

	half the population in the Kimberleys. I think the 1991 census said that 46% of the Kimberley population is Aboriginal people.
Chris Sidoti	If you take away Broome though it becomes close to 75%.
Peter Yu [Indigenous education; cultural integrity]	<p>Absolutely. Also, across the region I think if you take the majority of people that live here all their lives and end up dying here then its up to that mark as well. So in that sense there are peculiar characteristics both cultural and social about the context in which people live, and we need to try to understand the nature of how we are currently struggling with trying to maintain the level of strength of culture.</p> <p>I suppose there are interconnecting issues that relate to the Kimberley Land Council's work in regards to native title area where there has now been a formal recognition in common law. This has in some ways given a lot of hope from an Indigenous perspective, and has raised some expectations not only on the question of property rights but also about the issue of identity, of who people are. Of course, a big part of who people are is the question of what is in place to sustain the nature of that continuing identity. And that of course is related to the nature of maintaining cultural integrity, and how that process is facilitated. Of course one would have to say that this fundamentally lies within the area of education and the capacity for people to speak their own language and for people to be able to negotiate the nature of the integration of their culture within the formal education system.</p> <p>I think that's been a major concern. Just to highlight some of the concerns from 1991, and I say this has been consistent over the years, from some of the senior people that attended. Quotes like 'schools teach only one culture - when we learn kartiya culture we lose our Aboriginal culture'. 'State schools are not allowing teaching of Aboriginal languages (I'm not sure what the situation is today or whether there has been an improvement) whereas Aboriginal communities support the Aboriginal Language Resource Centre (which was established in 1984-85 I think, basically to assist in the development in the teaching of language in some schools but also focussing more importantly on the preservation and maintenance of language more generally in terms of other organisations and communities that might require their services from time to time). Also 'Children attending school are taught kartiya ways of learning and culture, there's no time left for Aboriginal culture. This is leading to the continuation of the process of assimilation'. And things like 'we need our own schools. We want 2 days of kartiya business and 3 days of Aboriginal business' and 'Aboriginal elders must be respected as educators'. 'There ought to be development of bicultural and multicultural approach to education so that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways are taught' 'That in conjunction with the school authority and education department, they should look at establishing closer links with the Aboriginal community in relation to the development of policies and strategies for the teaching Aboriginal culture and language in the Kimberleys.'</p> <p>So I think the Kimberleys is a good example in terms of the continuing presence and development of the Aboriginal population and the demographics, and the fact that there is a significant strong cultural base in the Kimberleys. There is something like 30 odd languages left in the Kimberleys at this time. So we have such a diverse cultural group of people. That's the other problem in terms of the education is that we tend to be lumped as one group of identifiable Aboriginal people without understanding the nature of cultural subtleties and differences that exist throughout the Kimberleys. This is of course, just purely on the cultural and language side and the difficulties that people have and the fear that they have that their kids are not being taught their own culture which of course exists to undermine the nature of the authority of the parents in the community.</p> <p>On the one hand you've got within the legal framework the recognition of native title which is more do with just property rights -it is to do with identity and who we are as Aboriginal people going into the new millenium as individuals, as communities, as families. I think that's one aspect of the debate that continues to be ignored, to the detriment of improved relationship and to the detriment of course to the rights of Indigenous people. I think it has given a level of confidence in some ways about the nature of traditional and customary authority. But it has not been translated into the community because we're not having the level of policy involvement in regards to the</p>

<p>[Parent involvement in children's education]</p>	<p>nature of the integrity of the identity and being of Aboriginal people. I think its fairly crucial because while we have this gradual recognition for litigation, people are being continually undermined as you'd appreciate in terms of the non-recognition, the inability of government and policy-makers to understand what the aspirations of Aboriginal people are in that regard. I think there is a whole crying out for that recognition within the Aboriginal community but it is being distracted by the very device of wedge politics which go on in this country.</p> <p>I'm talking fairly big picture stuff here but I think it has direct relevance in terms of the capacity of families and parents to have the confidence to be able to provide assistance to their children and to participate more fully in the nature of their children's education in the mainstream. I don't think you can ignore those factors. You just can't talk about education in isolation to the nature of influence that happens at home or influences that happen on a level where people are fundamentally fighting to get some basic recognition within the legal framework of this country. And I think its important to see it in that context because for instance, as a practical example if you look at the local day to day issue, if we take Broome for example, most families are now involved in some form of mediation or negotiations as a result of the native title legislation, either with the local government or development interests in and around town. Most of these parents are now on the dole with the CDEP program. When we first started in 1994 we were meeting 5, 6 or 7 days a week, sometimes ten hours a day, so that was taking away a lot of the parents, who were very keen to participate in the process, but you find that parents are very responsible and want to go home, so meetings can't continue. So parents are competing with their interests, in their fundamental positions plus their responsibility as parents in terms of supporting their children at home and at school. It's fairly difficult to balance the nature of that commitment. Sometimes you get a lot of people coming to a meeting and sometimes you don't, depending on what's happening within the school or other areas and I suppose vice versa that happens as well.</p>
<p>[Parent involvement: juvenile justice]</p>	<p>So I guess in terms of the appropriateness or cultural curriculum or whatever, that's one issue. The issue is the nature of the understanding and support within the Aboriginal community itself and how that affects the individual parents and their capacity to offer support and give direction and maintain some form of discipline in relation to their children's education. I think a lot of it has to do with the historical period dealing with the stolen generation. Particularly in places like Broome I recall in my personal experience working for a community welfare department in the early and late 70s we had a dramatic increase in offences in towns from children who'd come in from communities and places that were previously missions. What we found was most of those children that were offending were being sent away to Perth. It was an inordinate number of people being sent away. Was that they'd come from people that had mission backgrounds or community backgrounds. They'd come into town where the kids were getting greater access to technology and to automation and the parents could not understand what was going on. Even the normal day to day problem you'd expect in the nuclear family group you'd expect the parents to deal with it and parents were running to church or to welfare to continue to expect that they would supervise their children. I think this has changed fairly dramatically in that regard in terms of the fact that we do have a large core group of educated Aboriginal people.</p>
<p>[Adult literacy and numeracy]</p>	<p>I suppose one thing that is frustrating generally is that for all the training and employment programs that have happened over the years we still have great difficulty in identifying where those trained people are and how we can access them in terms of our own organisations. My experience as the head this organisation is that at times we've had people who've applied for positions who've basically been mature people, who've been through the education system but have very poor literacy and numeracy skills. They just can't read and write. These are not old people. In actual fact I think the contradiction is that the old people from the missions are probably more educated. People like my mother's generation are much more well-read, can read and write, than some of the people within my own generation. That is indicative I guess, of I don't know really what, of the fact that there are many social policy factors that have been developed without necessarily understanding the premise on which those policies have been directed</p>

<p>[Indigenous education and employment]</p>	<p>towards. Its like a lot of the bridging courses - I actually did a bridging course in 1976 and left after the first semester because I didn't really think it was appropriate - but those people coming out of those courses are usually coming from public sector background anyway. They aren't people coming from the communities.</p> <p>I suppose the issue is that the investment of education of Aboriginal people is not being invested back into the community, its being lost. The nature of the value of that education is being lost. That's what underpins this notion of the continuing assimilationist policies. That's not to deny that Aboriginal people like anybody else want a better job, want a better house, want better wages, want a decent house, a motor car all that sort of stuff but I've had some people who've done some of these courses and have been appropriately qualified in terms of getting their diploma and degree but can't write a five page report or can't read and write and I really wonder why. In the past we've actually invested to send them away to train, even if its just in block courses, we've provided them their ongoing wage and at the end of their period when they become qualified there's been an expectation on their part about improved positions within the organisation but yet not having the skill capacity to do it. So at another level the appropriateness of education is that people are getting qualified but what are they getting qualified for. It's a bit like the appropriateness that TAFE might run in isolated communities - you can only have so many hairdressers at Mulan or Lake Gregory or Billiluna, or so many welders at Halls Creek. These are very necessary skills, I'm not trying to undermine that but what are you going to do with 20 hairdressers in Halls Creek. How is it targeted to the skill needs in that community and what is the overall aspiration of the community there in terms of trying to improve itself.</p> <p>So I've covered a fairly broad area. I guess the reason for wanting to come and speak briefly with you today is that we may not be experts in education, but down the end of the line we have to deal as an organisation with people who are emerging out of the system and what we don't see is appropriately qualified people who are reinvesting the nature of whatever learned expertise they have back into the community. So at the same time we don't see the nature of the participation of the senior people who have the cultural authority. It may be happening in some cases in community schools at a local level and we think that's fine, but we think there is cause for an argument that the Kimberleys is unique and we have our own peculiar and idiosyncratic nature as a result of us having a half Aboriginal population. We have a tremendous amount of communities that are situated throughout the Kimberleys. We have a very strong cultural base with up to about 30 odd different language groups. I think in recent times there has been a bit of a renaissance in terms of people coming back and participating in cultural activity and asserting and identifying themselves but its done in a context where they are continually being thwarted in mainstreaming and ideological political positions which are being promoted in the name of economic rationalism. There is a growing exclusiveness while individual institutions might be developing very progressive policies in dealing with cultural matters in education it seems to me that they are very much pushing it uphill in terms of the overall support from the policy makers. I think our great fear is the continuing nature of assimilation, a fact that we are not seeing the reinvestment of what is being learnt being put back into our communities which impacts on the nature of our employment or the lack of our employment.</p>
<p>[Unemployment/CDEP]</p>	<p>As you are aware without CDEP [Community Development Employment Program] most communities would be 85-90% unemployed. I think that even with CDEP it will be a huge millstone around the necks of the Kimberley community in years to come because we now have three generations or more of Aboriginal people who've been working for the dole. It is useful to do some work but its no sense of personal pride and no sense of confirmation of improving the ethic of work in our community. The most important thing is that there are no skills being developed so there are no qualifications. My fear is that we have at least, taking an educated guess, 65% of our people on CDEP and if that figure is maintained, given that we continue with low retention rates and rates of success, in five or ten years time we will be having a greater level of uneducated people. We are really going backwards because the Aboriginal growth in population is about two times that national average. So we have a growing Aboriginal population. I think figures</p>

	<p>quoted by the economic unit for ATSIC if the current rate of unemployment continues by the year 2006 something like 46% of Aboriginal people will be unemployed in Australia.</p> <p>If you bring that down to a local level you cannot disassociate the nature of education from employment, so therefore you'd say that in actual fact the rate of success in the education field is being pulled back. Because the facilities are not there in the communities and kids are still leaving schools earlier. It sounds pretty pessimistic but I think we need to sound pessimistic in order to understand the nature and the magnitude of the difficulty that we are confronted with as a result of not having an appropriately based education system that's going to give the authority to the community, to the people, or to develop some cohesive and recognised partnership, a relationship with policy makers in the educational field. I'll stop there.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Precisely because of the broad background you've given we are interested in hearing more. You have actually give the overview and the context of these education issues in ways that few other organisations can, so we particularly look forward to getting a formal submission from you. We appreciate the comments you have made today.
Peter Yu	We're sort of at the other end where we look for people to employ and we look to maintain the nature of the balance in terms of our integrity given that we are a community organisation and we assert that we take our instruction from the community and that process is culturally acknowledged and accepted. What we have to battle with at our level is the changing nature of our organisation and the nature of our representation. Quite clearly the amendments to the Native Title Act in terms of representative bodies is a minor example. ATSIC has just done a review which basically says that we are a statutory organisation so our functions are very much tied even though we are a community organisation with some statutory authority. Quite clearly it has tried to direct us to purely performing our statutory functions which then of course alienate us, even though we are becoming a bureaucracy, it alienates us in terms of the representation of our communities.
Chris Sidoti	Thank you Tom and Peter. My apologies for starting late because of our delay. The submissions have to be in by the end of September. We need them as early as possible so that we can work through the issues that are raised in them. In particular we would like to hear more about the position about Aboriginal community schools and KLC's view of how the community schools are an alternative to the formal systems both government and non-government, and can relate to some of the issues that Tom, you have raised , and Peter you raised. Thanks a lot.
Tom Birch	In travelling around are you only committed to the area you are allotted to?
Chris Sidoti	The Inquiry is limited. All we are able to do is to look at a cross-section, sample communities, so that's the reason why we went to Billiluna but we didn't get to Balgo or to any other of the remote communities. Some people did come in from some of those when we were in Halls Creek and Fitzroy. We will be in each State and Territory at some stage during the course of this and it's just a matter of getting a cross-section.
Tom Birch	Yeah, I just wanted to raise it because originally I am from Wyndham and I read in the Kimberley Echo that unfortunately you were in Billiluna, and what I'm saying is that I don't know if Wyndham was notified about your meetings in Kununurra?
Chris Sidoti	I don't know if the Aboriginal communities were. We did have people come in from Wyndham to the Kununurra meetings. We heard a reasonable amount about some of the problems that Wyndham is facing particularly as Kununurra grows and Wyndham shrinks.
Tom Birch	OK that's fine.
Esther Bevan, Chair, Catholic Education Aboriginal Committee	My name is Esther Bevan. This morning I am representing CEAC which is the Catholic Education Aboriginal Committee for the West Kimberleys. For this morning's talk I thought I would give a bit of a history of what CEAC stands for and what we have been trying to do since its inception, or I suppose since its resurrection in late 1987 through the Catholic Education Regional Office here.
[Indigenous education: Catholic education]	I think I'll give just a brief history on it. In 1978 we had initial discussion between the Catholic Education Office down in Perth, staff and Aboriginal community people which led to the formation of the original Aboriginal Committee to advise the Catholic Education Commission in Perth on education. We had people in there in 1982 again. In 1982-1986 was the formally established CEAC Committee but only with a membership

