

Tackling literacy in remote Aboriginal communities

Kirsten Storry

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No. 73 • 31 August 2006

- There is an alarming educational gap facing remote Aboriginal communities. The gap in literacy between remote and urban Aboriginal children is even bigger than the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.
- Literacy levels among children and adults in remote communities are seriously low. Nationally in 2004, 83% of Aboriginal students and 93% of students overall in Year 3 achieved the literacy benchmark for their year. But Northern Territory data tells us that only 20% of Aboriginal students in remote communities in the Northern Territory achieved the benchmark.
- The need for school education reform in remote communities is urgent, but targeting the next generation of school-age children is not enough. There is a pressing need to address literacy more generally in communities to stop the cycle of low educational achievement.
- Addressing these low literacy levels can improve parents' self-reliance, children's education and health, and the implementation of government programmes in areas such as health and governance.
- The good news is that the community and private sectors are already involved in literacy in remote Aboriginal communities. What is lacking is readily-available information about these projects and rigorous evaluation.
- Public debate on literacy generally—as well as debate on Aboriginal education—would be enriched by more comprehensive reporting on literacy levels. More comprehensive and disaggregated reporting on literacy levels would allow resources to be more efficiently directed to where they are most needed.
- Better coordination of diverse community sector involvement would facilitate information sharing and make successful projects more easily replicable. Even a simple website would be a good start. A website could disseminate information on best practice and existing services, while also matching up potential producers and consumers of literacy education services to form partnerships.
- Those private sector organisations willing to be innovators should become involved in primary and secondary education in remote communities. Innovative school models exist, but need to be championed by private sector sponsors. Possible options include satellite schools or campuses managed by existing private schools, autonomous schools, and expansion of the School of the Air.
- Innovative solutions are needed to close the educational achievement gap facing remote Aboriginal communities. These solutions will work best when they embrace and are embraced by governments, the community sector and the private sector.

Kirsten Storry is a policy analyst with the Indigenous Affairs Research Programme of The Centre for Independent Studies.

The need for school education reform in remote communities is urgent, but targeting the next generation of school-age children is not enough.

Introduction

There is an alarming educational achievement gap facing many remote Aboriginal communities. Children in these communities have, on average, much lower rates of school attendance, achievement and retention than Aboriginal children in urban areas and other Australian children. Indeed the evidence suggests that the gap between urban and remote Aboriginal children is even bigger than the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.

But how big is the gap? And how can it be closed?

Policymakers, researchers and educators have variously pointed to health, resource levels, teaching quality, curriculum, low expectations, and home environment as the cause of the gap. Factors outside (as well as inside) the formal school system certainly appear to be at play in the gap facing remote communities. Much of the current generation of parents left the school system without basic literacy and numeracy skills. Their children often grow up in low-literate home environments and enter school with lower levels of health and school readiness than other Australian children.

The need for school education reform in remote communities is urgent, but targeting the next generation of school-age children is not enough. There is a pressing need to address literacy more generally in communities to stop the cycle of low educational achievement. The good news is that there is already community sector and private sector involvement in literacy in communities. What is lacking is adequate reporting of literacy levels, efficient coordination of community sector involvement, and innovative private sector involvement.

English literacy levels in remote communities

Literacy is, and has been for some time, a hot topic in education. The so-called reading wars over teaching methods—between the phonics method and the whole language method—are simply the latest episode in a litany of public and academic debates. It is perhaps surprising then how little we know about literacy levels in remote Aboriginal communities.

While the past decade has seen new literacy benchmark testing and reporting for school children, there is little statistical data available on adult literacy, even from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The ABS does not collect census data on adult literacy, but only asks respondents to rate their spoken English. Even this data is questionable: research by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research during the last census indicated that the special procedure for collecting census information in remote communities would not have produced a reliable picture of spoken English.¹

The ABS did collect some data on adult literacy as part of the Survey on Aspects of Literacy. This survey sought to compare subjective and objective assessments of respondents' literacy, by having respondents rate their reading and writing 'for the needs of daily life and for the needs of their main job' and then undertake tests.² But the survey specifically excluded people living in remote areas.

