

**COMMONWEALTH GRANTS COMMISSION**

**INDIGENOUS FUNDING INQUIRY**

**SUBMISSION**

**From: Tasmanian Government, Department of Treasury and  
Finance**

**Submission No.: IFI/SUB/0020**

**Date Received: 18/04/2000**

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Our Ref: D/000084

Mr R Searle  
Secretary  
Commonwealth Grants Commission  
5 Torrens Street  
BRADDON ACT 2612

Dear Mr Searle

Thank you for your invitation to provide a submission in relation to the Indigenous Funding Inquiry being undertaken by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Please find attached a copy of Tasmania's submission to the Inquiry. As requested an electronic copy has been forwarded to you.

I have also attached a summary of data collected by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in Tasmania through its 1998 Healthy Communities Survey of Tasmanian adults. DHHS advised that the response from the indigenous population is significant enough to be confident that the results are indicative of the State's indigenous population. The survey was designed to measure those factors that were identified as being determinants of health and wellbeing.

This data has been obtained from a survey within the State and would not be available nationally. However, this data may be of some assistance to the Commission in undertaking the Inquiry. Should you require any further information on the survey, the data collected or the attached submission, please contact Tony Jacques by phone on (03) 6233 7166 or by e-mail on [t.jacques@tres.tas.gov.au](mailto:t.jacques@tres.tas.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

D W Challen  
**SECRETARY**

17 April 2000

Encl

# **Indigenous Funding Inquiry**

**by the**

**Commonwealth Grants Commission**

**Tasmanian Submission**

**April 2000**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The following information has been prepared from data provided by State Government agencies whose responsibilities include the following functions:

- Housing;
- Health; and
- Education.

The terms of reference require the Commission to include infrastructure. With the exception of the remote areas of Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island, where a relatively high proportion of the population is indigenous, the indigenous population in Tasmania is distributed throughout the community. As a result it is difficult to comment on the specific infrastructure needs of the indigenous population. Their needs are generally met by the provision of infrastructure services to the overall community.

This submission provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the indigenous population in Tasmania. This is intended to assist the Commission to understand the nature of the indigenous population in Tasmania and the context in which services to the indigenous population have been developed.

The Commission is required to report in relation to each of the key functional areas. This report has been prepared for each of the functional areas identified above. It is also noted that the Commission has been asked to distinguish, where possible, between the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. As indicated below, the number of Torres Strait Islanders in Tasmania is relatively small and such a distinction is not possible.

Tasmania's indigenous population accesses the majority of services through mainstream activities due to the dispersed nature of the population. Data in relation to the indigenous status of those using the service is not always seen as a high priority. Tasmanian data therefore tends to understate the utilisation of services by the indigenous population. Difficulties with the identification and measurement of the utilisation of services by the indigenous population often results in Tasmania being assessed as having a relatively low need for services to the indigenous population. It is recognised that the needs of indigenous people living in remote settlements would, on average, be greater than those of indigenous people living in Tasmania. However, the use of Tasmania's current utilisation data would understate the need of the indigenous population in Tasmania.

An example of the underestimation of the utilisation of services by the indigenous population can be seen in a 1999 publication by the Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Health and Welfare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Cat no. 4704.0). Table 7.18 provided the number of hospital separations in 1996-97 by indigenous and non indigenous people for each State. The data was obtained from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Hospital separation data is thought to have significant coverage difficulties because of problems with the collection of administrative data. These problems are being addressed from 1998-99 onwards.

Table 1 is an extract for table 7.18 of the ABS publication, *Health and Welfare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Cat no. 4704.0)

**Table 1 Hospital Separations identified as indigenous 1996-97.**

	Separation rate per 1000 indigenous persons	Separation rate per 1000 non-indigenous persons	Rate ratio
<b>MALES</b>			
Tasmania	32.5	262.7	0.1
Australia	488.6	266.0	1.8
<b>FEMALES</b>			
Tasmania	32.3	300.6	0.1
Australia	572.8	296.5	1.9

There is no evidence to support such a large variation between utilisation rates in Tasmania and the national average. It is recognised that the special needs of indigenous people living in remote communities would account in part for the difference, but not to the extent reflected in this utilisation data.

The Commission needs to be aware that Tasmanian data underestimates the utilisation of services by indigenous people in Tasmania.

## 2 OVERVIEW

A needs based approach to the distribution of funds is supported. However, Tasmania is concerned that the analysis of the needs of a section of the population, which is seen as having a relatively higher need for assistance, will only result in the redistribution of resources from one group in need to another group in need. It does not assist in the identification of the resources required to address the needs of the section of the population.

The National Strategy to Address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage aims for better outcomes in health, education, employment, housing, law and justice. Its objective is to achieve social and economic conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that are the same as those enjoyed by other Australians. These objectives would not be met through the redistribution of existing resources. However, it is noted that the terms of reference do not ask the Commission to measure the total needs of the indigenous residents or advise on the level of resources that should be made available.

