Review of Aboriginal Education

Chapter 2

Ngalan-waru-maana Gurundi
Miindalaygam NSW-a

Support for Aboriginal Education in New South Wales
The translation of *Support for Aboriginal Education in NSW* in the Gumbaynggir language is

*Together up-hold Goories’ learning in NSW*
Support for Aboriginal Education in New South Wales

This chapter outlines recent policy development in, and current systemic service provision for, Aboriginal education and training in New South Wales. Considerable effort and initiative have been expended in supporting Aboriginal education and there is little doubt this has helped improve student outcomes in a range of areas. The issue becomes one of how to raise these levels to equalise outcomes for Aboriginal students within the next 10 years.

Aboriginal education policies

In 1982 the Aboriginal Education Unit of the (then) New South Wales Department of Education, developed the first New South Wales *Aboriginal Education Policy* (AEP) in partnership with the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (NSW AECG Inc). The *Aboriginal Education Policy* was aimed at educating Aboriginal students, involving Aboriginal communities and promoting culturally appropriate teaching.

The *Aboriginal Education Policy* did not become mandatory until 1987. A large number of schools expressed the view that the policy did not apply to them as they had few or no Aboriginal students and/or community. In 1996 the NSW AECG and the New South Wales Department of Education rewrote the *Aboriginal Education Policy* to focus on Aboriginal student outcomes, educating all students about Aboriginal Australia and implementing mandatory annual school reporting of progress. This policy was developed for all students, all staff and all schools in New South Wales.

*The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy* (NATSIEP) 1990 committed all Australian governments to work towards educational equity for Aboriginal Australians. Since 1993, in support of the NATSIEP, the Australian Government has provided supplementary funding for Aboriginal education to all states. The NATSIEP recognises the importance of Aboriginal community involvement and funding has been introduced to support programs for this purpose.

The NATSIEP was reviewed in 1995 and led to the development of the *National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2002*. In 1997 all State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers agreed on a national goal which stated that every child leaving primary school should be numerate and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level. The NATSIEP has 21 long-term goals and 4 major goals which include:

- involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making
- equality of access to education services
- equity of education participation
- equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.
Partnership with the NSW AECG

Partnerships between Aboriginal people and organisations have become an accepted part of government policy and the preferred way to do business with Aboriginal people. Such partnerships acknowledge that the greater the involvement of Aboriginal people determining the nature, pace and objectives of change, the more likely it will be that the changes will be effective and sustainable.

The New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) was established in 1976 with the mandate to provide Aboriginal community advice on Aboriginal education from early childhood through to schooling, to tertiary and community education, and to education providers at local, regional and state levels. Over more than 20 years, the NSW AECG and the Department of Education and Training have developed a close partnership. In 1999 the Department of Education and Training and the NSW AECG signed an agreement to formalise this partnership called Securing a collaborative partnership into the future: Consolidating a 21-year working relationship.

Government commitments to Aboriginal education and training

In 1975 an Aboriginal Education Unit was established by the (then) Department of School Education, and in 1979 an Aboriginal Education Program was developed by the then Department of Technical and Further Education. In 1997, following the amalgamation of the Department of School Education and the Department of Technical and Further Education, the newly formed New South Wales Department of Education and Training established the Aboriginal Programs Unit.

The Aboriginal Programs Unit is responsible for providing advice on Aboriginal education and training in New South Wales. It is responsible for the provision of specialist support to schools and TAFE NSW Institutes. However, Aboriginal education is the responsibility of many sectors within the Department, systemically and through to the classroom level.

The Aboriginal Programs Unit is currently part of the Aboriginal Education and Equity Programs Directorate, under the leadership of the Director, Aboriginal Education and Equity Programs. The Unit’s role is to:

- provide a strategic framework for the development of statewide policies for Aboriginal education and training
- provide leadership, advocacy and advice in relation to education and training for Aboriginal students and communities
- undertake and manage research projects as they relate to Aboriginal students and curriculum programs and resources
- develop culturally appropriate and relevant curriculum and resources to improve educational outcomes
- implement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Policies for school education and Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- support the professional development of Aboriginal education workers and targeted Departmental staff
• promote services and programs for Aboriginal education within New South Wales.