Without statistical data, the best we can do is to infer literacy levels from case studies. The only readily available case study data was collected and reported by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.³ It should be noted, however, that the researchers collected this data for other research purposes and made clear that they did not seek to ensure a statistically valid sample. The researchers asked 55 individuals across two remote Aboriginal communities to assess their own literacy levels and then tested the individuals' literacy levels against the National Reporting System (NRS) standards. At the lowest NRS level, a respondent can identify personal information in a personally relevant text and can write his or her own name and address. At the second lowest level, a respondent can read and interpret short texts on a personally relevant subject, may be able to locate specific information from simple diagrams, can write about a familiar topic using simple sentences and conjunctions, and may be able to complete forms or write notes.

The researchers found a large discrepancy between perceived and actual literacy competence. Nearly 90% of respondents had been to school and over 70% said that they could read and write English. However, more than 60% of the men and 40% of the women were *not* competent at even the lowest NRS level and only just over 20% were competent at the second lowest level. The researchers concluded that the respondents were either reluctant to admit to low literacy, considered themselves as literate as necessary for their purposes, or had not been exposed to and were unaware of the full breadth of literacy and were only literate relative to their community.

Thanks to the introduction of national literacy benchmark assessment and reporting for Years 3, 5 and 7, we know more about literacy levels than we did a decade ago. But the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, which reports on the benchmarks, is limited in what it tells us.

For a start, the benchmarks are only minimum standards—the minimum that children need to make ‘sufficient progress’ at school,⁴ but hardly to prosper. Experts have suggested the benchmarks may underestimate the number of children who are reading and writing below their age level.⁵

What’s more, the results against the benchmarks are only reported on a pass or fail basis. This can give the distorted picture of a fixed line to be crossed between illiteracy and literacy. Children who are achieving the benchmark could have basic or advanced literacy for their age.

The report also obscures the gap between remote and urban Aboriginal students by aggregating their results. According to the latest report in 2004, 83% of Aboriginal students and 93% of students overall in Year 3 achieved the literacy benchmark for their year. (There is no separate statistic for non-Aboriginal students.) But Northern Territory data tells us that only 20% of Aboriginal students in remote communities in the Northern Territory achieved the benchmark. Similarly for Year 5 nationally, 70% of Aboriginal students and 89% of students overall achieved the reading benchmark in 2004. But in remote communities in the Northern Territory, only 21% of Aboriginal students achieved the same benchmark.

It is a significant, and perhaps understated, point that there is evidence that literacy levels can vary widely across remote Aboriginal communities. A Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research report for the Fred Hollows Foundation revealed that no child in the Northern Territory community of Wugularr (Beswick), 120 kilometres south of Katherine, had achieved the literacy benchmark for Year 3 in 2004.⁷ Another study by the Centre found that no child in the Thamarrur region (Port Keats/Wadeye) in the

The gap between remote and urban Aboriginal students is obscured by aggregating their results.

Table 1: Percentage of students who achieved the reading benchmarks in 2004

	All students nationally	Aboriginal students nationally	Remote Aboriginal students in the Northern Territory
Year 3	93%	83%	20%
Year 5	89%	70%	21%

Table 2: Percentage of students in the Northern Territory who achieved the reading benchmarks in 2004⁶

	Non-Aboriginal students	Urban Aboriginal students	Remote Aboriginal students
Year 3	87%	57%	20%
Year 5	91%	62%	21%

Northern Territory achieved the Year 3 or 5 reading benchmarks in 2001.⁸

The limited available data suggest that literacy levels in many remote Aboriginal communities are seriously low. Since many children in remote communities leave school by their early teenage years, it is unlikely that these school leavers will rise above the low Year 5 literacy levels.

Why target literacy in remote communities?

Clearly, the school system is not getting results in many remote communities and the need for systemic reform is urgent. But is targeting the next generation of school children enough? What about the teenagers and young adults who have left the system in the last thirty years without basic literacy skills? Special literacy training is not a substitute for ten years of compulsory school education, but it can contribute to improving living standards.

For parents, literacy offers greater self-reliance. Adults who can read can follow the instructions on their medication, gain a driver's licence, find out information from newspapers or newsletters, read wage slips or social security slips, and manage a family budget. Literate adults may also be able to negotiate contracts and engage in the modern economy by owning or leasing property or by selling their art directly in the market. Adults who cannot read must rely on others to mediate their interactions with outside organisations and government. Is this a problem? Is the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research right to suggest that, while literacy is the ultimate goal, Aborigines in remote communities can rely on 'literacy brokers' to mediate for them and 'greater attention needs to be paid to supporting the literacy brokerage role'?⁹ Literacy is not a specialised skill; it is a necessary skill. Without it, adults in remote communities have their hands tied as actors in the modern economy.

