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Aboriginal
and
Torres Strait
Islander
Education
Policy*

*Joint Policy
Statement*



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as endorsed by the governments of:
The Commonwealth of Australia
The State of New South Wales
The State of Queensland
The State of South Australia
The State of Tasmania
The State of Victoria
The State of Western Australia
Australian Capital Territory
Northern Territory

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Foreword

Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are the indigenous peoples of Australia. Their distinctive cultures are a rich and important part of the nation's living heritage.

The historically-developed education processes of Aboriginal* culture have been eroded in many communities for a variety of reasons. The education arrangements and procedures established from non-Aboriginal traditions have not adequately recognised and accommodated the particular needs and circumstances of Aboriginal people.

Not only have Aboriginal people been consequently disadvantaged, but Australian society generally has not come to understand and appreciate the significance of Aboriginal culture.

The Australian Government is a signatory to several international covenants recognising international standards for the protection of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights.

Education is fundamental in enabling Aboriginal people to exercise their rights and participate fully in Australian society.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy represents a co-operative effort to develop more effective processes for the education of Aboriginal people.

** throughout this statement the term Aboriginal should be taken to include Torres Strait Islander.*

1 Introduction

1.1 The need for a National Policy

1.1.1 The need for a *national* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy arises from:

- long-expressed educational aspirations of Aboriginal people that have as yet not been realised;
- persisting low levels of education participation and attainment of Aboriginal people;
- deficiencies in the provision and quality of educational services for Aboriginal people;
- the joint responsibilities of the governments of the States and Territories and the Commonwealth for the provision of educational services for Aboriginal people;
- inadequate coordination between State and Territory and Commonwealth, and non-government, education providers in respect of policies and programs for Aboriginal education; and
- a shared understanding that most of the current deficiencies can be rectified — though not by any one government acting alone, and not immediately; but only through cooperative, long-term strategies.

1.1.2 Australians generally expect that policies and programs will be developed by the governments of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, to overcome the economic and social disadvantages of Aboriginal Australians, help them to maintain their distinctive cultures, and enable them to achieve full recognition and status within the nation.

1.1.3 The need for a national policy to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Aboriginal people is predicated upon the principles of social justice, equity, economic efficiency and cost-effective service delivery. It is also based upon the acceptance and valuing of cultural diversity.

1.2 Foundations of the Policy

1.2.1 Aboriginal education needs have been addressed in several reports produced in recent years, all of which have been based on extensive consultation with Aboriginal people and education providers. These include:

- The Report on Aboriginal Education in 1985 by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs;
- reports of the National Aboriginal Education Committee:
 - Funding priorities for Aboriginal Education in 1984;
 - Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal Education in 1985;
 - Policy Statement on Tertiary Education for Aborigines in 1986;
 - Policy Statement on Teacher Education for Aborigines in 1986; and

- various reports on education provision in the States and Territories drawing attention to the particular needs of Aboriginal people.

1.2.2 The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (chaired by Mick Miller) of 1985 also made recommendations concerning the need to underpin policies for Aboriginal employment and economic development with a concerted effort to develop Aboriginal education and training policies and programs. The Commonwealth addressed some of the major Aboriginal education issues, especially at the post-schooling level, with the establishment of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy during 1986 and 1987.

1.2.3 In 1988 the Commonwealth established an Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (chaired by Paul Hughes) to draw together the main findings of all of those reports with a view to developing a comprehensive long-term approach to Aboriginal education policy.

1.2.4 **The Task Force found that Aboriginal people remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia. The Task Force made specific recommendations about the need to develop a national Aboriginal Education Policy to redress the educational inequalities faced by Aboriginal people.**

1.2.5 **The Task Force reported in the following terms:**

“Australians take it for granted, as an inalienable right of citizens of this country, that their children will receive at least 10 years of education, as well as the benefits of early childhood education. However, these fundamental rights have not been extended to all Aboriginal families. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that in the compulsory school years, 1 in 8 Aboriginal children aged 5 to 9 years do not go to school or pre-school, and for those aged 10 to 15 years an appalling 1 in 6 do not have access to appropriate schooling. Moreover, access to and participation in education for Aborigines beyond the age of 15, whether in senior secondary school, technical and further education or higher education, remains at unacceptably low levels — generally at rates some 3 to 5 times lower than for the community as a whole.”