Current funding arrangements

Through separate agreements with the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the Aboriginal Programs Unit negotiates, administers and monitors funding for Aboriginal education in New South Wales through the following funding programs:

• Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP): This program (through a quadrennial agreement from 2001 to 2004) is one of the Australian Government’s major Aboriginal education programs under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. IESIP funds are provided to the Department of Education and Training based on the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in New South Wales Government preschools, schools and TAFE NSW Institutes and campuses. The initial 2003/2004 DET budget allocated $16.6 million for the schooling sector and $4.8 million for the TAFE NSW sector from IESIP supplementary recurrent funding.

• National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS): This agreement has provided around $3 million to the Department of Education and Training to implement initiatives for Aboriginal students from Kindergarten to Year 12 to improve literacy, numeracy, attendance and retention from 2001 to 2004.

• Vocational Education Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme (VEGAS): This scheme supports two major programs in New South Wales, the Learning Works Program and the Aboriginal Career Aspirations Program (ACAP). The Australian Government provided $0.85 million from 2001 to 2003 to support the Learning Works Program and $0.5 million from 2000 to 2002 to support ACAP. Learning Works is the largest vocational education and training program in Australia to improve education, training and employment outcomes of Aboriginal students in Years 9 to 12. It is also designed to re-engage young Aboriginal people who are currently outside of the education, training and employment sectors. The Aboriginal Careers Aspiration Program aims to provide a smoother transition from Year 6 to Year 7 and a broader range of employment pathways through a school-delivered career educational program.

• Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS): Through this scheme the Australian Government will provide approximately $4.6 million in 2004 to employ tutors from Aboriginal communities in more than 100 schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal students Kindergarten to Year 6.

The NSW DET Aboriginal Education Initiatives Plan contributes around $3.1 million annually to the Aboriginal Programs Unit to support administration, teaching positions and some Aboriginal Education Assistant salaries. It also includes around $1 million for state-level initiatives for programs such as School
Education Area support for Aboriginal field staff, personnel services employment programs and professional learning and curriculum development.

The Aboriginal Programs Unit, which comprises 31 positions, is led by a Manager (Chief Education Officer) and incorporates the following seven specialised teams:

- Executive Team (3)
- School Educational Programs Team (6)
- TAFE Educational Programs Team (4)
- Training and Promotions Team (3)
- Aboriginal Studies Team (4)
- Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Team (4)
- Administration (5) and Finance Team (2).

**Schools sector**

The Department of Education and Training, in partnership with Aboriginal communities and through its Aboriginal Programs Unit, has made significant ground in improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in New South Wales Government schools:

- While Aboriginal students’ results in the Basic Skills Test for Year 3 and Year 5 Literacy and Numeracy have improved, they are still, on average, well below non-Aboriginal students’ results.
- preschool Aboriginal enrolments have increased
- 11 Aboriginal preschools for Aboriginal students have been established in Aboriginal communities to provide culturally appropriate programs in consultation with their local Aboriginal community
- *Science in Context for Aboriginal Students* has developed teaching and learning programs specifically for Aboriginal students in partnership with the Australian National University that relate to skills, knowledge and experiences of the local Aboriginal community
- *Student Leadership is for Koori Kids* has developed the leadership skills of Aboriginal high school students
- local Aboriginal community members are involved in the delivery of Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Languages programs in schools.

