



Focus on indigenous literacy



photo by Jenni Oldfield

Evaluation of ANTA Adult Literacy Innovative Projects Programme

Nexus Strategic Solutions has been commissioned by DETYA to undertake a study to evaluate the ANTA Adult Literacy Innovative Projects Programme from 1997 to 1999. (See page 14 of this issue of *Literacy Link* for a list of ANTA Innovative Projects—2000.) The evaluation will review the effectiveness and efficiency of the Innovative Projects conducted and make recommendations for improving the Innovative Projects Programme.

The initial stage of the project will involve research and analysis of past Innovative Project reports and products. During November and December 2000, information will be collected from key stakeholders, primarily through structured telephone interviews and fax or email comments. A final report will be presented to DETYA in March 2001.

To contribute to this study contact: Rachel Robertson, Director, Nexus Strategic Solutions, PO Box 1000, Subiaco, WA 6904 or Tel/Fax 08 9337 3777 or email rachelr@inet.net.au

This issue of *Literacy Link* invited contributions which look at literacy for indigenous people. Melbourne-based consultant, Davina Woods, unravels for us some of the political complexity underlying Aboriginal education.

The case studies in this issue are sometimes mouth-watering in their descriptions of life in the tropical north. There is humour in the descriptions of complex, contrasting cultures gently bumping into each other in the literacy classroom. The photographs depicting the life of a literacy practitioner on Groote Eylandt would tempt anyone to load up the fishing rods and head north.

The second of a series of three articles arising from the ACAL Youth Literacy Research Project appears in this issue (page 11).

The report of the Perth Conference (page 10) points to many successful sessions, and one or two characterised by controversy and lively debate.

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Voters and lobbyists

Within the context of Aboriginal education the voters are the students and parents who vote with their feet on whether or not a particular education system, institution or strategy is working. Schools which do not cater for the specific learning needs and preferences of their indigenous students will find themselves deserted by the indigenous population. Likewise, schools which cater for Aboriginal preferred ways of learning find themselves drawing students from many kilometres away—Northlands Secondary College in Melbourne is one such school, which drew public attention in the mid 1990s when the government tried to close it down.

The lobbyists are the Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs). Originally established in the 1970s, these are state and/or regional groups representative of parents, students, teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) education workers (para-professionals). Depending on which state of Australia we are discussing, the AECGs are either incorporated bodies, with the office bearers being elected at the annual general meeting, or they are groups appointed by the State or Territory Ministers of Education. Today consultative committees function jointly with Aboriginal Students Support Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees, which are school-based and representative of the parents.

Policy

The Commonwealth Government began to strongly direct the States and Territories on how to prioritise within Aboriginal education in 1989 when the National Aboriginal Education Policy (NATSIEP) was launched. It established

four main aims:

1. *Involvement of indigenous people in education decision-making*
2. *Equality of access to education services*
3. *Equity of educational participation*
4. *Equitable and appropriate education outcomes*

In 1995 the Ministerial Committee on Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Taskforce on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education presented a strategy document which established eight priorities for ATSI education:

1. *to establish effective arrangements for participation of ATSI people in educational decision making*
2. *to increase the number of ATSI people employed in education and training*
3. *to ensure equitable access for ATSI students to education and training services*
4. *to ensure participation of ATSI students in education and training*
5. *to ensure equitable and appropriate educational achievement among ATSI students*
6. *to promote, maintain and support the teaching of ATSI studies, cultures and languages to all indigenous and non-indigenous students*
7. *to provide community development training services including proficiency in English literacy and numeracy for ATSI adults*
8. *to improve NATSIEP implementation, evaluation and resourcing arrangements*

Priority 1 (above) expresses the desire by ATSI people working as professionals, para-professionals and activists in education to be on school councils, TAFE Institute Advisory Councils, and members of staff within University faculties and in positions of influence within government bureaucracies.

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ACAL promotes co-operation among interested organisations and individuals, both government and non-government, by undertaking and encouraging appropriate study, research and action.

Literacy Link is distributed free to ACAL members. Articles are available online on the ACAL Homepage: <http://www.acal.edu.au> You are invited to discuss issues raised in **Literacy Link** through contributions to the ACAL Discussion list. Subscribe by email to : majordomo@edna.edu.au with message

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Priority 3 brings us back to semantics—in some cases disadvantage is so great that equitable will mean giving more just to level the playing field. For example, offering equitable access could mean reduced fees for TAFE courses run specifically in adult literacy for indigenous students.

As we all know attending school is not necessarily the same as participating in class. To ensure participation, education institutions at all levels need to understand the education and training needs of their students. Such needs analysis will have to be accompanied by a thorough understanding of the preferred ways of learning of the students and the nitty-gritty of their everyday interests.

Priority 5 *Working towards equitable and appropriate educational achievement* needs to take into account the aspirations of the student and the student's community. If a student lives in a community where all but he or she wishes to work in the local rural industry then that one student's aspirations to be an accountant or engineer must be catered for as well.

Priority 6 is fundamental to achieving self-esteem for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Research undertaken by Howard Groome and Arthur Hamilton in the 1990s strongly supports the concept that an indigenous student whose sense of being indigenous is strong is better able to achieve in school than an indigenous student whose understanding and pride in their own culture is weak. For non-indigenous students the right to know the indigenous cultures of Australia has been denied to their parents and it is a right that all Australians should have. It is imperative to a strong foundation for reconciliation

Community development training, as discussed in priority 7, is sometimes referred to as simply 'catch up' education which ensures that all indigenous adults of a community are literate in Standard Australian English (SAE) and have a

basic understanding of numeracy. In more recent times discussion on community development has expanded to include developing the skills within the community to establish or expand an enterprise, for example emu farming or the development of an indigenous arts market on the Internet.

Major tensions

The current and major tensions within Aboriginal education today are **participation**, **culture** and **skills**. The Commonwealth Government funded 'Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programmes Strategic Results Projects National Coordination and Evaluation Team', highlighted participation, culture and skills in their report *What works? - Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students*. The report was launched in March 2000 at the same time as the release of the Commonwealth's *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004*.

Participation is about more than getting the students to attend school—it is about having the students interact and becoming involved in the learning activities in ways which enable them to achieve to the maximum of their ability.