[Parent involvement]	<p>of four I think originally it was. In 1986 the membership increased to 24 and I think the only time these Aboriginal people met it was down in Perth. So in November of 1987 when Sister Pat was the regional officer here for the Catholic Education Regional Office, we decided to look at restructuring the whole of that Committee. Sister Pat was part of the Aboriginal Committee, myself as Chairperson, Robin Albert, Annette O'Connor, Ann Holgin, and Myrtle Ward. We tried to get, and we continued to try to get, membership which is a cross-section of the community with different expertise or skills either from their jobs or just as community people. They would bring to the Committee and then to the Catholic Education Commission of WA, what Aboriginal people see as their needs in the education of their children in our Kimberley Catholic schools.</p> <p>The name changed from the Advisory Committee from 1988-1990 to the Catholic Education Advisory Committee (CEAC). In 1991 under the new structure we went from just a regional committee starting at the Kimberleys, to seeing the need to have it in all of the four diocese of Western Australian, and other people as they looked at the Kimberley model saw that they'd like to have a voice too in their children's education. So then the Committees were established throughout the Kimberley diocese, Geraldton diocese, Geraldton diocese, the archdiocese of Perth and Bunbury. From that we elected a state executive of Aboriginal people. Originally we met with our regional offices and they were part of the whole CEAC structure. All of our regional committees take place four times a year within the four school terms, and in different locations throughout our diocese. We have two consultative meetings in Perth at the head office where all CEAC members from all four diocese meet and we meet together to apply for or put in our arguments and submissions for funding through the IESIP (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) program from the Commonwealth government. Our meeting this year will take place on the 22 and 23 of June.</p> <p>The structure of our state executive is the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of each regional committee sits on the State Executive and the Chair of that executive automatically sits on the Commission in Perth for the Catholic Education Commission. Regional meetings are held in the key centres: Perth, Geraldton, Bunbury and Broome. Regional meetings are held in distant towns: Kalgoorlie, Carnarvon, Wyndham. And our regional meetings we insist on having in remote Aboriginal communities like Warmun, Billiluna, Balgo and our last Committee meeting was two or three weeks ago at Lombadina Djarindjin just up the Peninsula. We try to go town-community-town-community. As we meet in those locations we invite the parents of children in that school or community people to come and voice their concerns to us to bring then to the State Executive on what they see as issues that are crucial to the education of their children.</p> <p>Some of the ways we've been involved over the years since 1987 have been that [indistinct]. As I said we have involvement in IESIP, the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Plan, operational plan and all CEAC members as I said are part of that and we fight for those funds and we meet in Perth each year. We always have input into the seminar for all new staff into the Kimberley Catholic schools and this year we had input for the whole week. Before we only started with a couple of days. Now every day of that week CEAC had either delivered a program for that day or was part of some of the issues and concerns or the cultural education that we needed and new teachers in our Kimberley Catholic schools needed to get. We were instrumental and were very successful in the development and implementation of the Catholic Education Aboriginal policy for the Catholic Education Commission of WA and that was an all Aboriginal committee. The regional office, the regional committees played their major part in that development. Part of our role in CEAC now is not only the review of policy but is that as CEAC members we could travel with the Aboriginal consultants in our regional offices and bring this to the people. Most importantly in CEAC we have Aboriginal consultants, we have Aboriginal teaching assistants, we have a whole range of other Aboriginal people who work within the Catholic education system in the Kimberleys and I believe that CEAC's involvement can be the passing on of information, running workshops and seminars for the parents and community people, because for too long Aboriginal parents through the history of this part of the world haven't been directly involved in their children's</p>
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<p>[Substance abuse programs]</p>	<p>education. In the early days it was either centres or the missions who took over, or welfare. It was always someone else but now we see that we are the parents of these children and we need to be part of their education and especially when we are looking at the kind of education that Aboriginal people are asking for is two way learning. CEAC tries to operate on this. Everything is delivered to CEAC - the members of CEAC in either the East or West Kimberleys - and we can go out with the consultants and we can talk to the parents while they are in the schools doing their business for the day.</p> <p>It is passing on the information so at the end of the day when we are asking the parents and community people to make decisions on the education of their children they can make it after being well-informed about either new programs or whatever is coming into the curriculum for their Catholic schools.</p> <p>Another way that we have provided support over the years is through the ASSPA program. This is another Commonwealth funded program which is the Aboriginal Students Support and Parental Awareness Program. It is not just for the Kimberley Catholic schools, it is for all schools that have Aboriginal enrolment.</p> <p>We visit schools and communities with our consultant. There are two Aboriginal consultants in the regional office here in Broome to discuss matters related to Catholic education. Those decisions perhaps will make it to the State Executive and need to go to the parents or from the other way around what the regions see as their needs we can in turn bring to the Commission.</p> <p>We attend all education conferences, gatherings, religious celebrations throughout the Kimberleys. I think the really big thing I could say about the Committee itself is that it is a cross-section of the Aboriginal community in the Kimberleys. We believe that the members are concerned about the need for a Catholic education for their children, perhaps because we have had a Catholic education and we are Catholics specifically and that's the choice that we make, and throughout the region we support initiatives involving Aboriginal people and we have established links with NATSICC the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council. There are two members - myself and Tina Howard - who are representative of CEAC on the Board of Management for this campus. Also there are some very positive initiatives. That is the main one - Aboriginal education policy, but there are other things that CEAC has taken initiative for and have provided a collection of stories of Aboriginal people, not only their faith journey but their own journeys throughout life, and that is a valuable resource for their children in our schools and our communities throughout. So we are part of that and we have had marvellous support from the regional office in any initiatives that we have undertaken we have been able to implement them and carry them through the support of the Catholic Education Office here in Broome. Plus because Tina and I work on campus here we have a lot of support that comes from this campus also as members of the Board and as CEAC representatives too.</p> <p>Another great initiative that last year we were able to get IESIP funding for was through CEAC employing Brother Shane Wood to write up for the CEAC Committee and this area a substance abuse program for Kimberley Catholic schools from k-12. CEAC is the watchdog committee for that program and the final draft now will be taken to the communities and parents. I have been invited by principals from all our Kimberley Catholic schools for CEAC to come in and not only in-service and speak to the families and community members but also to run workshops for all staff in our Catholic schools throughout WA</p> <p>People mightn't think that these are much but because I've been involved in and around Catholic Education or education in general for a long time and I have seen very positive moves - not only CEAC but the ASSPA committees in schools themselves have been a great avenue for Aboriginal people to have a say. It really is going okay for the dynamics of each community.....when you have a good involvement and next year you mightn't be going so good, but I think its just how the community at that time is going. I believe that working with many people for many years you need to go back to the same places. With</p>
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<p>[Family support]</p>	<p>Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal people they need to see you – that physical contact - I believe in that and a lot of my work is working, travelling, going to communities, meeting, listening and then bringing back to people what's on offer, what they would like, maybe sometimes come to a compromise if you can't have that- if you've got budget restraints or something. But there are positive things, they might only be small, but I suppose it calls for perseverance by people because negative things have happened to Aboriginal people, in Aboriginal education over many years and so we can't expect just changes to occur overnight.</p> <p>As someone who works with dysfunctional families, with addicted families and that, I believe that we concentrate on the education of children. As someone who has been through rehabilitation and that, I firmly believe that we haven't as yet as a people addressed the family and family issues. We are concentrating on children but we have never bothered to involve the people more fully and I believe its only through the true programs where you have not so much rehabilitation but substance abuse programs where you are not just leaving it for children in the schools to somehow to see that it comes from home. You can change and you can educate a child as much as you want to here but if you are going to throw that child back into a very dysfunctional home environment the chances of that child carrying on or using whatever they learn there is very hard because the support isn't there for them to be able to carry it out. When you have all this upheaval in you life that is going on, it makes the job that much harder. I personally believe that a committee like CEAC who does work mainly for families and community members it is so vital when it comes to any sort of education or righting of the wrongs that have been done over the years. And I think that in a nutshell is it.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Thank you Esther. A good introduction to CEAC. As someone whose kids have always gone to Catholic schools and for that reason perhaps have been critical of the Catholic education system, and I don't think this is just because Pat has been with me, I've heard nothing but praise this week for what Catholic schools are trying to do. I also don't think that its just that good things are happening in the Catholic system compared with things that aren't happening in the other system. But I think it's the Catholic schools and the independent Aboriginal schools where we've been told there seems to be some of the greatest hope about improving Indigenous education.</p>
<p>Esther Bevan</p>	<p>That's right. I for one too am not always in praise of Catholic education. I grew up in the Catholic education system and all my children went through it, and unfortunately my grandchildren don't, but there is a very strong link over many generations ain my family of being Catholics, and that's where the Catholic Education is so very strong in the Kimberleys because of those people that were either brought up on Catholic missions or Catholic themselves had that education. Its the tradition I suppose, because I've often said that the Kimberleys is very pro-Catholic, and it is. I believe that the only way you are going to ever change anything or right wrongs is if you are part of it, and you work away at it. There are lots of things that we would see haven't been as good as they used to be in our day, but then it's a very rapidly changing world and the children have been battling to keep up with it, but if we can be there to support them. We all expect it all to happen yesterday, but as I said these things take time and I think it's the frustration, because it takes time that people get frustrated with. They say that nothing ever happens, you don't listen or whatever, but you just keep on going.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Have they moved towards the decentralisation of decision-making with the Catholic schools, not in the main town schools I guess, but the community schools, so that although they remain part of the Catholic education system, they operate somewhat like the independent schools in being community owned?</p>
<p>Esther Bevan [Community ownership]</p>	<p>Very much so. Whereas in the old days when Pat and I were first on CEAC, we did tend to have this in the major centres, now the induction services, cross-cultural packages, Aboriginal studies, is being more and more taken on by the local people within their own school communities. A lot of Pat's students would be involved in that, in the delivery of that to their new staff and all non-Aboriginal staff in their communities. And that's not only the school staff but the wider non-Aboriginal staff within the communities. So very much, yes, hands on, and they in turn support that if we think they need us, they invite us out.</p>
<p>[Two-way]</p>	<p>We have just had 88 seminars, three weeks ago, at Mirrilingki for the East Kimberley,</p>

learning]	and then Balgo, the desert region held their own, so with the Catholic Education Office I went out with them, because I am State representative with them, and they deliver it themselves. And, I don't know if you know much of the two-way learning that goes on in the Kimberley Catholic schools, that was developed for the express needs of the Aboriginal people? For too long Aboriginal education was always seen as rubbish but with that two-way education ,again developed within the Kimberley region, from this regional office, it was bringing to the children in their schools I suppose the respect for not that one culture - the non-Aboriginal culture, the correct culture that we learn from our curriculum from- but their own culture and heritage, language, songs whatever, was as good as, and neither was better than the other and it was their heritage. The people themselves over the years have been involved in coming into the schools, community people, old people in language. Over the years Pat and I would have sat through a lot of language classes. And in different schools that was the first lesson of the day and all staff take part. All staff in that school, all the children and we were just visiting staff from the regional office, but we were part of it too. So more and more the community is taking control of things like that. I think it is empowering them too.
Chris Sidoti	Are there community boards?
Esther Bevan [Community ownership; school boards; parent involvement] [Indigenous role models]	Most of them would have school boards, yes. It is along the lines, I suppose any school board in the Catholic system within WA, but the local community would be able to adapt it to suit themselves. Like in mainstream school boards you have 10-12 people memberships. We've had places where a whole community has been part of the school board because they all want to be involved in helping to make decisions for that school. So wherever you go they have adapted to suit their own locality and suit their own needs of their community. So you might go to three different places and you'd have three different set ups of what a school board is like. The ASSPA committees are the same, and that used to be part of CEAC's involvement but DEET has taken it back again. One of the really great things about being part of this campus is although Tina and I are the CEAC reps here, CEAC also has to see the applications that come into the Catholic Education Office for scholarships to study on this campus and it has to be signed by a CEAC member. It's usually myself as Chairperson and we got through the application forms and put our signature on it and they in turn successfully get their scholarships. And that is one of the really big things over the years that I have seen from being involved in Catholic Schools is [indistinct]. The first Aboriginal or black person I suppose I worked with in a Catholic school was an African, Mr Samuel Oriti, he was in the Holy Rosary school when I was living in Derby, and just to see how those children reacted to this black man in this school is one of the greatest things and has made me a real supporter of pushing through and encouraging those people who want to become teachers because as we have seen over the years the Holy Rosary again is training their Aboriginal teachers through Signadou College in Canberra. Just the fact that someone of their own kind is in there. That's why I think the teaching assistance program works so well because they have an Aboriginal person in that class room who is there specifically to help them along with a classroom teacher and I think that has been one of the strengths of Catholic education over the years.
Chris Sidoti	What role do the school boards have in the selection of principals and teachers and other staff?
Esther Bevan [Teacher selection]	I know most of them because over the years I have been invited as Chairperson to come in when they have been sitting and have been very heavily involved in the recruiting and interviewing and then the choosing of their principals and schoolteachers. They usually bring the teachers or the principals up here to be interviewed on their own schools. Very much so. I have been involved with many schools in the Kimberleys over that and been part and parcel of that. They are very much involved in their own principal's review. And then again as CEAC, a CEAC member would be out there talking to the people and talking about this review that was coming up and when the review panel have flown up from Perth we have been there and the community comes in. So they do come in on mass in the communities. I see more support in the communities than I do in the towns.
Sister Pat Rhatigan	Can I just ask Esther about the IESIP funding. You were saying that it goes through the state meeting there. Do you see the bulk of the IESIP funding heavily involved in the allocation of teaching assistant places. Does CEAC know how many places are allocated from the IESIP funds and where they go to?