The Aboriginal Programs Unit’s School Education Programs Team, Aboriginal Studies Team and Training and Promotions Team coordinate statewide programs to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal students from preschool to Year 12 and to educate all students and all staff about Aboriginal Australia and its history. The teams have also:

- developed program guidelines, culturally appropriate and relevant resources and training packages for schools, targeting all stages of development from preschool to Year 12 including Vocational Education and Training programs for high schools
- developed resources to support Aboriginal perspectives across all key learning areas including resources for Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Languages
• provided curriculum advice and training and development to Aboriginal staff, consultants, schools and community people at the school, region and state level
• liaised with the NSW AECG to ensure that Aboriginal communities are consulted in program development and delivery, and that Aboriginal people are involved in decision-making
• worked closely with the New South Wales Office of the Board of Studies, Primary Principals’ Association, Secondary Principals’ Council and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Services Advisory Group
• coordinated Aboriginal cultural awareness and anti-racism training across all levels of the Department
• assisted in the development of teaching and learning programs for Aboriginal school-aged young people in custody
• worked with regional staff to coordinate a statewide approach for training for Aboriginal tutors and Aboriginal education workers in schools
• developed training packages and resources for schools to provide training and workshops for Aboriginal parents and caregivers.

The executive staff of the Aboriginal Programs Unit (APU) represent NSW DET on numerous national, state, regional and local area committees that have an Aboriginal educational focus and that require specialist participation and negotiation for schools and VET.

Aboriginal field staff are critical to the implementation of policies and practices at the local and regional level, and to the success of programs and services. The current Aboriginal field staff positions include:

• Consultant, Aboriginal Education (CAE – 11 positions): These consultants work across a school region providing advice and support to schools on the implementation of education, equity and anti-racism policies and programs and specialist support to schools with Aboriginal students. They assist in providing professional support for Aboriginal educators such as Aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers.
• Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher (AERT – 23 positions): These are teaching positions. AERTs team-teach with teachers in the Aboriginal Language Development Program operating across 24 schools and support Aboriginal Education Assistants in the classroom (Kindergarten to Year 2 or Kindergarten to Year 6) focusing on literacy. They contribute to developing culturally relevant teaching programs including Aboriginal perspectives in each curriculum area.
• Resource Teacher, Aboriginal (RTA – 5 positions): RTAs promote and assist the development of language communication and literacy and numeracy skills of Aboriginal students. They provide advice on the selection of instructional teaching resources and promote positive educational attitudes for Aboriginal students through promoting regular study, attendance and involvement in sporting and leisure activities. Some RTAs also assist with the transition of Aboriginal students from preschool to Kindergarten, from Year 6 to Year 7, and from school to work, and liaise with agencies that provide services for Aboriginal students and families.
• Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer (ACLO – 31 positions): ACLOs operate across the state to promote understanding between Aboriginal communities and schools. They promote community knowledge of and access to Departmental resources, facilities and personnel and inform Departmental field staff about the protocols and knowledge of local Aboriginal communities. ACLOs also maintain strong links between schools and local and regional AECGs.

• Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer (ASLO – 11 positions): ASLOs work with community and schools to support the regular attendance of Aboriginal students by visiting schools to monitor attendance and liaising with principals on non-attendance issues. They provide support to Aboriginal parents including home visits. They also liaise with Department of Community Services staff and representatives from other organisations relevant to communities, families and students.

• Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs): There are 320 Aboriginal Education Assistants (206 IESIP funded, 114 state funded) operating in schools across the state. The prime responsibilities of AEAs are to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students by working with teachers and to develop partnerships with students, Aboriginal parents, community and local AECGs.

This network of Aboriginal education support staff across New South Wales has supported Aboriginal education initiatives, programs and services at the local, regional and state level.

Examples of positive initiatives, services and programs impacting widely on schools include:

Through IESIP funds

• **Aboriginal Targeted Funding Program**, consisting of notional funding to School Education Areas (formerly Districts) from IESIP: More than 40 District Aboriginal Education Advisory Committees, using guidelines devised by the Aboriginal Programs Unit operate in New South Wales and comprise School Education Areas staff and Aboriginal community representatives who identify schools to receive Aboriginal targeted funding to support literacy and numeracy programs and attendance and retention initiatives from Kindergarten to Year 12 ($3 440 900 was distributed in 2004.)

