

Beginning the Journey
first Interim Report on the
Connecting to Country Program

*a report by the external research team on early directions, initial outcomes
and potential issues associated with the implementation of the
Connecting to Country Program in NSW DEC schools*

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Introduction

The *Connecting to Country* Project is an intensive professional development program for Principals and teachers involved in Aboriginal Education NSW schools. The Project, which began in 2011, is administered by the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate (AETD) of the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) but is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR).¹

In June 2011 the AETD appointed an External Researcher to report on the implementation of the *Connecting to Country* Project as part of the accountability and monitoring process required in the administration of the Commonwealth funded project. The Project Agreement stipulated that the External Researcher should have extensive experience in Aboriginal education and be well known in the Aboriginal communities of NSW. This requirement was satisfied by the formation of an External Research Team (ERT) comprised of:

- Principal Researcher: Ms Cathie Burgess, the President of the NSW Aboriginal Studies Association (ASA) and an academic in the Koori Centre of the University of Sydney;

and

- Assistant Researcher: Dr. Paddy (Pat) Cavanagh a member of the Executive of the ASA and a part-time academic at the Koori Centre.

It should be noted, however, that the ERT is not solely responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Project. The AETD and other units within DEC have significant monitoring responsibilities and, in addition to the reporting of the ERT, an External Evaluator will also be appointed to ensure the utmost accountability and transparency in the evaluation of the Project.

A list of the various monitoring entities and their responsibilities are included as Appendix A of this report.

¹ A total of \$2,141,700 has been allocated to the Project for the calendar years 2011 and 2012 under Section 11 of the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act, 2000*

Aims, Sources and Limitations of Interim Report

Aims of Interim Report

The aims of this interim report were defined by the June 26th Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the AETD and the ERT.²

The MoU stipulated that the ERT was to provide an interim report on the project by 15th November 2011. It anticipated that the report would provide *different perspectives* on the project in a *rich and nuanced way* using a range of qualitative research tools including surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, observation and documentary analysis.

More specifically the MoU directed the ERT to focus *primarily on gathering rich qualitative data about the Connecting to Country program that identifies, describes and analyses*

- changes produced by the CTC in the understanding, confidence and practices of individual participants.
- changes in school and classroom practices that can be attributed to the school's participation in the CTC
- the views of Aboriginal students, parents and community members of the influence of the CTC on the school particularly in relation to:
 - cultural inclusiveness in school and classroom practices and processes
 - the level of Aboriginal student engagement in the school
 - the level of Aboriginal student engagement in school planning and decision making processes
 - the level of Aboriginal community engagement in the development and delivery of curriculum and units of work.¹

Sources of Data

The sources from which the researchers gathered data for the report were:

- Departmental documentation providing background information on the Project
- Observation of two cultural immersion workshops.
- Observation of two DEC professional development sessions
- Individual interviews with 4 teachers at Brisbane Waters Junior Secondary College after their completion of the cultural immersion and DEC professional development components of the program
- Responses to questionnaire by 4 teachers (1 from Brisbane Waters Junior Secondary College and 3 from Chertsey Primary School) after their completion of the cultural immersion and DEC professional development components of the program.
- Interviews with 3 parents about the program and its potential impact.
- A focus group interview with 10 Aboriginal students from Years 7-9 at Brisbane Waters Junior Secondary College.

Limitations of Interim Report

The interim report is obviously limited by the small samples of participating teachers who have

² The MoU remained in draft form until ratified on November

been interviewed and the equally small samples of parents and students who have been interviewed.

The small interview samples for this interim report are largely a result of the limited time available to the researchers. Indeed, effectively the research for the report was conducted in a little over two months as, though the MoU between AETD and the ERT was drafted in June 2011, the ERT's application for approval to conduct research was only approved by the State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) on the 14th September 2011.

Further, the ERT is reliant upon the CTC schedule which is determined by local communities and the DEC, as well as allowing enough time after the training for the teachers to begin planning and implementing new initiatives in their schools. The scheduling of school case studies can also be complicated by school commitments such as exams, excursions and school holiday breaks. Scheduling case studies in Primary schools is further complicated by the demands on teachers who have less flexibility due to the very limited time they have away from face to face classroom teaching. As well, parent and student interviews depend on the ability of the school to organise parental permission and the demands on parents' time.

