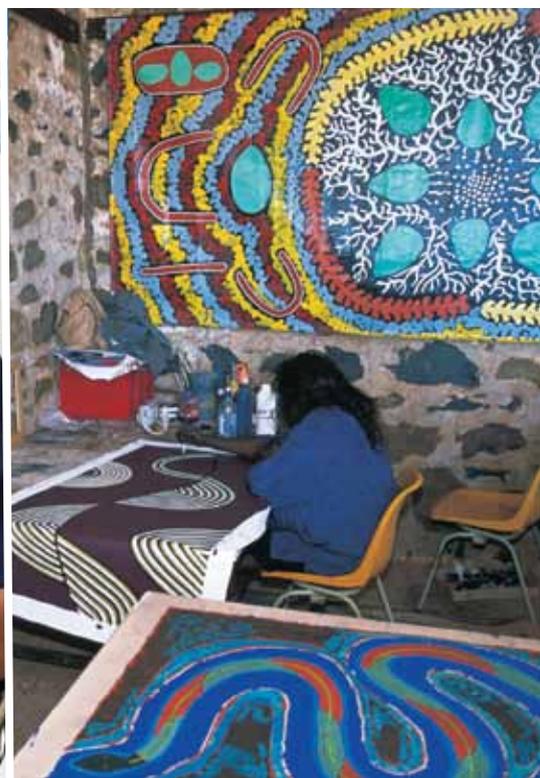
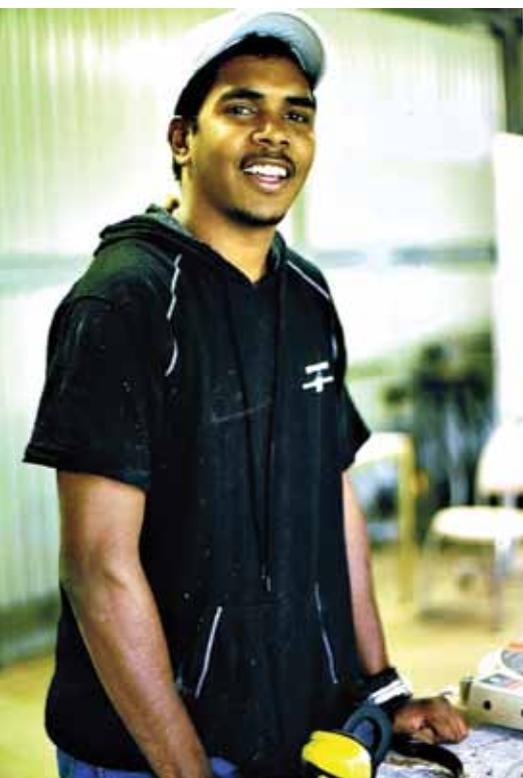




Western Australia Auditor General's Report

# Supporting Aboriginal Students in Training

Report 4 – May 2012





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WESTERN AUSTRALIAN AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Supporting Aboriginal Students in Training

Report 4  
May 2012



**THE PRESIDENT  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**THE SPEAKER  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

### **SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN TRAINING**

This report has been prepared for submission to Parliament under the provisions of section 25 of the *Auditor General Act 2006*.

Performance audits are an integral part of the overall audit program. They seek to provide Parliament with assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector programs and activities, and identify opportunities for improved performance.

The information provided through this approach will, I am sure, assist Parliament in better evaluating agency performance and enhance parliamentary decision-making to the benefit of all Western Australians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Murphy'.

COLIN MURPHY  
AUDITOR GENERAL  
2 May 2012

# Contents

<b>Auditor General's Overview</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
Background	5
Audit conclusion	6
Key findings	7
Recommendations	8
Response from agencies	9
Audit focus and scope	11
<b>The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met</b>	<b>13</b>
Aboriginal students need support in training	13
The Department and STPs have reliably identified the support needs of Aboriginal students and communities	15
The support provided by the Department and STPs meets good practice	16
STPs cannot meet all the needs of Aboriginal students	23
Governance is sound and funds are spent appropriately	24
<b>There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population</b>	<b>26</b>
More Aboriginal students are completing their studies	26
Aboriginal student numbers dropped marginally between 2006 and 2010	27
Aboriginal participation in higher level training has not improved	28
Aboriginal participation in employment based training has stayed close to that of other students	29
<b>Performance measures do not capture social and community benefits of training, and information use and sharing could be improved</b>	<b>31</b>
Current measures do not assess social and community benefits from training and support	31
Existing data and information is not analysed or shared effectively	31
<b>Appendix: VET student numbers</b>	<b>32</b>

# Auditor General's Overview

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Many Aboriginal people enrol and complete training with no more difficulty than any other student. However, other Aboriginal people face significant barriers to successful training. These include long term issues such as disengagement from education and training, unemployment, poor health and housing, and literacy and numeracy problems. Faced with these issues, State Training Providers (STPs) need to offer support services that seek to address at least some of those barriers.

For this audit we asked whether the support services for Aboriginal students were appropriate and well used, if they achieved good outcomes and whether STPs and the Department of Training and Workforce Development were collaborating effectively. In doing so, we engaged directly with students, support staff, training providers and representatives of Aboriginal communities to get their experiences, and looked at training delivery on the ground. We appreciate the positive and open way all those involved engaged with the audit.

We found that STPs deliver a broad range of support that often goes beyond their normal training role. The support services met many aspects of best practice and were appropriate to needs. A key factor in achieving this is the good, often long term, engagement that STPs have with Aboriginal people and communities, and the fact that this is built into governance structures. This helps STPs to identify and understand what training and support individuals and communities need.

While there are opportunities to improve – specifically in how outcomes are measured and information is shared – the support services that we looked at made a real difference to Aboriginal students and communities, and without them, results and outcomes would be worse.

Effective support for Aboriginal people in training on its own is not going to fix the entrenched disadvantage many Aboriginal people and communities face. However it can, and is, making an important contribution to better job opportunities for individuals, and improved social and economic outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

# Executive Summary

## Background

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector has two main and connected roles. The first is to meet the training needs of industry. The second role is to ensure there is a well-trained workforce ready to meet the employment needs of a growing economy. Many employers are committed to improve Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> job opportunities. Initiatives such as the Australian Employment Covenant stimulate employers to work with State Training Providers (STPs) in training Aboriginal people and provide them with support for successful transition into work.

The bulk of training funded by the State Government is delivered by STPs and governed and coordinated by the Department of Training and Workforce Development (the Department). There are 11 mainstream STPs (previously known as TAFEs) in Western Australia (WA) plus the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

In 2010 there were 7 043 Aboriginal people in VET studies in WA who made up five per cent of all students. Sixty-nine per cent of them (4 856 people) were studying at mainstream STPs and 31 per cent (2 187) with other training providers. Twenty-six per cent of Aboriginal people studying at STPs were based in Perth and the remaining 74 per cent in regional WA (see Appendix).

The Department is the agency responsible for the WA VET sector. It coordinates the funding for the sector of which approximately 70 per cent comes from the State and 30 per cent from the Commonwealth. In 2011, the State spent approximately \$425 million on purchasing training and support services from public training providers and approximately \$96 million on training services from private training providers.

Meeting workforce needs in WA involves improving participation of groups that have been under-represented or disengaged from training. These groups include people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, regional and remote areas, people with disabilities, young people as well as Aboriginal Australians. The State Training Plan 2012-2015 reflects this and prioritises the training and support needs of these groups.

It is important to recognise that for many Aboriginal people participation in training is relatively straightforward. They enrol and complete their training with no more or less difficulty than others.

However, there are deep-seated issues that impact on Aboriginal people's support needs. In WA Aboriginal people are about five times more likely to be unemployed than the broader population and half as likely to have completed their schooling. Other issues around health, housing, justice and finance for example can make it harder for Aboriginal people to engage with training. Many agencies and programs seek to address these social issues.

Aboriginal people and their communities see training as an important stepping stone to improve their economic opportunities through employment and entrepreneurship. It also contributes to better self-esteem and resilience for individuals and community sustainability.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report the word 'Aboriginal' refers to all people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. All service delivery referred to in this report depends on people identifying as Aboriginal.

