

My response is based on my experience in working for the NSW DET as an Education Consultant in the old Met West Region (1990-1996) and as the officer responsible for producing the Healing Time Drug Education resources (1996-2002).

I am using the term Aboriginal. I have no experience working with Torres Strait Islander people.

I am not positive about the plan for four main reasons.

1. Until Indigenous Australians are given self-determination, all such plans are a waste of paper.
2. Aboriginal education will not succeed while it remains a compartmentalized section of a western educational paradigm. Aboriginal education will not succeed until the welfare dependency tap has been turned off and parents are encouraged to take responsibility for the upbringing of their children. I recently came across an Aboriginal mother who refused to come up to the local school unless the school paid for a taxi to take her up and back. In Mexico, mothers (not fathers) receive credits for their children reaching milestones, both health and educational. It works. This is not rocket science. However, until the cycles of disempowerment are broken and parents find their voice, Aboriginal education will continue to founder.
3. The plan is a dog's breakfast because the Commonwealth has been rolled by the states. States and territories do not have the will, commitment or capacity to implement Commonwealth priorities. If, after nearly a century and a half of public education, the states haven't got Aboriginal education right, why continue to let them have their way?
4. Aboriginal education requires world-class research and innovation. While the plan goes some way in this direction I don't see leadership in addressing the issues of languages and technology for isolated and mobile students. In fact I think they are avoided.

When I designed the Healing Time drug education resources for Aboriginal Students I included a hidden sub text. The message was that if you wanted to do something about changing your life then you had to do it by yourself within an Aboriginal cultural framework, because there was no point in waiting for the white fella to rescue you. Unfortunately there is nothing in this plan to make me think that anything has changed.

Since retiring I have increasingly walked further away from endless planning meetings and am working on an Aboriginal history of my local area. I feel I am making a far greater contribution.

Regards,
Barry Corr