1.2.6 The Task Force called for the development of a national policy “to achieve broad equity between Aboriginal people and other Australians in access, participation and outcomes in all forms of education by the turn of the century.”

1.2.7 The Task Force stressed that “the most challenging issue of all is to ensure education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity.”

1.2.8 The Task Force stated that “a new approach to Aboriginal education can only succeed if the Aboriginal community is fully involved in determining the policies and programs that are intended to provide appropriate education for their community.”

1.3 The process of policy development

1.3.1 In October 1988, the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training announced that a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy would be jointly developed by the States and Territories and the Commonwealth during 1989. All States and Territories indicated their willingness to participate in this approach.

- 1.3.2 An Aboriginal Reference Group, chaired by Lynette Crocker, and comprising a deputy chair and the chairs of each State and Territory Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, was formed to ensure Aboriginal input to the policy development process. The Reference Group also includes a representative of the Torres Strait Islands and an Aboriginal representative of the Australian Teachers Federation.
- 1.3.3. In developing the policy, consultative workshops were conducted with Aboriginal community representatives in each State and Territory, involving a total of several hundred Aboriginal people. A special workshop was conducted on Thursday Island.
- 1.3.4 Discussions were also undertaken at senior officer level between Commonwealth and State and Territory education authorities, non-government providers and individual institutions.
- 1.3.5 Participants in the policy development process reaffirmed the main conclusions reached by the Hughes Task Force, and highlighted the importance of:
- achieving equality of educational opportunity and improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal people;
 - gaining full acceptance of, and respect for Aboriginal culture and identity, including measures to combat racism and to extend the teaching of Aboriginal studies;
 - maintaining and developing Aboriginal languages and further developing bi-lingual and bi-cultural programs;
 - sensitising teachers and educational decision-makers to the need to adapt curriculum and teaching methods to the varying circumstances of Aboriginal students; and, in particular,
 - involving Aboriginal people in decisions regarding policies and programs for Aboriginal education.
- 1.3.6 An education policy was sought which, in harmony with employment development policies, would enable Aboriginal people to pursue their own goals in community development, cultural maintenance, self-management and economic independence.

2 Purpose of the National Policy

2.1 Responding to Aboriginal needs and aspirations

- 2.1.1 The fundamental purpose of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is to develop appropriate ways of responding effectively and sensitively to the educational needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. This requires an holistic approach, under the guidance of Aboriginal people, to achieve educational equity while accommodating cultural difference and recognising socio-economic disadvantage.
- 2.1.2 Aboriginal people, as do other Australians, hold diverse individual and social expectations of, and commitments to, formal education systems. These reflect, in part, the history of Aboriginal experience of education and, also, the different choices Aboriginal people make in balancing their participation in mainstream economic and social life with their desire to maintain Aboriginal cultural values and lifestyles.
- 2.1.3 Numerous reviews, inquiries and consultations conducted in recent years have all demonstrated that Aboriginal people place a high priority on education. They want for themselves and their children no less by way of educational opportunity than is afforded to all Australians. They expect that educational processes should lead them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to realise their individual potential, lead satisfying lives, and contribute actively to the community. They look to education as a means of moving out of poverty and welfare dependency, enabling them to earn income through employment or enterprise and to manage the development of their communities.
- 2.1.4 Aboriginal comment on the provision of education services has long been critical. Aboriginal people have consistently called for greater Aboriginal influence in educational decision-making, with a view to improving the accessibility, relevance, appropriateness, sensitivity and effectiveness of educational services. Aboriginal people generally seek education that is more responsive to the diversity of Aboriginal circumstances and needs, and which recognises and values the cultural backgrounds of students. Education provided according to those criteria, it is argued, is likely to lead to higher levels of Aboriginal participation and greater rates of success.
- 2.1.5 Many Aboriginal people seek 'two-ways' education of a bi-lingual and bi-cultural nature, in order for them to maintain or restore their cultural identity and acquire useful skills for their participation in Australian social and economic life.

2.2 Promoting educational equity

- 2.2.1 A major purpose of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is to achieve broad equity between Aboriginal people and other Australians in access, participation and outcomes in all forms of education. This purpose assumes that Aboriginal people are entitled to no less opportunity than is available to all other Australians, and that they should have the opportunity to achieve at least at the levels of attainment for the Australian population as a whole. The potential exists for much greater than average achievement. The promotion of excellence and the development of exceptional talent are also important policy purposes.
- 2.2.2 In the pursuit of educational equity, the National Policy recognises the diversity that exists in terms of Aboriginal socio-economic circumstances, cultural values and educational aspirations. These environmental factors have to be taken into

account in the design and delivery of educational services and in assessments of individual and student group performance.