This audit examined the effectiveness of support services provided by STPs to Aboriginal students. Delivering this support is complex and comes in many forms. It can include employing specialist Aboriginal staff, providing bus services, arranging mentors and organising breakfasts. It can also involve delivering training off campus, designing specific training for employers and Aboriginal communities, and assisting students in dealing with Commonwealth and State agencies.

The audit focused on three questions: are the support services appropriate and utilised; do the support services achieve outcomes; and do the Department and STPs work together to promote best practice?

## Audit conclusion

The support provided by the STPs and the Department cannot be expected to solve all the problems facing many Aboriginal people. Nor is this the role of the Department and STPs. However, to achieve the objective to increase successful participation of Aboriginal students in VET, STPs often have to address problems which go beyond their normal training role.

The support provided by the Department and STPs for Aboriginal students works. It makes a difference to individuals, communities and employers. The support meets most aspects of best practice. It is flexible, culturally appropriate, delivered in Aboriginal communities and 'wraps around' students. At all STPs we met individuals with improved job opportunities and self-esteem, and learned of communities with better social and physical infrastructure. Without the support services provided by STPs, training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people would be worse.

However, there is only so much STPs can do. Effective support is inherently intensive, tailored, place-based, long term and relies heavily on individuals. It is not suited to generic or standardised delivery and the scope for productivity gains are limited. The complexity of problems faced by many Aboriginal students means that STPs cannot meet all needs.

Performance measures for Aboriginal students show that there has been some improvement in training outcomes. More students are completing their study and are getting qualifications. This indicates that support services help Aboriginal people to stay and finish their training. But improvements in outcomes are not consistent. Participation numbers are static and Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population.

Although the support provided was effective, the Department and STPs can improve how they measure its effects, giving them greater capacity to manage and tailor the support. This would include performance measures and other information which evaluate the broader social and community benefits derived from training support services. It would also include improving how they share knowledge on best practice and address service gaps.

## Key findings

- Support services provided by the Department and STPs for Aboriginal students were appropriate and effective. However, the complexity of student problems meant that there were needs that STPs could not meet.
  - The Department and STPs worked well to identify the support needs of Aboriginal students and their communities. The Department sets the overall Aboriginal training framework and STPs had good on-the-ground processes to identify needs.
  - The support given to Aboriginal students met key elements of national best practice. In particular, STPs:
    - employed Aboriginal support staff who are critical to supporting students
    - provided courses and programs that remove barriers to training
    - worked with employers to support Aboriginal students and trainees
    - delivered training on and off campus, in Aboriginal communities and at other locations where Aboriginal people feel comfortable
    - provided mainstream support services.
  - For a number of reasons the Department and STPs could not meet all the support needs of Aboriginal students. Students often had health, legal, housing and financial problems that STPs could not fix. There were also practical limitations to the support STPs could physically deliver across many locations. Finally, funding for support services was limited which impacted on all aspects of service delivery.
  - The governance of support services was sound but could be improved. The STPs and the Department had frameworks to govern Aboriginal support. These included: Delivery and Performance Agreements (DPAs) between the Department and STPs, Aboriginal Education Employment and Training Committees (AEETCs) and Aboriginal Training Plans at each STP. However, the DPAs had no formal completion or retention targets against which to assess the performance, and not all STPs had targets in their Aboriginal Training Plans. This lessened transparency and accountability.
  - Funding for Aboriginal support across the 11 mainstream STPs was stable at about \$4.1 million per year from 2007 to 2011. This amounted to approximately \$840 per Aboriginal student per year. The funds provided to STPs for Aboriginal support were spent appropriately, with the vast majority of the funds paying for salaries of the staff who deliver the support.
  - STPs kept limited information about the utilisation of the services and as a result we could not assess the efficiency of the support provided.

- There had been some improvement in Aboriginal training outcomes, but for most measures this was modest and uneven across the State.
  - More Aboriginal students completed their studies. Qualification rates almost doubled across the State between 2006 and 2010. This indicates that support services were working, with more students getting to the end of their studies. It also means that students were increasingly focused on employment outcomes from training.
  - Aboriginal student numbers at STPs dropped marginally while those of the general student population increased by 10 per cent between 2006 and 2010. We note that Aboriginal and general student numbers at other non-government training providers have increased in recent years.
  - The participation of Aboriginal students in higher level courses (Certificate III and above) remained stable at about 35 per cent. The general student figures rose from 60 to 64 per cent between 2006 and 2010.
  - The participation of Aboriginal students in employment based training (that is, traineeships and apprenticeships) stayed close to that of other students. In 2010, the Aboriginal participation rate was 14 per cent. The figure for the general student population was 17 per cent.
- The performance measures of course enrolments and completions did not provide a comprehensive picture of how well STPs and the Department support Aboriginal students. They do not measure the broader social and community outcomes from training. The Department is working to introduce ways of measuring these outcomes for WA's Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy.
- The Department and STPs did not comprehensively analyse their performance data and information. As a result they missed opportunities to further identify best practice and unmet needs. There was also little formal sharing between STPs and the Department of results and experiences. This makes it harder to identify service gaps and opportunities to improve service delivery.

## Recommendations

### The Department should:

- Lead the development of new performance measures to better assess the difference that support makes for individuals and communities. These measures should include social indicators, at individual and community levels, and add to the existing measures of course enrolments and completions.
- Increase the analysis and sharing of data and information with STPs on the performance of support services.
- Improve opportunities for STPs and AEETCs to share knowledge and best practice about supporting Aboriginal students in training.
- Review the funding framework for the delivery of Aboriginal support services by STPs as part of its overall review of DPAs. This should include providing funding over a longer period of time (more than one year) to allow better service continuity at STPs.

**The State Training Providers should:**

- Establish clear targets and timelines for Aboriginal Training Plans and include these in their annual performance review processes.
- Work with the Department to develop a better evaluation framework for the community and social outcomes of their student support services.

## Response from agencies

### Department of Training and Workforce Development

The Department of Training and Workforce Development is deeply committed to improving training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people. The Department's strategic framework for Aboriginal services is primarily implemented through the Training Together – Working Together strategy, a network of Aboriginal Workforce Development Centres and through policy and funding arrangements with a range of registered training organisations.

The last few years have seen significant improvements in training participation and outcomes for Aboriginal people in WA. Since 2008, there has been a 12 per cent increase in enrolments with over 10 000 enrolments by Aboriginal people in 2010. Just as importantly, over this same period there was a 26 per cent increase in the number of nationally recognised qualifications completed by Aboriginal people.

In reflecting upon these achievements it is essential to acknowledge the special relationship that exists between the Department and STPs including their Aboriginal Education, Employment and Training Committees. As the principal state training and workforce development agencies the Department and STPs are charged with the responsibility of meeting the State Government's agenda to support greater economic participation for Aboriginal people through training and employment strategies. Meaningful outcomes can only be achieved through strong collaboration and partnerships.

The Department welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Auditor General's report. The need to develop better performance measures and reporting to further improve services to Aboriginal people is acknowledged. As recommended in the Auditor General's report the Department also sees merit in improving the sharing of knowledge and best practice on Aboriginal support services.

### Challenger Institute of Technology

Challenger Institute of Technology is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people through training. The Institute is particularly proud of the positive employment outcomes achieved by our students. The development of specific Aboriginal programs in partnership with industry, state government departments and other organisations is testament to our desire to ensure Aboriginal people have access to relevant training and leadership development.

The Institute welcomes the findings and recommendations of the Auditor General's report and will continue to work with stakeholders to ensure support services for Aboriginal students are relevant and reflect best practice.

## Durack Institute of Technology

Durack Institute of Technology recognises and supports the Auditor General's report on 'Supporting Aboriginal Students in Training'.

Durack is the major provider of Vocational Education and Training in the Mid West and Gascoyne regions and supports communities and individuals across regional and remote locations.

As such, we recognise our responsibility to work with all students to provide appropriate levels of support and training options, but particularly with the Aboriginal communities and individuals that make up such a large proportion of the regions' peoples.