Culture is understanding and acknowledgment by the teachers and the learning institution that there are indigenous cultures and that Aboriginal people express themselves using cultural markers ranging from language to icons that distinguish them from the other groups within Australian society. In contemporary Australia we have many cultural identities encompassed within one national identity. In Melbourne, for example, there is Chinatown where businesses promoting Chinese culture are established. Each year a section of Lygon Street is closed to promote and celebrate Italian culture. In a similar way each year indigenous

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*The ACAL Executive
2000/2001*

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Training Aboriginal community police

by Dr Andrew R Giles-Peters

Starting last year, the Northern Territory Police implemented a development program for their Aboriginal Community Police Officers (ACPOs) which can lead indigenous persons of little educational background from Certificate 2 to Certificate 4 and then possible entry to Police Constable positions. In September, 36 ACPOs will graduate with their Certificate 2, a further six candidates may complete in early 2001; six others have resigned with incomplete results.

The program is intentionally non-academic. Off-the-job training courses are restricted to four days to minimise time spent away from the community and are usually held in regional centres. Task-centred workshops tied to departmental requirements are favoured over content-centred classes/lectures based on curriculum requirements.

Teamwork is encouraged rather than individual learning. Assessment is based on supervisors' reports against job competencies rather than on course assessments. Finally every effort is made to make the program accessible to the non-literate but at the same time to develop literacy skills.

The possibility of awarding nationally recognised certificates on this basis only arose with the introduction of Training Packages in Vocational Education and Training. These separate training from assessment and only prescribe the latter. The Northern Territory practice would not have fitted a curriculum-based course delivery model.

The challenge to the program designers was to implement a program to take all the Department's Aboriginal Community Police Officers, from newest recruit through to Senior ACPOs with 10 years experience, to Certificate 2 level with minimum time away from their workplace and communities.

The trainees varied considerably in age, policing experience, educational background, literacy, knowledge of Western culture, Aboriginal cultural knowledge, Aboriginal cultural status and access to supervision. (There were also males and females.) The job they were training for was imperfectly understood by their own supervisors, often extremely stressful and potentially dangerous. Finally their job environments ranged from working with a constable in a small modern city to working alone in

a remote traditional community.

Common sense might have suggested a policy of 'divide and conquer' but there were not the available time or resources. Instead we made a virtue of necessity and tried to use the diversity of the trainees as a teaching resource.

The key idea of the workshops was to achieve knowledge transfer between the participants (including facilitators and trainers). 'Learning from each other' is not a new idea but the more experienced traditional trainees had knowledge and experience no trainer could match. The method was to set up a scenario, question or problem; have mixed ability syndicates report back on them; and then discuss. Ideally a syndicate would include a senior traditional person, a member with solid police experience, a member with reasonable literacy, etc.

Usually groups constructed on an acceptable geographical/cultural basis proved sufficiently diverse.

An important subsidiary aim was to build (Western) communication skills. Aboriginal communication styles are not well understood by "mainstream" society and the ability to switch styles is essential for the competent cross-cultural operator.

We try to ensure each participant delivers a presentation to the whole workshop. We have also had ACPOs videotape interviews with each other, participate in radio interviews and brief representatives to address committees and conferences. The series of short workshops gets the ACPOs used to the facilitators and each other so that they will take risks they would not in a classroom or at work. This builds both confidence and competence. (In our earliest workshops we arranged ACPO-only sessions to air criticisms of their training and supervision. One of them would scribe the session on butcher's paper and we would get the written report only. This demonstrated the practical value of literacy but few are so reticent now.)

The impact of our program on the more senior traditional ACPOs has been considerable. Once content to take a back seat, they now participate fully in workshops. Furthermore, they are making the extension from the switching of cultural styles to the manipulation of cultural standards. A senior traditional lawman from the western desert said in an Alice Springs work-



Indigenous literacy education in Jabiru and Kakadu

Kate Boyd

From 1986 literacy programs for indigenous students in Kakadu, mainly in employment with the National Parks have been offered through the TAFE (now the NT University). Jabiru is a town with a population of 1,400. A further 300, mainly indigenous people, live in the surrounding Kakadu National Park.

The first Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program grant in the area was administered by Kakadu National Park. I developed curriculum materials mainly for indigenous (binj) park rangers but also for European (balanda) park rangers to use. These included 'How to Write an Incident Report', and 'How to Read Instructions' (based on the Park Procedural Manual).

The development of these materials followed research into workplace literacy carried out by Peter Wignell and myself in the Park. This resulted in the publication *Kakadu National Park as a Case Study in Workplace Literacy* (1994). Some of the recommendations were made noting the proven resistance of indigenous workers to written text found in the study.

We recommended that literacy students move gradually from those texts which are close to the spoken word (such as incident reports), using spoken language as a bridge, to texts that are removed from the immediate context. We predicted that inability to write more abstract texts such as monthly reports could prove to be one of the major stumbling blocks to promotion.

It needs to be made explicit to rangers with low level literacy skills why they need to read and write these texts. This explicitness could be expected to break down barriers of 'secret' or 'big' English, that is, English which many indigenous people see as inaccessible to them.

A main focus of the study was to investigate rangers' beliefs and perceptions about reading

and writing text and its role in their workplace. An example of this was the use in the park vernacular of the terms 'desk jockeys' or 'bitumen cowboys'. This categorised staff in relation to their attitude towards paperwork. At another level these perceptions came from staff definitions of 'what a ranger really does' and what work really is. For example, indigenous staff could not see how literacy 'tied in with their cultural view of land management' and 'caring for country'.

In 1994, Kakadu National Park had 10 indigenous rangers out of a permanent workforce of 55. It was found that most indigenous employees were 'backlogged' in their career paths and this was in large part due to lack of ability in literacy and numeracy skills. In 2000 there are 24 indigenous staff out of a workforce of 62.

In 1997 Parks Australia North received a second WELL grant with NTU nominated as the provider of training. Two lecturers, Cathy Craik and I, were employed. We developed an assessment tool which was matched to levels of the NRS. Once levels were confirmed (usually upper Level 1 or a range throughout Level 2) we chose curriculum materials developed during the WELL grant in the context of the National Communication Modules which included Workplace Communication, Writing Skills for Work and Report Writing. Students were initially enrolled in either the Certificate in Workplace Education (level I/II) or the Certificate in Access to Employment and Further Education (level I/II). They then progressed to modules in the Certificate II in Land Conservation and Restoration and/or the Certificate III in Lands, Parks and Wildlife Management.

