centre	2007	NT – Alice Springs	Aboriginal girls in years 7–9	An individualised approach to engaging the students through programs designed to tap into their areas of interest
Catherine Freeman Foundation		2007	Qld – Palm Island	Aboriginal girls of predominantly high school age	To pilot programs on Palm Island that can be implemented in other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia
Role Models WA Inc	Girls Academy	2007	WA – Perth (100 girls) and Kalgoorlie (120 girls)	Girls of high school age (Kalgoorlie academy takes non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls also)	Uses sport and other extracurricular activities to keep the girls engaged in education and their future
Stronger Smarter Institute	Stronger Smarter Learning Communities	2009	National – all states and territories. Aim to have 180–240 affiliated schools	School leaders who have evidence of improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	To develop and sustain a national network of up to 60 SSLCs that will work with 3–4 other schools to positively influence the quality of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Wunan Foundation	Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlemen Program	2010	WA – Kununurra	Girls of high school age who have dropped out of school	An intensive program that works with each girl individually to re-engage them with education and learning

## Appendix 2: Stronger Smarter Institute

The Stronger Smarter Institute is a group of people committed to changing the tide of low expectations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The ‘Stronger and Smarter’ motto means ‘strong in our hearts, proud of our identity, solid in our community – and smart in the way we do things, focused on high achievement, determined to succeed’

The Stronger Smarter Institute:

- delivers quality leadership programs for school leaders to enhance the teaching of Indigenous school students
- develops and facilitates innovative research projects
- works in partnership with governments, schools and universities engaged in Indigenous education;
- supports the development of Indigenous leadership in communities
- is a hub of a growing network of schools and individuals who are engaged in creating ‘stronger smarter’ realities for Indigenous children.

Source: Stronger Smarter Institute 2010

Stronger Smarter Learning Communities (SSLC) is a national landmark project funded by DEEWR. The overall aims and objectives are to transform schools through the building of leadership capacity and thereby to sustain and grow improved student outcomes within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program operates via targeted school community sites, known as the [SSLC hubs](#), with leaders charged with supporting, developing and challenging staff and community leaders in up to three local affiliated schools as well with linking with others on the national network. Over the next three years the number of Stronger Smarter Learning Community sites will grow to a total 60, and the number of affiliated schools to 180–240.

The [Stronger Smarter Leadership Program](#) is designed to challenge and support leadership at all levels of education to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The program provides opportunities for participants to:

- develop and enhance cultural competence and leadership capacity to pursue improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- support school transformation processes in their context to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes
- engage in action research and document progress and learnings
- contribute to the critical mass of educational leaders creating positive changes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Source: Stronger Smarter Institute 2010; C Sarra personal communication

## Appendix 3: Dare to Lead

Beginning in 2000, [\*Dare to Lead\*](#) is an initiative of Principals Australia with a focus on improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Dare to Lead is now in its third phase, with currently over 53% of all Australian schools (more than 5100) signed on as coalition members.

The coalition is not a ‘program’, but rather a network of support for school leaders to work effectively with current programs and to initiate new models of activity, which will result in improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. One of the goals of the project is to achieve sustainable change in this regard.

Each member school is connected to a cluster of others in the same region. The clusters of schools, called ‘Action Areas’, are led by experienced and willing school principals who are supported by the project to play an integral role in identifying the professional development needs of their colleagues. There are currently 120 Action Areas across Australia, with between 30–50 schools in each. State Coordinators support the work of the Action Area in their state/territory. The project has available a diverse and powerful set of leadership tools for this purpose which have been developed for the project by school principals who are experienced and successful in the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. The sessions in each Action Area provide the leadership support needed for schools to become more effective in achieving improved outcomes for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and in understanding and supporting the wider goals of reconciliation and cultural understandings for all of their students.

State Coordinators organise Professional Development for coalition schools. Resources include Leadership Tools, which are freely available on the Dare to Lead website. The Dare to Lead ‘school leadership frame’ is based on five propositions:

1. Leadership starts from within
2. Leadership is about influencing others
3. Leadership develops a rich learning environment
4. Leadership builds professionalism and management capability
5. Leadership inspires leadership actions and aspirations in others.

Approximately 9% of Dare to Lead coalition schools are in remote or very remote locations. The Dare to Lead Tristates Remotes group has been established to support school leaders in these locations of NT, SA, WA to improve the educational outcomes of their Aboriginal students.