The report notes that Aboriginal student outcomes, in terms of completion figures, have increased over time however the report also notes that this has been achieved without a concomitant increase in funding, a factor of which Durack is proud.

Durack continues to work closely with individuals and communities to support their aspirations and also with employers to support the development of further employment based training.

Durack also recognises and values the contribution of Aboriginal people to our organisation and therefore supports any improvement in existing strategies that will enable us to meet that responsibility more effectively and in a more long term manner.

Durack has already implemented measures to address recommendations regarding operational planning, targets, timelines and performance indicators and looks forward to working more closely with the Department and STPs to address the other recommendations.

## Kimberley Training Institute

Kimberley Training Institute's vision is to lead in the delivery of innovative, Vocational Education and Training programs and services that are flexible, relevant and responsive to the needs of community and industry. It services an area of some 424 000 square kilometres with campuses located in all the six major towns of Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham. The Institute has over 4,500 students and more than half the students are Aboriginal. In 2011 the Institute achieved the highest level of student satisfaction in WA and either met or exceeded all of its Key Performance Indicators. It is committed to providing quality vocational training that supports students achieve their aspirations, enhance current skills or build skills to participate in the workforce.

Kimberley Training Institute is one of the fastest growing STPs in Australia and its growth has been achieved through its flexibility, relevance, responsiveness and quality of service delivery. The Institute is committed to providing and strengthening support services to Aboriginal students across the Kimberley. These support services are flexible, tailored to meet the needs of students and provided at the Institute, on country, at school, in the workplace and at home.

We welcome the report and acknowledge that it has highlighted many successes that STPs, including Kimberley Training Institute, have enjoyed by supporting Aboriginal students in a vocational training environment. Kimberley Training Institute accepts the findings and recommendations in the report.

## Polytechnic West

Polytechnic West is WA's largest provider of Vocational Education and Training, offering training to approximately 32 000 students annually. These students come from all walks of life and have a variety of career and job aspirations. Our focus is to create easier access to training, and identify and meet industry needs linked directly to skills shortages in both trade and non-trade areas. We achieve this through innovative delivery strategies that emphasise flexibility and promote workplace delivery and skills recognition.

Polytechnic West is committed to the provision of training for Aboriginal people. We provide mainstream and Aboriginal specific qualifications and work collaboratively with the Aboriginal community to develop culturally appropriate training programs.

Polytechnic West welcomes the report and acknowledges that it highlights many of the positive programs that STPs have delivered for Aboriginal people. Polytechnic West accepts the findings and recommendations detailed in the report.

## Audit focus and scope

Our audit examined the effectiveness of support services provided by STPs to Aboriginal students. We focused on three questions:

1. Are the support services appropriate and utilised by the target group?
2. Do the support services achieve intended outcomes for Aboriginal students, STPs, the Department and local Aboriginal communities?
3. Do the Department and STPs collaborate to promote best practice in delivering support services for Aboriginal students?

This audit included the Department of Training and Workforce Development and four mainstream STPs: Challenger Institute of Technology (Challenger), Durack Institute of Technology (Durack), Kimberley Training Institute (Kimberley) and Polytechnic West. These were chosen on the basis of the number of Aboriginal students enrolled, the number of Aboriginal people in their catchment area, their location (metropolitan or regional), and the skill needs of local industry.

We excluded private training providers and the WA Academy of the Performing Arts from this audit. The remaining seven mainstream STPs were invited to provide comment on the support services they deliver for Aboriginal students.

In conducting the audit we:

- interviewed 100 Aboriginal students in metropolitan, regional and remote locations.
- interviewed senior management at the Department and STPs.
- interviewed Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lecturing and support staff.

- interviewed employers and employer organisations, Job Services Australia and Community Development Employment Projects providers, Aboriginal training and community organisations and other Registered Training Organisations.
- consulted with the Western Australian Aboriginal Advisory Council and WA's Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- met with representatives of the Department of Indigenous Affairs and the Commonwealth Department of Employment Education and Workplace Relations.
- conducted field visits to metropolitan and regional training facilities, and observed training delivery in two remote Aboriginal communities.
- analysed data and documents from the Department, STPs, and other organisations.

In this audit we were guided by best practice principles identified by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. These were specifically developed to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal people in training. The principles are:

- Community ownership and involvement
- Incorporation of Aboriginal identities, cultures, knowledge and values
- Establishment of partnerships
- Flexibility in course design, content and delivery
- Quality staff and committed advocacy
- Extensive student support services
- Appropriate funding that allows for sustainability.

We did not audit the support services provided by the Department and STPs to Aboriginal students enrolled in VET-in-Schools programs, Adult Community Education courses or participating in VET courses delivered in prisons. We also did not audit WA's Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards.

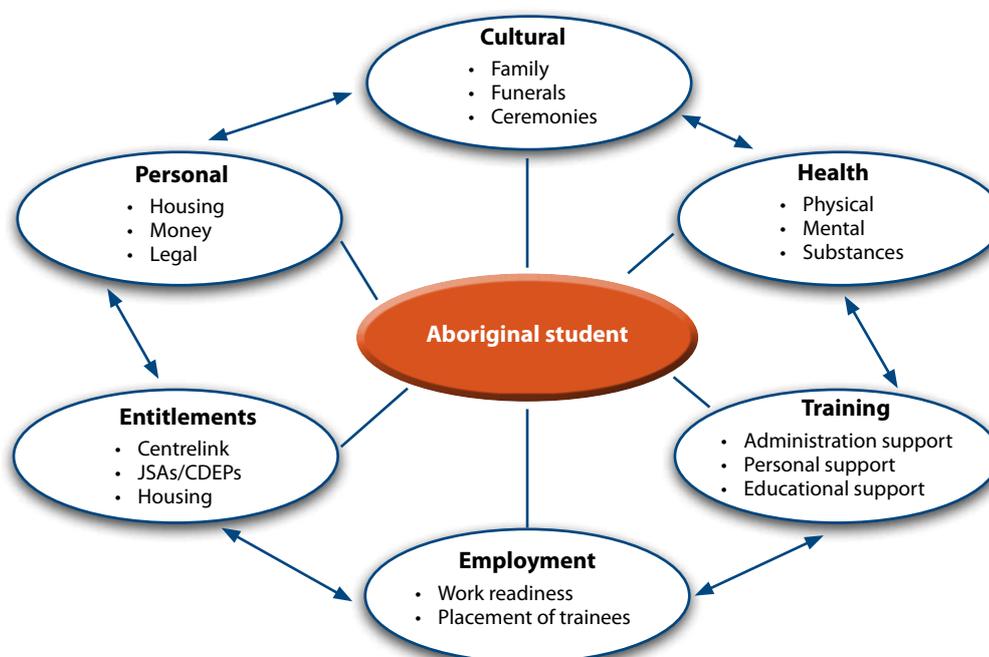
# The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

## Aboriginal students need support in training

Many Aboriginal people in WA face significant social and economic barriers compared to the general population. These can make it harder for people to move into training, employment or set up their own businesses. Further, a lot of students have more than one challenge to their training. When people live in overcrowded houses, have a hard time at school, carry many family or cultural responsibilities, and experience chronic unemployment, they often find it challenging to cope with training requirements.

Many of the problems facing Aboriginal students or prospective students are common across the State. Some of the recurring issues raised with us included:

- disengagement from the education system
- long term unemployment
- literacy and numeracy problems
- language challenges (especially when English is not a primary language)
- lack of self-esteem and motivation
- lack of housing and overcrowding
- poor health, including drug and alcohol dependencies and mental health problems
- legal and financial matters.



**Figure 1: Student needs map**

*Aboriginal students often have many overlapping needs.*

The Department and STPs provide effective support  
but not all needs are met

At all STPs we found that Aboriginal students needed practical and ongoing assistance in four main areas. First, they needed help with navigating administrative processes, in particular dealing with the complex arrangements between STPs, Centrelink, their Job Services Australia (JSA) or Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) provider or prospective employers. Most stakeholders commented on the difficulty students have in working out who pays for study fees and who to tell when they had study problems so that students do not lose Commonwealth or other entitlements.