<p>[Indigenous education policy]</p>	<p>teaching in Aboriginal communities, and there were others who had done the four year qualification which allowed them to teach at any school in the Northern Territory, or anywhere where their qualifications be recognised in Australia. And she said it was good. One of the reasons it was good was that the climate in the classrooms had improved dramatically. In other words kids were much happier. They were more settled. They were more connected to their teachers. Although the Aboriginal teachers weren't entirely happy with the state of affairs because unlike the white teachers in that school, they didn't have a teaching assistant allocated against them. So they felt that they were being prejudiced against them in that score. In understand the situation is probably still the same in the NT where a white teacher will have a teaching aide or a teaching assistant, and the Aboriginal teachers who have just as great a need for team teaching in the classroom, in some respects I would argue more, are often left, having qualified, to go it alone. Apart from that, the teachers were more than happy to have the status of the teachers. Very happy to have the perks which came with the position of course in terms of holidays, superannuation etc.</p> <p>In that school they also had a number of non-Aboriginal students – five or six, maybe eight - and they were the children of staff, being a big community there were a reasonable number of non-Aboriginal people employed in that community, and therefore the school had to cope - I use the word advisedly because I've been in that situation with my own children- had to cope with the presence of a small number of non-Aboriginal children in a school that was essentially a bilingual school. I should have perhaps opened my comments by pointing out that Yuendumu at that stage was running Stage Four typical NT bilingual program of achieving literacy in particular in the mother tongue, and switching across to English while maintaining Walbiri. So what to do with these children. So the decision was made to form a small class with one of the non-Aboriginal teachers to cater for these children. But because there were no economies of scale in this, the decision was made that they would also place some of the Aboriginal students in that class. Now I reiterate the point I made a moment ago, that the Aboriginal teachers working in that school were very excited about their role in the school, felt that this was the best thing that could happen to the school, is for Aboriginal people to be teaching their children. Now when it came to the selection of students for the non-Aboriginal class, that is the Aboriginal students that would go into the non-Aboriginal class, the Aboriginal teachers fought quite bitterly with each other to make sure that their children were in that class. So when I say that Aboriginal education is multi-layered and often contradictory, that's just an example of what I'm talking about. Nothing is as simple as it first seems. This is a lesson that anybody who's going to be involved in this area as a non-Aboriginal person for any length of time needs to take on board.</p> <p>Going back to my original statement that my short answer to the question was basically no, that I have of course some riders to that, which is a lot of good things have happened since 1972 and I think particularly since 1990 things have improved quite dramatically in some areas. This is largely because of the work which went into the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Education Policy, which I'll just call from now on the National Policy. I want to use that Policy as the pins on which I'm going to hang my comments. In particular I'm going to hang my comments on the application of the policy to the provision of formal education for Indigenous students in the Pilbara and the Kimberley, that is the North of Western Australia. You may have noticed I've already used the terms formal education because I am acknowledging of course, the importance of education within the Aboriginal family and community context that has nothing to do with the formal education that is largely controlled and offered by white teachers.</p> <p>Without doubt the Policy through its various funding programs has strongly influenced and supported significant shifts in such areas as student retention rates, the development of culturally appropriate curriculum and pedagogical practice, support for Indigenous involvement in education decision-making and Aboriginal - I should say Australian - language programs etc. However, on the basis of my personal observations I suggest that our practice has a considerable way to go before it matches the essential social justice objectives of the National Policy. As indicated previously the reasons for this shortfall are complex and before coming to a detailed explanation of this claim I need to make a</p>
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<p>[Indigenous involvement in decision-making; Indigenous education policy]</p>	<p>point. I'm sure its one that you are more aware of them than I am. Whatever the schools and or the individual teachers attempt to achieve, it is often undermined by a number of seemingly intractable, structural issues over which they have relatively limited influence. I refer to issues such as the endemic racism of the North, lack of realistic fulfilling economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians, health and other related issues that are essentially linked to the relations of power that exist in our broader community.</p> <p>So keeping this broader context in mind I'd like to move onto the four major themes of the National Policy. And the one I've teased out more rigorously is Aboriginal involvement in decision-making. There seems to be a general acceptance though often and imperfect understanding of the priority given to this goal by the National Policy and subsequently MCEETYA's agreed strategies and outcomes statements which has been endorsed by the Western Australian government. There is overall acknowledgment by the providers that this is a vital component of their game plan if they are going to achieve culturally relevant outcomes for Indigenous students as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context it is unfortunate that EDWAs major social justice statement on Indigenous education places this priority below that of achieving improved academic outcomes. I refer to that red document that West Australian Education Department has produced on social justice in Aboriginal education. This in my view is a case of putting the cart decidedly before the horse. There also seems to be considerable progress in responding to the national goals in terms of the ongoing development of ASSPA committees and I think Esther referred more than adequately to a lot of these structural developments that have taken place in the last few years.</p> <p>Certainly as far as ASSPA committees in EDWA schools, there have been considerable development over the last few years. Consultative groups established by CEO, which you are now full bottle on, in the East and West Kimberley and the growth of self-governing schools such as the five Kimberley and three Pilbara Aboriginal Independent Schools.</p>
<p>[Culture of inclusion]</p>	<p>However, to measure the success of these ventures we need to consider the following proposition. This is my major proposition that I am making in regard to involvement of Indigenous Australians in education, in particular in educational decision-making. Central to the achievement of Indigenous rights is the broader acceptance and understanding of the role of Indigenous knowledge and experience by non-Indigenous educators. And the level at which the negotiation of meaning takes place in the schooling context. That's the proposition against which I would measure how far schools have gone in terms of meeting the original thrust of the National Policy. In my view while the structures are theoretically in place to achieve this objective, the experience, understandings and commitment to make this happen is still limited by and contingent on limited individual goodwill and effort. The culture of inclusiveness is still relatively limited in our schools. Of course if we look back to the 1970s people would say, oh come on John things are much better, and I would have to agree with that. But I would still say in general terms we still haven't broken through in this particular area. And I refer to the non-government Aboriginal schools as much as any of the other schools. With deep regret I refer to the non-government independent Aboriginal schools and including them in that comment. From my non-Indigenous perspective, to achieve progress in this area depends on a combination of appropriately inducted and enthusiastic staffing, ongoing professional development, effective support systems and cross-sectoral professional networking. Added to this is the need for an ongoing support and professional development structure for school governing bodies, parents groups etc. I think very often there is an expectation that giving decision-making to Aboriginal groups with regard to their schools, that somehow they will know what is expected of them and they will know how to get across what it is that they are expecting for their school.</p>
<p>[Indigenous staffing]</p>	<p>The other important aspect of this theme which features prominently in the National Policy, MCEETYA's strategies and outcomes as well as the state's strategic plan, is the employment of Indigenous Australians at all levels of the education system. Here again there has been considerable progress in remote area schools where education sustainability is increasingly dependent on the growing number of long term Indigenous</p>

<p>[Equity of access]</p>	<p>staff. We see quite clearly a crisis in the staffing of the government schools at the moment. I can't speak with any authority on the situation for the Catholic schools but I can say for the Aboriginal Independent schools there is also a continuing crisis of staffing that is, of attracting the sort of staff that I referred to a few minutes ago, appropriately inducted and enthusiastic staffing who have a commitment to that central objective I spoke to a moment ago, that is, of developing an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal knowledge and experience and the power that this could have in developing school programs that meet the requirements of the Human Rights Commission.</p> <p>Here again, I'm talking about staffing again, there has considerable progress in remote area schools where education sustainability has increasingly depended on the growing numbers of long term Indigenous staff. I guess reading that again is still worthwhile because Aboriginal staff are going to be here to stay. Aboriginal staff stay on in communities and I think there is considerable evidence now of Aboriginal staff who have been in schools 10, 13, 14 and 15 years whereas the non-Aboriginal staff in that period of time has changed quite dramatically with some exceptions both in the independent and Catholic schools, and less exceptions in the government schools where staying on in remote areas is not really encouraged in terms of the promotion system etc. I would also venture to suggest that overall Catholic Ed and Aboriginal Independent schools have demonstrated a greater commitment and stronger outcomes in this area. In terms of further advances, however, I suggest my earlier comments regarding the acceptance of the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and experience also applies to the meaningful involvement of Indigenous staff, particularly in the context of this Inquiry. However, one of the problems in achieving this undertaking is as follows. In many instances non-Aboriginal staff who are expected to effectively team teach with Indigenous staff is that they have little or no professional experience and/or knowledge of cross-cultural communication, predicated as it is on mutual understandings. Linked to this issue is the situation where teachers and systems are not prepared to challenge the power relationships inherent in the teacher-teacher-aide-student paradigm. Greater support, administrative as well as financial needs to be given to the professional development of Indigenous staff both on-site and through tertiary institutions to assist in redressing this unequal relationship, though I am not suggesting this is a necessary prerequisite. The necessary prerequisite of course is the will and the understanding that non-Aboriginal staff need to possess and a commitment to actually communicating in an effective way to achieve team teaching in the classroom and opposed to the 'so-and-so will sharpen the pencil, so-and-so will prepare this. So-and-so will take that small group for reading'.</p> <p>While admitting this is a complex and financial difficult task it remains a key long term investment in so far as achieving equity of educational opportunities for Indigenous students is concerned.</p> <p>That is the end of the lesson that I've actually written down. So now I'll probably be far more comfortable just speaking to a couple of issues and I'll keep it fairly brief because I understand we are allocated about half an hour each.</p> <p>Equity of access. Again, I think there is progress but there are a number of issues which exist in terms of equality of access as well as equity of access.</p> <p>Just as a little bit of a red herring here. One of the difficulties I find with non-Aboriginal staff and non-Aboriginal people working in other capacities in the schools, is a misunderstanding of the term equity. Many people see equity as equality or they see that equality subsumes equity. We all know that equality can be used in all sorts of ways. Pauline Hanson uses the term equality in a context that diminishes the place of Aboriginal people in society. One of the things is the concept of equity as involving positive discrimination, that is often very difficult to get across to teachers and people who work in the school. And understanding when we talk of equity of outcomes, we are talking about a fair go in terms of outcomes, and here of course we are talking about the cultural background of the students and the desire of parents for cultural inclusiveness</p>
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<p>[Aboriginal hostels]</p>	<p>within curriculum etc.</p> <p>The problems of outcamps you've probably heard plenty about in your travels around. Probably you've heard if you've had some of the Independent schools at Fitzroy Crossing you've probably heard about Ngalapita's problems with transport of the kids to the Wulungarra school etc, Sue Thomas and that group there?</p> <p>When it comes to issues of access that involve secondary students and you look at things like information technology and hostels etc. As far as hostels etc are concerned, I won't speak about that as I'm sure plenty of people have spoken about that. The only point I would make here is that some of the surveys that have been conducted in the last few years, one that was conducted by the Commonwealth government in the Kimberley that nobody seems to have heard much about, I think it was a hit and rub exercise, by a woman who came out of Peter Buckskin's Indigenous Education Branch about three or four years ago. Some of the methodologies involved in some of those surveys are pretty suspect in terms of genuine consultation with people. My own conclusion having been involved in a review of education in the Kakadu region as part of the social impact study that was conducted there two years ago. If you are interested in a copy of my report which was pretty well buried by the education department, I can get a copy to you. I speak about issues like that.</p> <p>The only comment I would make about hostels there is that it was interested to note that no people in the Kakadu region wanted a hostel in Jabiru. They were quite happy to send their kids to Adelaide and quite happy to send their kids to Kormilda But certainly not in Jabiru because of the presence of town camps around Jabiru. They thought the students would be under enormous pressure from relatives etc in terms of providing them with money, general humbug etc. I thought that was an interesting one too in terms of my experience with Pundulmurra. Whereas people were prepared to send students to Batchelor College in preference to Pundulmurra because at Pundulmurra people coming in from the desert schools would be caught up with the spinifex warriors out the back of Coles. They could see again severe peer pressure being brought to bear on students who were in a location where they were obviously under a lot of pressure.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>I think that reflects to me the fact that there is no single solution. Kalkaringi parents were very strong that they wanted the extension of hostels in Katherine because they could drive there in four hours and visit the kids for weekends, and were not prepared to send their kids away to Darwin or Alice. I think one of the issues that has come through strongly for me is the need to provide as many options for Indigenous parents as white parents have, so they can pick and choose as they see fit.</p>
<p>John Bucknell</p> <p>[Itinerancy and Indigenous education]</p>	<p>Yes, I think it varies from community to community and even within communities. Very much so. You'll get very enthusiastic support for sending kids away, quite long distances in some instances, and then other cases you'll get no support too.</p> <p>In terms of access, I'd just like to refer to itinerancy because it may or may not be an issue that has been brought up with you and I will certainly expand on this quite considerably in the written submission. Usually its regarded as a problem of participation not of access. What I am about to say is that I think itinerancy is also related to the issue of providing equality of access in that unofficially students who are itinerant are being turned away from schools. Of course the Education Department will deny that but I know for example working with Anglicare recently on a project that they've got going in Darwin that although they are located immediately behind Ludmilla Primary School, at an official level the principal says we don't want your itinerant students who blow in for five days or maybe five weeks or whatever. Teachers find them too difficult. This was a major issue at Kakadu where we found in all sort of conscious and unconscious ways itinerant students were being denied access to the school. When I say unconscious I mean a situation where itinerant children would rock up for school after having been missing for five weeks. They would be put into the class room where they maybe were in five weeks ago, or a classroom that the principal and the administrative structure of the school thought was suitable for the children and the kids would be put up the back and given paper and pencils to amuse themselves because of course the teacher was involved</p>