For children, family literacy and particularly maternal literacy appears to promote better health and education. Research suggests that there is a strong link between the educational level of parents, especially mothers, and the situation of their children.¹⁰ The World Bank has found that better educated mothers marry and start families later, keep their houses tidier and cleaner, have a better ability to find and use health information, and have a greater ability to make good use of scarce financial resources.¹¹ A child from a low-literate home environment will not benefit from the passive exposure to literacy that children in more literate home environments do. As anyone who has observed children learning to talk or who has learnt a foreign language knows, this passive learning precedes and supports active learning. Sustained literacy training is arguably the equivalent of a further year of schooling for parents and studies have shown an extra year to have benefits for their children. For a young woman, for example, it is said to reduce the risk of infant mortality by seven to ten percent when she gives birth.¹²

For governments, literacy can offer better opportunities for consultation and interaction with remote communities. Low literacy levels limit the effectiveness of government programmes designed to boost health, increase employment rates, promote training opportunities, and improve economic participation. Without literacy, many remote communities will not be able to capture the benefits of government intervention and government investment may either be wasted or only benefit the powerful few.

For some teenagers and young adults who have left the school system without basic literacy skills, efforts to address community literacy may also contribute to a welfare to work transition. There is evidence that local employment is available within the community and in the mining, pastoral and tourism industries and that inadequate education—particularly poor literacy and numeracy—is the key barrier to Aborigines seeking employment.¹³ For those who build on their literacy skills with trade skills or work experience, there are many opportunities in the labour-short mining industry. A welfare to work transition will be more difficult for those who have chronic health problems or who are long term unemployed, but even then literacy training is an essential life skill

Literacy is not a specialised skill; it is a necessary skill.

Inadequate education is the key barrier to Aborigines seeking employment.

that they should not be denied.

What is currently being done? And how well is it working?

The good news is that the community and private sectors are already involved in literacy in remote Aboriginal communities. What is lacking is readily-available information about these projects and rigorous evaluation.

Community sector involvement

Community sector involvement in literacy in remote communities can be broadly grouped into three types. The first type—the volunteer corps—involves tutoring by volunteers such as students or club members. Tutoring might be one-on-one or in small groups and could be on an intensive basis (daily for weeks or months) or a regular longer-term basis (weekly for months or years). For example, the Story Writing in Remote Locations (SWIRL) project is a volunteer corps programme that has been operating since 1996 in remote communities.¹⁴ When Lawry McMahon from Victoria University in Melbourne visited a remote community and found ‘an absolute lack of Aboriginal faces in class books and kids’ stories’,¹⁵ he recruited student volunteers to work and travel with him during university holidays to the Alice Springs area and Barkley Tablelands. The student volunteers work with children, parents and elders to record stories and, with private sector sponsorship from IBM, the team puts together printed, laminated and bound books. There is one copy for the child and one copy for the child’s local library. There have been 300 volunteers so far, 30 volunteers have returned to teach in remote communities, and there were 80 books produced in 2005 alone. Funding from the Northern Territory Government since 2004 has also allowed the programme to expand to operate during term time, not just in school holidays. Recent publications on the SWIRL project, in the form of online reports and an IBM brochure, do not provide information about how much children and adults are learning from the project.

The second type—professional tuition programmes—involves a more academic and structured approach than the volunteer corps. Such programmes are, however, likely to be more constrained in capacity and more expensive because they involve trained educators, rather than volunteers. The YACHAD Accelerated Learning Program is a recent example of a professional tuition programme underway in remote communities.¹⁶ It is a three-year pilot programme which targets the lowest performing students with after-hours tutoring. The programme describes itself as ‘based on whole of community educational approaches developed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’, and it uses principles reported to have been successful in Israel with Ethiopian and Bedouin refugees.¹⁷ The programme’s stakeholder report in February 2006 includes much anecdotal evidence of its success and figures on the numbers of children and teachers who have been helped, but no figures on how much children have learnt. Another example is the Making Up for Lost Time in Literacy (MULTILIT) programme¹⁸ which recently began operating in Coen as part of the Cape York Partnerships’ Computer Culture project.¹⁹ The programme, based out of the Macquarie University Special Education Centre, also targets low-performing students and uses research-based programmes to provide intensive tuition to these students. Evaluation of the programme’s effectiveness and future directions will shortly be undertaken by Cape York Partnerships.