**'Training is never the first priority ... it is often the seventh or eighth on the list.'**

STP staff member

Second, they needed help with managing the impact of study on the home front. This is an issue for most Aboriginal students. They told us that it is difficult to find the money to pay for the extra costs especially as most are on low incomes. Purchasing study resources such as books, stationery, clothing, petrol, bus or train tickets puts strains on tight family budgets, and is a source of stress. STP support staff told us that students often also need help with sorting out affordable housing and child care options.

Third, Aboriginal students needed extra help in the class room. All STPs offered tutoring support and have extra courses for students who need to improve literacy, numeracy and general study skills.

Finally, students also needed help with balancing studies and cultural or community obligations. Attending funerals or lore ceremonies is a concern for students as it impacts on their ability to attend class and complete tasks on time. They needed help with negotiating time off or extra time to finish their course work.

In the Kimberley and Mid West regions we noted that the needs of Aboriginal students were further compounded by the remoteness of some communities. Isolation meant that these students experience extra barriers to training due to limited availability of services, restricted access to communities during wet weather conditions and lack of sustainable employment opportunities.

**'The biggest barriers are the impact of social problems in the community and the family, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse. Knowing that support is there if you want it is important. It is all about support.'**

Employer

The Department and STPs provide effective support  
but not all needs are met

## The Department and STPs have reliably identified the support needs of Aboriginal students and communities

### The Department sets the Aboriginal training framework

The Department does not have a day-to-day role in the identification of student support needs. However, in the DPAs it establishes targets for Aboriginal student participation. DPAs are the contracts between the State and STPs to purchase training and support services. They also require that each STP has an Aboriginal Education Employment and Training Committee (AEETC) and an Aboriginal Training Plan.

The Department also manages the State's performance under the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development. This sets targets for enrolments by Aboriginal students in higher level qualifications and course completion. In addition, the Department administers state training and employment policies. The main ones are: 'the State Training Plan 2012-2015', 'Training WA: Planning for the future 2009-2018', 'Skilling WA: A workforce development plan for WA' and 'Training Together—Working Together: Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy'.

The Department is responsible for the annual state-wide Student Satisfaction Survey that measures the quality of training provided by the VET sector. Survey results include the views of Aboriginal people and information on support needs.

### STPs have good processes to identify student needs

We found that STPs use numerous processes to identify Aboriginal student needs. There is no guarantee these processes identify the needs of every student all the time. However, it was clear from our interviews that STPs identified the most pressing needs of the majority of Aboriginal students.

All STPs identified support needs at enrolment. Often this would be followed up with a face-to-face meeting with a student support officer. There were also scheduled and 'on the run' conversations between students and STP staff, often Aboriginal support staff. STPs also receive information from employers and service providers responsible for the placement of Aboriginal people into employment or training.

Lecturing staff also had a key role in identifying student needs. They observed students in class and discussed additional needs with students. Most lecturing staff worked closely with Aboriginal support staff to ensure needs were acted on.

STPs also received information and advice from other sources such as:

- mentors and tutors working with students inside and outside the class room
- family members and other carers
- AEETC members in relation to training and support needs at community level
- Aboriginal and other community organisations
- schools and other education and training providers.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

## The support provided by the Department and STPs meets good practice

The VET sector has best practice principles for the delivery of training and support for Aboriginal people. Key amongst them are that training and support is flexible, culturally appropriate, community based, delivered by committed staff, 'wraps around' an individual and his or her training, and has consistent funding.

In this field 'support' is defined widely. It can include services that help an individual to begin, stay and complete a formal training course. It can also include services to Aboriginal communities that enhance social and economic change as well as deliver training.

### STPs employ Aboriginal support staff and these are crucial to meeting student needs

The majority of support provided to Aboriginal students and communities is through the employment of Aboriginal staff. Each of the STPs employed between five and 10 Aboriginal non-teaching staff who delivered the bulk of the support services.

Aboriginal staff at all STPs gave one-on-one support to Aboriginal students. They linked students with external support services. They also had a key role in liaising with local communities to identify training and support needs at a broader level.

It is important not to underestimate the role Aboriginal support staff play in making STPs culturally comfortable and welcoming places for Aboriginal students. This was made clear to us time and again by Aboriginal students and was particularly important if they had been disengaged from education, training and employment for longer periods.

**'If we ever needed one-on-one, they were always in the room. It makes a difference to have Aboriginal people in the room, because they are more approachable. We can ask for help. We are proud people at the end of the day and to ask for help is not easy.'**

**Aboriginal student**

Polytechnic West has an Aboriginal Support Unit which used a case management approach to support students over six campuses. The unit developed individual student learning plans. These detailed where assistance is needed with fee payments, counselling and mentoring, accommodation and additional educational support. Information from lecturers was recorded in the plans which are only closed off at the completion or withdrawal of study.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

At Durack the key role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services group was community outreach and the assessment of training and support needs of Aboriginal communities. The case management of individual students was undertaken by Aboriginal staff in mainstream student services.

At Challenger the Aboriginal support staff were part of mainstream student services. They have similar case management and community outreach roles to the staff at Polytechnic West and Durack.

Kimberley does not have a specific unit but employs 10 Aboriginal support staff. As about 40 per cent of students at Kimberley are Aboriginal, lecturing and general staff had an increased role in identifying student needs. Aboriginal support staff and lecturers also helped Aboriginal communities to identify employment and training needs.

**'I go to them with questions. If I have a problem I will tell them, if you feel like talking they are always there, and if they are not there, they are looking for you.'**

**Aboriginal student**

Support staff told us that much of their time is spent liaising with government organisations to sort out income support, housing assistance, and health and justice matters. They also assisted with transport and childcare issues and to find employers who want to take on Aboriginal trainees or apprentices. In regional and remote areas they also liaised with family and community members to improve support at home.

Staff also helped students understand basics such as the length of a course, starting and finishing times, location of classes and filling out State and Commonwealth student surveys. They also assisted when students struggle to balance cultural obligations with their studies. The staff often acted as mentors and ambassadors for STPs in local communities.

### **STPs have programs and courses that remove barriers to training for Aboriginal students**

One of the obligations that STPs have under their DPAs is to remove barriers to training for Aboriginal students. As part of this, all STPs delivered programs and courses to help students move into and finish training.

An important program that STPs delivered is the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) program. Under this program students can receive up to three hours tutoring per week. The program can be delivered to individuals or groups of students. All STPs provided this Commonwealth funded program. In 2011 the four STPs received \$251 000 for ITAS and 336 students received tutoring. Students told us that this was a valuable program that sometimes made the difference between them staying in training or dropping out.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

'Gaining Access to Training and Employment' is a type of access program designed to help students into training. It is a pre-certificate preparatory course that was delivered at Kimberley, Durack and Challenger. It aims to increase self-esteem, confidence, social skills, and get people study and work-ready. In the Kimberley it was targeted at young people who had dropped out of school. All STPs offered this or similar courses. Challenger offered programs such as 'Weld to Life' and 'One Sky Many Paths'. Polytechnic West and Durack offered 'New Opportunities for Women' and 'Wider Opportunities for Work' courses.

The Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills was provided for Aboriginal students at all STPs. This course could be taken as a preparatory course. On the advice of lecturers it was also used for literacy and numeracy support while students were doing certificate courses. The Workplace English Language and Literacy program is specifically used to support trainees and apprentices. This program was offered to Aboriginal students in the Kimberley.

### STPs work with employers to deliver support to Aboriginal students

One of the important roles of STPs is to meet the current and future workforce needs of industry. This includes delivering Aboriginal specific training and support for employers that want to develop or grow an Aboriginal workforce.

During this audit we saw many examples of employers that work successfully with STPs and Aboriginal communities in training and supporting their future workforce. Aboriginal training programs designed for particular companies mostly include 'wrap around' support such as mentors, transport, accommodation, food, and work readiness training. However, STPs and employers told us that it is complex and time consuming to work out what funding is available to provide this type of support. Employers and their representative organisations are often unsure what governments, STPs, and employment providers can offer and how their services differ.