Other limitations of the ERT's research to date that also need to be noted include the following:

- the interviews with teachers rely on the self reporting of outcomes and teachers are traditionally suspicious of and defensive when subject to external evaluations;
- the observations of parents and students can be quite subjective and based on limited background or specialist knowledge;
- some of the early interviews have been regarded as *pilot interviews* providing the ERT with an opportunity to *fine tune* their research instruments.

Because of these limitations any findings or suggestions emanating from this report can only be regarded as preliminary and tentative. Though they might provide direction to future research none of the findings of this report are yet substantiated.

Executive Summary of Emerging Trends and Initial Findings

Despite the limitations of the research some trends are already emerging and it is possible to begin to suggest some tentative findings and potential issues associated with the Project.

1. The 3-day cultural immersion component of the program is clearly successful in empowering those local and regional AECG members involved in delivery whose enthusiasm, knowledge and competence is generally much admired by the participating teachers. However, the cultural immersion workshops might be further enhanced by providing some presenters with training in presentation skills and, in some instances, a more extensive knowledge base.
2. The cultural immersion program is seen as very helpful by most participating teachers many of whom report being deeply moved by their contact with the Aboriginal community and, in particular, by hearing the life stories of Aboriginal people in many cases for the first time. . They are seen as particularly helpful in breaking down barriers between the teachers and the community and in beginning the development of community support networks, particularly through involvement with local AECGs. They see direct relevance to their teaching, both pedagogy and curriculum, as well as in enhancing their understanding of their students background and culture. This seems to have empowered them to introduce more Aboriginal perspectives and consider new ideas and whole school approaches and other ideas for more effectively engaging Aboriginal students.
3. There is slightly less enthusiasm for the 2 day DEC professional development component of the program. However, most teachers see this as a valuable opportunity to network and appreciate the sharing of information about experiences and strategies in education. Particularly appreciated were the insights these workshops provided into the development of Personal Learning Plans. However, perceptions of conflicting interest when some presenters have dual roles and present as both representatives of the local Aboriginal community and senior representatives of DEC are seen by some as problematic and counter-productive.
4. There are possible implications arising from the fact that *Connecting to Country* participants are not always new scheme or newly appointed teachers. Indeed, most participants in the *Connecting to Country* sessions observed by the ERT appear to be members of the School Executive, Head Teachers or experienced, long-serving teachers in their schools. Though quite sound strategic arguments exist for the selection of these participants by Principals, this seeming amendment to the original selection criteria may conflict with the original intentions of both DEC and the AECG.
5. Participating teachers appear to experience an initial burst of enthusiasm for curriculum development and other Aboriginal education programs when they first return from the cultural immersion session. However, the difficulty of maintaining this enthusiasm in the face of perceived disinterest or intransigence in other staff is an issue that needs to be addressed and will require further evaluation as this research proceeds and perhaps even a longitudinal study.
6. It is too early to comment extensively on the success of the strategies for establishing support networks for teachers and Principals and this will need further monitoring. However, it should be noted that the strategy for developing a support network for teachers

through the ASA network has begun with a small but apparently successful workshop in Dubbo. However, this workshop actually preceded the introduction of *Connecting to Country* in Western Region suggesting that there may be a need for more specific and precise targeting of this aspect of the project.

7. Similarly, it is too early to assess the strategies for developing school-community networks and community mentoring through the project. However, observations of the cultural immersion workshops held to date suggest that, though some community and agency contacts are established in these sessions, this strategy too needs to be more precisely targeted and supported with some post-workshop follow up strategies.
8. There is some discrepancy between the views of most teachers as to how their school is performing in Aboriginal education and the views of parents, community members and students. This apparent discrepancy may in fact provide the rationale for a particular school's participation in the Project and it is perhaps too early to comment on whether the project will succeed in a narrowing of the two views. This is a theme to which the ongoing research on the Project must return.
9. Some caution is needed in assessing these reports of the initial impact of *Connecting to Country* on the approaches to Aboriginal education adopted by individual teachers and across the school. In particular it needs to be noted that the initial enthusiasm of some teachers was blunted by a perceived disinterest in many other staff; many of the reported changes to the school's approach to Aboriginal education were either still in the planning stage or essentially involved then revival of plans and strategies that had previously been discarded; envisaged changes to curriculum were very much focused on *traditional* content and culture rather than on other perspectives.
10. The ambivalence of some parents to Aboriginal Studies should be noted. In particular, there are some perceptions that Aboriginal Studies and perspective are treated as *add ons* to the curriculum rather than integrated into the existing curriculum. As a result some Aboriginal students were being withdrawn from *normal* classes and missing out on *normal class* time. This led to a perception that participation in *Aboriginal Studies* programs could be detracting from student's potential outcomes in mainstream subjects. This issue will need to be monitored as the research proceeds.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Origins, Aims and Objectives of the Project

The *Connecting to Country* Project exemplifies the benefits of partnerships between Commonwealth and State agencies and Aboriginal community groups.