We both travelled weekly to ranger stations in the Park. I travelled to the southern station of

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shop that he knew when "he had to put on his policeman hat". In remote communities there are two laws and the ACPO must learn to live by both - even, in his particular case, if that means being speared under the one for what he has done under the other. He and several other ACPOs have independently enrolled in adult literacy courses; one new recruit has been sent on such a course.

Young, low literacy, ACPOs face considerable problems - particularly if they lack Aboriginal culture as well. They are of low status in both Western and Aboriginal culture; lacking knowl-

edge and experience they also have little to contribute in courses. Because Aboriginal culture is only properly acquired over an extended period, their only short-term solution is to become literate. Otherwise they are largely useless to other police.

Whilst we do not directly teach literacy, we do assess



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Literacy education in Jabiru & Kakadu

JimJim once a week for three hours and on another day travelled to the same ranger station to meet three students who travelled to JimJim from Mary River. Cathy travelled to the western ranger station at South Alligator and students from the northern station at East Alligator travelled to Jabiru for classes. We also developed materials for the workplace including: 'How to Read the National Parks and Wildlife Act', 'How to Fill in Forms', 'Basic Writing Skills for Everyday Life' and others.

Recently the mining company ERA received WELL Program grants for a program at the Ranger Uranium Mine. ERA have a positive discrimination policy of increasing the number of local indigenous employees. An attempt is made to find a local Aboriginal person for a position before advertising.

We travelled to the Ranger Mine site to deliver these courses to mining truck drivers, engineering workers, mill workers, environmental workshop/nursery employees and Aboriginal liaison staff. My own experience with the students included expression of regular on-going enthusiasm and of a considerable sense of achievement in the smallest of gains in literacy and numeracy skills.

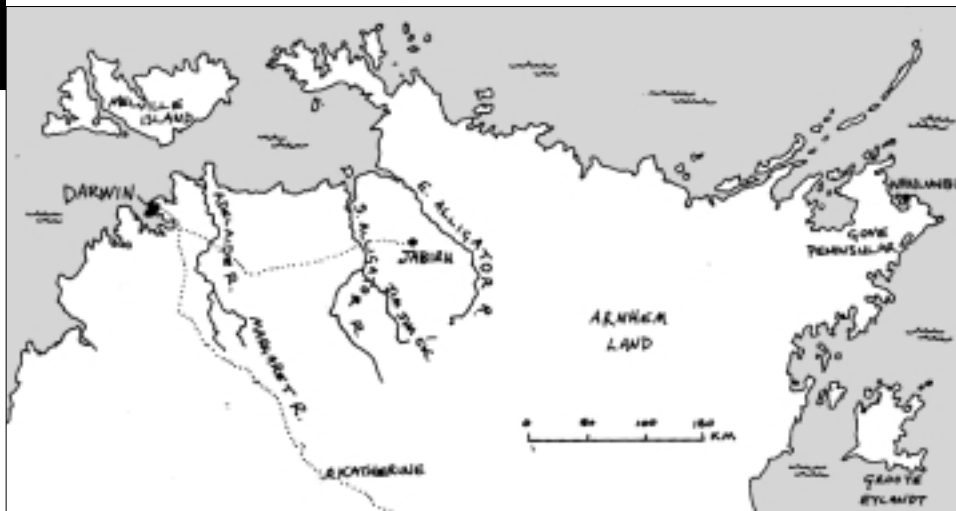
The success of the WELL program in the Kakadu area has been due to a strong partnership between employers and the NTU. This partnership has indigenous employee welfare as its focus. A strong commitment to regularly review the program; to listen to students and employees and to deliver what they need rather than what the employer or training provider think they need; as well as dedicated lecturing staff who are prepared to go wherever required have produced a

successful literacy program.

Thanks to Helen Spiers and Cathy Craik for their contributions to this article.

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reference Wignell, P. and Boyd K. (1994) *Kakadu National Park as a Case Study in Workplace Literacy*. Deakin, A.C.T.



Attendance at the sessions was regular, except when the rangers had to be elsewhere—fire-fighting, removing crocodiles from tourist spots or attending meetings. Senior staff reported to us that as well as improved literacy levels, indigenous rangers' confidence and self-esteem increased—eg, in contributions to workplace meetings and general decision making. Lap-top computers in classes were popular and increased motivation.



Training Aboriginal community police

it using a shortened version of the ALAN scales focused on police materials. We also design our courses with an eye to scaffolding. All material is presented in a mixed oral/written mode and all group work likewise. This stretches the least literate. At the same time we operate with concepts at varying levels. A basic technique is to replace discussion of hypotheticals with a range of concrete examples (stories) supplied by the participants. (Hence the importance of experience.) We then move on to ask what should have been done or what could have been done differently. This technique has been applied very successfully in operational safety training in place of the traditional rote learning of principles, acronyms and illustrative diagrams. A number of other tech-

niques are used in workshops including exploiting cultural analogies and designing group activities in terms of De Bono's thinking strategies.

Overall our approach is to build on strengths, to build western discursive and communication skills as part of (western) literacy, and to develop an appreciation of the value of literacy. This is successful except that the younger, urban, non-traditional and literate group who can take a more individualistic, content-centred approach feel held back by the mixed group. It is open to them, however, to work independently and take the workplace assessments as soon as they are ready.

*Dr Andrew R Giles-Peters
Development and Assessment Manager
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Manganese and literacy on Groote Eylandt

by Jenni Oldfield

Groote Eylandt is Aboriginal land; it is also very remote (see map opposite). The Groote Eylandt Mining Company (GEMCO) leases land from the Aboriginal people to mine manganese. It's in the mining company's interest to accommodate the local people however it can, and one way that it does this is through the employment and training program conducted through the Rehabilitation and Mine Services Section of the Environment Department.

The vision of this program is "To assist Groote Eylandt Aboriginal people secure a meaningful future, by providing opportunities to obtain the knowledge, skills, understanding and confidence to live and work effectively, safely and successfully within GEMCO and the wider community".