**'People without support will just fall off the program.'**

Employer

One example of a successful collaboration is the 'Real Jobs' Aboriginal training project designed for the Burswood Entertainment Complex. The project was developed by Polytechnic West and includes hospitality training, mentoring support, food, transport assistance and employment preparation. The project is now in its fourth year and at 2011 had resulted in 38 job placements for Aboriginal students.

**'The program had a mentor, without her I don't think half the group would have finished the course.'**

Employer

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

Ertech Pty Ltd is a civil construction firm that has worked with both Kimberley and Polytechnic West to train Aboriginal people for employment on construction projects. The company told us that it had benefitted from the close collaboration between STPs and Aboriginal organisations such as Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation and the Clontarf Foundation. They believed that these partnership arrangements help to ensure that employers get what they need and Aboriginal students are provided with the right type and level of support to keep them in training and in jobs.

While these training and support programs are successful both STPs and employers told us they are expensive and generally rely on extra government funding. The two main funding sources were the Indigenous Training Support (ITS) program and the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP).

The ITS program was designed to deliver support services to Aboriginal students from regional areas and was co-funded by the Commonwealth and the State. This program ran for four years to June 2011 and provided \$4.8 million. It was available to all training providers not only STPs. The four STPs received a total of \$2.7 million for 13 projects under the ITS program.

The IEP funds projects that offer employment and business opportunities for Aboriginal people and is solely funded by the Commonwealth. Challenger, Durack and Kimberley have accessed IEP funds to deliver training with 'wrap around' support. See the case example below.

## Offshore Marine Services Alliance

## CASE EXAMPLE 1

### ***Successful employment training with 'wrap around' support***

Offshore Marine Services Alliance (OMSA) is an employer in the oil and gas sector. In 2011 they partnered with Durack to pilot a training project for Aboriginal people interested in a career in the offshore industry with their company.

OMSA offered 12 permanent jobs and Durack got IEP funding to support students through a 10 week intensive learning program.

The project involved a Certificate II in Transport and Distribution (Maritime), eight industry tickets and life and learning skills training. Seventeen Aboriginal people were selected and 16 students graduated from the program.

The students came from Carnarvon, Shark Bay, Geraldton and Perth to study at Durack. They were helped with accommodation and transport. They had day-to-day access to mentors to get them through a highly specialised training program and meet the job expectations of OMSA.

As a result of the IEP funding, students had five mentors, an Aboriginal coordinator, access to residential facilities on campus, a daily bus service, meals and literacy and numeracy support.

Students and staff told us it worked. Thirteen participants got immediate employment with OMSA and one person has taken up a traineeship with another company. Two other students are looking for employment.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

## STPs provide support by delivering training in community settings

An important part of good practice in supporting Aboriginal people in training is to deliver it in places that are comfortable for Aboriginal people. In practice this requires taking training beyond main campuses into local communities. All STPs did this in a number of ways.

Firstly, all STPs had more than one campus. Often these were in places with large Aboriginal populations. For example, Kimberley has campuses in Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham. Durack has campuses in Geraldton, Carnarvon, Exmouth and Wiluna. Challenger and Polytechnic West have 15 campuses across the metropolitan and Peel regions.

STPs also ran training at community and Aboriginal owned sites. For example, Challenger runs training at an Aboriginal owned site in Mandurah (see case example 2). Polytechnic West delivered training at the Langford Aboriginal Association in Langford and at the Balga Detached Youth Work Project Inc in Balga. Durack conducts training in Northampton, Meekatharra, Yalgoo, Mullewa and Morawa. Kimberley delivers courses in community centres in Derby and Fitzroy Crossing.

**'As a training organisation you need to be more flexible, about what you deliver and when you deliver. You need to bring it to them.'**

STP staff member

Challenger operates the Kadadjiny Mia Centre at its Rockingham campus. This centre provides a space specifically for Aboriginal students. Kimberley has created an Open Learning Centre on its Broome campus to provide a comfortable study space. This is mainly aimed at Aboriginal students, although it is open to all. Durack has applied for funding to build an Aboriginal cultural and learning centre at its campus in Geraldton.

Finally, STPs also take training into remote Aboriginal communities. For example, as part of a nationally funded Working on Country Ranger Program, Kimberley delivered training in Conservation and Land Management to nine ranger groups in the Kimberley region. We saw this training delivered in Beagle Bay and One Arm Point north of Broome. Durack operated a Mobile Indigenous Trades Training Unit consisting of a semi-trailer that houses a trades workshop which is taken to remote communities to deliver training.

There were many benefits from these types of arrangements. First, students could remain living with their family, while for the communities it offered local employment and strengthened cultural practices. The trainees also became important role models in their communities.

The Department and STPs provide effective support  
but not all needs are met

Second, this training often resulted in new or renovated physical infrastructure. For instance we were told of cases where training in remote communities led to the establishment of community vegetable gardens which in Wiluna developed into a small business. At Kimberley we learned of a community that received art training, followed by business and construction courses resulting in a community arts centre.

**'Tailored programs in remote communities require so much more, lots of listening to communities, partnerships with people in organisations on the ground.'**

STP staff member

## The Winjan Centre for Aboriginal Learning

## CASE EXAMPLE 2

### ***Successful support in a community setting***

The Winjan Centre is owned by the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation in Mandurah. It is a small centre that provides services to local Aboriginal communities.

Challenger has provided training here since 2002. Two lecturing staff work at Winjan delivering a range of courses for Challenger.

This commitment and engagement has led to a number of good outcomes.

There are people studying at Winjan who have been out of the education/training/work loop for many years. Some have overcome serious literacy and numeracy issues and others health problems. Some Winjan students have children with problems at school who are now completing accredited VET programs at Winjan through Challenger.

One of Challenger's Aboriginal lecturing staff began his training career at Winjan. In 2005 Eugene Winmar was not sure about his future. He had worked as a labourer and wanted to secure a better job to support his two children. In the early days he was shy and did not want to be involved in mainstream training. He chose Winjan because it was a culturally comfortable and supportive learning space. It was also flexible enough for a home-based dad. The centre was close to home which made it easy for him to attend classes.

He later progressed to the mainstream Challenger campus, and completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

In 2010, Eugene was named the WA Aboriginal Student of the Year. Through his experience he became a role model to the local Aboriginal community and went on to lecture and tutor students at the Kadadjiny Mia Aboriginal learning centre on Challenger's Rockingham campus.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

### STPs also provide traditional support services for Aboriginal students

All STPs offered support services to Aboriginal students that are mainstream and available to all students. The most common of these are: student/client services units, libraries, canteens, counselling services, scholarships and recreational spaces.

All STPs offered Aboriginal scholarship programs. These assist students with their training related expenses. While details varied, in general these were small programs. STPs tended to offer \$500-\$700 per student per year and mostly involved no more than 10 students annually. Some scholarships were funded by companies.

In Carnarvon, Durack operated a small bus to transport students (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) to and from training. The service is free and assists students in an area with limited public transport. This form of support was identified as crucial by all stakeholders, as many Aboriginal students have difficulty in getting driving licences and rely on others to get them to and from training.

**'Local bus transport would be good. It is the biggest problem causing dropping retention rates. Public transport would also increase enrolments. We need better bus routes and matching timetables.'**

Aboriginal organisation

**'If there was no scholarships and if I did not have transport, it would be hard.'**

Aboriginal student

At Carnarvon, Durack also provided a crèche service. This is available free of charge for students receiving income support, or three dollars per hour for all other students. A small number of places are reserved for the children of Aboriginal students.

Both Challenger and Durack ran breakfast programs. At Durack these were available to all students. The programs ran most days and were free of charge. In both cases the food was provided by Foodbank WA. Lecturers informed us that the breakfast programs had a positive impact on students, particularly with concentration levels.

Students from regional and remote areas that have to leave their communities to study elsewhere need affordable accommodation. Durack was the only STP with supported accommodation on campus. It has 12 units which are open to all and can house 48 students. STPs informed us that the Commonwealth Indigenous Youth Mobility Program, which offers supported accommodation, does not meet existing needs in WA. The shortage of supported residential facilities for Aboriginal students has been previously identified in government reports.