The Commission has indicated that, to measure the needs of groups of indigenous Australians relative to one another, it will require a benchmark or standard to be set. It is recommended that this benchmark should be based on the average of the total Australian population. This will assist in measuring the needs of different Aboriginal groups relative to the 'average' Australian rather than the average member of the indigenous population.

Tasmania also notes that the Commission is looking at four key functions and will measure the relative needs for each of these functions. The Commission is not required to assess the needs of one function relative to another. Tasmania supports this proposal. Tasmania believes that decisions on functional priorities should be made locally as the need for different functions will vary for different population groups.

Whilst broad priorities should be set at a national level, decisions on how to achieve these priorities should be made at a local level. As indicated by the Commission, there are a number of interactions between the functions of government. For example, to implement a policy of improving the health status of the indigenous population may be best achieved in a particular group by improving housing standards rather than through an increase in health care programs.

Tasmania believes that the work being undertaken by the Commission will be important to assess the relative needs of the indigenous population. However, caution must also be taken in using the results to implement national policies without taking into account local needs. It is important that the Commission's report highlights the variations which exist between indigenous population groups and the caution needed when trying to implement national policies without consultation with the local communities.

### **3 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

The following statistics describe the structure and composition of the indigenous population in Tasmania. They are intended to assist the Commission to understand some of the characteristics of the indigenous population in Tasmania.

It should be noted from Table 2 below, that the proportion of Tasmania's population which identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is the second highest of the States. The number of people identifying themselves as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and resident in the ATSI region of Hobart, which includes all of Tasmania, on Census night, increased from 8,912 in 1991 to 13,929 in 1996. This represents an increase of 56%, one of the highest increases in any of the ATSI regions.

**Table 2 Census count by usual place of residence – 30 June 1996**

	Indigenous Population ('000)	Non-indigenous Population ('000)	Proportion Indigenous %
New South Wales	101.6	5726.5	1.74%
Victoria	21.5	4,260.9	0.50%
Queensland	95.4	3,146.0	3.03%
South Australia	20.4	1,400.3	1.46%
Western Australia	50.7	1,659.0	3.06%
Tasmania	13.9	449.3	3.10%
Northern Territory	46.4	166.7	27.81%
Australian Capital Territory	3.1	293.5	1.07%
<b>Australia</b>	<b>353.0</b>	<b>16,872.1</b>	<b>2.16%</b>

Source: ABS Population distribution, Indigenous Australians Cat 4705.0 1996 (Table 4)

Table 3 shows that the number of Torres Strait Islanders in Tasmania is relatively small.

**Table 3 Aboriginals And Torres Strait Islanders In Tasmania 30 June 1996**

	Number	Percentage
Aboriginal	12,023	86.7%
Torres Strait Islanders	1,475	10.6%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders	375	2.7%
<b>Total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</b>	<b>13,873</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: ABS Census data

Australia-wide, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in 1996 had a median age which was much younger (20 years) than the total population (34 years). This median age disparity was similar in all the States and Territories.

**Table 4 Age Distribution of the indigenous population as at 30 June 1996**

AGE GROUP	Tasmania		Australia	
	Indigenous	Total	Indigenous	Total
0 to 9	26.9%	14.7%	28.0%	14.2%
10 to 19	25.0%	14.8%	21.9%	14.1%
20 to 29	16.2%	13.8%	18.2%	15.4%
30 to 39	14.0%	15.3%	13.9%	15.8%
40 to 49	9.9%	14.4%	9.0%	14.5%
50 to 59	4.5%	10.2%	4.8%	10.1%
60 to 69	2.3%	8.0%	2.7%	7.7%
70 and over	1.1%	8.8%	1.5%	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: ABS Population distribution, Indigenous Australians Cat 4705.0 1996



Table 4 demonstrates that, for both Tasmania and Australia, the proportion of the indigenous population below 30 years of age is much greater than the total population. There is also a significantly lower proportion of the indigenous population over the age of 50 years.

This implies both a higher fertility rate and shorter longevity.

In addition to the higher fertility rates, the maternal age of indigenous mothers is lower. Table 5 shows that the proportion of indigenous mothers under 20 years of age is much greater than non-indigenous mothers.

**Table 5 Maternal Age (Percentage of Total) 1994-96**

	Under 20 years	20-34 Years	Over 34 years	Total
Indigenous mothers	23.1	72.2	4.7	100.0
Non Indigenous mothers	4.7	81.6	13.7	100.0

Source; ABS 4704.0 Health and Welfare, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families Australia-wide averaged 3.7 persons per family compared to the total Australian population average of 3.1 persons per family in 1996.

The indigenous population is less likely to live in major urban centres. Table 6 compares the percentage of the indigenous population living in major urban centres, for both Tasmania and Australia, with the total population.

**Table 6 Indigenous population in major urban centres**

	Percentage of indigenous population	Percentage of total population
Australia	30.3	62.6
Tasmania	20.5	27.3

Source: ABS Census 1996

This table demonstrates that a greater proportion of Tasmanian indigenous people live outside the major metropolitan areas.

Table 7 provides details of the number and proportion of the indigenous population living in each Statistical Local Area in Tasmania as at 30 June 1996.