What do the employees do? Twenty-one Aboriginal people are employed to work at 'Rehab' to carry out a number of different tasks around the mine site and the mine township. They:

- rehabilitate the land on the lease that has been disturbed by mining. (This involves many horticultural skills including collecting and germinating seeds and propagating local plants.)
- collect and dispose of waste on the mine site as well as around the town
- control weeds
- lop trees
- maintain the grounds around the mine site and the local airport
- contract backhoe work
- collect garden refuse

A coordinator and two supervisors, one of whom is Aboriginal, are also employed in this section.

The Rehab team is an integral and important part of the whole mining operation - GEMCO's lease conditions make it necessary to leave the spent quarries in as close to the same condition as the land was before mining began. The team is close-knit and places on it are sought after by many, but positions can only be achieved after going through a thorough selection program. In the main, people on the team have made a choice to join the conventional work ethic of the mine and they are expected to perform in a similar way to mainstream workers. Allowances are made for Aboriginal employees to have leave for funerals and for 'respect' (when people die). Beyond that, leave entitlements are the same for all employees.

What's the training about? GEMCO recognises that training is necessary for all their employees

to do their job and in partnership with the Northern Territory University (NTU) they have put together a special employee development program for the Rehab team. This program has five levels, and each of the levels covers training in literacy and numeracy, horticulture, specialist machinery operation (eg. chainsaw) and mobile equipment (eg. trucks, backhoes).

At higher levels the program offers opportunities to meet more individual needs and employees at the moment are working on accredited courses involving: workplace assessment; frontline management; office skills; waste management; and parks and wildlife management. Lecturers employed by NTU conduct most of the training on site, but some programs are studied externally with the tutors employed through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assistance Scheme (ATAS).

On average, employees spend 8 hours of their week in training.

The literacy and numeracy program

The literacy and numeracy training serves many roles and at the moment it is based on modules from the Certificate in Access to Employment and Further Study, and the Certificate of Workplace Education. It focuses on:

- Literacy so that people may do their job safely, for example: understand signage around the mine site; understand Occupational Health and Safety issues; understand risk and hazards in the workplace.
- Literacy and numeracy so that people can do their job effectively, so that they can, for example: fill out pre-start checks on vehicles and equipment; read instructions and manuals; leave notes; weigh seeds; mix fuels and cleaning solutions; fill out time sheets.
- Developing reading and writing skills so that learning in other disciplines may be enhanced, for example: reading activities often stem from horticulture modules.
- Literacy and numeracy to enhance participation in the community and activities outside of work, for example: read the newspaper; understand current affairs; read a tide chart; write stories; budget money.

Learning activities are prepared specifically for



GEMCO staff with Senator the Hon. Peter Reith Minister for Workplace Relations (centre)

Tauondi College — literacy for SA Nungas

by Albert Narcys

Literacy at Tauondi College in Port Adelaide is inherent in all courses but more specifically is part of Aboriginal Entry Level Training Certificates, three of which are offered: Foundation (six months), Preparatory (six months) and Vocational (twelve months). Within these certificates there are strands including; literacy, numeracy, community participation, work and study, history, society and culture, technology and others. By far the biggest strand is literacy which occupies five hours or one day a week.

The literacy program is, as much as possible, based on issues which Aboriginal students find interesting and meaningful. Lecturers are forever collecting newspaper clippings, photographs, video materials and so on. Where literature is incorporated, it has a focus on Aboriginal writers.

Writing is probably the key to most of our literacy programs. We usually start by asking the students to write about themselves. This

emphasis on producing autobiographical material is important for our own understanding of the students. In many instances it has a cathartic and healing quality which assists students in coming to terms with their culture and identity, and the need to share their life experience because Tauondi is very much a place where South Australian Nungas come together as a community. It is without doubt the largest gathering of Nungas in Adelaide, if not South Australia. There are often over 200 students enrolled. We have produced in-house publications, *Our Stories*, which showcase students' autobiographical materials. Students are encouraged too, to write for publication in the College newsletter, *Tauondi Talk*, and the College yearbook.

Cultural tourism

Students come from all Australia to attend the course in cultural tourism. Successful graduates of this course have returned to their communities in Kakadu and Cairns and made

THE PHILOSOPHY OF TAUONDI



Tauondi's philosophy is based on the essential dignity of all human beings and the belief that each individual is entitled to the opportunity to develop their potential in a non-threatening atmosphere of fairness and respect.

Hence, its educational philosophy is holistic. That is, education of the whole self: mind, body, and spirit. Empowerment, through self-esteem and cultural identity of the collective and the individual, is paramount in its philosophy, given the historical legacies of the past two hundred years.

Fundamental to this philosophy is the belief that Aboriginal people share an original blueprint of many thousands of years of existence within this land. That existence was also based on the physical, mental and spiritual.

Tauondi believes that the profound influence of this existence, past and present, will also determine the future of ALL Australians from where healing and wholeness can come.

this environment and relate to work and leisure. The students are very well motivated, interested and keen to learn... it's a stimulating setting to work in. Students often come to training early to find out what the session might be about, and often work through break times

being totally absorbed in what they're learning!

The students are very aware of their Aboriginality and the culture maintains many strong traditions. Teachers need to be aware of many of these traditions in the classroom. For example, kinship rules... there are

many relationships between people who don't speak to, or acknowledge each other. These are referred to as 'poison cousins' and there's no use trying to set up a class including people who have this relationship!

Why does it work?

This program works well for a number of reasons. Some of the key ones are:

- Rehab employees are paid 'real' wages (Base level: \$32 319pa, Level 1: \$37 854pa, Level 3: \$40 857pa, Level 4: \$43 947pa) and there are 'real' benefits. After a time of proven employment, Aboriginal employees are allocated a house in the mining township and are able to use the town facilities which are provided only for those who work at the mine and their families.
- Staff are very committed, particularly the training coordinator who has lived in the community for years. He has a thorough understanding of the local Anindilyakwa

The author and friend gather lunch for a picnic on the beach.



clear the potential for growth and development this sort of work offers indigenous communities.

Excursions and field trips are used as a catalyst for writing and reporting on activities outside the classroom. Aboriginal communities visited include: Adnyumathanha - history and culture of the Flinders Ranges with Cliff and Terry Coulthard, 1996; Ngarrindjeri history with Tom and Ellen Trevorowat, Camp Coorong (south-eastern SA), 1997; Anangu communities (Aranda) in Central Australia with the Institute of Aboriginal Development (IAD), 1998. On each of these three field trips Aboriginal people showed students the history, culture and the dreaming stories associated with their communities. These are powerful experiences for our students and are excellent catalysts to create literacy projects, discussions and so forth, when they return to College.