• Cultural funds of $5000 are distributed to each School Education Area for all schools to gain Aboriginal cultural experiences.

• **Aboriginal Student Leadership Programs**: These include positive student leadership programs for Aboriginal high school students; the establishment of positions for Aboriginal students on the New South Wales Student Representative Council; and opportunities for Student Mentor Programs.
Through NIELNS funds

- **Otitis Media Strategy**: This strategy is aimed at increasing teachers’ and parents’ understanding of otitis media and services to support students with otitis media. The strategy assists in providing processes to establish local working parties and partnerships between health and education workers, including Aboriginal community members, and to develop local resources.

- **Home to School Transition Program**: This is a program that is provided for Aboriginal students who do not have access to a preschool. The program supplements and expands existing preschool services. It has funded the employment of a teacher and an Aboriginal Education Worker at 10 locations across the state in areas of high need, in each year from 2001 to 2004, to operate an educational program that focuses on the further development of literacy, numeracy and social skills, while ensuring the students gain an understanding of the operation of schools. Parent awareness is also a major component of the program.

- **Bidialectal Approach to Teaching Standard Australian English**: This program is designed to increase teachers’ understanding of Aboriginal English and to improve Aboriginal students’ understanding of the use of language for specific purposes. Training for teachers and Aboriginal communities is provided and school/community resources are developed.

- **Numeracy Strategy**: The purpose of this strategy is to improve numeracy outcomes for Aboriginal students through *Maths in Context for Aboriginal Students, Count Me In Too* and *Counting On* training for Aboriginal Education Assistants, a *Numeracy Awareness Training Package* for Aboriginal parents and community members, and the dissemination of good practice in programs, teaching and curriculum for numeracy.

**Curriculum development**

- **Our Story, Telling IT**: This multimedia education program is designed to assist primary and secondary Aboriginal students, teachers and Aboriginal Education Assistants to collect, store, organise and publish information and images with the aim of producing a multimedia product such as a website or CD-ROM that tells stories about the local Aboriginal community.

**Aboriginal teachers**

- **Employment and Career Development Programs**: This is a priority employment and transfer program for Aboriginal teachers. An *Aboriginal Mentor Program, Aboriginal Career Pathways Program* and the Bachelor of Education (Secondary) – Indigenous Studies component are also offered as part of this program.

**Vocational education and training sector**

In recent years TAFE NSW has continually increased the overall Aboriginal student enrolment numbers, completion rates and award levels in vocational education and training. The number of enrolments by Aboriginal people in TAFE NSW has grown by 25 percent, from 15 715 in 1999 to 19 632 in 2003. TAFE
NSW has also developed accredited Vocational Education and Training in-school courses for Year 11 and 12 students that are aligned with the National Training Framework and provide dual qualification for the students.

The Aboriginal Programs Unit’s TAFE Educational Programs Team is responsible for the coordination of statewide policies, programs, courses and resources to improve education and training outcomes for Aboriginal students in TAFE NSW. Its role is also to develop curriculum and teaching and learning resources to support TAFE NSW Institutes, Aboriginal field staff, teaching staff and Aboriginal students. This includes the identification of demands and trends in curriculum and resource development, including National Training Packages that impact on Aboriginal student learning needs.

The work of the Aboriginal Programs Unit is underpinned by several state and national strategies and plans; in particular, the state vocational education and training plan for Aboriginal communities, *New Partners, New Learning, New South Wales*. This state plan reflects the priorities of the national Aboriginal vocational education and training strategy, *Partners in a Learning Culture*. The introduction of the national strategy, *Shaping Our Future*, in 2004 has seen a heightened focus on economic development, resulting in a shift in the direction of the team. The TAFE Educational Programs Team also works in line with the Board of Vocational Education and Training’s NSW Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and TAFE NSW Strategic Directions.