	<p>in this whole business of sequential learning etc and with a fairly large class what do you do with kids who have slipped so far behind the others, so the kids were a humbug really. So give them paper and pencils. Unconsciously of course this was denying them access to education because after three days the kids would be bored out of their brains and off they'd go. Of course, the other thing that's related to itinerancy is our constructions of childhood which have changed enormously over the last 200 years anyhow within Western society, how we regard children. How children are regarded in Aboriginal communities is something that a lot of teachers come into the school situation with kids not understanding that in many instances the kids are expected to be treated as adults. Or even if they are not treated as adults, younger children still have tremendous amount of autonomy that certainly I would deny my grandkids. Within Aboriginal community child rearing practices there are points of significant difference to that of the white teacher and expectations of the white teacher.</p> <p>I think that the answer to itinerancy although expensive, well not necessarily expensive, but I think the answer to itinerancy lies in what's happening in a number of places, for example in Yakanarra where they have what they call the visiting classroom, though I think they are a little bit tight on that in that the movement of the kid from the visiting classroom into the mainstream school - the main Aboriginal school – sometimes I think that's delayed a bit too long. But the concept is still a good one, of getting those Aboriginal kids up to speed. One of the exciting things about the visiting class from out there who's had an Aboriginal teacher - a graduate from Notre Dame - although I note that she's getting a bit tired of it because she finds that the constant shift in children and having to develop individual based programs to bring those kids up to speed is fairly demanding.</p> <p>The Barramundi School I've no doubt you came across that in Kununurra is another example of where kids are treated differently and so therefore respond better, because they are after all adults and they all drink, they all smoke ganja and they are all sexually active, and so having them in that separate school seems to me to be a pointer as to how itinerant children can effectively be brought into educational programs. Its certainly a recommendation we made at Kakadu is that there should be an Aboriginal learning centre within the school. I notice that Marrara Christian school is also doing that - basically a non-Aboriginal school but with a reasonable number of Aboriginal students is also taking that line as well - is also bringing kids into that centre. Then when students feel comfortable and feel up to speed and it's negotiated with the Aboriginal staff within that centre, then if they want to they move across into the mainstream school, so they do have access to education. I'll write more about that in my written submission.</p> <p>The privacy issue with tracking itinerant students is something that has been raised with you on your travels? It's there. You are probably aware of this major Commonwealth initiative. The whole business of tracking itinerant students?</p>
Chris Sidoti	I've heard of it but not the details of it. It's like a national register?
John Bucknell [Indigenous involvement in decision-making]	<p>Yes. I would suggest its something that the Human Rights Commission should be interested in. Certainly some of the teachers and some of the Aboriginal governing bodies in the independent schools have got concerns with it. I think the general thrust of the program is admirable, that is to try and get some idea of the patterns and to generate solutions to providing those kids with an education.</p> <p>Participation. I won't dwell on that. I'll write about best practice and those sorts of things. Finally equitable and appropriate outcomes. That really comes back to where I started when I talked about the involvement of Aboriginal people in the education decision making process. I think that there needs to be a greater understanding on the part of non-Aboriginal staff of what is meant by the terms equitable and appropriate outcomes. There has been a reasonably vigorous and ongoing debate about the meaning of two-way education and I think that debate needs to be taken a lot further. Moving around schools in the Northern Territory and the north of this state, I see as many interpretations of that as there are communities and schools. Now I think that is a very good thing. In fact I think that's the only way for that concept and I don't like to use the word two-way education because it boxes it into a little compartment where people think they</p>

	<p>understand what it is - I think it is something that is negotiated with communities and with schools at a local and at the worst at the regional level, and at best at a school-based level. I think that sort of debate needs to go on and I think the only way this is going to happen is when there is a greater esprit de corps developing in Aboriginal schools. Here I am referring not so much to the larger schools in urban centres, but certainly in the remote and semi-remote, and the small town areas in remote regions, I think that esprit de corps which I think was starting to develop back there in the 1970s with the excitement that came with the introduction of bilingual education and the Whitlam government, and the setting up of courses within the various tertiary institutions such as Mt Lawley and SA etc., there was the beginnings of a real esprit de corps that was based on professional networking.</p> <p>I've seen a considerable decline in that professional networking. I see Notre Dame and other tertiary institutions as playing a significant role in encouraging that, whether it means the setting up of associations of teachers of Aboriginal students in regional areas, I don't know. I think that has possibilities in just getting people together to talk over the issues, to exchange ideas, utilise the network, set up a webpage, do all those sorts of things and on the question of Aboriginal people, appropriating technology for their own social purposes, and that as a precursor to the use of information technology in schools, I'll leave it to you to read my written submission.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Thank you very much, John. Would you like to introduce yourself to the tape.
<p>Joyce Hudson</p> <p>[Indigenous language programs]</p> <p>[Language programs - difficulties]</p>	<p>My name is Joyce Hudson. I'm a linguist. I've been working in the area of Indigenous languages and education for the last 15 years. I don't have a plan like John just did. I was asked by the language centre to come. I believe you've had people from the Kimberley Language Resource Centre. I work part-time for them. I work part-time at Notre Dame and various other jobs that are related to languages. So I've been working in the Kimberley for over 30 years so my experience has been extensive in terms of languages. Currently I am working in two main areas. One is the Indigenous languages themselves, the traditional languages, and the other is in the area of English, in terms of the teaching of English to those who speak Kriol or Aboriginal English. So in a sense I do two quite contrasting types of work. With the Indigenous languages the focus has been largely on supporting people who want to teach their own language and culture in the school and then the English to the children. In some ways they seem to be in conflict but I don't think they are at all.</p> <p>I've just come back from Queensland. I spent four weeks there working in both these areas and I was impressed by what we've got in WA having been in Queensland. People kept saying to me, oh we haven't got anything like that here. I just wanted to say that because WA has been doing quite a lot of good work in supporting Indigenous languages in the schools. It doesn't mean of course that there is nothing else to be done but there are a lot of positives. The Catholic system up here has had teacher linguists and a lot of programs for Indigenous languages and supported the communities for quite a few years. The education department has developed programs which have been going for some years now and there is something like thirty language programs across the state. I don't know the figure but it wouldn't be hard to get.</p> <p>Some years ago I was commissioned to write a framework for the teaching of Aboriginal languages in primary schools and in doing that I saw what was the real difficulty of including language and culture in the schools. I thought I would outline some of those difficulties. The first one is that there are a large number of languages. Therefore every school has to have a different program. The second one is that the knowledge of those languages is diminishing rapidly. In some places the languages are known only by a small number of people. And those people who do know the language are usually old, have never been to school, so the whole idea of them going into a school to teach the language is a difficulty for them and for the school. So what we have been doing in WA is to develop language teams. The person who knows the language we call the specialist. Then there is the classroom teacher, and these two people are the two key people, because without the classroom teacher the thing doesn't work, it has to be timetabled and discipline and so on, and then we have either the Aboriginal teaching assistant or the AIEW depending on which system you are talking about and that person is the liaison</p>

<p>[Indigenous teacher training]</p> <p>[LOTE and bilingual education]</p>	<p>between the two, making sure the specialist is comfortable and able to communicate and often that person works in the schools. That seems to be working and seems to be the only way to provide the language in the schools given the situation that we have. So it seems to me that we are not doing too badly. It seems to me that we are having that happen in many schools.</p> <p>The other thing that EDWA is now doing is training and they are looking to the future to have Aboriginal people in the schools trained and able to make sure that this continues. This its not my place really to say what that program is but I know it's a very good program and they are expecting the first graduates in July and they are taking another group in this year and another group next year. So that will provide ongoing support, at least that will be the plan.</p> <p>There is often talk about bilingual education. We haven't really had that in WA much at all in the way it is in the Northern Territory and that's largely because there are a very small number of languages where the communities speak the languages still. There are probably just a few where such a thing could happen but I don't think it does. So we are looking more at LOTE in all the schools and a tremendous range. The children might come to school with some knowledge of the language and other places where they have non at all.</p> <p>I'm not sure where to go from there. Is there anything you'd like to ask?</p>
<p>Pat Rhatigan</p>	<p>Is there any support for a teacher linguist in the LOTE program, in the setting up and getting information?</p>
<p>Joyce Hudson</p> <p>[Teacher linguists]</p>	<p>At the beginning when those programs were first set up there was a teacher linguist on each team for each school. Finances I think meant that they gradually whittled that away until now there are none employed now in EDWA. In the Catholic system there are still one full-time. I think the schools are tending to employ a teacher linguist for a short time, so each school has to find their own and the schools have the finance it out of their own budget. So that's a gap and a lack.</p> <p>If the program is an oral program only then the teacher linguists role isn't quite so crucial but in terms of having a progression so that you can set up a curriculum then you need a linguist if you are going to make it that tight. But often the program has to be very flexible with using the specialists who are older, so you don't tend to have that tight curriculum that your get with other subjects. Also most of the schools aren't having too much in terms of reading and writing because the first thing is to get the children willing to talk anything so the main focus in on oral in most of the programs.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>That raises issues for fluency and long term viability of an Aboriginal language. I think that oral teaching can maintain a level of language presence but its not going to allow a language to survive as living language without the literacy component as well.</p>
<p>Joyce Hudson</p> <p>[Indigenous language programs]</p>	<p>Yes. I think we have to face the fact that for many of them even the best program won't make them survive. For many of them it's too late. So what we are looking at for those languages is more of a cultural support so the language becomes an identity focus for the culture. And Aboriginal people often say we want language taught in the school but when you go into it from a non-Indigenous point of view they are not really asking for language in the way that people think of teaching a migrant language like French or Italian or something like that, it seems to me that they are not thinking of it as becoming fluent. Language is the vehicle through which the culture is passed on. When they say they want language in the school, they really mean they want culture. So when we've tried to develop high quality fluency and have talked about that, we don't get very far because the big focus is on getting that information over rather than getting the grammatical structures right and getting children talking. So I think there is a big difference in the way we look at the word language. But it makes no difference to the importance of it, but we have to have different goals. So when you have a LOTE program and its goal is set out to have fluency at the end, then very few of the Indigenous languages can expect to reach that. Now some of them can because there is already enough language in the community. But if you've got someone teaching it who doesn't have anyone else to talk to and who only uses a small amount of the language themselves, then you can't teach any ore than they know. And that goes across Australia really. But then we've got some schools where the language is still very much in use, and</p>

	so places like Jiggalong in the Pilbara, Balgo, those sort of places they could have bilingual programs as much as anywhere, but that hasn't been the case, or it isn't now anyway. Balgo used to have a bilingual program but it doesn't at the moment.
Pat Rhatigan	The LOTE program, are they seen as going along a K to 12 sort of progression, do they go right through to final year? Are they in secondary or are they limited to primary school?
Joyce Hudson	I'm not sure what they are doing now with all of them but it's a very hard request to get it right through the schools but I think some of them are trying for that. One of the things that is in favour of these languages is that in the LOTE policy that EDWA has, every primary student will be learning a LOTE by the end of next year. That means that they can do the Indigenous language or they can do a different language altogether. If they take on an Indigenous language then they have to provide it right through primary. A decent sized school, say Halls Creek primary school, state school, if they have that LOTE for every child in the school, I think they could justify employing a teacher linguist and then they could develop really well right through. But most of the schools won't have that much language available or that many children available to get that sort of money. So I guess I can't say yes or no to that question really.
Pat Rhatigan	The education issue has come up where children are speaking some of a particular language and the decision by the community is to learn the language of the land, that particular country. Can you comment
Joyce Hudson [Indigenous language in schools]	That's the classic. It happens in a lot of places but Mulan is the really strong one where you can see the example very clearly. The people who live at Mulan as adults now went to school at Balgo and spent a long time there in the dormitories there at Balgo so they learned to speak Kukatja. Sometime ago they moved across to Mulan to set up their own community and went back home, but by the time they went back home, everyone was speaking Kukatja. The language they come from is Walmatjarri. So the community wanted language in the school and the school was willing to do so. But the language they wanted was Walmatjarri. That's been probably 15-16-17 years since that school started. Every change of staff says this is educationally not a good idea because these children are speaking Kukatja and you are teaching them yet another language. So they learning English and they are learning Walmatjarri but they speak Kukatja but there is no way in the world that you can change that communities perspective. They say this is Walmatjarri land and therefore the school must teach Walmatjarri and only Walmatjarri. Billiluna not that far away has a similar situation only their people speak Jaru but its on Walmatjarri land. Its one of the strongest arguments I've seen for the tie of land and language. Its very very strong. And that community too will not allow Jaru in the school. It has to be Walmatjarri. And I've seen it in other places but never as clearly as that. Which of course makes a very difficult thing in the school because you don't have the people speaking the language to be teaching it. And they wouldn't accept a bilingual program in Kukatja if you offered it to them I'm sure. But the fact that the whole community speaks it makes it difficult. So I guess in a way I think the difficulties of providing Indigenous as a formal program are very great and I think given that in WA we are doing pretty well.
[English language teaching]	I'd like to talk also about the English work that I do. I've developed that through my employment in the Catholic Education Office over the years. We developed an approach called the Feliks Approach. This is a bi-dialectal approach to teaching English. So instead of taking ESL and assuming that the children are going to understand that they are going to learning English as a new language, we are working with the teachers and pointing out to them that the children don't realise that they are learning another language because they already speak Kriol or Aboriginal English. So they need to have a focus of what we call bi-dialectal education. Its really taking the English based Kriol language that the children come to school with and cashing in on that. Instead of knocking it or putting it down or ignoring it we say we'll talk about it and get the students themselves to realise they have two languages to deal with. They have Kriol which they shouldn't be ashamed of and English which they will have to learn. So the professional development I have been involved in actually pinpoints what teachers need to focus on. Wherever we present this the teachers get excited because it answers some of the questions that they've had over the years as they work teaching English in these remote areas. Many of them say things like, this should be obligatory in our training. So