Most field trips are, however, fairly local. They include cross-cultural exchanges with overseas students from CALUSA (Centre of Applied Linguistics, University of SA). CALUSA visitors made comments like the following:

"I was very amazed that kangaroo meat is so juicy when it come out from the sand because it's famous for healthy and low fat one - I saw the chef-man draining the brown juice which was squeezed out from the meat. That looked nice gravy though. That tasted yummy anyway, I wish I could know what flavour herbs you used. Must be one of the best ways to know Aboriginal culture." Kosei (Japan)

In addition to the usual trips to the museum, zoo and so on, other field trips have included: visits to a mosque, a synagogue, a Buddhist temple, a Greek Orthodox church; and guest speakers

culture. His long-term commitment gives the program continuity.

- The program allows Aboriginal people to work together as a group... collectivism is a strong part of this culture.

Recognition!

The training and employment program at Rehab has recently been acknowledged for innovation and best practice through two awards. In April it was given a "Recognition of Resource Development" award by the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy, and in September it won the NAIDOC award which recognised GEMCO's



A Groote Eyelandt picnic: oysters, mud crab and damper



Tauondi College

THE TAUONDI LOGO

The centre circle represents Tauondi and the emanating zigzags represent Tauondi "breaking through" strongholds that stifle so many Aboriginal people. The traditional symbols for man and woman represent Tauondi's culturally appropriate teaching methods and shows people coming from various places to learn.

have included a Japanese story teller, Cuban politicians, health workers etc.

Tauondi College is currently seeking funding for next year to set up a literacy suite which will incorporate intensive reading programs and computer software packages and programs as an adjunct to current programs.

If you are ever in Adelaide come and visit us at Tauondi College.

*Albert Narcys
Tauondi College
Box 409 Port Adelaide SA 5015*

contribution to indigenous employment. The awards are well received, but what's really important is the development of skills and confidence that are empowering this group of Aboriginal people. They will be able to make the choices that follow.

*Jenni Oldfield,
Groote Eyelandt*

Reflections on the first international adult literacy conference

Dr Jennie Bickmore Brand

Over 300 people gathered in Perth last month at the First International Adult Literacy Conference. The following gives a taste of what went on. Many presenters have included their paper on the website <http://murdoch.edu.au/confs/acal> where the reader can also find a complete list of the abstracts.

'What good is literacy anyway?' Gee exhorted the audience to ask 'whose interests am I serving with these literacy practices? As literacy teachers we are always teaching a certain version of the language and hence we are complaisant in the enculturation process.'

Provocateur, James Gee, confronted the audience at the end of the first day with the question 'What good is literacy anyway?' He exhorted the audience to ask 'whose interests am I serving with these literacy practices? As literacy teachers we are always teaching a certain version of the language and hence we are complaisant in the enculturation process.' Gee put the perspective of a student who resists literacy instruction because he does not want to be connected with the identity which is packaged with the literacy.

Stories from other countries

The participation by international speakers such as Mecak Alaak (Sudan) who was imprisoned for his belief in the empowerment of literacy struck a chord for many.

Laxmi Narayan told of organising and learning with people who collect waste in India. She discussed mass organisation, meetings, protests, literacy programs and large scale empowerment. Two 'light house' pilot adult literacy programs that have been founded by Rotary in Turkey and Egypt have impacted on government policy and become part of mainstream funding.

A sobering message came from Hamilton Williams who wants to get away from the simplistic Western definition of literacy to be more inclusive. In the Xhosa context, the various forms of literacy they exhibit would be regarded as 'illiterate' in Western societies.



*Mecak Ajang Alaak,
The Sudan*

A highlight for many was Lidia Puivert who worked with women from non-academic backgrounds who were the service staff of the elite in Spain.

The literary circles, where they read the classics became their passport to feminist discourse and empowerment in their relationships and place in society. Wimala Karunaratne spoke of the importance of literacy in Sri Lanka to daily living, and the maintenance of healthy families, as well as freedom from excessive exploitation.

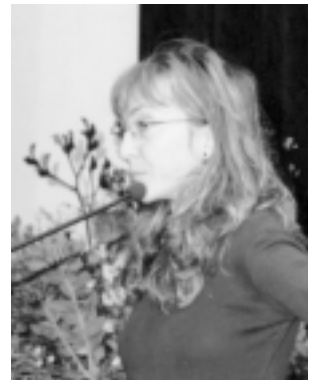
Priscilla George introduced the idea of the 'Rainbow Approach' where each colour was assigned to a literacy e.g. red—first language, orange—oral literacy etc. This was an attempt by the Canadian teachers to redress the former educational experiences for their indigenous people and now build in education for the whole person: spirit, heart, mind and body.

Our own indigenous stories began with Len Collard's Noongar welcome. Len is Program Chair of Aboriginal Studies at Murdoch and a community activist. He spoke of the empty promises of gaining higher qualifications and yet the empowerment coming from setting goals and succeeding. His parting comment was for the 'we' who have had more privileged starts in life, and he included himself in that, to make it possible for others to participate more fully in society.

Contrasting indigenous school experiences with 'Wadjella' ones was a feature of Patricia Konigsberg's session. One wonders how a white, middle class teacher like her connects with the Aboriginal student whose family has over 160 members.

Technology mediated learning featured consistently within the conference program. Numeracy featured its strongest profile in any ACAL conference to date and signals the integration of literacy provision to require practitioners to have expertise that straddles both literacy and numeracy. Having an international audience enabled some assumptions to be challenged about how mathematics is being constructed as a western cultural phenomenon.

Participants attended from prison education.



*Lidia Puigvert-Mallart,
University of Barcelona,*

Think globally, integrate locally: delivery mechanisms for social inclusion

Carolyn Ovens

This is the second of three articles in Literacy Link which arise from commissioned research undertaken by Carolyn Ovens for ACAL into "The Relevance of Literacy: How can our respective policy responsibilities be realised through common concern for young people and the cause and effect role of literacy in their lives?"

This article moves on from the theme introduced in the previous article of the emerging literature calling for a paradigm shift that removes blame from young people.