The role and structure of the TAFE Educational Programs Team is determined by a number of priorities:

- increasing Australian Qualification Framework levels and improving the articulation between levels
- improving completion rates of Aboriginal students and improving pathways from education into employment
- forging new learning alliances with communities, industry and other sectors
- increasing culturally inclusive resources and curricula
- working together to improve social, economic, cultural and educational development for Aboriginal people and communities
- developing new modules that address gaps in existing training packages.

The TAFE Educational Programs Team relies on close working relationships with a range of Departmental stakeholders such as TAFE NSW Curriculum Centres through their Program Managers; TAFE NSW Institute Aboriginal Development Managers and Aboriginal Coordinators; other teaching staff; and Aboriginal students within TAFE NSW. The team also liaises with external stakeholders such as Industry Skills Councils (previously Industry Training Advisory Bodies); industry groups and representatives; community groups and representatives; government departments; and non-government organisations, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.

In line with the New South Wales Government’s commitment to partnerships and a holistic approach to improving outcomes, the TAFE Educational Programs Team
has secured partnership agreements with key organisations. These agreements include:

- Memorandum of Understanding between TAFE NSW Commission and the NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
- Memorandum of Understanding between TAFE NSW Commission and Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Memorandum of Understanding between TAFE NSW Commission and NSW Aboriginal Housing Office
- TAFE NSW Provision for Aboriginal Offenders Implementation Plan 2004–2005 (New South Wales Department of Education and Training and New South Wales Department of Corrective Services)
- NSW Department of Corrective Services and TAFE NSW Commission Memorandum of Understanding 2002–2005

The team supports a network of Aboriginal officers operating across 10 regional areas. The current Aboriginal TAFE NSW staff include:

- Aboriginal Development Managers (ADM – 11 positions): The ADM is responsible for strategically coordinating and promoting Aboriginal education and training initiatives across their Institute, as well as supervising their respective staff from the Aboriginal Education and Training Unit. ADMs monitor, lead and direct the agenda on Aboriginal education in TAFE NSW.
- Aboriginal Coordinators (AC – 28 positions): The AC assists in the development and implementation of Aboriginal education policies and programs within their Institute and liaises with the local Aboriginal community, government departments and other community organisations to inform them of any new developments by their Institute.
- Aboriginal Student Support Officers (ASSO – 19 positions): The ASSO is generally responsible for providing Aboriginal students in TAFE NSW with advice, support services and referrals to assist students with their studies.

The TAFE Educational Programs Unit has contributed to the development and implementation of such strategies and programs as:

- Murrin Bridge Wine Project
- Australia Post Pre-employment Training Program
- development of apprenticeships/traineeships for Aboriginal people across the state
- development and delivery of TAFE NSW programs and courses for Aboriginal people in correctional services
- educational centres of excellence within Institutes.

The TAFE Educational Programs Team has developed a number of accredited courses specifically for Aboriginal people in partnership with key Aboriginal
organisations such as Aboriginal Land Councils, local community organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in the areas of Property Management, Community Night Patrols, Cultural Site Preservations, Families, Health and Indigenous Organisation Management. Twelve Statement of Attainment courses have been developed specifically for Aboriginal people along with three Certificate I level courses, seven Certificate II courses, ten Certificate III courses, five Certificate IV courses, four Diploma level courses, and one Advanced Diploma course. A number of accredited courses with Aboriginal content have also been developed by the TAFE Educational Programs Team.

Examples of current programs include:

*Deadly Bay: Open for Work*

*Deadly Bay: Open for Work* is a multimedia learning resource for young Aboriginal people, consisting of a CD-ROM, workbook and teachers notes. The aim of the resource is to develop the language, literacy and numeracy skills required to demonstrate key competencies in the context of six industries – Business Services, Horticulture, Community Recreation, Seafood, Hospitality and Tourism. The resource is based on meaningful, activity-based learning approaches.