**Table 7 Indigenous population by Statistical Local Area - Tasmania**

<b>Statistical Local Areas</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</b>	<b>% of SLA Pop who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</b>	<b>% of Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islanders per SLA</b>
Break O'Day (M)	131	2.3	0.9
Brighton (M)	720	5.8	5.2
Burnie (C) - Pt A	667	3.9	4.9
Burnie (C) - Pt B	68	3.3	0.5
Central Coast (M) - Pt A	836	4.9	6.0
Central Coast (M) - Pt B	183	5.7	1.3
Central Highlands (M)	95	3.7	0.7
Circular Head (M)	443	5.5	3.2
Clarence (C)	1147	2.4	8.3
Derwent Valley (M) - Pt A	170	2.6	1.2
Derwent Valley (M) - Pt B	115	3.9	0.8
Devonport (C)	770	0.3	5.7
Dorset (M)	122	1.7	0.8
Flinders (M)	145	15.7	1.1
George Town (M) - Pt A	146	2.6	1.2
George Town (M) - Pt B	31	3.1	0.2
Glamorgan/Spring Bay (M)	101	2.5	0.8
Glenorchy (C)	1354	3.1	9.6
Hobart (C) - Inner	28	2.6	0.1
Hobart (C) - Remainder	530	1.2	3.8
Huon Valley (M)	1239	9.6	8.9
Kentish (M)	159	3.0	1.1
King Island (M)	35	1.9	0.3
Kingborough (M) - Pt A	572	2.3	4.1
Kingborough (M) - Pt B	75	3.3	0.7
Latrobe (M) - Pt A	289	4.2	2.1
Latrobe (M) - Pt B	36	5.4	0.3
Launceston (C) - Inner	12	2.8	0.1
Launceston (C) - Pt B	1391	2.4	10.1
Launceston (C) - Pt C	36	1.3	0.2
Meander Valley (M) - Pt A	87	1.3	0.6
Meander Valley (M) - Pt B	225	2.3	1.6
Northern Midlands (M) - Pt A	106	1.6	0.8
Northern Midlands (M) - Pt B	75	1.7	0.6
Sorell (M) - Pt A	203	2.2	1.5
Sorell (M) - Pt B	19	2.0	0.3
Southern Midlands (M)	149	2.8	1.1
Tasman (M)	102	4.5	0.7
Waratah/Wynyard (M) - Pt A	563	5.3	3.9
Waratah/Wynyard (M) - Pt B	126	4.7	0.9
West Coast (M)	310	4.9	2.1
West Tamar (M) - Pt A	200	1.2	1.5
West Tamar (M) - Pt B	31	1.8	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>13861</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: ABS Census 1996

This table demonstrates that the indigenous population in Tasmania is geographically dispersed.

#### 4. HEALTH STATUS INDICATORS

Unfortunately, life expectancy data in relation to Tasmania's indigenous population is unreliable at present. Although steps have been taken to improve the reliability of the data, it will be some time before there will be confidence in the data. However, the age mix of the indigenous population in Table 4 indicates that the life expectancy of this section of the population is lower than the population as a whole.

The most reliable published information on morbidity prevalence for Tasmanian Aboriginals is the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey shown in Table 8. It shows higher self-assessed prevalence of Asthma, ear/hearing, eye, heart and skin problems than the indigenous population nationally, but lower diabetes, non-asthma chest problems and high blood pressure than the indigenous population nationally.

**Table 8: Self-Reported Health Conditions of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Population, 1994**

	Tasmania %	Australia %
Asthma	20.6	15.3
Diabetes	1.5	4.5
Heart problems	5.5	4.7
Chest problems	5.0	6.6
Skin problems	14.8	7.8
High blood pressure	4.6	7.7
Ear/hearing problems	13.3	11.0
Eye problems	4.5	3.0
Kidney problems	3.0	3.6

Source: National Aboriginal and Torres Straits Survey 1994 – Detailed findings (4190.0)

In relation to perceived health problems, diabetes was particularly different: only 1.4% of Tasmanian 13+ Aboriginals reported this as a local problem, compared to 22% of Aboriginals on mainland Australia.

#### 5. HOUSING

##### Measurement of Need

Currently, needs for housing are identified on the basis of demographic profile of the Aboriginal community, the expressed demand through applications for housing, and where possible, emerging housing need as identified by the Aboriginal Housing Committees and Customer Services Officers.

Measuring Aboriginal housing need is complex. The Commonwealth State Working Group on Indigenous Housing (CSWGIH) has commissioned a consultancy into mechanisms for measuring need. The final report has not been formally released and further modeling is being undertaken before it is implemented. However, over time this work should provide a better mechanism for determining need.

The National Indigenous Data Management Strategy will, over time, provide improved data on Aboriginal housing need and the extent that existing programs are meeting the need.

### **Service Provision for the Indigenous Population**

#### ***Aboriginal Rental Housing Program (ARHP)***

ARHP provides affordable rental housing for Aboriginal people in Tasmania. As at 29 February 2000 there were a total of 305 properties throughout Tasmania in the program.