Two trends developing are the focus on regional economic development and on education and labour market programs that can centre on the developmental needs of young people as well as on the local economy and capacity for job creation. From work undertaken by the OECD (2000a), there is clear indication that societal factors and a healthy local economy come together to create successful programs. It is noted that these programs have:

- collaborated with local employers to improve the quality of job opportunities and outcomes
- paid close attention to the pedagogy of what is being taught
- provided ladders to further learning
- addressed related needs of participants such as child care and counselling
- the programs were rigorously evaluated to enhance their effectiveness.

(OECD, 2000a)

Ingredients in local integration that are listed as key features of effective transition systems in *The Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life* (OECD, 1998) are:

Presentations of interest dealt with creative solutions to crime which attempt to build relationships with the community, and trainers and their ability to work with different cultural groups, particularly indigenous Australians.

The adult literacy profession has been well researched by Jean Searle who presented a survey of the field and how it has changed since its emergence in the 70s as an informal group, largely of volunteer tutors, to become highly regarded in the 80s and 90s.

Sessions critiquing the LANT program were well attended. Clearly Government transition into the rhetoric of lifelong learning challenges the literacy profession. Workplace literacy presentations showed some success stories where

- a healthy economy
- well-organised pathways
- widespread opportunities to combine study with workplace experience
- tight knit safety nets for those at risk
- good information
- effective institutions and processes.

Literacy levels the 'new' economy

Some writers (Carmichael, 1992; Hull & Grubb, 1999; Hautecoeur, 1996) have noted that when a country cannot substantiate a claim to a healthy economy, the situation is attributed to a lack of qualifications of the workforce, with assertions that basic skills associated with literacy have become more complex. The OECD (OECD, 2000b) has critically reviewed the economies of its constituent member countries and uncovered patchy evidence that there is in fact a 'new' economy based on higher levels of productivity due to investment in information technology in areas other than the IT industry itself.

Many countries that have not achieved this 'new' economy yet, such as Australia, still claim to require skills, however, including higher levels of literacy in the working population. In some countries, on the other hand, it is labour relations policies that have generated higher levels of productivity rather than the impact of IT into production. When observing claims of levels of illiteracy in Canada, Hautecoeur (ibid: 65) identifies wild swings of official levels of illiteracy across three decades in line with perceived interpretations that the economy was healthy or otherwise. It is quite possible that literacy practitioners are drawn unwittingly into a sense

literacy and numeracy were the priorities of management such as at Bartter Chicken and the Oil and Drilling industry. However, the issue of assessment continues to be complex as Louise Wignall asserted in her presentation 'Reporting service requests: How the current competency standards fail to capture the work done.'

Kalantzis noted that practitioners were caught in the rip tide of innovation... She was critical of our defensive, or at the very worst, 'wait and see' approach, and saw the profession as weak!

Mary Kalantzis in her role as provocateur challenged the adult literacy profession to resist the current government's obsession with assess-



continued over

of crisis, which is uncritical of their own role in these economic debates.

Integrating resources for job creation

Despite perceived levels of illiteracy at the local level and among particular groups of young people, literacy practitioners might consider closer integration of their services with a range of service providers to young people as well as economic development agencies. This should be undertaken with some caution as Nicholson (2000) warns that neither business nor community organisations are particularly well-practised at establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. In times of crisis, the lack of resources and traditional ways of relating which Nicholson alludes to may be sourced to low education levels which quite often is code for low levels of literacy.

Hautecoeur (1996) observes that levels of adult literacy are a recent phenomena entering educational parlance with total quality management and other document driven systems supporting business and affecting the workplace. Workplace literacy practitioners know full well the demand for their services by firms introducing such systems to comply with government requirements for quality assurance of its suppliers of good and services. The contrast in the case of Youth Policy is that, unlike the demand for literacy practitioners in the total quality discussion, Their (literacy practitioners') services are not acknowledged in the discussion regarding social exclusion of young people. For

example, literacy practitioners or professional associations have not been involved in the recent series of consultations held by the federal government 'Youth Pathways' Taskforce.

Where should integration occur for social inclusion?

The OECD suggestion that lessons might be learned from better integration at the local level has been taken up in Australia not so much at the local level, but rather by the central bureaucracies who have integrated units for higher levels of surveillance. The Under Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services announced an integrated approach for his department which involved Community Services, Health and Family Services, Attorney General and Treasury. It was claimed that this approach had gained support from families, government, community and business. The choice of sections combining their considerable systems could be interpreted as more capacity for surveillance of welfare and higher levels of monetary probity rather than service to clients. As for literacy provision and thus the capacity for literacy practitioners to become involved in supporting young people, those programs which are time limited because of insufficient funds do not enable literacy providers to build the levels of trust, which can produce results for clients.

There has been much criticism (and emerging evidence) which suggests this central integration is exacerbating social exclusion. Raper



International literacy conference

ment. She remarked that we have all become very good at assessment and yet ideologically many of us are compromised when making our final judgements. She observed that Australia has missed the boat because we have refused to invest in education.

She noted that practitioners were becoming less visible and what we do has become less visible as skills become more embedded within curriculum, such as in Training Packages. She noted that we were caught in the rip tide of innovation and that, as the boundaries shift and blur and the new rhetoric of lifelong learning takes hold, there will be greater invisibility.

Our response, she observes, is one of 'passivity' along with most other Australian educators. She was critical of our defensive, or at the very worst, 'wait and see' approach, and saw the profession as weak! Her advice is to take a political response, to take on self-exploitation in order to make a difference.

A counter example came from Marcia Barclay

with her success story with the Volunteer Tutor Scheme in WA. Many tutors were able to attend the conference thanks to a subsidy from WAALC. She was quite blunt: 'Marginal groups receive marginal funding'. Although the tutor scheme was over 22 years old and had achieved a lot, it had failed to establish itself in the community and communicate its achievements.

As Gee observed, people learn in communities of practice and organise themselves around affinity groups to share endeavours and practices, even though at times they may not actually like the people they are with. The Lens on Literacy Conference was deliberately designed to attract the diverse interests of the adult literacy field and while it provided spaces for the conversations, it also factored in dissonance and opportunities to ask the hard questions.

*Dr Jennie Bickmore Brand
ACAL Conference convenor*

(2000) indicates that social security rules are resulting in far too many of [Australia's] most vulnerable citizens being heavily fined for infringements in a 'breach at all costs' culture at Centrelink. This is too severe. The indication of the harshness of the current system is indicated in *Table 1* (Raper, 2000b) opposite.