*Information Technology for Aboriginal Women*

Two enrichment modules have been developed to be delivered with the national Certificate II in Information Technology, catering for Aboriginal women as learners. The modules provide a framework for contextualising delivery around Aboriginal perspectives on IT and include a strong focus on IT-related work opportunities available to Aboriginal women.

*Indigenous Organisational Training*

The Indigenous Organisational Training is based on the delivery of Certificate IV and Diploma in Business (Governance) to the Board members and Management of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) organisations in New South Wales.

*Interagency initiatives*

The Department of Education and Training is involved at the regional level in a number of key government strategies linking schools and families with health, welfare and family support programs at the regional level, such as:

- *Families First* is the New South Wales Government’s prevention and early intervention strategy to help parents give their children a good start in life. It is delivered jointly by five government agencies – New South Wales Health and Area Health Services, Community Services, Education and Training, Housing and Ageing, Disability and Home Care – in partnership with parents, community organisations and local government.
- *Better Families Regional Strategy* has been developed and funded by the New South Wales Government in order to achieve better outcomes for
young people in New South Wales by improving how communities and services support young people and respond to their needs.

- *The Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy (ACYFS)* is an initiative of the New South Wales Government to support Aboriginal parents, families and communities who are raising children under 18 years of age. This strategy will be progressed within the *Families First* and *Better Futures* policy frameworks, while recognising the need to establish partnerships with Aboriginal communities to address a broad range of issues that impact on people’s lives.

The NSW Department of Education and Training is represented on a number of state and national advisory bodies focusing on Aboriginal education and training, such as:

- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs’ Taskforce on Indigenous Education, Employment, Training and Youth: This advisory body provides policy advice on Aboriginal education and training issues including cross-sectoral matters with the aim of enhancing outcomes for Australia’s Aboriginal people.
- Australian National Training Authority’s Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council: This advisory body is the national council for quality assurance and partnership initiatives for Aboriginal education.

The Department of Education and Training also liaises with independent Aboriginal education and training providers in New South Wales that offer an alternative in education and training for Aboriginal people. Examples of Aboriginal providers include: Tranby College in Glebe; Booroongen Djugun in Kempsey; and the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association in Sydney. These organisations have developed localised practices, programs and services aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal people of all ages.

For a number of years the Department of Education and Training has convened an Aboriginal Education and Training Advisory Committee to provide specialist support and high-level policy advice to the Director-General. The advice covers the full range of Aboriginal education and training from preschool to higher education. The committee includes representatives from the New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs, NSW AECG, New South Wales Office of the Board of Studies, Primary Principals Association, Secondary Principals Council, senior Departmental representatives, New South Wales Teachers Federation and the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training.

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training is a lead agency involved in the development of the new Aboriginal Affairs Plan for New South Wales, *Two Ways Together*. The Department considers its involvement in the development of this landmark plan to be one of the highlights in Aboriginal education and training in recent years. The new Aboriginal Affairs Plan will guide the way in which the New South Wales Government does business with Aboriginal people over the next 10 years.
The Plan provides a framework for building stronger and more effective partnerships between the New South Wales Government and Aboriginal communities to address the social disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people.

As part of the *Two Ways Together* process, the Department of Education and Training has led a cluster working group of key government agencies to address priority areas, set targets and monitor progress on Aboriginal education and training. *Two Ways Together* will assist the Department in providing for a more coordinated response and flexible approach to delivering services to Aboriginal people and students at both a regional and local level, and for the participation of Aboriginal people in decisions about how services are delivered in Aboriginal education and training.

The State Government has provided DET with around $1.4 million in 2004/2005 to support the Youth Excel and Scholarships components of *Two Ways Together*.