Housing Tasmania manages property and tenancy issues. Three Trainee Aboriginal Customer Services Officers were appointed in late 1998 and early 1999 to assist in the management functions and to provide a more responsive service for Aboriginal applicants and tenants. Three Aboriginal Housing Committees also assist in the management of the Program including input into assessment of applications; allocation of vacant properties; and advice on policy and asset issues.

#### ***Public housing***

Aboriginal people are able to access public housing and as at 30 June 1999 there were 215 principal tenants in public housing who identified as aboriginal.

#### ***Other housing options***

In Tasmania, Aboriginal people are also able to access indigenous community managed housing funded by ATSIC. There are three separate organisations, one on mainland Tasmania, one on Flinders Island and one on Cape Barren Island.

## 6 HEALTH SERVICES

### Measurement of Need

There is not a single or systematic approach to the measurement of need. However, in relation to some services, need is gauged through consultation and service participation rates. A number of services utilise service specific consultation with indigenous groups, including:

- the Cancer Screening and Control service;
- the mutton bird industry; and
- nursing and medical services on Cape Barren and Flinders Islands.

Service participation by Aboriginal people is measured by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and by the Home and Community Care (HACC) program in its annual User Characteristic Survey.

The measurement of the extent to which the needs of Aboriginal people are met through the Department of Health and Human Services' (DHHS) service provision varies greatly between programs and Divisions within DHHS. Some program areas specifically measure Aboriginal people's need whilst other areas consider whole of community factors such as access and waiting times for services.

In 1997, the Prime Minister requested that indicators be developed that measured the performance of mainstream services in meeting the needs of indigenous Australians.

This was considered an important, but difficult, task. Most data on health care services are obtained via administrative collections, of which few distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous users.

The health of indigenous Australians is considerably worse than that of non-indigenous Australians. The mortality rate for indigenous Australians is three times that for the non-indigenous inhabitants. Life expectancy for Aboriginal males is 17 years less than that of non-aboriginal men; the gap for females is slightly wider.<sup>1</sup>

As indicated in the Introduction, Tasmanian data on the utilisation of services by the indigenous population is unreliable and underestimates the utilisation of services by the indigenous population.

An analysis of health care expenditure through publicly subsidised programs revealed that, in 1995-96, expenditure on indigenous persons was \$2,235 per person compared with \$1,554 for non-indigenous Australians. Expenditure through mainstream health care services accounted for 89% of expenditure on health care for indigenous people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deeble, J., Mathers, C., Smith, L., Goss, J., Webb, R. and Smith, V. 1998, Expenditures on Health Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, cat. No. HWE 6, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Canberra.

SAAP services are provided for families and/or individuals and include support, information and counselling, childcare, and accommodation. Accommodation is provided through boarding houses, hostels community houses, rental properties, shelters and refuges. There are no specific Aboriginal services provided by SAAP. However, Aboriginal people are able to access all SAAP services, and SAAP collects information on service usage by Aboriginal people.

Indigenous people represent 8% of all people using SAAP services in Tasmania which is relatively low compared to 37% in the Northern Territory and 27% in Western Australia. However, Tasmania's proportion of indigenous clients represents a high utilisation rate by indigenous people. The indigenous population is only 3.1% of Tasmania's total population.

The following information regarding need is drawn from a national report, the *Homelessness in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context and its possible implications for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program – Final Report*, by Department of Family and Community Services, November 1998.

In regards to SAAP services, nationally collected statistics indicated that Aboriginal clients are more likely to be female (in particular women escaping domestic violence), to be users of crisis/short-term accommodation services, and to use SAAP services for a shorter period of time compared to non-indigenous clients. They are also more likely to be living with family members before and after their period of support from SAAP and more likely to be housed in public housing after their contact with SAAP.

Barriers to use of SAAP services by Aboriginal people include:

- fear or discomfort in using mainstream services (particularly those perceived to be associated with 'welfare');
- fear or reluctance to engage in counselling programs or other activities with which they are unfamiliar;
- perceptions that SAAP services will be unresponsive to their particular needs;
- stigma and 'shame' associated with being homeless or without family support;
- a dislike of the physical design of the accommodation facility;
- distrust of the rules and regulations that operate in some SAAP services or which restrict entry to their service;
- confidentiality issues;
- lack of knowledge of the services available; and
- in some cases, a lack or shortage of SAAP services designed to meet their particular needs.

## **Service provision**

In Tasmania, DHHS provides a range of services to the community including services specifically targeted to indigenous people. As indicated by the dispersion of Tasmania's indigenous population, most services are provided through mainstream activities.

Mainstream services include:

- acute medical services through the three regional hospitals;
- ambulance services;
- public housing and rental assistance;
- community based medical;
- nursing and allied health services;
- public and environmental health services;
- health screening services;
- child and family support services, including domestic violence counselling services,
- mental health services;
- drug and alcohol services;
- dental services;
- sexual health education and counselling;
- palliative care; and
- occupational and accommodation support for people with disabilities.