2.2.3 The available statistics relating to the educational participation of Aboriginal people show, on a national aggregate basis, that:

- fewer than **50 per cent** of children have had some pre-schooling experience, compared with a national equivalent rate of greater than **90 per cent**;
- some **85 per cent** of children of compulsory schooling age are participating in primary or secondary education, compared with a national participation rate of of close to **100 per cent**;
- some **30 per cent** of those aged 16 and 17 years are participating in education or formal training, compared with a national equivalent rate of **75 per cent**;
- some **7 per cent** of those people aged 18 to 20 years are participating in education or formal training, compared with a national equivalent rate exceeding **40 per cent**;
- some **4 per cent** of those aged 20 to 24 years participate in education or formal training, compared with a national equivalent rate of **20 per cent**;
- some **3 per cent** of those aged 25 years and over are participating in education or formal training, compared with a national equivalent rate of **8 per cent**;
- **11 per cent** of all Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over have never attended a school; and
- **10 per cent** of the Aboriginal population aged 15 years and over have post-school educational qualifications, compared with a national proportion of **31 per cent**.

2.2.4 From a national perspective these indicators portray an unacceptable situation. The participation of Aboriginal people in all forms of education is the lowest experienced by any group in Australia. The fact that some 15 per cent of Aboriginal children of compulsory schooling age are not participating in education is of particular concern.

2.2.5 It is also of concern that for those children enrolled in school, Aboriginal attendance rates are low and their attrition and truancy rates are high. Effective learning time for Aboriginal children is less than for any other group. Retention rates and learning outcomes are correspondingly lower on average. There are also lower rates of transition to and graduation from award courses in technical and further education and higher education. Moreover, there are significant numbers of Aboriginal people who have had limited educational experience and success.

2.2.6 Behind the national indicators are considerable variations between and within States and Territories. In all areas, educational participation of Aboriginals is below that of other Australians. In some areas the situation is improving but problems remain in many areas. Strategies to promote equality of educational opportunity must accommodate diverse needs and circumstances.

2.2.7 In several areas, educational participation of Aboriginal people is inhibited by lack of physical access to education services. In other areas participation, in the sense of effective learning, is hampered by inadequate sensitivity and relevance to

cultural differences in: curricula, teaching strategies, student grouping, teacher relations with students and their communities, learning schedules and organisational arrangements. The health, housing and economic conditions of communities are also significant factors, as are language differences and the limited involvement of communities in education processes.

2.2.8 To achieve equality of educational opportunity it will be necessary to provide access to education services where it currently does not exist. It is no less a task to improve the responsiveness of provided educational services to the differing needs and circumstances of Aboriginal communities.

2.3 Developing a concerted approach

2.3.1 An important purpose of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy is to develop a concerted effort to address the educational needs of Aboriginal people, by co-operatively directing the strategies of the Commonwealth, the States and Territories, non-government education authorities and educational institutions, to achieve agreed goals.

2.3.2 The adoption of a co-operative, strategic approach is intended to improve the co-ordination of service delivery and the cost-effectiveness of Commonwealth and State and Territory expenditures on Aboriginal education.

2.3.3 In Australia, the States and Territories have the constitutional and major financial responsibility for schooling. The Commonwealth, along with States and Territories, has a significant role in identifying national priorities for schooling. The Commonwealth contributes to the funding of schooling, has financial responsibility in the area of higher education and contributes to technical and further education. The Commonwealth also contributes to Aboriginal pre-school education and generally provides benefits to students.

2.3.4 Within this framework, the respective governments have acted to develop specific Aboriginal education programs to supplement and support mainstream educational services. These include:

- the establishment of Aboriginal educational consultative mechanisms;
- the establishment of Aboriginal education units in head offices of education authorities;
- the employment of Aboriginal teachers, teacher assistants and education workers;
- the development of pre-service and in-service programs for teachers of Aboriginal students;
- the development of specific curriculum strategies and learning materials, including for Aboriginal Studies;
- the development of bi-lingual and bi-cultural programs;
- English as a Second Language and other language programs;
- the provision of tutorial assistance and other benefits to students;

- professional support for ABSTUDY students through a field service operated by Commonwealth officers;
- capital programs for schools or colleges in rural and remote areas with significant proportions of Aboriginal students;
- the funding of non-government Aboriginal pre-schools, schools and colleges;
- the provision of Aboriginal post-school training and education courses, particularly bridging and access courses;
- the reserving of higher education places for Aboriginal students;
- the development of Aboriginal support units in higher education institutions; and
- the provision of student allowances for secondary and tertiary Aboriginal students.