**Murdi Paaki COAG Trial**

In April 2002 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to trial working together with Aboriginal communities in up to 10 selected regions in Australia to provide more flexible programs and services based on priorities agreed with communities. In August 2003 a Shared Responsibility Agreement for the New South Wales Trial was signed.

The trial is taking place in the Murdi Paaki ATSIC region. This region includes the following 16 communities: Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Cobar, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Dareton, Enngonia, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Walgett, Weilmoringle and Wilcannia. A Shared Responsibility Agreement will be made between each of the 16 communities and Australian and State Governments. These agreements will:

- provide a basis for cooperation and partnership
- focus on priorities identified by communities based on the New South Wales Agreement
- identify outcomes agreed between communities and governments.

The Steering Committee formed for the Murdi Paaki COAG Trial consists of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), the Murdi Paaki Regional Council and the New South Wales Departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Education and Training (DET). While DEST and DET play a coordinating role, relevant agencies will be required to participate in the development and implementation of Shared Responsibility Agreements across the 16 communities.

The New South Wales Agreement focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people; improving educational attainment and school retention; helping families to raise healthy children; and strengthening community and regional governance structures.
A team of officers from DEST, DET and the Murdi Paaki ATSIC Regional Council has commenced negotiations with some Community Working Parties and government agencies based on community plans and identified priority areas.

Local agreements will be developed with all 16 Community Working Parties to address issues at an individual community level. These agreements will outline the basis for service delivery in the 16 sites.

**Future developments**

The Australian Government through DEST is currently negotiating quadrennial agreements across all states and territories with regard to Commonwealth Indigenous Education Funding for the period from 2005 to 2008.

Of the $2100 million to be provided nationally over four years:

- $641.6 million is for *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives* (IESIP)
- $280.9 million is for *Indigenous Education Direct Assistance* (IEDA)
- $905.3 million is for *ABSTUDY*
- $110.1 million is for *Away From Base* (AWB) *Assistance*
- $121.3 million is for *Indigenous Support Funding* (ISF).

The precise impact on New South Wales Government schools and TAFE NSW funding from the Australian Government has not been identified at this stage and will be subject to the Principles of Reform that will underpin the forthcoming agreement.

**Principles of Reform**

The Principles of Reform that accompany the Australian Government’s funding provision over the 2005 to 2008 quadrennial include:

- **Redirect of Existing Resources to Initiatives that Work.**
  - The proposal to include IESIP and IEDA funding under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted) Assistance* legislation should:
    - Formalise IESIP and IEDA funding provision for the quadrennial.
    - Commit DEST to long term funding provision.
    - Give long term funding expectation to schools.
    - Enable the interchange of IESIP and IEDA funding to give more emphasis to IEDA programs such as In Class Tuition.

- **Greater Weighting of Resources to Students of Greatest Disadvantage – Those in Remote Areas.**
  - Students in newly designated Remote, Rural/Provincial Areas and Metropolitan preschools will attract increased per capita funding based on escalation to reflect the Wage Cost Index following the application of the 2001 ABS Census.
  - Other student per capita rates will remain at the relevant 2004 level thus releasing IESIP funds for other initiatives.
• **Commitment to Improve Mainstream Service Provision to Indigenous Education.**
  o New performance measures will be tied to funding through the range of Indigenous Education Agreements.
  o Annual *Indigenous Education Statements (IES)* will be required from States/territories.
  o Systems will be required to report on how mainstream funding is expected to improve Indigenous education outcomes.

• **Strengthened Monitoring, Reporting and Accountability Framework.**
  o Systems will be required to agree to performance indicators and targets on Indigenous education outcomes and attendance.
  o Systems must agree to the monitoring of their performance and expenditure, and to report against the agreed performance indicators and targets.
  o States/territories must transparently report:
    • Their expected and actual expenditure on Indigenous education from their own resources; and
    • Provide for Australian Government intervention in the case of underperformance against agreed indicators or for failure to report.