The third type—community learning centres—is quite different from the other two models and is usually better suited to larger, permanent communities. An example is the Karrayili Community Education Centre, established in Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia in the 1980s as a result of community demand.²⁰ Adults in the community wanted to be able to sign cheques, read and write letters, and participate meaningfully in meetings with government agencies and representatives. The centre has also provided driving lessons, art classes, book-keeping training and work preparation courses for employment in local mining. A book about the centre in 2001 provided an interesting

What is lacking is readily-available information about the literacy projects and rigorous evaluation.

What is missing is private sector involvement in Aboriginal education at the primary and secondary levels in remote communities.

anecdotal history, but no figures.

While the existence of these projects is encouraging, they are small in number and information about their effectiveness is limited. In research for this paper, the lack of such easily accessible information was often all too apparent. Anecdotal evidence confirmed the need for better information, and suggested that funding for literacy programmes is generally only available for service delivery and not for evaluation. While educators felt that they had 'tried everything', the lack of reported evaluation made it hard to determine what sorts of projects worked better than others and to understand why.

That said, research for this paper did turn up two potentially useful sources of information for communities seeking literacy training. The first—the Reading Writing Hotline—is a national telephone adult literacy and numeracy referral service.²¹ The hotline is funded by the federal Department of Education, Science and Training and is managed by TAFE NSW. The hotline is intended to provide advice and a referral to one of 1,200 providers of adult literacy and numeracy services. Enquiries to the hotline call centre revealed that they did not know of any active programmes in the remote communities asked about. The second source of information—*Literacy Link*—is the journal of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy Incorporated.²² The journal often includes an article by educators on a literacy programme that they are delivering to an Aboriginal community (such as an integrated driver education and literacy programme in NSW²³) and on a relevant ground-breaking literacy programme they are delivering overseas (such as an internet-based programme using voice recognition, screen readers and interactive activities²⁴).

Private sector involvement

Private sector involvement in Aboriginal education is primarily at the secondary and tertiary levels in urban centres. There are numerous examples of private sector sponsorship of successful scholarship programmes for children to board at private schools, including the Cape York Institute's Higher Expectations programme²⁵ and St Joseph's Indigenous Fund. What is missing is private sector involvement in Aboriginal education at the primary and secondary levels in remote communities.

In remote areas, private sector involvement is largely confined to the mining industry. Many mining companies in remote northern Australia offer preferential employment to Aboriginal workers, but have often found it necessary to provide supplementary literacy and numeracy training. The involvement of mining companies has been described as 'a case of enlightened self-interest': a mixture of the skills shortage, the burgeoning Aboriginal population in remote areas, the insistence on commitments to education and employment as part of native title negotiations, and the desire to address the clear 'mismatch' between the strong profits to mining companies and the living standards of the local Aboriginal communities.²⁶ An example of private sector involvement is the new vocational training course to be offered at the TAFE college in Derby, Western Australia.²⁷ Aztec Resources recently completed an agreement with the traditional land owners to re-open a mine on Koolan Island and has helped to develop the course to facilitate its commitment to a 30% Aboriginal workforce at the mine. The course will reportedly offer local Aboriginal teenagers training in basic literacy, numeracy and work skills.

While mining company programmes have the potential to produce great results, we do not know that they are actually doing so. A number of mines have seen their Aboriginal workforce levels rise above the industry average of five per cent and this would seem to indicate some success.²⁸ In any case, mining industry programmes are limited to those in a position to successfully make the welfare-to-work transition and this would probably exclude those with chronic health problems and those who are long-term unemployed, as well as those who do not live close to a mine.

What else can be done?

Innovative thinking and action is needed. It is not enough to expand or replicate existing programmes unless evidence can be produced of their measurable impact on literacy. First, public debate on literacy generally—as well as debate on Aboriginal education—would be enriched by more comprehensive reporting on literacy levels. Second, better coordination of diverse community sector involvement would facilitate information sharing and make successful projects more easily replicable. Even a simple website would be a good start. Finally, those private sector organisations willing to be innovators should become involved in primary and secondary education in remote communities. Innovative school models exist, but need to be championed by private sector sponsors.