These services are accessible to people of all ages, including those of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, people with disabilities and those in isolated rural communities across the State.

Some of these services utilise specific strategies to assist Aboriginal people's access to these mainstream services. Examples of this include the following.

- Aboriginal workers in the Alcohol and Drug Service undertaking community counselling, health promotion and community development.
- Aboriginal liaison officers in the Royal Hobart Hospital and the North West Regional Hospital.
- Partnership between the Aboriginal community, the Population and Environmental Health Service and Flinders Island Council to improve food safety awareness within the mutton bird industry.
- Requirements for some service areas to develop and implement specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander equity strategies. For example, special resource material and bus service for breast screening, and a mobile service on Flinders Island.

A number of services/programs target indigenous people. The following highlights those services provided by DHHS to Aboriginal people.

- Community Support Program (CSP) funds mainstream services to provide personal and family counselling, childcare, out of home care and financial counselling. Services are provided through community houses, family support agencies, and other community

based organisations such as Anglicare and Centacare. CSP includes funding to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre to address the specific needs of the Aboriginal community.

- DHHS employ an Aboriginal Health Policy Officer to advise the Department on health related issues.
- A full time community nursing service and visiting medical officer on Cape Barren Island.
- Home and Community Care (HACC), a Commonwealth/State funded program, provides services for frail older people, younger people with disabilities and their carers. The South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation receives \$38,539 in HACC funding to provide a home maintenance service in the south of the State. Wyndarra, in the northwest, receives \$23,936 to provide a range of services including in home respite, home help, transport and personal care.

## **7 EDUCATION**

### **Measurement of need**

#### *Regional Considerations*

There is a common belief that the major issues associated with indigenous education tend to be regional in their nature and this belief is reflected in the terms of reference of the funding inquiry. Challenges are often associated with areas that have high concentrations of indigenous populations. These may be rural, such as remote Northern Territory communities, or urban, such as the high indigenous populations of areas such as Redfern in Sydney.

The regionalisation of problems, however, tends not to be characteristic of the Tasmanian situation. There are three major characteristics of the indigenous sector of the Tasmanian education system, which could be argued as having the most influence. Firstly, the Tasmanian indigenous population is significant, but is dispersed. Secondly, the Tasmanian State education system has only a relatively short history of significant targeted effort in the area of indigenous education. Finally, there are increasing numbers of students acknowledging their indigenous status.

#### *Significant, but dispersed population*

In the *Report on Government Services, 2000* prepared by the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, the proportion of the Tasmanian student population that is identified as indigenous is reported as being on a par with Western Australia and Queensland. After the Northern Territory, these three states have "... relatively high proportions of indigenous students..."

Clearly, the significant difference between Tasmania, WA and QLD is that, in relation to WA and Qld, a significant component of their respective indigenous student populations are located in population centres where indigenous students will dominate school populations. Tasmania, on the other hand, has only one school – on Cape Barren Island with a student population of less than 10 – where indigenous enrolments are dominant.



### ***Indigenous education in Tasmania has only a short history***

It is only in the last decade that it could be said that the Tasmanian State education system has made significant efforts to address the challenges of indigenous education. Prior to that, the indigenous population of Tasmania was poorly recognised and the conduct of specific programs to support them at a State level was rare.

### ***Acknowledging indigenous status***

In recent years there has been difficulty within Tasmania in relation to the application of the Commonwealth's definitions for identification as indigenous. In addition, there has been an increased willingness for students to identify as indigenous. These factors contribute to volatility in statistics regarding indigenous students in Tasmania. Since 1993 the proportion of students in Government schools identified as indigenous students has increased steadily from 3.8% to 5.8% in 1998.

The identification issue is exacerbated by a relatively high degree of mobility amongst the indigenous student population. The process of re-enrolment in a new school is a process that creates the likelihood of changes to the status of a student's indigenous status. Similarly, Tasmania's system of senior secondary colleges, and the associated requirement to move from schools to colleges at the end of year 10 creates more situations where a student's status may change.

### **Tasmanian Programs**

With regards to indigenous education, Tasmania does not, generally, regard itself as having regional challenges and, accordingly, does not focus the development of indigenous education strategies on a regional basis. Tasmania's situation implies that all schools essentially have the potential to be required to service the needs of indigenous students.

Whether it be in relation to a West coast school with a single indigenous enrolment, or an urban Hobart secondary college with 5% of its total enrolment identified as indigenous, the Tasmanian State education system regards its role as ensuring that schools are able to adequately deal with the special requirements of teaching at a school with indigenous enrolments.

Rather than requiring regional strategies, this approach results in a departmental strategy comprising four major components.

### ***Sectoral focus***

Strategies are often based on dealing with the requirements of one of the four key sectoral groups:

- early childhood;
- primary;
- junior secondary; and
- senior secondary.

For example, the *Improving Numeracy for Indigenous Students in Secondary Schools (INISSS)* program is tackling numeracy in junior secondary, *Changing Places* is targeting the primary sector while the *Aboriginal Student Retention* program is focussing on late secondary and senior secondary. The implementation of such programs is done on a Statewide rather than regional basis.