It is part of the *Closing the Gap* policy of both Commonwealth and State governments and its overall objective is to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Funding for the program is sourced from the Commonwealth's *Expansion of literacy and numeracy programs for underachieving Indigenous students* Program which is in turn administered under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* and is part of the National Aboriginal Education Policy (NAEP)

Connecting to Country began in NSW in 2011 as a DEC initiative that developed from a cultural immersion program previously developed and implemented by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG) --- the *Being Culturally Aware, Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence* program.

The project is designed to improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students³ by improving the knowledge, understanding and skills of the Principals and teachers in the schools they attend. The Project began by identifying 143 participating schools from which the Principals and selected teachers would be involved in a series of intensive community and departmental workshops.

The immediate aims of these community and departmental workshops are to:

1. develop participants knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal culture, history and socio-political issues;
2. strengthen their capacity to exercise a leadership role in Aboriginal education;

and

3. increase their confidence in engaging with their Aboriginal students and with the Aboriginal community involved with their schools.

The long term objectives of the Project are to create a substantial transformation of approaches to Aboriginal education in the participating schools and to achieve improved and sustainable outcomes for the Aboriginal students of those schools.

Though initially scheduled to commence at the beginning of Term 1, 2011, the Project Agreement between DEC and DEEWR was not ratified till May 27th 2011 and administrative and other delays meant that the Project did not effectively commence until the beginning of Term 3 2011. To date the program has only been rolled out in 3 departmental / AECG regions --- Central Coast, Hunter and Mid North Coast

The Project is scheduled to be completed at the end of Term 4 2012 but, given the delay in commencing its roll-out, it may be necessary for AETD and DEEWR to renegotiate the anticipated completion date.

3 Throughout the remainder of this report the term *Aboriginal students* will be inclusive of Torres Strait Islander students unless explicitly stated otherwise.

The Structure of the Project

Seven key components of the *Connecting to Country* Project are defined in the Project Agreement between DEC and DEEWR. These are:

1. A 3-day cultural immersion workshop for Principals and teachers from participating schools that is delivered by local and regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs) NSW AECG's *Being Culturally Aware, Becoming Culturally Inclusive: A Pathway to Cultural Competence* program.
2. A subsequent 2-day professional development program for the participating teachers. This is conducted by regional DEC personnel and is intended to translate key elements of the initial immersion into practical teaching and learning methodologies, particularly in relation to literacy and numeracy.
3. A 2-day professional development program for the Principals of participating schools. This is also conducted by DEC regional personnel and focuses on the development of a structured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Program and effective leadership practices in Aboriginal education in their schools
4. The establishment by the AECG, and as part of the 3 day cultural immersion program, of *pathways to community mentoring* in schools.
5. The development of Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs) for all Aboriginal students in the 143 participating schools.
6. Establishing links between teachers who participated in the Project and the Aboriginal Studies Association and forming professional networks and support groups.
7. Involving the Principals of participating schools in *Dare to Lead* Action Area meetings to facilitate the development of professional networks and support groups.

This is clearly a highly structured professional development strategy designed to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes in Aboriginal education. However, the success of each component is clearly linked to the others and the the ultimate success of the Project will be very much dependent on the interaction and smooth gearing of each interdependent component.

Initial Impact on Individual Participants

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the cultural immersion component of the CTC staged by regional and local AECGs. There was a slightly less enthusiastic, but still positive, response to the subsequent professional development workshops implemented by region offices of the DEC.

The 4 teachers who were individually interviewed College all reported that the cultural immersion had been inspirational and used superlatives like *fantastic*, *overwhelming*, and *brilliant* to describe it. In elaborating on this one teacher explained that she came back to school *reinvigorated* and *with a real fire to do something* in Aboriginal education.

Another participant reported that hearing the life stories of numbers of Aboriginal people at the cultural immersion workshop had, for her, been *a life changing experience*. The personal stories, both from young Aboriginal students and the Aboriginal presenters at the Central Coast workshop, were also listed as the *best liked* feature of the cultural immersion in 3 of the 4 written responses to the questionnaire.