	if there was a recommendation I would like to come out of this, I would like it to be that extent. Teachers are always saying that once they've heard it. But most of the time they spend a lot of time in the school before they find out there is another way to approach it.
Chris Sidoti	Can you send some material about the program?
Joyce Hudson [English language teaching; Kriol]	We've produced a book called Making the Jump - a resource for teachers of Aboriginal students. So there is the book and that covers the whole program. That's written for teachers themselves. There is also a professional development course which is what we are following as we deliver it. That's called Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools. The interesting thing about it is that we've been employed last year and this year to go to Queensland and deliver it there with amazing results. It just fits there perfectly. I've just finished working with the Thursday Island Regional Office producing a little supplementary booklet for Torres Strait Kriol so it has fitted quite nicely. However, we have this difficulty of staff changes and as soon as we've inserviced a bunch of teachers they leave. I don't know the ongoings of it. We've addressed it by putting out the book. We've also addressed it by having courses at Notre Dame, and I know there are things being done in Perth by other people. Another aspect which is very important is the adult Aboriginal communities attitude. They are not always in agreement with what we're doing, mainly because of misunderstandings. They're not comfortable with Kriol always, they often come with negatives reactions to talk about Kriol and then we don't know exactly what the teachers are saying in the classroom. We can only hope that they do it sensitively. There are a lot of adults out there who don't have the understandings that we're giving to the teachers and that is quite an important thing.
Pat Rhatigan	Does the program get provided for adult people?
Joyce Hudson	It hasn't been so far, it would be good if it could be. At the moment it's only provided to teachers and any Aboriginal staff are invited to be part of it when it's done as an inservice.
Pat Rhatigan	You've just come back from Queensland.....
Joyce Hudson	So far I've just been asked to do it for one school, but it's an individual school. We worked with the consultants in EDWA for some years and they were all trained in the delivery of this but they had major changes and we haven't had anything like that in the last year or two. I think they might still put it in their own induction, I'm not sure. I expect I'll be part of the submission writing from the Kimberley Language Resource Centre.
Martin Bin-Rashid [Remote primary and secondary Indigenous education]	My name is Martin Bin-Rashid. I was born in Broome and grew up in Derby and I've worked around the Kimberleys. Presently I am a Senior Officer with Family and Children's Services and my role is to ensure that there are regular services, programs and policies delivered to young people in the Kimberley's zone. Today I'd like to talk about my experience and with Aboriginal communities and how education has impacted on their performance, the way they live and their way of survival. The last two years I worked on Bidyadanga Aboriginal Community as a CDEP Manager. I took some time off from the Family and Children's Services to go and help my people out in the community. What I see out there is that education is impacting on a lot of the remote communities' needs. The school out there is only a primary-level, state government school. They've got a secondary annex there, but the majority of students leave their community and travel to Darwin, St John's, was down to [indistinct], to the Koolgardie area and down to Perth, metropolitan schools and also out to Tardun and Bindoon. It's good for these children to go away and get an education but when they come home there's a lack of opportunities for them in the community and local support for those young students/adults. The school has improved a lot and is currently involved with the school curriculum. They have a language curriculum which is to encourage children to maintain their language. It's not mainstream education, just geared to the community's needs.
[Income support]	When the children do get up to first and second year they travel to the city and can't cope with the mainstream education so there is a high drop out rate. They come back home and there is really nothing much for them to do so they go back onto the social security or Youth Allowance or CDEP and they don't get very far. One thing is, in my line of work I travel to a lot of communities and see a lot of students who have the potential to go, but their families are needy themselves and unable to provide the additional funds.

<p>[Post school employment options; further education]</p>	<p>Abstudy doesn't permit children to travel away to school if they don't cover all the costs. From 13-16 year olds I think it is, parents have to contribute towards living costs, which they cannot maintain. Also the communities don't have that kind of money to support the parents so you can get students going and then not meeting some of the criteria of Abstudy and they don't get that opportunity to excel.</p> <p>Going back to job opportunities, most of those positions are taken up by non-indigenous white staff which have been recruited by the communities and usually they're not there to develop their people needs so they don't have time to offer training and support. So they come and do their job and they're usually driven by other organisations like ATSIC to meet requirements to account for the funds and the budgets which have been allocated for the communities, so there again the young adults don't get any support. They join the queue again. I think some government and non-government agencies should deliver some scholarships or traineeships for Aboriginal students. There should be positions within the organisations for young Aboriginals to develop their skills and provide an Aboriginal service to customers in a given location. A lot of communities have got a range of different service providers. In education, we've got the Catholic, state-government and independent schools and when we come to a place like Notre Dame or the high schools and colleges in Broome they are all at a different level. And sometimes Aboriginal students need to go back and do access courses to get their levels up. It takes time. Also they need to look at some support mechanism for those Aboriginal students because usually it's a numbers game.</p>
<p>[Early school leavers; income support]</p>	<p>Statistically, a high number of Aboriginal students drop out but there's no evaluation to determine why they have, what the problems are. Then they came home and have to face their families – "you've been here, you've been there, but you've failed". In the remote communities, you've got good teachers out there now, but a lot of students tend to follow a trend of getting away from their communities, to interact socially with the broader community. So they get down there, they go and look around and see what's available. During that stage sometimes people don't understand why they really want to get away. They are searching around for something they want to achieve, so sometimes you'll get them going down and coming back. It's got to the stage now where Abstudy are now refusing those students. They don't succeed by they come back after the first year because they're getting no support down there, no-one understands their culture or their feelings and they've also got cultural commitments to come back home at times, so that may happen three or four times. And then they don't fund them, they say "okay, it's up to you". But then culture plays a very important role in the education of Aboriginal students, no matter what age, because that culture's important to them.</p>
<p>[Access to secondary school]</p>	<p>In the remote communities, because there is no high school there, only a secondary annex, usually those teachers are doing extra time to facilitate and support the students out there. I guess there needs to be some education within the community, with representatives from the Education Department and the Ministry to go out there and talk and tell people why they've been cut back and why there isn't a second annexe there. Because students are leaving the community, they take away teachers. Those teachers are only primary teachers supporting a secondary annexe. I've been on a community where, because of their numbers, they lost their teachers. School numbers can fluctuate at different times of the year because of culture too. Towards mid-year you'll find a lot of the students disappear and go back to their own homelands or where their families come from. So culture plays a very important role in determining students needs as well, because they've got to go to two schools.</p>
<p>[Travel]</p>	<p>There's a lot of contentious issues that impact, but my task here was to talk about those needy communities, and the remote communities, the distance they've got to travel to go to school as well. In some communities they've got to travel 30, 40, 50k daily and besides the lack of transport, they don't get any support from the government to take their kids there. Sometimes they travel four times a day. If there's a sick student they've got to travel again. So the cost of transport. Some of the communities had Royal Flying Doctor services or the School of Air services and some communities travelled to that particular point to ensure that the children get some education. So the students and</p>

	<p>teachers travelling out there do get a lot of support but just occasionally.</p> <p>There's a lot of issues around education in this part of the country. It contributes to all the other crises in the line where I work. Education's very important. I think they should also use local role models to promote education and awareness of education as well, and also the long-term benefits of education. Notre Dame does a good job. I'm not a student of Notre Dame but for my own education I have travelled all the way down to Perth because the course wasn't available here, so I had to go down on block release and be away from my family whom I was committed to. Commitment's a big thing too. So that's all I've got to say to the panel.</p>
Chris Sidoti	<p>One thing that impressed me when we were in the Northern Territory last week was that the Aboriginal organisations of the [indistinct] community had actually looked at this issue that you've been talking about of lack of employment opportunities for Aboriginal people and they've developed what they call the 2010 Program where they've identified all the jobs that will be in the town by 2010 and the skills that will be necessary for people who are going to occupy those jobs and they have started a program whereby they identify and start preparing the kids by giving them those skills in their teenage years for that. Do you know of any communities in this area that are actually starting to look at localisation of employment?</p>
Martin Bin-Rashid [Employment opportunities]	<p>In my experience of the Northern Territory they have got a different structure within their communities. They have a Local Shire and not a Council and they get funding provided by the government. The communities round here are supported by ATSIIC funds and the Council isn't paid, so what I found in the Northern Territory is that they have more support. They generate income through mining companies, ownership of land and development. No matter where you go you are going to have some sort of gap. One has more support. It would be good if they could think of something like that but it's got come from the top, there's got to be some sort of strategic plan and some commitment. All they do now is give you the funds and you go and do it. They only intervene when there's a failure. It's a very complicated system we're working in.</p>
Anne Poelina, Chair, Burdekin Youth In Action	<p>My name is Anne Poelina and I am the Chair of Burdekin Youth In Action and with me is Ian Perdrisat who will be doing most of the presentation. Ian and I have left our positions as Senior Lecturers at the University of Queensland to come back, to occupy and try and build up the capacity of our communities and it is quite frustrating because we're only on CDEP. So I'm a registered nurse with all my three Masters degrees and I am trying to complete a PhD. In terms of motivation and commitment, it's because it's a life journey that we come back to the Kimberleys and we've maintained our association over a longer period of time, but it is frustrating that the infrastructure is not available in communities to engage Indigenous people with the qualifications to be able to have a longer process of developing sustainability of communities.</p> <p>I think one of the things that communities need to start looking at is extending the opportunity for partnerships. Communities seem to be stuck in a cycle of grant dependencies rather than looking at external partnerships with partners such as universities, corporate services, with public and private sponsors. We need to also get it trained into people's mindset that if we continue to rely on grant funding that the possibilities of extending our life opportunities are going to be restricted. We seem to be in that cycle of being reliant on those sorts of handouts. There is a need to start to look at the opportunity to extend where communities might be able to engage partnerships to broaden the capacity building of communities and that hasn't really been tackled yet. So I'll stop on that point. We will be submitting quite extensive written evidence and we would like to meet with you face to face because we have been watching what's been going on with Bush Talks and some of the outcomes so we've come along to have this very short verbal input, but we also have quite extensive written documentation that we will also be submitting.</p>
Ian Perdrisat [Indigenous community involvement; CDEP]	<p>a meeting at another youth program, a very good one, called the Drop in Centre and what we found was that there were three committee members and no executive members and the Department of Family and Community Services were looking to consider winding up the program if it couldn't attract community support. Given that background we've been working to find ways that we can generate community support. Some of the other problems that the program was facing at that point was in regards to the lack of</p>

<p>[Access to alternative education]</p>	<p>training available to the staff. Often when we get staff to the community they are inexperienced so we need to look at how we can get training and build experience within staff. That's specifically related to the co-ordinator but it also related to the ability of the program to engage other young people in the town to actually work for the organisation so that they could interact. We found that whilst there's a willingness from the Aboriginal community CDEP co-ordinating organisations to supply CDEP positions, the ability to top them up and to provide the training is fairly restricted. We also found that the management within the organisation, and this is because of the lack of depth of community involvement, actually affected the perception of the community's need and so the organisation may not have been as oriented as it may have needed to be. It is also extremely restricted in the levels of funding and other sorts of resources and those resources that were supplied were very inflexible. While two different departments were providing resources but those resources were very clearly identified so there was very little room for the community's flexible management of that system.</p> <p>Also there seems to be in the town a fairly low level of understanding of the issues confronting youth and an acknowledgment of the responsibility of parents, civic and business leaders within the town. If we start to promote this into an educational setting then one of the things we need to reflect upon is the existing educational systems that are in the town and whether they are in fact meeting the students' needs. The high level of disengagement of young people from existing services demonstrates that there may not be, but there's very little opportunity for alternative systems to be developed. In fact, apart from our involvement with Burdekin we also work for an Aboriginal community organisation, as our work with Burdekin is completely voluntary. Our work with Muludja was looking at developing alternative sorts of strategies as well, and one of those strategies was one day late for the Western Australian Healthways, which is the health promotion tobacco-sponsored program, so it was rejected. Those sorts of things are quite alarming and we will detail that in the submission. So in a sense a whole range of funding that we've identified over a number of years of working and living in the communities, and at times living in remote communities and sometimes in town, we've identified that the funding processes actually work against Aboriginal people having control over the educational process because the established systems, whether they be church or state, tend to get control, because they have an established mechanism, over new resources. Even what appeared previously to be Aboriginal-owned educational resources now appear to be owned by independent agencies.</p>
<p>[Lifelong education]</p>	<p>One of the things that we've identified as a bit of an issue, and it's also reflected in the Bush Talks report and the Pathways to Prevention report and the Youth Homelessness report, identifies the issue of education for life. In a sense the focus of education is often reflected in the interests of those who own that system. Therefore indigenous interests are often not fully represented within state or church systems, so the processes tend not to be self-reflective or problem-solving and deny access to [indistinct].</p>
<p>[Post-school options]</p>	<p>The content also is not culturally-reinforcing, skills-oriented or situationally appropriate. So therefore alternative education sites and spaces within town and in communities for post-schooling options and I guess within schools. But it's easier in terms of the intellectual framework of our educational systems people to think about post-schooling options as being more flexible. We need to be thinking about post-schooling options for the ages of 14 years and up, rather than the expectation that people need to wait until they're forced out of a system, wait for a few years before they can re-engage the system at a post-schooling level. There also seems to be competition between services. There seems systems of exclusion rather than co-operative partnerships, as Anne drew your attention to, even within the realm of Aboriginal-controlled services, and a competitive nature, which in fact marginalises people on the ground. In a sense, at this point we're interested in finding out from you, what is the depth of this particular process and what capacity is there to influence change. What can you tell us that will help us shape our solution?</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Breadth rather than depth. The breadth is national when looking at the key issues in the education of children, particularly the issue of compliance with human rights requirements – the Convention on the Rights of a Child: the right to an education, the</p>