2.3.5 These various initiatives have contributed to the improvement of educational opportunities for Aboriginal people.

- Aboriginal secondary school enrolments rose from 2,000 in 1970 to 20,000 in 1986.
- school retention rates to Year 12 have increased from 10 per cent in 1982 to 22 per cent in 1988; and
- enrolments in higher education award courses have increased from 850 in 1982 to 2,700 in 1989.

2.3.6 The various programs and initiatives, however, have frequently not been well co-ordinated between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, nor across the sectors of education. More effective results could be achieved through the development of collaborative and co-operative strategies, giving greater attention to outcomes than inputs, and improving the linkages between sectors.

2.3.7 The Commonwealth presently funds some 16 separate programs relating to Aboriginal education. These programs are not consistent with regard to their objectives, provisions, funding cycles and reporting arrangements. There is scope for more simplified and flexible program arrangements. **In particular, there is a need to improve the integration of Commonwealth programs with the efforts of the main education providers in the States and Territories, in order to facilitate:**

- the development of co-ordinated long-term strategies;
- clearer communication to Aboriginals of the opportunities available; and
- improved effectiveness in the delivery of educational services.

3 Common Goals of the National Policy

3.1 Education principles

- 3.1.1. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy aims to improve the availability, responsiveness and effectiveness of educational services as a means of achieving equity of access to and participation in education, and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- 3.1.2 The National Policy recognises that Australia's various educational systems and institutions function according to diverse philosophies and within different organisational arrangements, and that they adopt distinctive educational approaches. The agreed common goals of the Policy provide a framework for developing a concerted national effort to redress the educational disadvantages of Aboriginal people. The common goals do not imply any limitation to the diversity of educational philosophies and practices but, rather, encourage flexibility and innovation.
- 3.1.3 The National Policy is based on the assumption that the educational progress of Aboriginal students is likely to be facilitated when the efforts of the various education providers are co-operatively co-ordinated through a comprehensive and articulated strategic approach across all education sectors from pre-school, through primary and secondary schooling, technical and further education, and higher education.
- 3.1.4 The readiness of Aboriginal children to participate in and cope with primary schooling is maximised with a supportive home environment and rewarding pre-school educational experience. The effectiveness of educational services in several areas is likely to be increased when measures are taken to address particular student disadvantages, including programs to improve student nutrition, to cater for students with visual and hearing impairments, to provide tutorial assistance, homework centres and transport services, and to improve the teaching of English as a second language.
- 3.1.5 Aboriginal youth are more likely to participate in education and develop learning competencies when: the organisational climate of the educational institution is welcoming to Aboriginal students and their parents or guardians; when the curriculum is, and is perceived to be, relevant and appropriate; when sensitive and skilled teachers use interesting strategies which take account of the different cultural backgrounds, socialisation experiences and living conditions of Aboriginal students; and when the students are given clear directions on their responsibilities and constructive feedback on their performance. Much depends on the attitudes and understanding of principals and teachers.
- 3.1.6 For Aboriginal education purposes the effectiveness of schools, colleges and other educational institutions depends in large part on the degree to which Aboriginal people are involved in the processes of educational decision-making. Without parental and community involvement there can be no guarantee that students will attend, that the curriculum will be relevant and that learning outcomes will be achieved. Aboriginal youth are also more likely to stay on and succeed at school when they see and have contact with Aboriginal people in professional roles in the school, and are exposed to Aboriginal role models.
- 3.1.7 Aboriginal students are more likely to succeed in post-school education when they are provided with sensitive institutional support, especially from Aboriginal people in professional and consultative roles, and from their peers; and when institutions recognise incremental achievements of students, and are flexible in respect of course scheduling and course completion requirements.

3.2 Long-term goals

3.2.1 The following statement of goals forms the basis for co-operation and collaboration between educational institutions, States and Territories and the Commonwealth, in association with Aboriginal people. These are **long-term goals** to guide the development of agreed educational strategies for meeting the different educational needs of Aboriginal people in the States and Territories.