More comprehensive reporting on literacy levels

There is an urgent need to improve reporting of literacy levels against the national literacy benchmarks. Aggregated data obscures the performance of individual remote schools. Systemic failure to achieve against literacy benchmarks should prompt intervention, not be hidden in aggregated statistics. A simple pass or fail approach can give the distorted picture that there is a fixed line to be crossed between illiteracy and literacy. It also does not give a full picture of how well children are actually learning. Are many achieving only just above the benchmark or do most well surpass the benchmark?

A better reporting model might be the National Assessment of Educational Progress in the United States.²⁹ Since 1969, nationally representative samples of primary and secondary school students in Years 4, 8 and 12 have been regularly tested on a range of subjects, including reading and writing, and the results reported in the 'nation's report card'. The report card includes both scale scores (either on a scale of 0 to 300 or 0 to 500 depending on the subject) and achievement levels (basic, proficient and advanced). The results are also disaggregated into relevant groups, such as female students or Hispanic students. This national assessment scheme is conducted in addition to state-based testing regimes and, with some fine-tuning, could offer a suitable alternative in the Australian context.

Coordinated community sector partnerships

Community sector involvement in literacy in remote communities could be made more efficient with better coordination. One option would be a community partnerships website to disseminate information on best practice and existing services, while also matching up potential producers and consumers of literacy education services to form partnerships.

A partnerships model would be better suited to the diversity of circumstances and literacy levels across the 1,200 remote Aboriginal communities than a single-provider service delivery model. Community sector organisations will have different capacities and skill-sets and may be better matched with remote communities seeking, for example, life skills rather than occupational skills. In general though, the partnerships model will be best suited to communities with strong literate leadership, regular access to the internet, a large keen group of adult learners, and sound law and order.

The partnerships website could include:

- an interactive forum to promote active participation and helpful discussion;
- access to relevant government inquiries or published reports;
- access to reports by communities or providers on their programmes, either short informal reports in a weblog posting format or longer evaluation reports;
- links to government funding initiatives like the National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, together with forms to apply for the funding.

The website of Indigenous Community Volunteers could provide a reference point

Innovative school models exist, but need to be championed by private sector sponsors.

The delivery of educational services to these communities needs to move beyond a single on-site primary school for children and intermittent training for adults.

for the partnerships website. Indigenous Community Volunteers markets itself as ‘an independent, not-for-profit company that offers support to Aboriginal communities to pursue their community development goals in their own way’. It provides volunteers with the opportunity to transfer their skills to Aboriginal communities and community organisations by matching the volunteers with short to medium term projects. Indigenous Community Volunteers also prepares volunteers with a cultural awareness programme, while communities provide a culture mentor and accommodation. The organisation receives funding primarily from the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, as well as some state and territory governments, but states that it is ‘seeking to establish an ongoing funding base with support from corporate Australia, the philanthropic sector, other interested organisations and individual donations’.

Innovative school models

With private sector sponsorship, innovative school models could offer new hope to remote communities, particularly to those communities too small to support primary and secondary school education in the traditional school setting. The delivery of educational services to these communities needs to move beyond a single on-site primary school for children and intermittent training for adults by registered training organisations. Any educational strategy in very small communities, particularly the approximately 800 communities with fewer than 50 people, must embrace both children and adult learners in order to close the educational achievement gap. Here are three school models which could have the flexibility to manage small numbers of learners spread across a wide range of age groups.

The first option, for communities large enough to support a school, is to encourage the development of satellite schools or campuses by contracting out educational services to an existing private sector provider. Successful non-government schools are perhaps best placed to take up this role. Such schools could staff a satellite campus either by seconding their own teachers or hiring specialist teachers. The school could receive funding according to the existing state and federal entitlements, with additional funding for teacher housing and the necessary technology and facilities.