The Department and STPs provide effective support  
but not all needs are met

## STPs cannot meet all the needs of Aboriginal students

There were a number of factors that impacted on the level and type of support that STPs could provide to Aboriginal students. Many of the needs of Aboriginal students fell outside of the role and expertise of STPs. These included mental health, drug and alcohol, financial, housing and legal issues.

There were also physical limitations to where STPs could provide their support to students. As mentioned before, all STPs have multiple campuses and delivered training in various community settings. With a finite and generally small number of support staff, it is impossible for them to offer all services at all times in all places.

In addition, the DPA funding STPs received for the support of Aboriginal students has a ceiling which impacts on the level of service that can be offered and the number of students helped. This particularly impacts the number of Aboriginal support staff STPs can employ and the number of students that received tutoring services.

Mentoring was a good example of the constraints impacting on support. All STPs and stakeholders told us that Aboriginal students that have been disengaged from education need help with motivation, confidence and life and work skills. Without these attributes these students struggle to succeed. Mentors were identified as crucial for this type of support. However, finding suitable and sufficient numbers of mentors was a challenge for all STPs at all their delivery sites.

**‘If training does not come with mentoring for life and work skills people end up with qualifications that they cannot put into practice.’**

Employment organisation

We found different approaches to this problem. Some, like Polytechnic West, engaged their Aboriginal support staff as mentors and had recently begun encouraging former students to be mentors. Durack sourced mentoring support through local Aboriginal organisations. Sometimes employers or employment agencies offered mentors for a particular training program. In most cases the number of mentors did not match the number of students and there was no certainty as to how long mentoring assistance would be available.

**‘Mentors are critical ... in the past we were lucky to get 50 per cent completion outcomes, now it is 90 per cent.’**

Employment organisation

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

## Governance is sound and funds are spent appropriately

There were reasonable governance structures for Aboriginal support at the STPs and we found that funds for Aboriginal support services were expended appropriately. However, governance arrangements would be improved if more performance targets were in place and if the results of the Aboriginal Training Plans were evaluated.

### The governance framework is sound but could be improved

There is a state-wide governance framework for STPs for the accountable and transparent delivery of training services. The State's framework is detailed in the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* and the *Vocational Education and Training (General) Regulations 2009*. There are also National Partnership Agreements that stipulate funding and training delivery that form part of the framework.

The Department and the STPs developed annual DPAs and strategic plans that were consistent with the State Training Plan and other key policies. DPAs had performance criteria and annual targets for Aboriginal enrolments but not for retention or completion of training by Aboriginal students. Not having these targets limits the Department's ability to assess how STPs are performing.

STPs are statutory authorities and as such have their own governance structures. These include governing councils, AEETCs, Managing Directors Performance Agreements, strategic plans and Aboriginal Training Plans.

The Managing Directors Performance Agreements we examined all had objectives and targets for training and support delivery to Aboriginal students. The strategic plans for Polytechnic West, Durack and Kimberley had specific strategies relating to the support of Aboriginal students. STPs with separate Aboriginal units also had operational plans for them. Polytechnic West was the first STP to produce a separate internal annual report for its Aboriginal Services Unit in 2010.

STPs are required to develop annual Aboriginal Training Plans under their DPAs. These plans are to be endorsed by AEETCs and provided to the Department. All STPs had drafted plans, although they had not all been finalised. However, we noted that most plans did not have clear targets or timelines nor did the STPs report on achievements under these plans.

### Aboriginal Education Employment and Training Committees are a key element of effective governance and best practice

AEETCs have been in existence for many years. Their role is to advise STPs on the training and support needs of local Aboriginal people and communities. This includes giving STPs information on the type, level and location of training courses of interest to Aboriginal people, and connecting STPs with potential private sector and other clients. These activities meet the best practice principle of engaging with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders. The functions, operations and membership arrangements for AEETCs are detailed in guidelines supplied by the Department.

The Department and STPs provide effective support but not all needs are met

We found that the four STPs had AEETCs. The committees had broad and relevant representation from industry, Aboriginal communities and employment organisations. Individual AEETCs met regularly to monitor the implementation of training initiatives and inform STP management about developments in local Aboriginal communities. We note that there was no structure for AEETCs to interact with the Department or each other. At Polytechnic West the chair of the AEETC was a member of the Governing Council. Other STPs had offered to nominate the AEETC chairperson for governing councils but these offers were declined because of the great many commitments AEETC chairpersons had.

### Funding levels have been static and STPs have used the funds for their intended purpose

There has been little change in the amount of funds provided by the State and Commonwealth for support services since 2009. Over the five years 2007 to 2011, the 11 STPs received \$20.6 million in DPA funds to support Aboriginal students. This equated to \$4.1 million a year. WA provided \$12.8 million of these funds, with the rest coming from the Commonwealth. These figures do not include the ITS funds. Between 2007 and 2011 Kimberley received \$4.4 million, Polytechnic West \$2.4 million, Durack \$2.4 million and Challenger \$1.7 million (Table 1). When averaged out, these funds equated to about \$840 per Aboriginal student per year.

The Department is simplifying requirements for acquitting funds for Aboriginal services for STPs from 2012. This will decrease the administrative and bureaucratic burden on STPs. Until 2011 DPAs had three funding streams for Aboriginal support services: Indigenous Funding, Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) and ITAS. The Commonwealth funded the SRA and ITAS and WA funded the Indigenous Funding. From 2012 onward the funding will be merged into one stream.

We checked the accounts at the four STPs and found that all money allocated to support Aboriginal students had been spent for this purpose. There were formal acquittals for all the funds provided through DPAs and ITS. However, few of the services had utilisation figures. As a result we could not assess the efficiency of the support provided.

STPs spent most of the DPA funding in employing Aboriginal non-teaching support staff. We note that all DPA funds have an annual cycle. As a result, many support staff have been employed on short term contracts.

STP	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Challenger	\$162 905	\$200 702	\$419 706	\$439 762	\$455 381	\$1 678 456
Durack	\$319 289	\$317 655	\$594 757	\$572 271	\$571 280	\$2 375 252
Kimberley	\$469 672	\$532 634	\$1 144 832	\$1 145 464	\$1 147 861	\$4 440 463
Polytechnic West	\$240 182	\$276 584	\$633 080	\$633 582	\$650 641	\$2 434 069
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1 192 048</b>	<b>\$1 327 575</b>	<b>\$2 792 375</b>	<b>\$2 791 079</b>	<b>\$2 825 163</b>	<b>\$10 928 240</b>

Source: The Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD)

**Table 1: DPA funding for Aboriginal support services for the four STPs from 2007 to 2011**

*Funding for support services has been static since 2009.*

## There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population

The Department and STPs use a group of measures to assess progress towards achieving outcomes from training. The key measures are:

- how many people have enrolled to study
- the number of people studying for higher level courses (Certificate level III and above)
- the number of people in Employment Based Training (EBT), that is, traineeships and apprenticeships
- how many people complete their studies.

The data for these measures does not give a simple or clear picture about Aboriginal outcomes. Completion figures have improved, but most other measures were static or showed a slight decline. Our analysis of the figures showed that there are variations between STPs and over time, which could not be easily explained. We note that the Department and STPs could gain important insights about improving their services from more detailed analysis of this data, but that this is not routinely done.