3.2.2 Long-term goals for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision-making

- 1 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of pre-school, primary and secondary education services for their children.
- 2 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teacher assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.
- 3 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
- 4 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
- 5 To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.
- 6 To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice from Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

equality of access to educational services

- 7 To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.
- 8 To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.
- 9 To ensure equitable access of Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and to higher education.

equity of educational participation

- 10 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.
- 11 To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.

12 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.

□ **equitable and appropriate educational outcomes**

13 To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

14 To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

15 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

16 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

17 To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal Languages.

18 To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

19 To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experience.

20 To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

3.3 Intermediate priorities

3.3.1 To achieve the long-term goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy it will be necessary to develop co-operative and incremental strategies which:

- initially address the major inequities in educational access and participation, noting that needs vary between and within States and Territories;
- generate momentum to build upon achievements to date, noting that progress varies between and within States and Territories;
- recognise the lead times required to establish education pipelines across the pre-school, school, technical and further education, and higher education sectors; and
- are realistic and achievable within the constraints of available resources.

3.3.2 The immediate priority is to establish effective arrangements for the involvement of Aboriginal people in decision-making regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of education services at institutional and system-wide

levels. The objective is before 1992:

- to have appropriate consultative machinery operational in each education sector; and
- to have developed strategies for increasing the numbers of Aboriginal people employed in professional and para-professional positions in education authorities and institutions.

3.3.3 Early attention is to be given, especially over the period 1990 to 1996, to the achievement of equity of educational access and participation for Aboriginal children of pre-school and compulsory schooling age. To this end, initiatives will be taken to develop:

- parent education and the participation of parents in the education of their children;
- the provision of local educational facilities and distance education services; and
- improvements in the quality and sensitivity of teaching.

3.3.4 The intention of the Policy is to effect a marked shift from current low levels of Aboriginal participation in education towards the national average participation rates. On present national averages the desired changes are:

- from less than 50 per cent to over 90 per cent pre-schooling education of at least one year; and
- from 85 per cent to close to 100 per cent participation in compulsory primary and secondary schooling.

3.3.5 The purpose of the Policy is not merely to increase enrolment rates but also, and more importantly, to raise the attendance and retention rates and to improve the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students. Performance indicators in this regard will be developed by the responsible education providers.

3.3.6 In the pursuit of educational equity the National Policy also has the objective of increasing Aboriginal retention rates to Year 12 or equivalent. On the basis of present national averages, the Policy aims to increase Aboriginal retention rates from 22 per cent to around 58 per cent.

3.3.7 Concurrent efforts will be directed to:

- increase Aboriginal participation in award courses, as distinct from access and bridging courses, in technical and further education and in higher education;
- achieve a broader representation of Aboriginal students across disciplines and courses of study in tertiary education;
- raise the proportion of graduating Aboriginal students who commence technical and further education and higher education courses; and
- expand Aboriginal adult participation in education and training programs which develop English language and community and enterprise management competencies.

4 Agreed Arrangements for Policy Implementation

In giving effect to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, the States and Territories and the Commonwealth, together with non-government education authorities and educational institutions, agree to co-operate through collaborative arrangements regarding:

- strategic planning;
- financial resourcing; and
- monitoring and reporting of progress towards attainment of agreed goals.

4.1 Strategic planning arrangements

4.1.1 The following planning arrangements are agreed on the understanding that:

- the goals and objectives of the National Policy will not be varied other than by mutual agreement between the Commonwealth and a State or Territory;
- the education providers in the States and Territories are responsible for the delivery of education services, and the Commonwealth will respect the autonomy of their operations;
- the Commonwealth has direct financial relationships with non-government education institutions and systems and with higher education institutions; and
- in its negotiations with non-government education institutions and systems the Commonwealth will take account of State and Territory requirements regarding quality of service provision, through registration of institutions and accreditation of award courses of study.

4.1.2 In giving effect to the National Policy each of the States and Territories will formulate triennial strategic plans for Aboriginal education encompassing all education sectors. Responsibility for formulating comprehensive plans will rest with the appropriate State and Territory Ministers, as will the responsibility for co-ordinating their implementation under procedures determined by the respective Premier or Chief Minister.

4.1.3 Strategic plans of the States and Territories for Aboriginal education will be developed and annually reviewed in consultation with the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth will develop its planning and financial arrangements in respect of Aboriginal education in consultation with the States and Territories.