A precedent for this satellite school model is the school which St Andrew’s Cathedral School is proposing to set up in Redfern to raise educational standards—particularly literacy and numeracy—among Aboriginal children there.³⁰ The intention is that the school will be ‘self-contained’, but there will be ‘an exchange of some staff and resources such as technology and books’. The proposed funding arrangements are to be based on a novel ‘World Vision notion’: each student is to be sponsored by a corporation or an individual to the tune of \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year. The arrangements are based on those in a school in South Africa, where a mining company pays students’ fees.

A second option, again for communities large enough to support a school, is for governments to introduce greater autonomy and self-management for schools within the public system.³¹ The approach taken in South Australia under the Partnerships 21 scheme is one example.³² Schools can choose to strengthen local management through partnerships, quality improvement and resource flexibility. For example, instead of all authority centralised in the education department, the Partnerships 21 scheme gives school councils authority for strategic planning, policy determination, monitoring and accountability, and schools also have an allocated budget and autonomy to administer it.

Greater autonomy could also be introduced by way of charter school laws. Charter laws can vary widely in their detail but, in essence, charter schools are independent government schools. Charter schools are funded by and accountable to government, but have greater financial, operational and educational autonomy than normal government schools on the condition that they meet the terms of their charter, such as achievement levels and attendance rates. Under charter school laws, existing schools could have the option to self-manage or to seek a management partnership with another school, a community

group, or a private sector organisation.

A third option, particularly for communities too small to support a school, is to open up the existing infrastructure of the Schools of the Air, a possibility which has already been mooted. Historically, Schools of the Air usually catered for primary school children who lived on remote outstations. The children had lessons over high frequency radio several times a week and did correspondence lessons under the supervision of a parent or home tutor. Now there are changes afoot. The Northern Territory Government announced this year that the Katherine School of the Air will be trialling a new middle school programme, adding Years 8 and 9 to its schedule for the next two years.³³ This follows the 2003 joint initiative between the Commonwealth, Northern Territory and New South Wales Governments to upgrade all Northern Territory and New South Wales Schools of the Air to new satellite-based internet technologies and new e-learning systems within three years.³⁴ The new eLearning programme allows children to login to interactive courses online, while the new Interactive Distance Learning programme allows children to login to see real-time video and audio of their teacher and participate in lessons, including a virtual blackboard on which teachers and children can draw.³⁵

Further changes are reportedly in the pipeline.³⁶ The next stage of the joint government initiative is to extend the new technology and learning systems to hundreds of small schools across the Northern Territory and New South Wales. The facilities are also to be opened up to the general community, for adult education and TAFE courses, and to remote Aboriginal communities. For remote communities, this is an innovative and promising development. However, there must be some fine tuning to overcome the issue of low community literacy levels. Indeed, as the Alice Springs School of the Air has already found with its thirty or so Aboriginal students, the major obstacle they face is the need for supervision by an adult with good English reading and writing skills.³⁷ Remote Aboriginal communities would need to fund or enlist private sector sponsorship for an appropriate and literate tutor, as well as a dedicated and secure school room equipped with computers and internet access.

Conclusion

The educational achievement gap facing remote Aboriginal communities must be closed. Services and funding cannot be efficiently targeted unless more comprehensive, disaggregated information on adult literacy levels is made publicly available. Aboriginal children cannot get a good education when they attend primary school sporadically, then drop out of the system entirely by their early teenage years. Without English literacy, numeracy, and the skills and knowledge that all children should acquire during the compulsory ten years of school education, their chance of having meaningful choices in the modern world is negligible.

Addressing community literacy is an important first step to tackling the educational achievement gap in remote Aboriginal communities. But it is not enough to target the next generation of school-age children by way of traditional educational services. Particularly in the small remote communities, it is time to acknowledge that traditional educational service delivery is not working. It is time to trial innovative solutions, such as autonomous, privately funded schools, that cater for the learning needs of children and adult learners. These solutions will work best when they embrace and are embraced by governments, the community sector and the private sector.

Addressing community literacy is an important first step to tackling the educational achievement gap in remote Aboriginal communities.