### More Aboriginal students are completing their studies

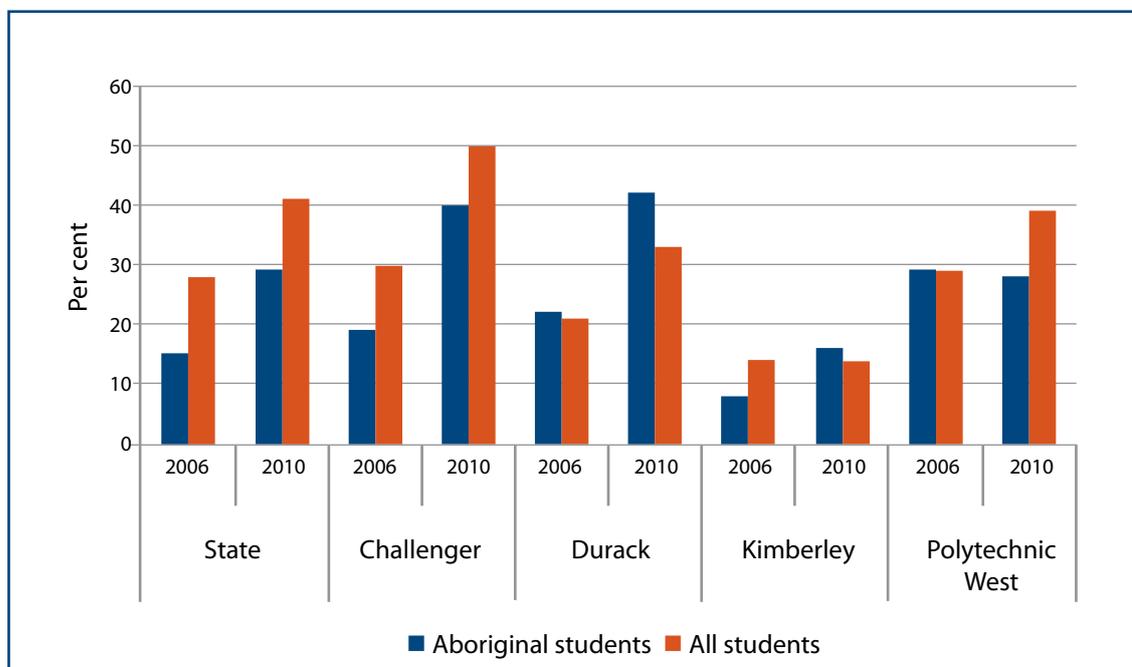
The figures show that more Aboriginal people completed all the units of study they enrolled in, and increasingly obtained formal qualifications. Importantly, both these results show that for this measure Aboriginal students were catching up to the general student population. The results also reflect a growing interest in moving into paid work. They also indicate that the support provided by STPs was effective.

In 2010, 60 per cent of Aboriginal students (2 890) at STPs in WA completed all units they enrolled in, compared to 69 per cent of all students in WA (74 847). This is an improvement from 2006 when the figures were 51 per cent (2 518) and 64 per cent (63 359) respectively.

There was a similar improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal students obtaining qualifications. In 2010, 29 per cent received a qualification compared to 41 per cent of all students. This was up from 2006 when the figures were 15 per cent and 28 per cent respectively.

However, there was significant variation across STPs in this area. For example, Aboriginal students at Durack and Kimberley did better than the general population in 2010. At Polytechnic West, the success rates for Aboriginal students fell slightly over the period (Table 2). Understanding the reasons for this variation and improving collaboration between STPs would give a real opportunity to improve results.

There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population



Source: DTWD

**Table 2: Student qualification rates for the State and four STPs between 2006-2010**

*More Aboriginal students obtained qualifications.*

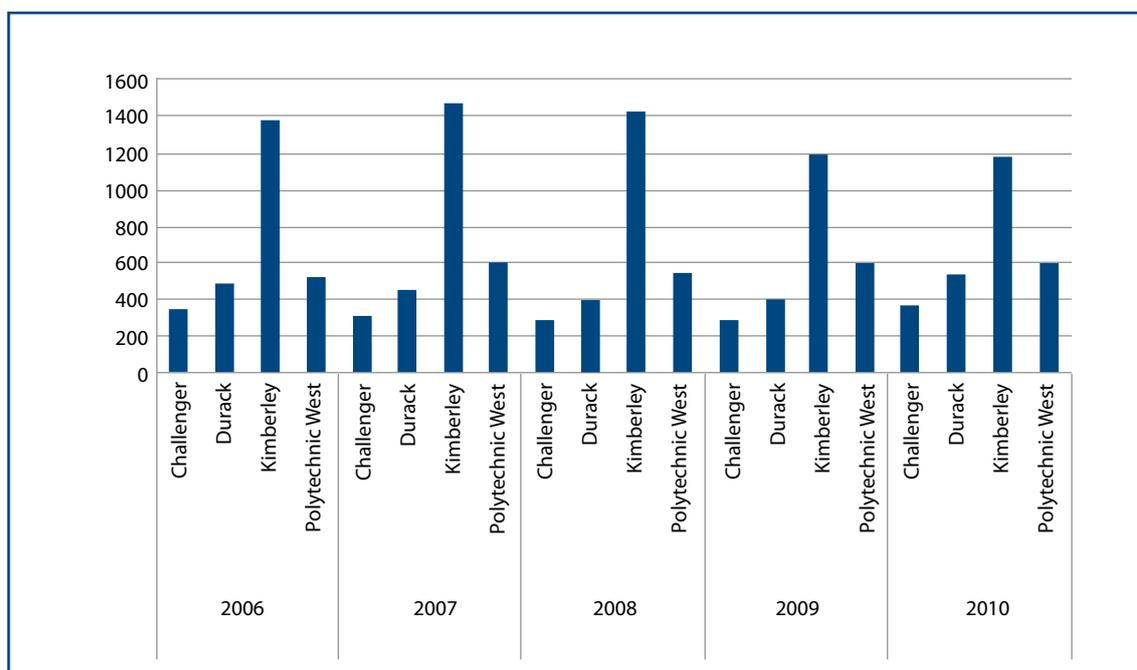
## Aboriginal student numbers dropped marginally between 2006 and 2010

The most basic measure of Aboriginal engagement in training is the number of students studying in VET courses. This is an important first step towards improved outcomes in employment. Between 2006 and 2010 the number of Aboriginal students across the State fell one per cent from 4 915 to 4 856. Across the four STPs there was a two per cent fall from 2 745 to 2 702 (Table 3).

The picture was very different for the total student population. Between 2006 and 2010 student numbers across the State rose 10 per cent from 99 148 to 108 942. Total student numbers at the four STPs increased 18 per cent from 44 129 in 2006 to 52 248 in 2010. We note that there was an increase in the number of students, Aboriginal and other, studying with non-government training providers. In 2010 there were 2 187 Aboriginal students and 27 237 students studying outside the STP system.

The drop in Aboriginal student numbers across the four STPs was mainly caused by a 14 per cent drop at Kimberley, down from 1 378 in 2006 to 1 185 in 2010. There was no clear explanation for this drop. However, Kimberley believed it resulted from a larger number of students choosing not to identify as Aboriginal in their enrolment information. The number of Aboriginal students at the other three STPs grew 11 per cent from 1 367 in 2006 to 1 517 in 2010. We note that the drop in numbers at Kimberley impacted on all other measures because Kimberley had 26 per cent of all Aboriginal students at STPs in WA in 2010.