4.1.4 The States and Territories and the Commonwealth will ensure Aboriginal participation in the development of triennial strategic plans.

4.1.5 Within the strategic planning framework determined by each State or Territory, operational plans will be developed on a forward triennial basis, by each of the providers of Aboriginal education services, both government and non-government. Participants in the planning process will include: State or Territory departments and agencies responsible for pre-schooling, schooling and technical and further education; non-government education authorities and institutions; State or Territory post-secondary co-ordinating bodies; higher education institutions; and Aboriginal representatives.

4.1.6 Triennial operational plans of the education authorities in the States and Territories, and other participating educational bodies, will encompass but need not be confined to ongoing and particular initiatives relating to:

- Aboriginal parent and/or student, and community involvement;
- employment of Aboriginals in teaching and other professional and para-professional positions;
- professional development of educational personnel, including specific programs to sensitise non-Aboriginal teachers and administrators;
- provision of educational facilities and accessing strategies;
- development of student support services;
- curriculum development;
- arrangements for co-ordination with other education providers;
- evaluation procedures; and
- particular matters identified as State or Territory priorities.

4.2 Financial arrangements

4.2.1 The following financial arrangements are agreed on the understanding that:

- forward financing commitments by the Commonwealth will be maintained for the periods and at the levels negotiated bilaterally with each of the States and Territories and participating non-government and higher education bodies, for the purposes of the National Policy; and
- finances allocated for Aboriginal education by each of the States and Territories, and participating non-government and higher education bodies, will not be diminished because of any additional funding for these purposes from the Commonwealth.

4.2.2 The Commonwealth will supplement its normal provisions of recurrent and capital funding for education in the States and Territories with a dedicated commitment of funds on a forward triennial basis for assisting the implementation of the National Policy through one consolidated *Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program*.

4.2.3 The Commonwealth and the States and Territories will continue to share some of the costs of student places and staffing in pre-schools. To develop agreed future arrangements, joint working parties will be established immediately at a State and Territory level and including at the Commonwealth, the Departments of Community Services and Health, and Employment, Education and Training, together with Aboriginal representatives.

4.2.4 Each of the States and Territories will meet the recurrent costs of providing schooling to Aboriginals on the same basis as they provide generally for the Australian population, and as catered for in Commonwealth general recurrent funding for the States and Territories for educational purposes.

4.2.5 Each of the States and Territories will continue to meet their present shares of the recurrent costs of providing technical and further education, including for Aboriginals on the same basis as for the population generally, and as catered for by Commonwealth financial assistance grants for technical and further education.

4.2.6 The Commonwealth will continue to provide funds for higher education institutions in accordance with the policies established for the higher education sector, which provide for growth in Aboriginal student places.

4.2.7 The allocation of funds provided by the Commonwealth through the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program, will be negotiated bilaterally with each of the States and Territories and participating non-government and higher education bodies, in the process of developing collaborative arrangements regarding triennial plans to implement the National Policy.

4.3 Monitoring, evaluation and review arrangements

4.3.1 The following monitoring and review arrangements are agreed on the understanding that:

- the States and Territories have prerogatives in public policy and resource allocation, and while being publicly accountable, are not directly accountable to the Commonwealth for their policy decisions and the use of their own resources;
- the States and Territories have arrangements for regular public reporting in respect of their education functions, including arrangements agreed with the Commonwealth, such as the National Reports on Schooling, which encompass measures financed from both State or Territory and Commonwealth sources; and
- higher education institutions publicly report in respect of the institutional profiles and equity targets negotiated bilaterally with the Commonwealth.

4.3.2 Each of the States and Territories and participating non-government and higher education bodies will develop, jointly with the Commonwealth, a set of performance indicators for monitoring of, evaluating and public reporting on, the strategies adopted within the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. The performance indicators will include changes in Aboriginal participation in the different sectors of education.

4.3.3 Each of the States and Territories and the Commonwealth, and participating non-government and higher education bodies, will ensure Aboriginal participation in monitoring, evaluating and reporting in respect of the strategies adopted within the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

4.3.4 Each of the States and Territories and participating non-government and higher education bodies will establish arrangements for annual reporting on the measures taken and the results achieved in relation to the common goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. Wherever possible, the annual reports will be included within existing arrangements for education reporting by the participating bodies.