

Independent Schools Queensland Response to:

Draft Advancing Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Education and Training –
An Action Plan for Education in
Queensland

Introduction

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training – An action plan for education in Queensland*.

Cross-sector collaboration is a high priority for ISQ including in the area of providing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to achieve their full potential in life-long learning, as well as assisting teachers and school leaders to embed Indigenous perspectives in curriculum.

During the period 2011 – 2016, Queensland independent schools experienced an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments by 699 students to a total of 3,932. This is equivalent to an annual growth rate of four percent. Independent schools cater for five percent of the Indigenous students enrolled in Queensland schools.

The increasing role played by independent schools in the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should be considered in any state initiative, action and implementation plan.

Specific strengths of the draft action plan

- The draft Action Plan is positive and encourages all providers to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' cultural identity, linguistic background and journey of learning from early childhood through to Year 12, school-based training and post-compulsory work placement or tertiary pursuits;
- The draft Action Plan content provides a platform of strength and forward direction for Queensland educators supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- The draft Action Plan delivers a strong message to all government and non-government providers to work towards an approach of excellence;
- The draft Action Plan emphasises a need to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in all education learning environments for all students and educators;
- The emphasis on increased professional learning opportunities for education workers and teachers in the area of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners is welcomed;
- The empowerment model underpinning the draft Action Plan (as illustrated on page 8) is clear, concise and self-explanatory; and
- The continued emphasis on encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects is welcomed.

Specific areas for further consideration

- Though there is minor mention of non-government providers throughout the draft Action Plan, it appears to be mainly engaging and providing services and resources to government schools to implement the plan; more equitable distribution of these resources to the non-government sector would be valued;
- Government school sectors in states and territories have collaborated to produce the recently launched *Capability Framework - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) Learners* and this vital document that links teachers to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers should be mentioned in the Action Plan;
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) Qualifications (page 4): though Indigenous students are over-represented in the lower VET qualifications (Cert III and below), it should also be mentioned that entry level Cert I and II qualifications are often those that are completed, especially in the areas of Hospitality and Kitchen Operations as these assist students to directly access pre-apprenticeship employment for example as kitchen hands and baristas.
- Technology resources, employability and skills set training, support to schools to assist students to complete qualifications, and school and community-based trainers and assessors are necessary for the VET initiatives mentioned in the draft Action Plan: access to this resourcing for independent schools would be welcomed.
- The term 'strength based' approaches (page 9) needs to be briefly explained or unpacked;
- In some regions, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership (DATSIP) officers are working with a small number of independent schools to provide improved school to training or employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, however, this is not consistent across the state as officers have commented that their priority is to work with state schools - this situation does not provide equitable support for Indigenous students and their families across the state; the distribution of these services could be improved; and
- Provision of training for school-based education workers and community members (e.g. in the Training and Assessment qualification TAE 40116) to deliver training in schools would facilitate an improved student completion rate of a variety of Cert I – IV certificates.

Specific questions

- Delivery of Plan (page 6): *"We will monitor and report on progress and ensure....."* Will data from independent schools be included in the monitoring process, and if so, how will this be best achieved?
- The draft Action Plan specifically mentions the introduction of EALD Hub on-line resource (page 22); will independent schools be able to access this resource?

- Early Childhood Education and Care (pages 9 and 10): it appears that most of the \$38.8 million will be channelled into the Children and Family Centres and to ten state schools delivering pre-prep programs; will any resources be available to the non-government sector and will non-government early childhood educators have access to the promised professional development?
- Will the new EALD coaches (page 11) also be available for professional development sessions in independent schools?
- Will Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in independent schools have access to the services provided under the \$7.2 million investment into the 'academies' (page 12)?
- The *Solid Pathways Program* is an exciting initiative targeting high achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; will Indigenous students in independent schools have the opportunity to access this extension support through the implementation of this new draft Action Plan?
- Improved school performance (page 12) – how will schools will be supported to implement best practice?
- Will the annual forum (page 12) involve the non-government education sector as in previous years?
- Cross-sector collaboration is rightly emphasised (page 19) for a more integrated approach for sharing skills, competencies and resources; how will this be implemented? What resourcing will be provided by the State Government to facilitate this process?
- Will the provision of scholarships (page 21) be available to students graduating from Year 12 in independent schools?
- The *Aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders* program states that it is for Queensland; will this leadership program be available to school leaders in independent schools?

Further comments

Independent Schools Queensland has been heavily involved in the cross-sector collaboration to improve the ear health and subsequent improvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' language and literacy development through the *Deadly Kids, Deadly Futures* initiative Queensland Action and Implementation plans. This model for cross-sector collaboration proved to be extremely successful and would be a worthwhile approach for other initiatives under this new *Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training – An action plan for Queensland*.

Conclusion

Independent Schools Queensland appreciates this opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Action Plan.

ISQ looks forward to further discussions and collaboration on the draft Action Plan which is an exciting initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

If you have any enquiries or wish to follow up any comments made here please contact:

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