

8 March 2010

IEAP Consultation
Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
PO Box 202
Carlton South
VICTORIA 3053

Dear Sir/Madam,

Draft Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010-2014

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft *Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010-2014*. La Trobe University welcomes the development of the National Indigenous Education Action Plan and encourages its implementation across all education sectors.

In answer to the guide questions for feedback, I am pleased to respond as follows:

1. What was your first impression of the draft IEAP when you read it?

Many of the issues contained within the draft have been discussed at length over a number of years, within a variety of forums, including reviews and inquiries. These issues include: how to increase access to education by Indigenous Australians, from primary through to tertiary levels; how to ensure effective participation by Indigenous Australian students once they are in the education system; how we can encourage increased engagement by parents of Indigenous Australian students in their children's participation at school; how we can increase the cultural competency of non-Indigenous stakeholders to ensure appropriate learning environments are provided; and how we can increase the numbers of Indigenous Australian professionals in the education system.

2. What questions, issues or concerns did the draft IEAP raise for you?

Inconsistencies regarding funding and resource allocations in the past have resulted in lack of Indigenous inclusion, achievement and representation within the education system. Whilst feedback over the years has indicated a preference for partnerships and collaborative initiatives when outcomes are not achieved, often the blame is laid at the feet of the Indigenous Australian stakeholder.

It is positive to note that there will be attention given to at least halving the gap in Indigenous Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 (target 6 in the draft plan). This is especially important for Victoria, which has the lowest completion rate of Year 12 Indigenous students. A concerted effort needs to be applied to Indigenous students at primary and secondary schools to inform them of their options at post-secondary level. Tertiary institutions should be encouraged to provide more graduate retention into meaningful positions within those institutions.

La Trobe University also has reservations about 'targets' included in the introduction section

of the Draft Plan ('...at least halve the gap in Indigenous Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020...'), without explicit identification of resources required to achieve such targets.

3. Are there important issues that you feel have not been addressed in the draft IEAP?

La Trobe University recognises there are similar challenges faced by the higher education sector, as there are in pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. However, very little mention has been made of the tertiary sector and the role it plays in developing professionals, particularly those desperately needed in the nursing, legal, social work, education and behavioural sciences sectors. More emphasis should be placed on the 'pathways to real post-school options' section of the draft. There is a need to more clearly articulate targets for schooling and community engagement. In addition, the sector needs to identify how enabling institutions might better support and produce the outcomes particularly related to teacher preparation and other areas of professional development.

The Draft Plan does not appear to place sufficient emphasis on the important relationship between schools and universities. Universities should be working with schools in relation to Indigenous participation at a very early stage. Universities, as trainers of educators, have a vested interest in ensuring quality teaching staff are produced. This in turn impacts on the student experience at school, which may influence attendance and achievement standards of Indigenous schoolchildren.

4. What do you like about the draft IEAP?

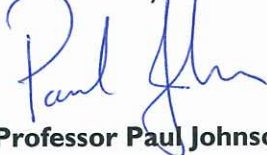
An Indigenous Education Action Plan is needed – it should encompass the needs and views of all stakeholders to reach the maximum positive outcomes. La Trobe University supports the 'Indigenous engagement principle' included in the Draft Plan – greater focus needs to apply to +involving parents and community in education. This would assist in building stronger relationships between the community and education providers and overcoming the marginalisation many Indigenous people feel within the education system.

5. Have you any further advice that you feel might strengthen the Plan?

The draft plan could expand its focus to life-long learning. This focus must incorporate post-compulsory education. This would include (a) identification of principals and teachers, and (b) preparation of pre-service teacher education. Universities are existing 'enablers' of both (a) and (b) and need to be consolidated into the draft plan to be viewed as real options for Indigenous people.

I hope that these comments will contribute to our common goal of significantly improving the education outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Yours faithfully,



Professor Paul Johnson
Vice-Chancellor and President