If current breach rates continue this financial year, we will see an 85% increase since 1997-98. Raper suggests that this is alarming, particularly given the high penalties incurred by people who have been breached. Fines range from \$339 for an administrative breach and \$800 for an activity test breach, up to \$1,304 for a third or subsequent Activity Test breach.

Addressing the social exclusion of indigenous young people

Much of the literature about social exclusion of indigenous Australians would challenge the notion of individualised services being relevant unless aspects beyond the experience of youth workers and literacy practitioners, are also taken into account. Daly and Smith (1999) suggest that the household and family should be used as the basis for developing policy as well as other social indicators such as sole parent, high adult unemployment, high visitor rates, high childhood levels. Promoting individualised programs as the OECD suggests does not necessarily address social exclusion of indigenous young people.

A reading of the recently released Federal Government National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000 - 2004 (DEYA, 1999) could indicate that this document meets the key indicators set out by the OECD (1998) for effective school-to-work transitions for young people. There is little in the Strategy that can change the harsh realities of indigenous community life marked by high levels of unemployment, virtually non-existent youth friendly labour markets, severe health, housing and justice issues that go beyond the scope of an educational strategy in this current form to address.

Following this same theme, Arthur (1999), Hunter and Borland (1997), Gray and Hunter (1999) highlight the extreme difficulties which educationalists have especially when confronted with a range of social deficits, including such aspects of indigenous experience as high arrest rates and poor housing stock, which can defeat any young person.

Furthermore, the findings of Hunter & Daly (1998), show that current work opportunities (including CDEP) for indigenous people do not provide enough incentive for them to enter the workforce. These welfare dysfunctions ensure that the social inclusion of indigenous people is a complex issue, requiring far more

Table 1: Increasing breach rates: 1997-2000

	Activity test breaches	increase since 97-98	Admin breaches	increase since 97-98	Total breaches	increase since 97-98
1997-98 (actual)	60,981	-	59,737	-	120,718	-
1998-99 (actual)	88,751	46%	76,741	28%	165,492	37%
1999-00 (projection - based on data available for first 4 months of 1999-00)	131,094	102%	92,256	54%	223,350	85%

collaboration and cohesion in policy development, implementation and evaluation across various agencies that serve indigenous clients.

Agency and action

Individual and collective agency are suggested by some writers as a way forward for young people to combat social exclusion. Hazard and Lee (1999:349) suggest that young people can deal with the levels of dysfunctionality which constitute their world, should they have the social skills to identify and deal with the risks. The participation of young people in decision making as well as the identification of these social skills is essential. This article also suggests that literacy practitioners, like the clients they wish to assist, require the same skills of building and maintaining relationships as well as the capacity to identify and strategise through the problems of dysfunctionality.

The language in Centrelink promotional brochures suggests a very smooth system of provision and choice. The reality is far from the case, where provision is ad hoc and dependent on an increasingly privatised framework. Breaches are quite likely given the multiplicity of difficulties regarding the proximity and reliability of required training. Breaches also attract fines in excess of those available to the judicial system in criminal proceedings. Few young people have the capacity to unpack the extreme requirements and challenge these administrative decisions (Varghese, 2000).

*Carolyn Ovens
ACAL Project Officer*

The writer wishes to acknowledge, with appreciation, the support and assistance from Dr. Geraldine Castleton in reviewing early drafts.

The complete version of this article, including Bibliography, can be found on the ACAL web site <http://www.acal.edu.au>



ANTA Innovative Projects—2000

Adelaide Institute of TAFE: SA—***‘Review and update the Adult Numeracy Training Professional Development Kit to develop an on-line component of delivery and support’***

Aim: to update the Professional Development Program (Adult Numeracy Training) for the ALBE sector and to develop and trial an on-line model of delivery.

Contact: Tess Were (08) 8207 8266

Arts Training New South Wales Limited: NSW ***‘Production of a user friendly resource highlighting methods to develop young people’s literacy and numeracy skills development’***

This project focuses on building pathways from non-accredited to accredited training for young people considered to be ‘at risk’. This will be done by recruiting young people to participate in a Helping Early Leavers Project in the Byron Bay area and then offering them a ten week VET access course in event management.

Contact: Sue-Ann Stanford (02) 9357 2938

Ballarat East Community House Inc.: VIC ***‘Interactive Road Rules Project’***

Aim: to produce an interactive CD ROM and an accompanying Learning Guide which will use innovative learning strategies to assist adults with low literacy skills to master the literacy demands associated with passing a written Learner’s Permit test.

Contact: Michael Gwyther (03) 5331 4107

Central West Community College Inc.: NSW ***‘JuST a Bit More - resource development for Job Search Training programs’***

Aim: to enhance access for job seekers to a VET pathway for further education and training by developing job search skills training resources for use with and by job seekers with

low language, literacy and numeracy skills. Contact: Suellen Young (02) 6361 3122

Continuing Education Centre, Albury-Wodonga: ***‘On Farm Literacy: Travelling Tutor Program’***

Aim: to provide a travelling tutor as an initial step in breaking down the barriers currently preventing farmers accessing literacy assistance. This tutor will also provide workplace learning on farms and provide pathways for farmers into Adult Literacy Programs.

Contact: Dorothy Lucardie (0260) 241800

Dr Helen Fraser: NSW—***‘Interactive computer disc for teachers of ESL pronunciation’***

This project was commenced in 1999. This year it aims to produce an interactive computer disk (CD-ROM) to support teachers in helping learners of English as a second language with pronunciation. Contact: Helen Fraser (02) 6284 3767

Language Australia: VIC—***‘Learn2Learn’***

Aim: to develop an on-line resource for adult learners that provides language, literacy and numeracy tasks that develop the learning to learn capacities and strategies of the user. This resource will allow students in diverse settings the opportunity to practise and extend their language, literacy and numeracy skills whilst explicitly engaging in and reflecting on the ‘Learning to Learn’ skills integral to the transition from dependent (passive) to independent (active) learner.