Source: Dare to Lead, n.d.; S Osborne, personal communication

## Appendix 4: Polly Farmer Foundation

The [\*Graham \(Polly\) Farmer Foundation\*](#) was established in 1995 by a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians to:

- provide support to Aboriginal youth to achieve their potential
- enhance the skills and potential of young Aboriginal people
- generate positive aspirations in young Aboriginal people
- assist Aboriginal youth to relate to the community in general, particularly to other young Australians.

The Foundation's program 'Follow the Dream/Partnerships for Success' is a series of school educational support projects for Aboriginal students who have the capacity, interest and potential to go on and complete their secondary education. These students are encouraged to go on to tertiary studies and employment.

Beginning in 1997, the Foundation's first education partnership *Gumala Mirnuwarni* (Coming Together to Learn) was established in Karratha/Roebourne, with 20 students. Since then, the Foundation has established 15 projects operating in WA, SA, NT and NSW. Remote areas include Alice Springs and Groote Eylandt (NT); and Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Karratha/Roebourne, Port Hedland, Tom Price, Newman and Kununurra (WA). There are currently 486 students participating in the project around Australia, and since its inception 259 students have graduated from Year 12.



Source: Polly Farmer Foundation 2010



## Appendix 5: Girls at the Centre

Girls at the Centre is an Indigenous Education and Employment Taskforce (IEET) initiative in partnership with The Smith Family, to help Aboriginal girls in years 7–9 stay at school, transition to senior school and develop career goals.

Facilitated by Desert Knowledge Australia, the IEET is intercultural and includes representatives from both government and non-government organisations. These participants include senior representatives of:

- Alice Springs Town Council
- Centrecorp
- Central Land Council
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre
- Newmont
- Peppered Black Security
- Tangentyere Council

The Girls at the Centre Program operates at the Centralian Middle School in Alice Springs and addresses four main areas:

1. Literacy: Improved school attendance and achievement
2. Life goals: aspirations and positive pathway action plans and relationships
3. Life skills: improved social and emotional wellbeing and resilience
4. Communities, schools and workplaces that support ‘emerging women’

The program offers access to tutors and mentors and opportunities to participate in curriculum enhancement activities such as sport, cooking and art, and to attend workforce workshops for skills development in resumé writing, interview practice and telephone technique. A ‘girl coach’ has been appointed to act as a mentor, adviser and advocate, and a ‘girls’ room’ has been set aside as a place where the girls can meet and connect with girls of their own age.

In 2008, 37 girls took part in the program; this grew to 46 participants in 2010. The girls and their families participate in activities such as Breakfast with a Mentor, Tuesday after-school activities, Families and Schools Together (FAST) and Core of Life, a pregnancy and parenting program. To date there has not been an evaluation of the program.

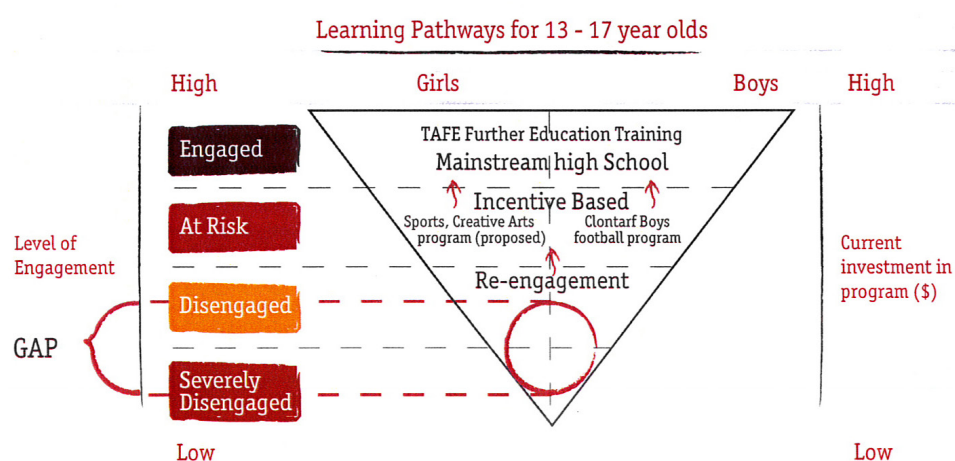
Source: Desert Knowledge Australia n.d.; The Smith Family 2010; E Baxter, personal communication

## Appendix 6: Joodoogeb-be-gerring Werlemen Program

Originally operating as the Youth Connections and Bridging programs in Kununurra since 2008, and building on years of success, the community partnership program was conceived as Joodoogebbe-gerring Werlemen in January 2010. The Werlemen project is a local solution to a local problem and it is a joint venture between four parties:

- Miriwung Gajerrong Ord Enhancement Scheme (MG OES)
- Gelganyem Trust
- Kununurra District High School and Department of Education
- Wunan Foundation.