### ***Changing school cultures and pedagogy through curriculum materials and professional development***

Programs are conducted and curriculum and support materials are developed that contribute to the creation of a culture in which the teaching and classroom processes are automatically taking account of the potential for indigenous students (or other minority groups) to be involved.

Professional development programs such as the *Cross Cultural Awareness* workshops are important. Similarly, programs, such as the *INISSS* program, which change the pedagogical style in areas such as literacy and numeracy, are important.

The publication of anti-racism and harassment support materials, general Aboriginal Studies support materials such as *Tasmanian Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum* and the maintenance of a resource centre are examples of the materials and support that are available for schools.

### ***Intervention programs***

Programs will be conducted which target specific areas of concern. The Department has concerns in relation to a range of issues and has implemented programs that specifically target these issues. These issues include:

- concerns regarding the deterioration in educational achievement relativities between indigenous and non-indigenous students from kindergarten to Grade 2 or 3. (Kindergarten checks identify no exceptional need in respect of indigenous students but there is a tendency for performance to deteriorate quickly once formal school commences);
- relatively low retention rates in senior secondary colleges; and
- poor numeracy skills in junior secondary years.

### ***Indigenous cultural programs***

Programs are conducted which improve the awareness amongst indigenous students of their cultural heritage – for example mutton birding on Big Dog Island. In addition, the Department endeavours to include a cultural awareness perspective in any education program that is developed and much of the support material relates to the cultural imperatives.

A comprehensive list of programs being conducted by the Aboriginal Education Unit is included in the attached description of the Activities of that Unit (Attachment 1).

## **RESOURCE ALLOCATION**

### ***Resourcing levels in Tasmania***

The quantum of resourcing for indigenous education in Tasmania cannot be readily calculated. There are certainly discreet pools of money that can be readily identified as funding which contributes directly to the conduct of specific programs. To a large extent in Tasmania, these readily identifiable funds are those which come from the Commonwealth. However, this cannot be interpreted as the full extent of financial support.

The State makes both direct and indirect contributions. The following are some examples of the contributions, which are in addition to identifiable inputs, such as the staff and the physical and administrative infrastructure, that underpin the education system. The examples highlight the difficulties in calculating precise levels of resourcing but also highlight the diversity of inputs:

- The State's general school resourcing principles are focussed on measures of relative disadvantage between schools and the allocation of significant resources on the basis of these relative measures. The disadvantage measures take account of social and geographical indicators.
- The Aboriginal Education Unit is staffed by a mixture of State funded and Commonwealth funded employees and operates as part of an Equity Standards Branch which is essentially State funded.
- The development of general State education initiatives will, where necessary, take account of and include resources for specific indigenous education considerations. For example, plans to incorporate indigenous education resources into the Department's 'Discover' website will require the support of departmental staff to facilitate the necessary web developments. Similarly, the Office for Educational Review undertakes evaluation and review of educational processes and the assessment of student learning outcomes and includes indigenous students in their areas of focus.
- The State makes direct and indirect contributions to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association.

### ***Resource allocation decisions***

Decisions on resource allocation for programs targeted at indigenous students are driven by a range of factors including:

- conditions placed on specific purpose funding from the Commonwealth Government;
- incorporation of indigenous education perspective's into general State Education initiatives;
- maintenance of existing successful programs;
- identification of specific areas of need; and
- constraints associated with the amount of funding that may be available at any particular period of time.

In recent years, the principles of resource allocation have changed significantly. In the past, there was a tendency to focus support on individual students, often with teacher aide support being allocated (and frequently having to follow a student as he or she moved from one location to the next). The Department's approach now is to devote more resources to programs that deal with targeted issues in a range of schools. A common approach is to identify schools which exhibit characteristics that suggest the need for intervention, and to then invite those schools to participate. For example, in its first implementation, the *INISSS* program was targeted at schools which:

- had either large numbers of indigenous students or relatively high proportions of indigenous students,
- recorded poor year 9 testing results; and
- had an Aboriginal Education worker within the school.

A first group of 20 schools was identified and invited to participate. 17 of the schools ultimately joined the program. The size of the targeted group takes account of the amount of resources available and the practicalities of the number of students and teachers who will be involved. The program will be re-run for other groups of schools.

Decisions in relation to the targeting of State programs are generally the responsibility of the Aboriginal Education unit but may also involve higher-level agency decisions.

#### ***Other 'need' issues***

One area where Tasmania has a sense that it is disadvantaged is in the level of access to indigenous adults who can be employed in a professional or semi-professional capacity. Surveys of employees have revealed low levels of staff who identify as indigenous. Despite the fact that the statistics are influenced by the willingness of some to acknowledge their indigenous status, and therefore there are likely to be higher levels than are statistically apparent, this does not help the Department to incorporate indigenous adults into the conduct of programs. Additionally, the Department regards itself as having only limited success in competing with other agencies, particularly the health and police agencies, in attracting indigenous adults into the workforce.