	<p>right not to be discriminated against, the particular rights of indigenous to grow up and be educated in the culture and the use of language. Questions about children with disabilities are also of particular concern to us.</p> <p>The process is one where we invite public submissions. We are travelling to a small number of locations. It's a relatively small number that we're able to get to, but the purpose of that is really only to put flesh on the submissions that we receive. We receive many more written submissions than communities we visit, but the face to face contact, seeing communities in context is a very important part of that. From that we will try to identify a number of key issues to deal with. We won't be able to address every single issue but where there are key issues which will no doubt emerge from our consultations and submissions we will seek to address them. The issue of indigenous cultural education, the issue of secondary education; what happens to kids when they rejoin their rural communities, the issue of integration of education and employment. One difficulty is that it's almost impossible to take education out of context, so how far into that background context do we have the capacity to go? But that's the broad perimeters within which we're working.</p>
Ian Perdrisat	Some of the issues that we talked about before in terms of the focus, the way in which some of the existing systems are established tends to overlook that that process is in fact about the formation of self, the impact on identity, and how that can be enhanced or depleted by that educational process. It's one of the key issues that we would like to put forward in terms of process.
Chris Sidoti	I assume you are talking about both individual identity and community identity?
Ian Perdrisat	That's right. In terms of looking at the evaluation of some of these systems in our experience both as academics and as CDEPs living in remote communities we see that there tends to be a lack of honesty in these systems and the way in which they do business. In fact they actively reject wanting to engage in an honest evaluation process. In a sense evaluation that looks at the impact on the individual, on peer relationships, on indigenous family and community and the wider community, and also then looking at the evaluation on statistical outcomes. For example, deaths within the community, court appearances, other quality of life indicators.
Chris Sidoti	How long have you been back in Broome?
Anne Poelina	Since February. Even though we've been away we've been back about six times now.
Chris Sidoti	One issue that was very bad a few years ago was youth suicide. Does that still remain one of your service's concerns?
Anne Poelina [Youth suicide]	<p>Ian and I have had a lot of experience working with youth suicide, I also come from a family where my brother suicided at a very early age, so I am very passionate about the whole issue. Ian and I now work as experts to the National Youth Suicide Strategy which has now become the National Draft Action Plan for Suicide Prevention, so we have just been round the country providing the indigenous perspective. One of the things we talk about is that suicide is an outcome of something that is much greater in terms of the endemic problems that affect Indigenous people so we don't like to focus on the concept of suicide, but rather how do we promote the continuity of life?</p> <p>So from Burdekin's perspective we do deal with young people at risk and part of our mandate is to try and build life-enhancing skills. But as Ian says, the funding is very much restricted to what the service determines as the nature of the business rather than looking at the evolutionary nature of the service. Burdekin needs to be much more outreach-focused. We've got something in Broome that's called the [indistinct] which is the Flying Fox which means that young people don't get up until about 10 or 11 o'clock, by the time they start to engage the community it's usually about twelve and then if you're moving around at night you'll see the large populations. So for young people Burdekin has really been focused on trying to get people in rather than trying to get out to young people. So we've had a really hard battle in trying to identify the evolutionary nature of the service and one of the things we're looking to do is articulate a wide range of perspectives with other existing youth services and try and pool our resources to tackle not so much youth suicide but the ability to promote young people's lives in Broome and the outlying communities. So that's where Burdekin's focus is going. Youth suicide is there, but it's so much in terms of the fact that the young people's lives we're talking about are so dysfunctional. We have young people who are homeless in their own</p>

	<p>homes. Burdekin has been restricted in its ability to do good business because of the service agreement that we've had with agencies. We've argued quite strongly and they seem to be responding to the fact that it should be more about outreach and less about young people trying to come in, so hopefully we'll be able to tackle the situation much more clearly from that perspective in working partnerships with other service agencies such as Smile and YAC and Shire and a whole range of other people dealing with youth issues.</p>
<p>Ian Perdrisat [Youth culture as marginalised]</p>	<p>One of the things about Burdekin too is that it was established as a town-based program and there's lots of needs out in communities. The young people in the communities are relying on the innocence, without being too harsh because this is really the result of the colonial experience, so in fact while young people are feeling marginalised by their own older people, their older people are doing that because of the colonial experience that they've undergone, the training that they've received either through the Mission or the cattle-station type strategy, or the government worker type strategy. The ways in which all these different agencies have interacted with Aboriginal people over the years have in a sense been fairly oppressive in their management structures, which are very pyramid in shape rather than lateral in shape, which traditional management structures have been. In a sense many people have learnt inappropriate management structure systems processes in dealing with their own communities, so older people are oppressing young people in their own community, and it's the older people that are on community councils. And they are the ones that we are all expecting to create the change for younger people, but there's that dynamic where they don't have the level of communication with younger people, so the whole situation becomes dysfunctional. So where young people are becoming quite active within communities they are feeling that the process of raising concerns is seen as whingeing, complaining or creating conflict within the community, rather than trying to create a dialogue. And we've in fact experienced this within this town where we've tried to instigate discussion about particular issues and have been labelled as agitators, complainers and whingers to the point of being harassed on the telephone. In this case for writing a perfectly legitimate discussion article in the newspaper, and from an agency very close to us.</p>
<p>Chris Sidoti</p>	<p>Thank you very much.</p>
<p>Sister Gwen Bucknall</p>	<p>I was asked to introduce Sister Clare here, she started her teaching career in Catholic schools in rural New South Wales before holding a position in Sydney and in 1976 came to the East Kimberley where she continued in the Catholic education system before coming to Notre Dame. I have Mary Vajda who has worked at city schools in Western Australia and has had extensive experience at Edith Cowan University and Notre Dame in Fremantle before coming to the Broome campus. We regard this is a plus because the impact of all these new experiences are very fresh in her mind and unfortunately it does confirm for us our worst fears; that we haven't managed to overcome a lot of the problems that we were trying to address. I'm Glen Bucknall and I started teaching in Victoria, my first experience of teaching Aboriginal students on the Murray River there. I've worked in the [indistinct] and I've worked mainly in Aboriginal independent schools before coming to Notre Dame for the first time permanently this year. We are going to address it in three main areas. Clare's going to look at the social and background area, I'm going to look at teaching and the curriculum and Mary's going to look at early childhood and the placement of teachers in appropriate places for teaching practices.</p>
<p>Sister Clare [Indigenous teacher training programs]</p>	<p>At the University of Notre Dame we offer qualifications in education, business and humanities. We're just going to talk about the education program today. We have three main programs in our teaching training area. One is a pathway program offering certificates and diplomas. The students in this program are all indigenous Australians. The second program is at the undergraduate level. The students are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The majority of our students in this program come from the various remote and town communities of the Kimberley. Others come from around the state or from the NT. The third program is at postgraduate level, at BEd and MA standard. Some of these students come from Notre Dame in Fremantle to specialise in Aboriginal units, others are qualified teachers in the field that come from other states and now want to specialise in Aboriginal units, and another group of students completing their BA from the University, so we're all focusing on the needs of the Kimberleys.</p>

	<p>Now what is the age of our students? We have a few students straight from high school, but the majority of the students are mature-age students in their twenties or early thirties. These students are parents and have all the worries associated with having a family. The students come from a wide variety of denominations and no one church group dominates. Our students are on Abstudy or Austudy; some have received scholarships. Some scholarships received through Catholic education are given to teaching assistants who have worked in the schools and now want to be teachers. They are tired of training teachers. As well as paying the HECS contribution, the scholarships enable the students to study full-time without having to find part-time work. All the other scholarships, with the exception of one, come from church groups. Most of our other students have to work to keep themselves and their families. Because our students are mature-age students they are highly motivated and eager to achieve, and it's great being here with them. Their difficulties are trying to manage their family lives, their study commitments and meet their financial needs. Our students complete their programs in different ways. Some attend daily as full-time students, some complete part of their work in the communities where they live and come on campus for intense periods of delivery, and some postgraduate students do all their work off-campus. Our students have new problems and challenges now because of the changing culture in the Kimberley and the Pilbara. Many of them come from places where alcohol, drugs, suicide and violence have brought terrible chaos into the lives of their children, families and close ones. They know too that the scene in the school is a difficult one nowadays. They are aware of the malnutrition and sickness that is entering the lives of the children and how difficult it is for a hungry, sick child to learn, and how difficult it is for a teacher to teach hungry children. Because our students manage to complete their studies in sometimes extremely frustrating situations we have deep admiration for their determination to obtain their qualifications.</p> <p>Now how do we help? To assist our students to organise and be successful in their studies we have the ATAS [Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme] program which provides tutors for the indigenous students both on and off-campus. To assist them with their personal problems we have a student support officer who is constantly called upon. She is funded by a church group. To assist them with their childminding problems we are constantly trying to raise money for a creche. Again it is the church group's work contributing at the moment. This is not a luxury item. It is something that was needed yesterday. And the desire of every woman who comes here, it's essential. Over our years of operation we have had a steady flow of graduates at various levels who are now out in various schools across the Kimberley, Western Australia and the NT. All our teachers have specialised in Aboriginal units and are eagerly sought by the school principals.</p>
<p>Sister Gwen Bucknall</p> <p>[Indigenous education; teacher quality and training]</p>	<p>Even taking into account the appropriateness of the testing procedures, it is evident from the recently published literacy and numeracy assessment figures that the majority of students in remote areas, and particularly Aboriginal students, are not receiving equal access to education, nor are they enjoying equity of participation. I make these comments not in terms of students attending school, but in terms of the quality and appropriateness of what is offered. Schools in these areas are largely staffed by young, hopefully enthusiastic, inexperienced teachers from down south. I believe many come really wanting to pursue the careers for which they have studied for so long, and try hard to meet the needs of the situation in which they find themselves. However, the reality is that teaching students from a difference culture have received a different pattern of socialisation, values and indeed speak a different dialect of English in most cases. Each sector in the Northwest provides some orientation for people new to the Kimberley, but these new teachers require mentoring and ongoing support.</p> <p>However, all this is a bandaid approach. Teachers should receive training appropriate to the diversity of students they'll be required to teach, and complete a teaching practice in a remote area to bring to their conscious awareness the context that exists in WA. I understand that during training it is only compulsory for teachers to complete one unit in Aboriginal studies, which is insufficient to prepare them for such a situation. So when they arrive, who do they rely on? Teaching assistants, AEWs, if they're lucky enough to have one in the classroom. Although having said this, I've spoken to many new teachers working with teaching assistants and they are quite upset to have to work with these people as they have no training or understanding of how to properly utilise their skills.</p>

<p>[Aboriginal teaching assistants; staff incentives]</p>	<p>They only want to get themselves sorted out and are overwhelmed by the presence of such a rich resource. And from the other side I heard one AEW in a government school comment, “they only need us for the first month, and after that they know it all.” These assistants work in the school. They understand the students’ ways and have a wealth of local knowledge to draw upon. They are a rich resource that trainee teachers need to know how to utilise.</p> <p>This raises the question of recognition of these assistants within the schools. These are the ones who stay on, these are the role models the students need, these are the people that represent the community’s values and aspirations. How much credit are these people given for their knowledge? I often hear criticism of them and the role they play in the school. Why? How realistic are the demands on them? Who delegates their roles? How much are they included in the negotiations and classroom planning. I realise that some of them are being used to their full potential and at this stage I am generalising. And the students? If we take into account the points raised so far, what is the quality of their education? Even if the teacher really gets a hold on what is required, how long is it before they move on and another teachers arrives to be trained on site. If you think I’m exaggerating we only need to consider why it is that the teachers in these areas send their own children away to school, provide supplementary education after school in the home or leave the area to ensure their own children receive a suitable education. This in turn provides another reason why in the Northwest a range of experienced teachers who could nurture new teachers are coming into the area. There is no evidence that the expensive incentive packages used by the Department of Education have attracted a better quality of teacher to the remote schools nor encouraged anyone to stay much longer.</p>
<p>[Access to information technology]</p>	<p>Other issues for students receiving equal education opportunities in the remote schools centres around the generous offer by the government of computers and other hardware to the schools. Many of the schools cannot at this stage receive an additional telephone line to access email and the Internet. These problems can eventually be overcome, however the ongoing, recurrent cost of accessing these lines are excessive, as calls are all costed to STD. One school is reputed to pay \$10 per hour. This indeed will limit access to research and other off-site educational opportunities.</p>
<p>[Cultural programs; language programs]</p>	<p>Appropriate programs to cater for the cultural, social and language diversity of the communities needs to be addressed, to centre around shared experiences either on-site, or where possible, students need opportunities to broaden their experiences whilst developing the use of Standard Australian English in meaningful context. Such experiences allow them to reflect and put into perspective their own culture and background. Home language needs to be nurtured and recognised whilst developing the language of formal education. This is supported by a well-known educationalist Cummings, who in 1989 stated, “the roots of the term education imply drawing out children’s potential, making them more than they were. However, when students come to school fluent in their primary language and they leave school essentially monolingual in English we have negated the meaning of the word education because they have made them less than they were”. Programs and assessment of students in these communities need to take into account the students’ prior knowledge and build from this place. This means involving family and community members at all levels of the school to develop an appreciation of where the children are coming from. What are their strengths? What are their responsibilities outside of school? How to people relate to them in the community? What knowledge do they bring to school?</p> <p>Linguists are no longer employed to support traditional and other first-language programs on which rests the students’ and community’s identity and which encompasses their knowledge base. Linguists or specialist language teachers could also be used to bring to both students and teachers explicit knowledge to help them become aware of the differences in Kriol and SAE. Without such knowledge students will experience confusion and be disadvantaged in formal education, as they will be unable to move competently between the two dialects of English.</p>
<p>[Aboriginal</p>	<p>At Notre Dame we provide pathways programs for Aboriginal TAs and AEWs to extend</p>