Contact: Jan Hagston (03) 9926 4779

NSW AMES: NSW—***‘Looking Forward’***

Aim: to address identified literacy needs of adult Indigenous people living in communities in the Northern Territory and surrounding remote areas by developing a range of teaching



The politics of Aboriginal education

people and our supporters celebrate the survival of indigenous cultures during National Aboriginal and Islander Week. My Aboriginal son could recognise the Aboriginal flag as our flag at the age of three, and my teenage daughter proudly wears her black, red and yellow beads on a bracelet intertwined with echidna quills so that she can be identified amongst her multi-cultural school mates as Koorie. Today’s teachers are better informed and understand that it is important to respect a student’s background. My children’s teachers being thus aware have avoided the mistakes made by those who taught me. I remember going home after a lesson on ‘aborigines’ at primary school

and asking “Mum, how come we don’t eat witchetty grubs?” as my teacher had said Aboriginal people eat witchetty grubs and I knew we did not eat grubs of any sort. A student is less likely to learn in an environment where their family and friends are misrepresented and misunderstood.

Skills - the focus is on achieving literacy in Standard Australian English (SAE) and numeracy. The language of power in Australia and most of the world is English. ATSI people generally recognise the importance of our children being literate in SAE; however, it is also important that we maintain our home languages and the indigenous languages which are some of the oldest on the planet.

and learning resources.

Contact: Catherine Burrows (02) 9555 5300
Northern Territory University—***'Pilot Project - Literacy and Numeracy Training in Rehabilitation Centres'***

Aim: to establish, deliver and evaluate a pilot program for indigenous adults at two of the major rehabilitation centres in Darwin. Accredited educational programs and courses will be incorporated as part of the rehabilitation programs, particularly in relation to adult literacy and numeracy.

Contact: Rae Flanagan (08) 8946 6571

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology: VIC
'Integrating Holistic Assessment of Adult Numeracy into the National Reporting System'

Aim: to produce a hard copy assessment resource, accompanied by on-line examples on a Project website. The project also aims to stimulate and support ongoing discussion of assessment issues and the development of exemplary assessment practice.

Contact: Beth Marr (03) 9925 7822

SkillsPlus Peninsula Inc.: VIC—***'Telling My Story: A Computer Mentoring Project'***

Aim: to improve the language, literacy and numeracy skills of youth between the ages of 15 and 25 who have incomplete and negative experiences of learning. The major objective will be to develop a commitment to learning and to enhance participation in the community through a two-way mentoring system, where elderly community members are assisted to produce multi-media copies of their life histories. Contact: Kristine Helisma (03) 9781 3388

Summer Hill Films Pty Ltd: NSW—***'Pre-Training Assessment in Workplace Learning - Video Case Studies'***

This project is a continuation of a 1999 project. It will produce a professional development video resource to support Pre-Training

Assessments in workplace training programs.

Contact: Joanne Pettit (02) 9698 5544

Swinburne University of Technology in conjunction with The Centre - Wangaratta

'Innovative CGEA (Youth) Curriculum'

Aim: to develop a curriculum which is appropriate to young people whose needs have not been met by mainstream education and need to be re-engaged in an alternative education framework. It also will further develop and document innovative curriculum and learning strategies that successfully address language and literacy needs of young adults.

Contact: Cate Thompson (03) 9214 5577

TAFE Tasmania: TAS—***'Workplace Communication in Training Packages'***

Aim: to conduct nine information sessions for enterprises and training providers across the state. These sessions will examine the growing importance of literacy and numeracy competencies in the changing workplace environment; ways language, literacy and numeracy competencies are incorporated into Training Packages and obligations of workplace assessors and trainers. The sessions will also assist workplace assessors and trainers develop inclusive training methodology and materials.

Contact: Roger Richardson (03) 6421 5540

Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE

'Peer Literacy Tutor Training Video'

The project aims to produce a professionally made video to support 2 modules in the adult literacy tutor training course CNVOC006, which has been rewritten with an indigenous community focus. Peer tutor trainees in remote areas are not able to directly observe literacy tutoring strategies and this video will demonstrate a range of best practice literacy tutoring strategies that can be used to help them provide literacy support in workplaces.

Contact: Darcel Moyle (07) 4042 2480

The insistence by earlier educators that Aboriginal children only use English is one of the reasons that hundreds of indigenous languages are now extinct. The fact that few indigenous languages are written down and that few are used for school readers is an obstacle.

The work undertaken by the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs to teach SAE to Aboriginal adults has been most successful when the teaching was based on first ensuring that the students had a thorough understanding of their indigenous language.

Principles, opinions & views

During a discussion among Aboriginal people who work within the field of education the then

newly launched NATSIEP came up for discussion and one of the sages within the group commented, "Well, I am not so sure that this is for us, as it is aimed at mediocrity". For a moment the others paused. He went on to say that "too many of our people have been denied adequate and satisfactory formal education thus we need to achieve better than the average to achieve well". He asked, "Why should those of us who have achieved against the odds simply be satisfied to being like all other Australians? Why should we not aim to achieve above the status quo, to raise the level higher and higher?" If all that people can obtain is the status quo then they will never excel and without those who excel, the rest of the group will always be playing catch up.

literacy contact lists



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The politics of Aboriginal education

Another point of view is that because Indigenous Australian Studies is not widely undertaken at either university or school, education is simply another tool for assimilation. People who hold this belief strongly will often utilise the resistance model of political activism and not attend and not have their children attend school.

In the 1960s adherence to the resistance model could be said to be allied with the Queensland based Black Power group. As time moved on and the Aboriginal Provisional Government came into existence, resistance spread across the country, having started in Tasmania.

Today, those who consciously utilise resistance are so few that I can personally think of none, and it can be said that the majority of Aboriginal adults recognise the importance of education.

Reconciliation

On the first of January 2001 the Act which legislated for the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation will expire unless revised by Parliament. If reconciliation is an aim of an education institution at any level it should incorporate accurate and acceptable Indigenous Australian Studies in its curriculum. There have been no formal surveys of education institutions which have incorporated reconciliation into their aims. Such a study would enable Governments to examine funding for the area. Aboriginal Studies are more common these days they were a decade ago, but much more needs to be done in the area.

Feedback

Please connect with the EdNA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interactive e-mail list by going to <http://www.acsa.edu.au/indigenous>

Ms Davina B Woods
Director, Clever Women Consultants.

c. 1559 The Sacred Congregation of the Roman Inquisition publishes the first *Index of Forbidden Books*. Revised for the last time in 1948, the final printing appears in 1966, including among the banned authors Graham Greene and Colette.
from *A History of Reading* by Alberto Manguel