Factors which affect the level of need in Tasmania

#### **Enrolment, Participation and Retention**

##### ***Numbers and proportion of students identified as indigenous students***

Numbers are determined annually and published in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC). Proportions are derived from NSSC data. Data is available in respect of Government schools, non-government schools and State totals.

##### ***Relative shares of total national indigenous student population***

State proportional shares are determined annually and published in the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC). These can be compared with relative shares of total national student population as an indicator of relative need.

### ***Dispersion of indigenous students***

The Department maintains data on a school by school basis of numbers of indigenous students from which proportion figures can be derived. This data supports the assertion that Tasmania's indigenous student population tends to be dispersed rather than regionalised. The attached tables (Attachment 2) illustrate the dispersion of indigenous students within Tasmania, with in excess of 70% of all schools having indigenous enrolments of up to 10% of the total enrolment and 20% of schools having indigenous enrolments of between 10% and 20% of the total enrolment. Only 7 schools in the state have an indigenous student proportion of greater than 20%, and only one of those (Cape Barren with 100% of its seven enrolments) is greater than 30%. Only 12 schools have no indigenous enrolments.

### ***Retention rates***

The Department determines retention rates in respect of indigenous students on an annual basis. (See below in Achievement / Performance Data – IESIP.)

### **Achievement / Performance Data - Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program**

Performance indicators are reported to DETYA annually via the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program (*IESIP Performance Report*). This information should be available to the Grants Commission. Recent reports have included data that have suggested the following trends for Tasmania:

- little difference between the indigenous and non-indigenous rates of students identified at risk at kindergarten level, but increasing problems for the indigenous sector from year 1 onwards;
- less than satisfactory retention rates for indigenous students but with trends which are difficult to rely on, given the inherent effects of re-identification when transitioning from year 10 to 11 and the 'noise' of the recent effects of the Commonwealth's Youth Allowance;
- attendance rates which are deteriorating in real terms and in relative terms when compared to non-indigenous rates;

The 1999 report will shortly be made to DETYA, which will allow better comparisons will be able to be made with data from previous years.

### **Data Quality**

#### ***Tasmanian data***

The quality of data in relation to indigenous students has traditionally been poor. Within Tasmania there is a reasonably high degree of confidence in the base data on the numbers of students and their distribution, but less confidence in analysis which uses this data in measuring relative educational performance.

The major factor influencing the reliability of data is the factor of self-identification and the lack of consistency in this process. The problem manifests itself in two ways: students who do not identify as being indigenous until they have been in the system for a period of time; and students who once identified as being indigenous but who have subsequently decided to not be identified as indigenous.

Identification as an indigenous student is part of the normal enrolment process within Government schools. However, until recently, as students have moved or progressed to new schools the question as to whether or not they are indigenous has always been asked with no knowledge of the student's prior status. Electronic systems are now in place whereby the basic personal details of most students moving schools will be picked up automatically from the previous school. It is assumed that this process will, at least for those who have once identified as being indigenous, increase the likelihood of that identification being retained. It will also assist in the identification of the incidence of students who do not choose to identify as being indigenous until they have been in the education system for a period of time.

It is also evident that different data gathering exercises undertaken by the Department have produced different data on the indigenous student population. For example, data compiled by the Aboriginal Education Unit on individual students has identified a total number of enrolments almost identical to those identified via the Department's formal census process. However, analysis of the actual students reveals that approximately 15% of the students in each of the data collections are unique to those collections.

### *Comparisons with data from other jurisdictions*

With regards to Tasmanian data being compared to data from other jurisdictions, there are commonly held concerns that data gathering and analysis methodologies cannot be relied on as being totally consistent. Tasmania would (and it is assumed that other jurisdictions would) appreciate the opportunity to comment on any specific data set that might be adopted by the Grants Commission as an indicator of relativities between the jurisdictions.

## THE ABORIGINAL EDUCATION UNIT (DoE)

The Aboriginal Education Unit is situated within the Equity Standards Branch of the Department of Education (DoE). The unit assists districts, schools and colleges with the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Strategic Plan 1997-2002.

The function of the unit is:

- To contribute to the implementation of the 'Equity in Schooling' Policy.
- To implement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in DoE schools.
- To devise and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education programs, specific to the Tasmanian schools sector.
- To contribute to the funding, design and management of research into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues.
- To manage Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programs (IESIP), the Vocational and Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS) and other Commonwealth indigenous education funding.

The Unit is managed by the Principal Curriculum Officer (PCO) of Aboriginal Education, with line management to the Director of the Equity Standards Branch.

The unit consists of:

- The PCO of Aboriginal Education located in Hobart with statewide responsibilities.
- Five Senior Curriculum Officers (SCOs) with statewide responsibilities for:
  - Early Childhood Education
  - Literacy
  - Numeracy
  - Retention
  - Aboriginal Studies
  - Cultural Education
  - Cultural Awareness
  - Inclusive Practice
  - VET in Schools for Aboriginal students
  - Transition Programs
- A Librarian located in Hobart with statewide responsibilities.

- Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs) located in all District Support Services and managed by District Support Service Managers.
- Aboriginal Education Workers (AEWs) located in selected kindergartens, primary, high and district high schools.
- Clerical officers located in Hobart and Launceston.

The Aboriginal Education Unit and its programs gain funds from the Commonwealth through the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP) and from the DoE. The DoE provides some staffing, funding and infrastructure. IESIP 'tops up' staffing and provides all programs funding. Funding is on a per capita basis and related to outcomes statements matched against yearly targets.

The unit manages and funds the following programs:
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- Aboriginal Studies curriculum materials for early childhood students.
- Aboriginal Literacy Program in Early Childhood (ALPEC). The aim of this program is to improve the literacy outcomes of Aboriginal students in the preparatory year, year 1 and year 2.
- *'Changing Places: Building Better Schools'* is a program for eleven primary schools. This is a professional development program for teachers and parents to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal students through improving classroom pedagogy, community involvement and developing inclusive practice.
- Aboriginal visiting speakers are organised to support Aboriginal Studies programs in primary schools.
- The Aboriginal Education Resource Centre supports Aboriginal Studies programs.
- *'Implementing Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum'* workshops are conducted for primary schools.
- Improving Numeracy for Indigenous Students in Secondary Schools (INISSS). This is a professional development program for teachers and AEWs in twenty high schools
- An ABSTART program is conducted in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students deemed 'at risk' spend time with a workplace mentor.
- A series of Cultural Education Camps are conducted during the Muttonbirding season on Big Dog Island in Bass Strait. The camps are intended to acquaint Aboriginal students with an important part of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture. Students work in the birding sheds and learn from Aboriginal Elders. Their experiences are linked to their school curriculum on their return to school.
- Aboriginal Student Retention Program (ASRet). The AEOs work primarily with students from years 9-12 with the purpose of retaining these students in education to year 12.
- Aboriginal visiting speakers are organised to support Aboriginal Studies programs in secondary schools and colleges.
- The Aboriginal Education Resource Centre supports Aboriginal Studies in secondary schools and colleges.



- *'Implementing Aboriginal Perspectives Across the Curriculum'* workshops are conducted for secondary schools and colleges.
- Aboriginal Education manages a VET in Schools support program for all secondary colleges in Tasmania.
  - The SCOs in Aboriginal Education provide an information base for the development of Aboriginal Studies. The officers are available to work with schools to support their Aboriginal Studies program.
- The Aboriginal Education Resource Centre provides a wide range of services statewide including:
  - The loan of books, videos, audio cassettes, CDs and CD Roms
  - Research service
  - Collection development service
  - Preparation of bibliographies

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- A Visiting Speakers Program provides Aboriginal Elders, artists and artisans to work with students and teachers. The Aboriginal Education Unit and schools share the cost. The program is managed by an SCO.
- An extensive number of Cross Cultural Awareness Courses are conducted throughout the year.

## **VET IN SCHOOLS**

- The unit manages a project across all six school districts which encourages retention of Aboriginal students in years 9-12 and which highlights to these students and their communities the fact that staying on to years 11 and 12 is important. It also highlights that colleges have programs to offer all students and in particular that VET programs may offer useful and appropriate pathways to further education, to further vocational programs or to employment.

## **Community Liaison**

- AEOs work with schools, students and parents in all school districts. Contact the District Support Service Managers for assistance.
- The PCO works with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (TAEA), an elected community body, to gain advice on all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. TAEA is the Minister's advisory body.
- The Aboriginal Education Unit acts as an agent for Reconciliation in Tasmania in relation to DoE schools and colleges. The PCO is a member of the State Reconciliation Committee.

**ATTAC** *Distribution of Indigenous Students across*  
**HMENT** *school types*  
**2**

**Based on August 1999 enrolment data.**

**Numbers of Schools with proportion of Indigenous students**

	College	High	District	Pri
0%	0	0	2	
0% to 10%	8	25	17	
10% to 20%	0	7	5	
20% to 30%	0	0	3	
30%+	0	0	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>27</b>	

**Proportion of school population that is indigenous**

**Relative shares within school types**

	College	High	District	Pri
0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	
0% to 10%	100.0%	78.1%	63.0%	7
10% to 20%	0.0%	21.9%	18.5%	2
20% to 30%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1%	
30%+	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>10</b>

**Proportion of school population that is indigenous**

**Overall relative shares across all schools**

	College	High	District	Pri
0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	
0% to 10%	3.6%	11.3%	7.7%	4
10% to 20%	0.0%	3.2%	2.3%	1
20% to 30%	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%	

30%+	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3.6%</b>	<b>14.5%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>

	<b>College</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Pri</b>
Schools without indigenous enrolments - count	-	-	2	
Schools with indigenous enrolments - count	8	32	25	
Schools without indigenous enrolments - percentage	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	
Schools with indigenous enrolments - percentage	100.0%	100.0%	92.6%	9
Maximum proportion of enrolment who are indigenous	7.2%	16.0%	27.7%	10
Average proportion who are indigenous (in schools with indigenous students)	3.9%	6.1%	7.8%	