<p>teaching assistants; teacher training]</p>	<p>their skills and knowledge in the areas of education and business management. Both of these programs are very practical, action-researched, competency-based programs centred around the school, the community and the community's office. These courses take them through from Certificate Three to Certificate Four and then onto a Diploma. At the completion of any of these levels students have a legitimate exit point, however at the completion of the Diploma in Education students may articulate into undergraduate studies. This Broome campus offers a range of Aboriginal and educational units to address these issues and to better equip our trainee teachers to facilitate meaning learning for the students in more remote areas. The overall aim is to develop the self-esteem of the Aboriginal students at all levels as it is a key factor in their success in education and their life in general. I think it's important to emphasise the point that Clare made: That graduates with appropriate training appear to remain in the Northwest. Part of teacher training is to place trainee teachers in schools to gain valuable first hand knowledge and experience. However, this presents a number of difficulties which I'll ask Mary to address.</p>
<p>Sister Mary Vajda</p> <p>[Teacher training; role models]</p> <p>[Teacher training; student placements]</p>	<p>Part of just about all teacher programs is to place students in supervised work placements and the aim of this is basically to put theory into practice and also for student teachers to gradually develop their teaching skills and gradually accept more and more responsibility for the children in their class and to demonstrate management of children in class and communicating effectively and appropriately with them, demonstrate their ability to plan educationally appropriate programs and demonstrate building relationships with children. This happens under supervision and only after they've developed a high level of competence are teachers then able to go out and be unsupervised. What researchers have found is that graduate teachers reflect the practices of their supervisory teachers rather than what they learnt at university. So no matter what we teach them at university it's basically the experience that they have in their prac that's going to affect their practice. It's petrifying. And this means that it's very important for our students or any student teachers to have the best practice role model possible. The more opportunity students have to experience quality teaching practicum the more likely they are to be better practitioners.</p> <p>Most universities have a policy of recommending that students be placed with master teachers, a teacher that's been out in the field for at least five years. Over the years I have placed a number of student teachers in schools but they have all been in the Perth metropolitan area and here in Broome I've just noticed a whole lot of other issues that I've never had to face before in Perth. What has become apparent to me in my short stay since January this year, which makes my experience very limited and I haven't actually gone through the whole year cycle so there might be other problems that I haven't encountered yet, it's much much harder to find practicum placements for students here in Broome because we've only got three primary schools and we've got at least two universities seeking prac places in these local schools. This means that the schools are actually put under a heck of a lot of pressure. The schools seem supportive of Notre Dame's requests for student placements, however they are not always able to accept the students who require to do a placement locally. One of these reasons is the number of staff who are new graduates or who are perceived by the principal as being inexperienced, and in fact most of them have had two or three years experience before they do accept a teacher. If you go back to my comment about role models this can be quite frightening. If I can't place the students locally I have to find somewhere else to place them because that's a licensing requirement as well, that they do so many hours of placement. So I have to place them out of town, which means anywhere in the stage, so I've even got a couple of students going to the Northern Territory because that's how desperate we are. As Clare pointed out, many of our students have children. So by placing them out of Broome it means that some instances some of the students have to leave their own children behind because those children are attending schools and they cannot be disrupted. Their children will then have to be cared for by others while they're out on a placement out of town.</p> <p>The other issue I have found is that often remote schools are very pleased to accept prac students but under the proviso that they find their own accommodation. With these students completing a prac away from home this places an extra financial burden. Our</p>

<p>[Early childhood education; teacher training]</p>	<p>students then incur the cost of travel, and these are quite different from what the normal metropolitan students would have to incur. So they have the cost of travel; which is not cheap up here; the cost of accommodation, and if they're renting they have to pay for two lots of accommodation, at home and away as well; the cost of food; and in some in some instances a loss of income. I've actually noticed that food in Broome costs a lot more and if you go out remote it's even higher. So these are the extra costs that the students have to carry. And then, as Claire pointed out, a number of our students have part-time jobs so if you place them away from home they've either got to give up those jobs or have the job held for them, but there is definitely a loss of income.</p> <p>Another factor is that student teachers on practicum are assessed by the school and usually a university adviser. Now at our Fremantle campus these university supervisions usually occur once, twice or three times during the practicum depending on the stage of prac the student is completing. The direct and indirect cost of supervising a student on prac in a remote school may mean that the student will actually receive less supervisory visits and in some cases there might not even be a university supervisor going out to supervise them. In these instances the school report or feedback will be the only report that the student will receive. If the student doesn't receive an independent assessment it has an effect of moderation. We see a lot more students so we can moderate, and also if a student is needing extra help and assistance they will miss out on that.</p> <p>The other issue that I've noticed is that we have teacher training via pathways and this can then mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers have worked in a school in a remote area and they've done their training there, and then they come to Notre Dame and move into their teacher training program and the first that they request is that they go back into their local area. What this means for some students is that their whole education experience is in either a very remote or rural area. I now believe that students who have that type of experience would benefit if they were sent into a larger region to broaden their experiences. This is the reverse of bringing people up to the Northwest. They are my feelings on practicum.</p> <p>The other area I'm interested in is early childhood education. Schools within all sectors have great difficulty in attracting qualified teachers in rural and remote areas. One area of education that is particularly disadvantaged is the early childhood areas, and by this I'm restricting the early childhood to the kindergarten and pre-primary years. With a lack of available staff principals have to do the best they can to staff classrooms. In a number of situations this means that primary-trained teachers are called upon to teach in the pre-primary and kindergarten classes. Whilst these teachers are conscientious and really do work to the best of their ability, they are not actually trained in this areas and are often ill-equipped. I've even heard them say that they feel inadequate for the role that they do even though they're doing the best that they can. The latest research on the mechanism of early brain development and its implications for subsequent behaviours in later childhood, adolescence and adult life actually gives a new urgency to the importance of intervention in the early years of life. The old argument of nature versus nurture has finally been put to rest with the evidence showing that both are equally important. So children are actually born with innate potential, but if they do not receive maximum stimulation millions of brain cells die off and you never get them back again. So it really is 'use it, or lose it'. That has huge implications for what's happening in early childhood. What the latest research is showing is that the environment that surrounds children from birth to five years has more to do with their long-term health and also the academic success than anything else that happens to them in later years. For this reason it's imperative that children receive the best care and education in these early years.</p> <p>So early education programs need to be family-focused, culturally relevant and developmentally appropriate and by investing resources in families and appropriate early-education programs in the early formative years the government can actually save millions of dollars on later intervention programs that in many cases have limited success. Appropriate early childhood programs develop in children a love of learning, literacy development and early socialisation and they also actively involve families within the education system and they lay the foundations of future parent-teacher trust</p>
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	<p>and respect. American research has shown that children that attend quality early-childhood programs are less likely to end up pursuing criminal behaviour or end up in prison in later life. The impact of society on quality kindergarten and pre-primary education cannot be overstated. For this reason it's imperative that young children and families receive all the support and resources needed and that they have appropriately trained specialised teachers to teach them.</p>
Sister Gwen Bucknall	<p>Now hopefully we have provided a suitable backdrop, now each of us will focus in on the recommendations arising out of that.</p>
Sister Clare [Teacher training]	<p>So these are the recommendations arising out of the background. To assist all our students who are full-time on campus or coming in for intense on-campus sessions a creche is urgently needed. The knowledge that the children are in a safe environment would enable all our students to concentrate on their studies. This would also enable potential students who have been unable to access education without such a facility to participate in study. A creche is an essential, not a luxury.</p> <p>To assist our students in their study problems we strongly recommend that the ATAs scheme remain. This is essential for the success of many of our students who have been disadvantaged by the lack of accessibility to good primary and secondary education or come from a different language background.</p> <p>The third recommendation: To assist our students with their own life problems that impinge on their successful study it is becoming increasingly obvious that we will need permanent funding for a student support officer with a sound academic qualification in counselling.</p> <p>Fourth; to assist the children that our students teach or will teach we urgently recommend that even at the risk of sounding maternalistic that the nutritional and health needs of the children be met. An emergency measure, maybe the introduction of a breakfast program.</p>
Sister Gwen Bucknall [Teacher training; staff incentives; teacher mentoring; itinerant programs, cultural programs; financial support]	<p>As a result of examining the factors which most disadvantage the children in our schools I'd like to make eight recommendations. The first; training teachers in regional areas where they can receive appropriate training needs to be fostered with sufficient specialist units included in their study to ensure they receive suitable training to work effectively in remote and rural settings as well as in city and suburban areas. As we mentioned, Fremantle teachers who came up to the Broome campus and the Kimberley were snapped up by schools who recognised the advantage of such experience.</p> <p>EDWA needs to recognise a study undertaken by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Workers and the Teaching Assistants and devise a financial incentive for their achievement at each level similar to that provided by the Catholic education system. These assistants play an invaluable role in the schools and act as much needed role models. They need encouragement to continue with their studies and to reach their potential.</p> <p>The third recommendation; a mentoring system needs to be put in place to better support teachers in their first years in remote schools. Number 4: the staff at all schools, but remote schools in particular, need to look at the roles of the Aboriginal people in the schools as well as in the community and negotiate with them to make their roles as meaningful as possible.</p> <p>Linked to this recommendation is the need for funds to be made available for employment of more AEWs and ATAs in schools until such time as we can place trained Aboriginal teachers in classrooms. Aboriginal students in every classroom from pre-primary to at least grade four need the support of an adult from their community to assist in overcoming the difficulties of cross-cultural classrooms.</p> <p>5. Incentive packages are needed across all sectors if equality of education for students in these remote schools is to be addressed. However, while EDWA's extended holidays on full or half pay are attractive, we believe there would be more value in encouraging teachers to use this accumulative time to study in areas related to their school experience</p>

	<p>while they have no concerns about being disadvantaged financially. Such studies include studies in training and early childhood, linguistics, critical literacy, social justice in education, catering for students from diverse backgrounds, using Information Technology to enhance learning across the curriculum. This in turn could be connected to ongoing action research in remote schools to inject new insights and enthusiasm in to the school program, as well as to provide valuable data for all teachers in these schools. Teachers would simultaneously be gaining valuable academic qualifications and further standing within their chosen career.</p> <p>6. Suitable financial support needs to be provided for regular quality-enrichment programs for schools outside the main centres. These programs fall into two categories: A, those that can travel to the communities and be presented on site and b, those to which the students need to travel. In category A, programs need to cover Science, Music, Art, Mathematics, Drama, etc, and people involved need to be prepared to stay a week and perhaps even up to a month and be self-sufficient in terms of food and accommodation. It would be unfair to place further pressure on the staff in these schools. These experiences would enrich the students' programs whilst providing shared experiences on which the teachers could base further literacy, language and cognitive development. To date such expertise is ad hoc and schools find it difficult to finance opportunities provided at short notice and without the adequate funding.</p> <p>B, the excursions and participation in the enrichment programs, the financial burden on some families for their children to have sufficient broadening experiences in their education needs to be addressed. For children coming from non-English-speaking backgrounds there immersion in Standard Australian English contexts and their need for exposure to a wide variety of educational experiences makes their involvement imperative is they are to operate competently in their own and mainstream situations. Linked to this is the employment of appropriate full and part time staff to meet the needs of students and staff in the area of tutoring and mentoring.</p> <p>7. Suitable financial support needs to be allocated for the placement of students at the diploma, undergraduate and post-graduate levels in schools, where they can observe and research appropriate strategies in order to develop appropriate expertise to work effectively with students in these communities. This, together with the provision of a creche at training institutions would provide equity of access for community people wishing to study. Financial arrangements need to support the maintenance of Information Technology and allow students in remote areas equal access to fully utilise the potential of such equipment without financial limitations being placed on them due to their location.</p>
<p>Sister Mary Vajda</p> <p>[Teacher training; student placements]</p> <p>[Teacher training; early childhood education; student support]</p>	<p>Some recommendations regarding practicum placements. One, that all student studying at regional universities and who undertake a practicum in remote areas or away from a home base are financially supported to offset their travel, accommodation and meals costs. Two, that regional universities receive extra funding to undertake student-teacher practicum supervision and assessment by university supervisors. Three, just as metropolitan student teachers are encouraged and supported to complete a rural and remote practicum during their training, students whose entire experience is in rural and remote areas be financially supported to complete a practicum in the Perth metropolitan area or other regional area. Four, that the availability of accommodation for student teachers undertaking practicums in rural or remote areas be investigated. Five, that funding be made available to all sectors to enable them to offer incentives, encouragement and support to entice experienced teachers, as well as graduates, to accept teaching positions in rural and remote areas.</p> <p>And some early childhood recommendations; that support programs are offered for families with young children; that children in their third, fourth and fifth year of life should have access to quality pre-school programs and quality childcare provision for those who are disadvantaged. Three, that the role of school as a focus for early childhood learning experiences needs to be reconsidered. Four, that educators and social healthcare providers need to work in tandem and more directly with children and their families in the formative pre-school years. Five, that primary trained teachers working in early</p>

	childhood area should be encouraged and supported to take on further study and gain early childhood qualifications. Six, that support is given to primary teachers who are required to complete kindergarten, pre-primary practicums as part of upgrading their primary teaching qualifications to early childhood qualifications. And seven, that incentives and encouragement be given to principals to attend in-service postgraduate courses to gain a better understanding of the philosophy and teaching strategies employed in the childhood programs.
Sister Clare	To conclude; we are a small university and a poor one. But we are proud of what we are doing here to answer the needs of children in remote areas for a good education. We are also proud of the fact that we took the risk to open a university in one of the most remote areas of Australia so that the people of the Outback could attend university and equip themselves for their chosen career. We provide education at this tertiary level because we believe that education is liberation for those that are or have been disadvantaged. Our students succeed against many odds and are wonderful role models for their children and peers. We're grateful for the opportunity to present our story to the commission. We are a campus of reconciliation providing university qualifications for indigenous and non-indigenous students, and in the words of the Reconciliation council, we are helping the students to work towards a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all, especially in the area of education. So thank you.
Chris Sidoti	Thank you, a fantastic presentation. I would ask you to leave us with the text if you didn't mind, and any supporting material you've got. Something that was not there, or maybe I missed it, was some information about the number of people you've had go through, Indigenous or non-Indigenous numbers, and where they all are now. Is that kind of information available?
Sister Gwen Bucknall	It's available in this document up to diploma level.
Sister Clare	I suppose what you could say is that when you look at our graduations this year we have approximately forty students, and a lot of them were indigenous students. They're now coming into the postgraduate level so we can go back and look at that.
Chris Sidoti	I mentioned that you must have been absolutely thrilled with the success of this program, praised in the most glowing terms both by people who are involved in it directly and enthusiastic support everywhere we've been.
Laurie Andrew, District Director, Kimberley Education	Currently within our existing framework if you like to call it we provide a fairly high quality service, but I need to qualify that. I guess I could probably be subject to some chastisement for these comments, but I say it in good faith, and that is what I've actually seen, in terms of the delivery of education to the kids, is that because the whole nature of teaching has changed in terms of the preparation of teachers, and I exclude Notre Dame and Broome from this, they've actually got their feet on the ground.
[Teaching workforce]	But in terms of the larger institutions the actual preparation of people to come into the teaching workforce is significantly lacking. Again, let me qualify that. Theoretically the students and teachers that we pick up have some pretty strong understandings about education, as far as those issues that relate to theory, language development, that sort of stuff, the bit that's impacting significantly is that the people we're getting don't have the strong pedagogical understandings which will allow them, or allow us I guess, from a systems point of view, to turn that theory into practice via effective delivery. And I don't say that with any disrespect to the people we've got, I think it's just a matter of reality. And again, the impact of that sort of situation is one where we tend to get a lot more young, inexperienced teachers coming into our schools, and when you look at some of the urban areas although they have their problems as well, they have a much more established workforce. A lot of their teachers have a lot more experience. A lot of those teachers in the metropolitan schools probably went through a system which gave them good methodology, and so I guess the outcome of that is that until we get to a position where we're getting good teachers with good pedagogy then again the gap is going to become greater and the kids in the remote areas are going to be disadvantaged. I just want to emphasise that's no disrespect to the people in our schools, I think they do a terrific job.
[Students with	Just to make a couple of comments in terms of children with disabilities, I have to be