Endnotes

- ¹ David F Martin et al, 'Making Sense of the Census: Observations of the 2001 Enumeration in Remote Aboriginal Australia,' (Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2001).
- ² 'Preface', *4228.0-Aspects of Literacy: Assessed Skill Levels, Australia, 1996*, www.abs.gov.au.
- ³ Inge Kral and RG (Jerry) Schwab, 'The Realities of Aboriginal Adult Literacy Acquisition and Practice: Implications for Remote Community Capacity Building,' in *CAEPR Discussion Paper No 257* (Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2003), p 8.
- ⁴ National Literacy and Numeracy Benchmarks website, http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/key_issues/literacy_numeracy/national_literacy_and_numeracy_benchmarks.htm.
- ⁵ See remarks quoted in Jennifer Buckingham, 'School tests not catching poor readers', *The Australian*, 29 November 2004.
- ⁶ Department of Education Employment and Training, *Annual Report 2004–2005* (Darwin: Northern Territory Government, 2005), p 42.
- ⁷ RG (Jerry) Schwab and Dale Sutherland, 'Literacy for Life: A Scoping Study for a Community Literacy Empowerment Project (Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2004).
- ⁸ John Taylor, 'Social Indicators for Aboriginal Governance: Insights from the Thamarrur Region, Northern Territory', *Research Monograph No 24* (Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2004).
- ⁹ Kral and Schwab, 'The Realities of Aboriginal Adult Literacy Acquisition and Practice', p 18.
- ¹⁰ For example, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development study discussed in Adele Horin and Edmund Tadros, 'Cashed up, Happy Mums the Key to Happy Children', *The Age*, 10 July 2006.
- ¹¹ World Bank, *World Development Report 1993: Investing in Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp 42–3.
- ¹² Jeff McMullen, 'When Literacy Can Mean Life', *Griffith Review* 11 (2006), p 199.
- ¹³ Veronica Cleary, 'Education and Learning in an Aboriginal Community', *Issue Analysis* No 65 (Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies, 2005), p 15; Northern Territory Department of Education, 'Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory' (Darwin: Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999), p 18.
- ¹⁴ SWIRL website, <http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/SWIRL/about.html>.
- ¹⁵ [Journospeak].
- ¹⁶ YALP website, www.yalp.org.au.
- ¹⁷ Alice Russell, 'Help for indigenous students', *The Age*, 30 August 2004.
- ¹⁸ MULTILIT website, www.multilit.com.au.
- ¹⁹ Computer Culture website, <http://www.capeyorkpartnerships.com/computerculture/index.htm>.
- ²⁰ See Sue McGinty, Tarungka Irene Jimbidie and Pangkaylala Gail Smiler, *Karrayili: Adult Education in a Remote Australian Community* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001).
- ²¹ Reading and Writing Hotline website, www.literacyline.edu.au.
- ²² Literacy Link website, <http://www.acal.edu.au/>.
- ²³ Robyn Jay, 'Empowering Aboriginal communities with a driver education project', *Literacy Link*, June 2005, pp 4–5.
- ²⁴ Kaye Lowe, 'You got me going now: Read on the Web', *Literacy Link*, December 2005,

- pp 9–10, 15.
- ²⁵ Higher Expectations programme website, <http://www.cyi.org.au/hep.aspx>.
- ²⁶ Jennifer Hewett, 'Good works for a change', *The Australian Financial Review*, 27 May 2006.
- ²⁷ Jennifer Hewett, 'Good works for a change'.
- ²⁸ Tanuja Barker and David Brereton, 'Aboriginal Employment at Century Mine', Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, Research Paper No 3, April 2004.
- ²⁹ Nation's report card website, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.
- ³⁰ Hannah Edwards, 'A College of Dreams', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 May 2006.
- ³¹ School autonomy is discussed at some length in Julie Novak, 'School Autonomy: A Key Reform for Improving Indigenous Education', *Issue Analysis* No 72 (Sydney: The Centre for Independent Studies, 2006).
- ³² Paul Kilvert, 'Partnerships 21', *International Education Journal* 2:1 (2001), <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v2n1/kilvert/kilvert.pdf>.
- ³³ Katherine School of the Air, *Air Waves*, Fortnightly Bulletin, Issue 8, 7 June 2006, <http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/ksa/globalclassroom/airwaves/2006airwaves-8.pdf>.
- ³⁴ Denise Murray, 'New Wings for Schools of the Air', *The Age*, 11 February 2006.
- ³⁵ Katherine School of the Air website, <http://www.schools.nt.edu.au/ksa/>.
- ³⁶ Denise Murray, 'New Wings for Schools of the Air'.
- ³⁷ Alice Springs School of the Air website, <http://www.assoa.nt.edu.au/schoolinfo.html>.