Werlemen has been helping young Aboriginal women who have dropped out of school to re-engage in learning and education and gain the qualifications vital for employment. The program helps one of the most disadvantaged groups in Kununurra: young Aboriginal women aged 12–18 with very low literacy and numeracy skills, limited finances, and extremely tough and unstable home lives.



The young women have had significant gaps in their schooling, and for various cultural, personal and socio-economic reasons, won't attend the local high school. Operating during school hours in the Kununurra Youth Centre, the program has two full-time teachers and two Aboriginal mentors. It is an intensive program that helps each young woman individually, and on a case-by-case basis.

Due to the girls' varying ages and different levels of school attendance, there's no 'one size fits all' approach. Each girl has an individual learning plan and targets, based on several core outcomes. Due to the size of the classroom, the maximum capacity of the class is approximately 20 students. However, given the aim of the Program is to move students into mainstream education or training, and support them while doing this, the Program has a rolling enrolment and can conceivably support up to 50 young women over the course of a year.

Source: Grundy & Gomm 2010; M Pucci, personal communication

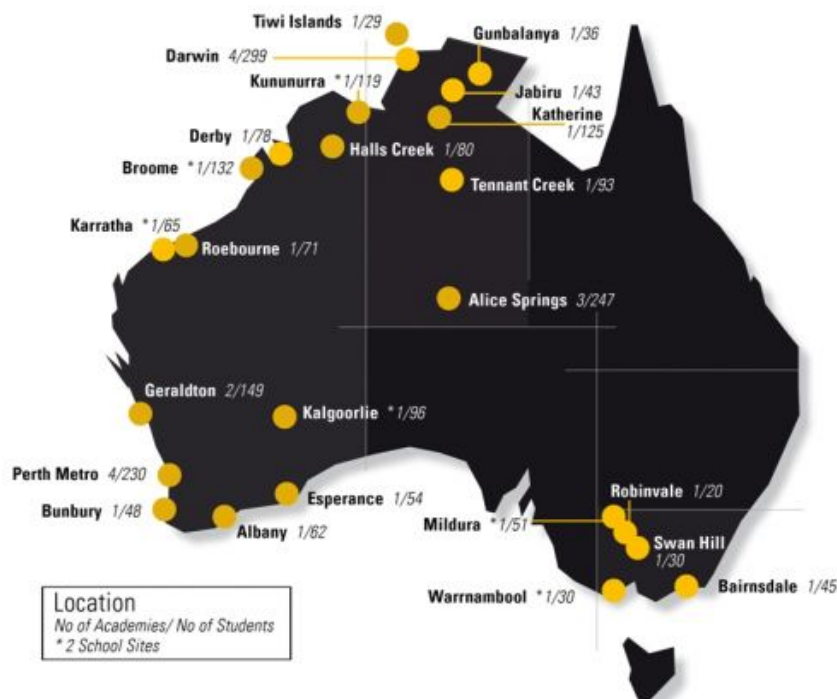
## Appendix 7: Clontarf Foundation/Academies

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and by doing so, equip them to participate more meaningfully in society. These outcomes are achieved through the medium of football. Academies are formed in association with selected schools and colleges and each Academy's football program attracts young Aboriginal men to school and helps to retain them. As well as coordinating the football program, Academy staff mentor and counsel students on a range of behavioural and lifestyle issues while the school caters for their specific educational needs.

To remain in the Academy, members must consistently endeavour to:

- attend school regularly
- apply themselves to the study of appropriate courses
- embrace the Academy's requirements for behaviour and self-discipline.

Since opening its first Academy for 25 boys in Perth, WA in 2000, the Foundation has grown rapidly and now caters for more than 2,200 boys in 36 schools across WA, NT and Victoria. Academies in remote areas include Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Jabiru, Gunbalanya and Tiwi Islands (NT); and Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Karratha/Roebourne, Broome, Derby, Halls Creek and Kununurra (WA).



Source: Clontarf Foundation 2007

## Appendix 8: Role Models

[\*Role Models WA\*](#) provides leadership, sports and education programs to assist Western Australian youth, particularly Aboriginal youth, who suffer from poverty, sickness, misfortune, or a disconnectedness from their community. The key principles driving the program delivery are:

- Young, at-risk youth (particularly Aboriginal youth) need intensive personal support to bring about positive change in their lives.
- Sport and physical activity are key elements in a formula which will bring about change to young people's lives and their futures.
- Sporting and community role models become essential mentors in the process to facilitate considerable change to at-risk young people.
- Engagement in education and training is the key to long-term, successful change for young people.