[disabilities]	<p>particularly scathing. Not of any particular person who's currently involved in the disabilities department or anything like that, but I actually think that we do a very poor job because it is particularly under-resourced in terms of people, in providing opportunities for children with disabilities, and I am reminded when I say that of the situation of a parent on a station with three children, one particular child had something like Tourettes Syndrome, which is a disability. Now that person could not attract any service and had to put three kids, all school age, into a car and travel something like 450km to the nearest major centre to get any support of any service for that child. And in terms of that child accessing education in their home it was almost impossible. And I find that not only in the station communities, but when I go through the schools that I look after, any number of children with different disabilities we find it extremely difficult to provide them with their best opportunities because we are under-resourced and I think that's an issue for government and one that has to be addressed. If you had a parent with a child with a disability in a metropolitan area they would have access to a full range of services. People out in the remote areas don't, and I think that there's a major equity issue there.</p>
[Indigenous education]	<p>In terms of Indigenous children and children from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds and their human rights, I guess I'd have to say that in the sector I work every endeavour has been made and is constantly made to raise the level of consciousness of the people who are providing for those groups and those students to ensure that their rights are being met in a manner which is most appropriate and which takes into consideration their cultural and religious backgrounds. But again I also have to say that I still think that within our system, and we are trying to address this through a range of strategies, we need to tackle a little more vigorously the notion of covert racism, because some people might say it does exist and it certainly impacts on kids' opportunities and their families' as well. I guess apart from that, and I talk specifically from the Aboriginal education point of view, we continue to have some critical issues that need to be faced and that is that many of our students don't achieve the outcomes that are comparable to their non-indigenous counterparts in spite of some very strong energy and resources.</p> <p>I think many of those children are actually disadvantaged through a system that is driven by a largely Western educational viewpoint, and by that I refer to a particular instance, the Year 3 literacy test which is the government's way of ensuring that kids are meeting the required outcomes to a particular benchmark, totally disadvantages Aboriginal children in terms of making judgements about the outcomes that they've achieved and their capacity to learn. There's a complete lack of understanding in terms of that whole process that many of the kids that are being tested in Year 3, and again I talk particularly about the Aboriginal students, for many children it's not the third year of formal schooling for them, it may in fact be their first six months. So when this actually occurs, and judgements are made, the first thing you actually see is the poor performance of Aboriginal students at Year 3 level. I think that's a total misrepresentation and I think that the flow-on effect from that from a perception point of view again puts those sets of people at a disadvantage.</p>
Chris Sidoti	Well that's not bad off the cuff. Pat would you like to start off?
Pat Rhatigan	Do you get any input into the number of AIEW places you have in Kimberley?
Laurie Andrew [Indigenous teaching assistants]	<p>I may comment with a little bit of authority I think. I'm actually on the working party looking into the issue of a vision of AIEW career structure and pathways and how the AIEWs are distributed to schools and districts across the state, and that work is ongoing. In terms of the current situation there are something like 42 allocated AIEW positions to the Kimberley. That figure has been arrived at historically from two perspectives. One is that schools have basically demonstrated a need, that always hasn't been looked at favourably, and the other is some fairly random application of a per-capita type formula. I have to say I guess that, and hopefully the work we're doing will try to redress some of the balances, in terms of the AIEW question I think they do a terrific job, I certainly don't think that there are enough of them, I don't believe that they are accorded appropriate status. They should take on a central role in the education of the children in our schools. I guess the further extension of that is that we as a system are currently looking at opportunities to provide further incentives for those people to go on and</p>

	complete their studies, because one of the things that we are wanting to do is to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers working in their own communities. We've failed dismally I'd have to say in our efforts, but again not for a lack of trying, we just haven't got it right yet. I suppose that's just a bit of a snapshot. What was the other question you asked me?
Pat Rhatigan	I suppose you can find that it is related to a previous structure? Do you know if the majority of that funding is IESIP funding?
Laurie Andrews	Well I think about 40% of the funding or thereabouts was IESIP funding, the rest of the funding for AIEWs was WA government funding, but we have now committed that every AIEW position we've got will continue irrespective of IESIP funding. The intention is to increase the number of AIEWs irrespective of IESIP funding. Can I just say a little bit more about how I see the role from my experience and where it's gone. I mean fundamentally whilst there have been some very positive changes, I don't see the role of the AIEW having changed significantly over the last 10 or 12 years and I think that's a bit of an indictment that perhaps we need to address fairly quickly. I see the AIEW being seen more as a simple support structure rather than being accorded a full status in terms of their capacity to impact and influence what happens in schools and what happens in the learning programs for Aboriginal students.
Pat Rhatigan	Is the review looking at trying to address that situation?
Laurie Andrew	Yes, the review is looking at the whole career structure for AIEWs and certainly a big part of that is looking at how we can via affirmative action actually enhance the sort of work they do in the schools and have that recognised.
Chris Sidoti	There were two clear issues that we came across regularly. The first was the lack of paid release so that they can even upgrade to the degree system. The Catholic system is offering scholarships, there seems to be nothing comparable in the government system. The unavailability of funds to enable them to continue to get paid is just prohibitive for them.
Laurie Andrew	It's a major issue and again I think just recently there have certainly been discussions at our central office about putting scholarships in place and also providing some resource to ensure that there's release time for these people to study. If we don't address that issue then for many of those people it's just not an option.
Chris Sidoti	The second thing was that there seems to be a very large number of them who are employed casually even though there are designated, funded positions. The mental effect of that is that they've got no job security, no time for sick recreation leave, never mind study or long service leave. Many of them are actually rolled over from year to year as casual appointments. In some schools you've got four, five or six AIEW positions not one of which is held by a permanent employee. And that goes for the career restructure issue too.
Laurie Andrew	There will be some major issues that come out of the career restructure and I guess the process for allocation of AIEWs to particular school sites, not least of which will be the permanency. As you say if you've got eighteen permanents in one school and there's a greater need or entitlement in another school and that means that we have to move, relocate, or create positions then we've got the permanency issue to deal with, it's not an excuse for not making people permanent but that's an issue that we're going to have to deal with. The other issue related to non-permanency has been driven by the fact that in many schools there is a turnover and a lot of our AIEWS are there for a period of time, then they go away for a period of time, then they come back. I guess the way to deal with that is to create the itinerant wages system which enables schools to employ but it means that if somebody left they could go straight ahead and employ somebody to come in there. That's not an excuse for not providing people with job security but that sort of movement is an issue. I'm not fully conversant I have to admit with how many non-permanent and permanent people we've had or have in our schools. I think of places like Looma and La Grange and One Armed Point, most of those people are permanent.
Chris Sidoti	It's impossible for us to say on the basis of a few schools but certainly with at least two of the schools we visited it's a major issue, one case being one hundred% casual.
Laurie Andrew	The only other situation that could contribute to that is where the school hasn't been allocated an AIEW out of the pool of available AIEWs but they actually use their salary reserve to employ. That salary reserve varies from year to year and in quite a few of our schools they have AIEWs that are on the school site but are actually being paid under

	CDEP, with some top up in some cases.
Chris Sidoti	If we can move onto the disability area, particularly the provision of support teachers or special ed teachers. Is there a different per capita formula between Kimberley and, say, Perth or are you subjected to a statewide formula?
Laurie Andrew [Students with disabilities/special needs; special education teachers]	<p>There are x-number of what we call visiting teachers and they are located in the district service centre in Perth and it's not so much the actual number as the accessibility. We might have various teachers dealing with particular kids who have particular disabilities. Now they might service the Pilbara and the Kimberley and maybe even the Goldfields. So you've basically got a very small group of people looking after a very large area and sometimes they're pretty inaccessible. Whereas you could have a similar number of people in a more confined locality and their capacity to actually get to the kids is far easier and far more accessible.</p> <p>Another thing that I think is critical is that the resource is not located near the point of need. I've asked the question many times. I've had debates over and over again. Why have we got these people over in Perth when they're actually servicing kids in the Kimberley? Why don't we actually have a resource in the Kimberley, or spread across at least the Pilbara and the Kimberley? Which will allow the parents of those kids and the schools looking after those kids to get more immediate access and a greater level of support. Whether that's a financial problem or a bureaucratic problem you can make up your own mind. I think it's something that has to be addressed. If we're really dinkum about equity and we're really dinkum about provision not only for kids with disabilities but all kids then we have to actually get the distribution right.</p>
Chris Sidoti	We came across a couple of places where there was a point five disability support person within the school, I don't know what the title of that position would be. With their distribution again would there be a single state-wide formula?
Laurie Andrew	Disability Aid. No, they would be a finite resource, but depending on the nature of the disability of the child, you can actually attract on-site support. So if you've got a child that's severely disabled then that could attract some on-site aid support. But I think you need to look at that again in context. Having aid support is different from having someone who's a pseudo-expert in assisting teachers and parents in dealing with all of the special needs of those particular kids. In most cases the aids are there to look after particular physical disabilities and needs like toileting problems and things like that and doesn't essentially have an educational role, purely and simply a support role.
Chris Sidoti	There seems to be an inflexibility in the funding formula that doesn't take into account the actual needs of the child.
Laurie Andrew	You have to fight hard and argue in some cases to actually get point five. We've got a particular situation in Cable Beach which I dealt with a couple of years ago where the child had a particular disability and we argued very strongly for support at the school site. The mother had been giving support at the school site on a voluntary basis. When I went to argue the case strangely enough this disability wasn't recognised – it didn't actually fit into the box of disabilities that attract aid time.
Chris Sidoti	What sort of disability was it? It must have been something physical if that kind of support was needed?
Laurie Andrew	I can't remember the actual nature of it, but yes it was physical.
Chris Sidoti	It seems to be more difficult with learning disabilities where in one case a child's dyslexia was not recognised as being a disability but a learning problem and so the school just had difficulty in dealing with the child. In one of the larger schools there were about three or four kids diagnosed with dyslexia but they couldn't get any support.
Laurie Andrew	That's the point that I was making. Although I have to say that the student services division is working on the whole area of dealing with students with disabilities. I mean we spent a lot of money through the Sheen report dealing with students with learning difficulties, I'm not sure where that's been embedded. But they are looking very closely at the area of what is a learning disability and what is a physical disability and should we be dealing with them either differently or similarly. At the end of the day that may not actually impact on the FTE? or number of people available for schools to access. I'm particularly critical of the whole area of provision for students with disabilities, whether it be learning difficulties or physical disabilities, or medical difficulties.
Chris Sidoti	It certainly came up a number of times in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, but I suppose compounded in the Indigenous communities by hearing

	problems [indistinct].
Laurie Andrew [Students with disabilities; student support] [Early childhood education]	<p>We've got a visiting teacher for the deaf who works out of our office. It's great to have the person on site but I have to say that the actual support for that person we've had to fight hard to get. So they came to us with no contingency to move around, with no vehicle to move around in, no computer to use, basically nothing, but we do have this person. The other side to that was that the title for this particular person is visiting teacher for the deaf. His role is particularly confined to a group of students that meet some criteria. So he might just tackle thirty, forty or fifty students when one of the most significant problems we've got in our community is hearing loss with kids. The issue there is that related to who deserves this service and who doesn't. So you put this group of kids in this box here but you disregard the rest?</p> <p>Can I just make a comment about early childhood education? I'm going to talk about the other end of the scale too. One of the other things that I find is that this seems to me to be the area, and again although we've put a lot of resources and energy into it, it seems to me that the problems we start to experience further up in school are compounded by the fact that the early childhood end, we really haven't got it right. And if we were getting it right in the early childhood end we wouldn't see some of the problems that are emerging further up the school.</p> <p>The other thing about the early childhood side of things is that we just do not have a huge bank of adequately trained early childhood teachers, from a physical resourcing point of view we do okay, we sort of box the early childhood from K through to 3 and I think there needs to be a recognition that we might have to use early childhood strategies a little bit longer albeit within an appropriate context for the child and the child's age.</p> <p>Another thing that I think is missing in the early childhood end is the linkage between the first year of K and the earlier years, I'm talking about the nought to fours. In our state Family and Children's Services are essentially responsible for the nought to fours and we pick them up at four and take them from there. I think it's absolutely critical somewhere soon that there is a stronger partnership or you hand over all responsibility for education to the Education Department to deal with the issues of later to early childhood. Many of these kids don't get into school until they're seven, eight or nine and the foundation blocks for learning as we know it are often not there but that doesn't mean these kids shouldn't be afforded the opportunity, so I think that we need to be putting a lot more energy into the early early years, the whole process of transition through the early years into formal schooling. To do that the silly notion that we've got that an organisation like Children and Family Services will look after the educational needs of the nought to fours and the Education Department will then take on the responsibility is just stupid.</p>
Chris Sidoti	I think we need to leave it there, we've had terrible timing problems today. Thanks a lot for coming along.