Previous papers in The Centre for Independent Studies' *Issue Analysis* series include:

- No. 72 School Autonomy: A Key Reform for Improving Indigenous Education *Julie Novak*
- No. 71 Are New Zealanders paying too much tax? *Phil Rennie*
- No. 70 Family Relationship Centres: Why We Don't Need Them *Arti Sharma*
- No. 69 Annals of Aid: Vanuatu and The United States Millenium Challenge Corporation
Helen Hughes and Gaurav Sodhi
- No. 68 HELPless: How the FEE HELP loans system lets students down and how to fix it
Andrew Norton
- No. 67 Make Poverty History: Tackle Corruption *Wolfgang Kasper*
- No. 66 Restoring Self-reliance in Welfare (3): Twenty Million Future Funds *Peter Saunders*
- No. 65 Education and Learning in an Aboriginal Community *Veronica Cleary*
- No. 64 Good Teachers Where They Are Needed *Jennifer Buckingham*
- No. 63 The Economics of Indigenous Deprivation and Proposals for Reform *Helen Hughes*
- No. 62 The Free Market Case Against Voluntary Student Unionism (But for Voluntary Student
Representation) *Andrew Norton*
- No. 61 Restoring Self-reliance in Welfare (2): Six Arguments in Favour of Self Funding
Peter Saunders
- No. 60 Clearing Muddy Waters: Why Vinnes are Wrong in Inequality *Peter Saunders*
- No. 59 A Headlong Dash into the Chasm of Hyperbole *Peter Saunders*
- No. 58 Papua New Guinea's Choice: A Tale of Two Nations *Helen Hughes And Susan
Windybank*
- No. 57 Restoring Self-reliance in Welfare (1): The \$85 Billion Tax/welfare Churn *Peter
Saunders*
- No. 56 Universities in a State: The Federal Case Against Commonwealth Control of
Universities *Andrew Norton*
- No. 55 Lessons from the Tiwi Islands: The Need for Radical Improvement in Remote
Aboriginal Communities *John Cleary*
- No. 54 A New Deal for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Remote Communities
Helen Hughes and Jenness Warin
- No. 53 The Pacific is Viable! *Helen Hughes*
- No. 52 A Voluntary Free Trade Alliance: How to Overcome Hurdles in the Path of Traders
and Investors *Wolfgang Kasper*
- No. 51 Only 18% Why ACOSS is Wrong to be Complacent About Welfare Dependency
Peter Saunders
- No. 50 From Riches to Rags: What are Nauru's Options and How Can Australia Help?
Helen Hughes
- No. 49 Can Papua New Guinea Come Back From the Brink? *Helen Hughes*
- No. 48 The Long Eye of the Law: Closed Circuit Television, Crime Prevention and Civil
Liberties *Caspar Conde*
- No. 47 Why We Should Reform the Disability Support Pension *Peter Saunders*
- No. 46 Lies, Damned Lies and the Senate Poverty Inquiry Report *Peter Saunders*
- No. 45 Sweet and Sour Pork Barrelling: The Case of Queensland Sugar *Alex Robson*
- No. 44 How Union Campaigns on Hours and Casuals Are Threatening Low-Skilled Jobs
Kayoko Tsumori
- No. 43 Valuing Education: A Response to the Australia Institute Report *Buying an
Education Jennifer Buckingham*
- No. 42 The Open Front Door: Tourism, Border Control and National Security
William Maley
- No. 41 Poor Laws (3) How to Reform the Award System and Create More Jobs
Kayoko Tsumori
- No. 40 How to Reduce Long-term Unemployment *Peter Saunders and Kayoko Tsumori*
- No. 39 Reforming Divorce Law *Barry Maley*
- No. 38 The Beat Goes On: Policing for Crime Prevention *Nicole Billante*
- No. 37 Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: Dr Nelson Mixes Price Flexibility with Rigid
Quotas *Andrew Norton*



Issue Analysis (ISSN:1440 6306) is a regular series published by The Centre for Independent Studies, evaluating public issues and Government policies and offering proposals for reform. Views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Centre's staff, advisors, directors or officers. Issue Analysis papers (including back issues) can be purchased from CIS for \$5.50 each (plus postage) or can be downloaded free from www.cis.org.au.