Role Models WA operates girls sporting academies based in Perth, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury and Broome, which focus on improving the retention rates and education attainment of students in years 8–12. The Academy has a unique program developed specifically for girls, which focuses on sports and life skills. The program includes mentoring, sport, outside activities, workplace training, and leadership and teamwork opportunities.

The Role Models WA specialist teams of high profile Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sporting and community role models make three visits to remote communities as part of its Up4it Leadership Development Program. Focusing on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school students, the Program engages community members and elders from communities in the Goldfields/Esperance, Gascoyne/Mid-west, Pilbara and Kimberley regions of WA. During the community visits, high profile Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal role models spend 2–3 days in each community delivering leadership workshops, sporting programs, and extracurricular activities and events to promote healthy lifestyles and the importance of education.

Source: Role Models WA n.d.; DEEWR 2010a

## Appendix 9: Location of Sporting Chance Programs

The Sporting Chance Program is an Australian Government initiative that uses sport and recreation as a vehicle to increase the level of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling to improve their education, training and employment outcomes. The program has two elements: 54 school-based sports academies for secondary students; and five education engagement strategies for primary and secondary school students. Some of these individual sports academies and engagement strategies have been dealt with earlier in this paper.

The aim of the school-based sports academies is to encourage positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (boys and girls) using sport and recreation. In 2010, the Sporting Chance funding will support 54 school-based sports academies for about 5000 students (House of Representatives 2010).

### Location of school-based sports academies in remotes areas

<b>NT</b>	Clontarf Foundation football academies: Alice Springs, Katherine, Tiwi, Tennant Creek, Jabiru, Gunbalanya Role Models WA: Girls Academies, Jabiru, Gunbalanya, Alice Springs Stronger Smarter Sisters Academy, Katherine High School
<b>QLD</b>	Eagle Edge Academy of Sport, Cunnamulla
<b>WA</b>	Clontarf Foundation football academies: Kununurra, Halls Creek, Karratha, Broome, Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Derby Role Models WA girls academies: Kalgoorlie, Broome Kicking Goals Academies: Newman, Port Hedland Fitzroy Valley Girls Sporting Academy, Madalah Ltd, Fitzroy Crossing
<b>SA</b>	SA Aboriginal Sports Training Academy Program, SA regions

### Location of engagement projects

<b>NSW</b>	Far West Sports Development Program, Country Rugby League, Western NSW
<b>WA</b>	Up4it Leadership Development Program, Role Models, regional WA
<b>NT</b>	ARMTour, National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy (NASCA), remote communities; Bluearth Project: Tennant Creek and Darwin
<b>SA</b>	Sport for Life, Stride, SA regions

Source: DEEWR 2010b; House of Representatives 2010

## Appendix 10: Gateways to Literacy

The key outcome of the Gateways to Literacy program has always been to optimise the conditions for success. If a child has a strong base of understanding and no longer has to think about basic/foundation skills, thinking space is freed for other skills which will develop much more easily when the child is ready.

The educators at Millner Primary School in Darwin have been using effective assessment and analysis strategies informed and fine-tuned with knowledge and expertise from speech pathologists and occupational therapists. The Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test has been used to assess each child's phonological awareness. Other proformas for assessment and analysis were developed with the resident speech pathologists and occupational therapists, with additional resource and organisational lists.

The program is now a stand-alone package, published by the school. The package includes 75 cards of photos and photo sequences of perceptual motor activities. Outlined on the back are descriptions of the key areas of perceptual motor skill development that each activity provides practice in (to allow a teacher to pick and choose appropriate activities catering for specific delays). Also on the back are the developmental levels of oral language that students might use in explaining the activity to his/her peers, and the type of language that a teacher might use to scaffold and model for the next phase of development.

This integrated and effective approach is embedded within the Millner Primary School ethos and philosophy. The key outcome – to maximise the conditions for success for every learner – has been met comprehensively over a consistent number of years. Within four years, all learners who had been consistently involved with the program were achieving literacy and numeracy benchmarks at their appropriate level or above. Due to the transience of the school population, there were few of the original children left at the school by Year 5, but their results indicated they were still achieving to benchmark or above. These results have been maintained over time.

Source: Batenburg 2005

# PARTNERS IN THE CRC FOR REMOTE ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

## Principal Partners



Australian Government  
Department of Families, Housing,  
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs  
Department of Regional Australia, Regional  
Development and Local Government



## Project Partners



Australian Government  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Office for the Arts  
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Indigenous Affairs