There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population



Source: DTWD

**Table 3: Number of Aboriginal students at the four STPs between 2006 and 2010**

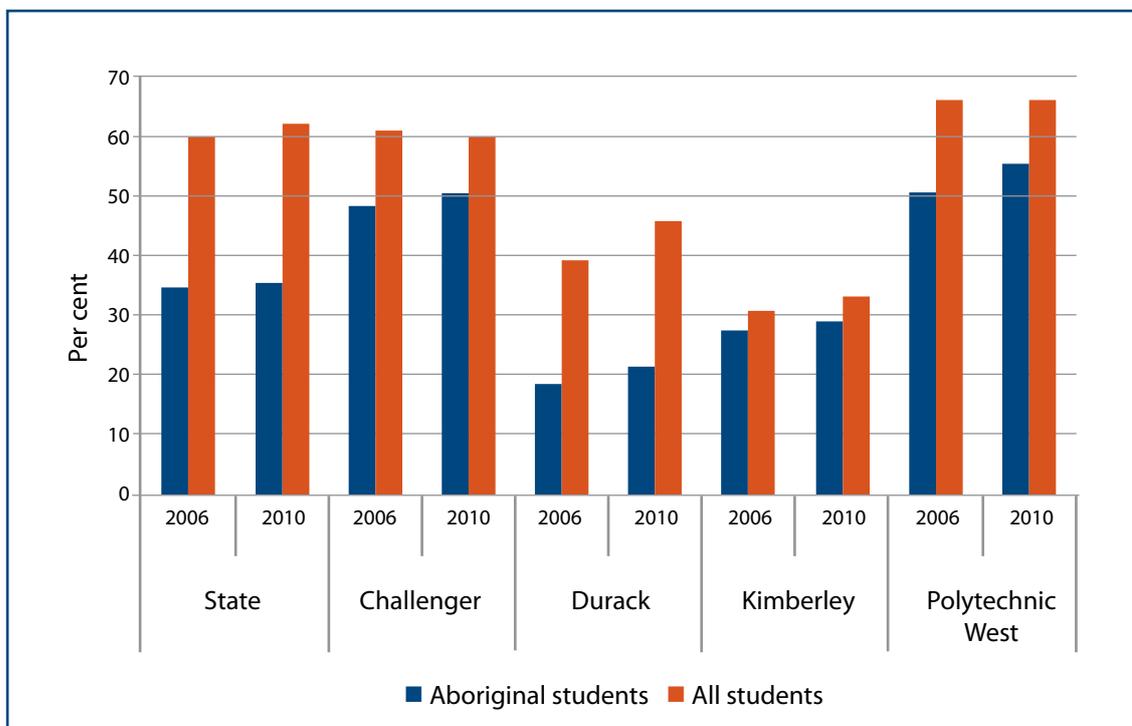
*The number of Aboriginal people studying at the four STPs dropped by two per cent between 2006 and 2010.*

## Aboriginal participation in higher level training has not improved

A key goal for VET is to increase the number of people in higher level training. There was almost no change in the number or proportion of Aboriginal people enrolled at STPs in higher level courses across the State between 2006 and 2010. However, there was a small increase in the general student figures. This indicates that Aboriginal students have lost some ground in this area.

There were 1 909 Aboriginal students enrolled in Certificate III or above courses in WA in 2010, up from 1 869 in 2006. The 2010 figure represents 36 per cent of Aboriginal students up from 35 per cent in 2006. This was lower than overall student figures which rose from 60 per cent in 2006 (63 756 students) to 63 per cent (75 201 students) in 2010 (Table 4).

There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population



Source: DTWD

**Table 4: Student participation in higher level courses for the State and the four STPs between 2006 and 2010**

Participation by Aboriginal students in higher level training courses increased by one per cent between 2006 and 2010.

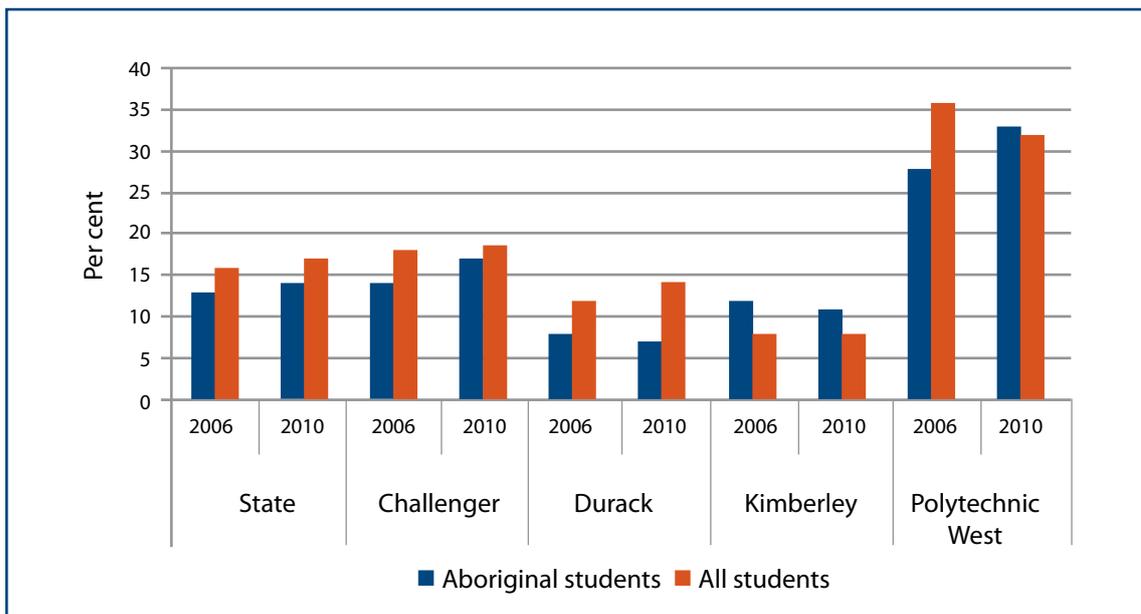
## Aboriginal participation in employment based training has stayed close to that of other students

Another important aim of VET is to increase the number of people that get trade qualifications by undertaking Employment Based Training (EBT) (that is, a traineeship or an apprenticeship). Student numbers for EBT are generally lower than for Institute Based Training because EBT depends on employers taking on apprentices and trainees.

Aboriginal enrolments in EBT were relatively constant over the period. Thirteen per cent of all Aboriginal enrolments were in EBT in 2006 compared to 14 per cent in 2010. The figures for the whole student population moved from 16 per cent to 18 per cent respectively (Table 5). The number of Aboriginal EBT enrolments increased five per cent from 673 in 2006 to 709 in 2010. This compares to an increase of 12 per cent for all EBT enrolments at STPs across the State between 2006 (16 664) and 2010 (18 622).

There is some improvement in outcomes, but Aboriginal students are not catching up to the general student population

Polytechnic West outperformed the other three STPs in this area. This reflects its strong EBT focus. We also note that in 2010 the percentage of Aboriginal students in EBT was higher than the general student population at Kimberley and Polytechnic West.



Source: DTWD

**Table 5: Student participation in EBT for the State and the four STPs between 2006 and 2010**  
*The number of Aboriginal trainees and apprentices increased by five per cent from 2006 to 2010.*

# Performance measures do not capture social and community benefits of training, and information use and sharing could be improved

## Current measures do not assess social and community benefits from training and support

The measures currently used by the Department and STPs provide important information. However, they do not help the Department and STPs to evaluate the broader social and community benefits from support services. They are based on outputs and used by the Department as proxies to measure progress towards desired outcomes. A more complete set of measures would help identify what type of support provided the greatest social and community benefits.

We found that the Department and STPs understand the social outcomes that individuals and communities are seeking from training and support services. These include: Aboriginal students getting jobs, becoming better community members, developing Aboriginal leaders and role models in education and employment, building better relationships within families and communities, improving infrastructure for economic and business development opportunities.

While we acknowledge that measuring social and community outcomes from training is difficult, neither the Department nor the STPs were attempting much in this area. We note that the Department has undertaken preliminary work to find better ways to evaluate community outcomes for WA's Aboriginal Workforce Development Strategy. We suggest that the Department and STPs look at how this might be extended and applied to existing support services.

## Existing data and information is not analysed or shared effectively

We found that the Department mainly required quantitative performance data from STPs on individual student achievements. The Department had qualitative data on outcomes achieved from training through ITS reports and verbatim comments from Aboriginal student responses to surveys. At present, the Department does not conduct a comprehensive analysis of this data. This means it is losing an opportunity to further identify best practice and unmet needs.

There was also little formal sharing of best practice and experience between individual STPs and the Department. This makes it harder to identify service gaps and opportunities to improve service delivery. Prior to 2009 Aboriginal support staff met with departmental representatives once a year to discuss service delivery to Aboriginal students. Support staff informed us that this was useful as lessons learned were shared and knowledge was pooled. As noted earlier, there is no formal meeting for chairs of AEETCs. This also limits opportunities to improve support for Aboriginal students in training.

## Appendix: VET student numbers



Source: DTWD

### Figure 2: WA VET student numbers 2010

There were 4 856 Aboriginal people studying at 11 mainstream STPs in 2010 and 2 187 students at non-STPs. Note: these numbers exclude Aboriginal students at STPs that are enrolled in Adult Community Education courses, VET-in-Schools programs and VET courses delivered in prisons.