It was also evident that the CTC training had made most of the teachers more confident and less threatened by the prospect of engaging with the local community. One teacher reported that:

.... prior to attending the CTC training I didn't feel I had earned my way in the coastal Aboriginal community even though I had worked in other Aboriginal communities Going to the (cultural immersion workshop) was a real eye-opener for me, I got a lot of information about the local community and a lot of reinforcement.

An immediate outcome of this boost to teacher-confidence was greater teacher involvement in the local AECG.

Four of the seven teachers reported that they had attended several AECG meetings since participating in the CTC. One who had never before attended an AECG meeting because she *did not think it her place to go*, felt that the cultural immersion had *empowered* her to do so while another noted that she was now much less worried about the possibility of making mistakes in engaging with the community and much more aware of a supportive community network. One who said that she had previously been involved with the local community noted that she had *become more active since completing the course*.

In addition to attending *a few local AECG meetings* since attending the program one teacher also indicated that she was representing the school at *meetings regarding several Aboriginal students*. Another seemed to be suggesting enhanced confidence in relating to the Aboriginal community and greater enthusiasm for Aboriginal perspectives in the curriculum in her comment that:

I have since taken students to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fun Day, where we were able to meet other teachers and students and the local community. I have also completed the Traditional Indigenous Games (TIG) training day which has allowed me to be more engaged with students and local community as I have programmed a PE component based on this training for the Primary-age students.

Initial Impact on School and Classroom Practices

There was also evidence that participation in the CTC program had an immediate and positive impact on the relationship that teachers had with their Aboriginal students and also in approaches to pedagogy and curriculum in both schools and individual classrooms.

One participant suggested that her participation in the CTC program, particularly hearing the stories of individual Aboriginal people, *the youth, teachers and elders*, had provided her with a much better understanding of the Aboriginal students in her school:

I believe it has allowed me to view students and their families as members of a wider community, from a different culture, and a different history. These factors impact the families and their children and acknowledgement of this is critical to developing relationships within the school

Other participants suggested even more immediate ways in which their participation in the cultural immersion program had *opened up new lines of communication* and *helped in making connections* with their Aboriginal students. Several of the teachers reported that some students had noticed the Aboriginal *artefacts* and *souvenirs* that the teachers had produced at the workshop and brought back to their classrooms and how these had become a *talking point*. The significance of this was explained by teachers who commented:

One of the boys who had previously been difficult to engage now smiles at me and talks with me. He previously said very little. I think he now sees that I'm interested and he knows my class is a safe supportive place to be. That's definitely come from the course for me --- it was life changing, we all of us who went, thought that.

It's funny, and I don't mean to sound patronising or tokenistic but even this coffee cup (with an Aboriginal flag on it) which I brought back from the CTC training was noticed by the kids. Both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal kids have noticed it and asked me about it and its significance. The same happened with the little Aboriginal art work that we produced at the CTC training. The kids saw it and they worked out what it meant to me and how it was related to my coming from New Zealand right away.

Participation in the CTC program also appears to have led to the introduction of some new whole-school strategies in Aboriginal education or the reinvigoration of previous strategies that, for one reason or another had lapsed or fallen into disuse. Whole school strategies that were reported to have been stimulated by participation in the CTC included:

- The establishment of a bush tucker garden in the school that is being managed and developed by both Aboriginal and non Aboriginal students. The garden is seen, in part as a reconciliation process, and in part as a means of establishing an Aboriginal meeting place or *yarning place* within the school.
- Participation in the *Sister Speak* Program. Since the *Connecting to Country* one of the

school's 4 participants has been trained in this program and begun implementing it in the school. The program aims to enhance the girl's self esteem and self confidence and also to promote capacity building within the community.

- The school's AEO has also received training in the *Bro Speak* program, an equivalent program for Aboriginal boys.
- The schools NAIDOC Day celebrations in 2011 were considered *probably the best we've ever had* as a result of participation in the CTC s.
- Plans are under way to develop an Aboriginal girls dance group.
- Some tentative planning has begun to develop a junior AECG at the school

Some participants also suggested that the CTC had opened their eyes to new opportunities in curriculum for Aboriginal students while others said that the program had provided them with a timely boost by *validating* the approaches that they normally used but which, at times, they thought may be regarded as *odd* by others. Examples of the incorporation of Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum that were reported as either having been initiated or reinvigorated as a result of the participation of teachers from the two schools in the CTC program included:

- evaluating and rewriting the English and HSIE programs so that Aboriginal perspectives are more deeply embedded in them;
- reinforcing Aboriginal perspectives in Art and Drama with more references to stories from the Dreaming and Aboriginal ritual
- The Creative Arts Department is also attempting to organise excursions to local sites to make their own paint and artefacts and the AEO is liaising with local community members to facilitate this.
- reinvigorating the boy's *didge and dance* group
- planning the introduction of a girl's dance group
- the implementation of a Rotary indigenous literacy program, *Tales from a Dilly Bag*
- the introduction of Traditional Indigenous Games in the schools PDHPE program

Some caution is needed in assessing these reports of the initial impact of *Connecting to Country* on the approaches to Aboriginal education adopted by individual teachers and across the school. In particular it needs to be noted that:

- the initial enthusiasm of some teachers was blunted by a perceived disinterest in many other staff;
- many of the reported changes to the school's approach to Aboriginal education were either still in the planning stage or were essentially involved then revival of previous plans and strategies.
- the changes to curriculum were very much focused on *traditional* content and culture rather than on other perspectives.

Initial Impact on Aboriginal Students, Parents and Community Members

Only 3 Aboriginal parents and 10 Aboriginal students were interviewed by the ERT in the preparation of this report. Such small numbers do not allow substantial conclusions to be drawn from the data obtained. However, a number of interesting observations were made by the parent and student interviewees that should be noted at this stage and subject to future investigation as research and monitoring of the Project proceeds.

Levels of cultural awareness at the school

Both parents and students suggested that cultural awareness was not one of the school's strong points. Some students suggested that *most teachers don't even know we're Aboriginal*. One student also indicated that racist jokes and comments were quite common in the school playground but that the teachers seemed unaware of this.

This suggestion that teachers lacked cultural awareness was echoed by two of the parents who were emphatic that most teachers in the local schools had very little knowledge of the family life of their Aboriginal students or of local Aboriginal culture.

Generally around here the teachers don't have that knowledge or background with Aboriginal people. So they think the kids should be like everyone else and they think they are all fully assimilated..... But the point is that many of the kids here come from large extended families and may be coming from other parts of the country. The teachers don't understand this and don't understand the family responsibilities that the kids may have.

Aboriginal engagement in school decision making processes

Both parents and students had little if any awareness of the school's participation in the *Connecting to Country* program which suggests that neither group had been much engaged in school planning and decision making processes. Indeed, one parent reported that the CTC had not been discussed at his local AECG, even though a number of teachers from the High School attended, and that he had only heard of it in a letter from the school just a day or two before being interviewed by the ERT.

This parent also suggested that most schools in the area were not prepared to develop and implement long term strategies to engage parents and communities so as to address the complex issues involved in Aboriginal education.

The trouble is that the Principals and SEDS (School Education Directors) all think the same way. They assume there's a 'quick fix' (and) that Aboriginal parents have the same skills and education as non Aboriginal parents and they ignore the need for community training You've got to change the culture of the school about how they do things there's got to be a persistent approach, you've got to keep doing it.

Instead this parent suggested that the schools were often unwelcoming to parents and typically

kept parents and community members waiting outside the front office..... The best schools are those like with Aboriginal people employed from the front office through to all the teachers and others.

Another indication of community disenchantment with the level of Aboriginal engagement in the schools came from a student who expressed resentment at what she suggested was an arbitrary

decision by school staff to end Aboriginal student control of a school *Coffee Shop* that had been long established as *work experience / work skills program* at the school.

Cultural inclusiveness in school and classroom practices and processes

Though the 3 parents interviewed by the ERT all seemed supportive of the inclusion of Aboriginal content within the curriculum there was also some ambivalence in their attitudes to it.

One parent, for instance, was wistful in noting that Aboriginal Studies and perspectives had not been available to earlier generations of Aboriginal students. But, perhaps unwittingly he then appeared to raise a question about the relevance of Aboriginal Studies to the current generation when he added a significant qualification:

I can't remember it being done much when I was at school at B..... Boys in the 1970s and I know it wasn't done at all when my father was at school. But none of the young people today would be interested enough to do it if it was done outside of school hours.

All 3 parents also raised concerns that Aboriginal Studies might in fact be a distraction for Aboriginal students and detracting rather than improving their academic outcomes. They were particularly concerned at the amount of normal class time that was being lost to some students who were required to take part in cultural performances and rejected the concept of special, *add on* Aboriginal Studies programs.

(They) should embed programs in curriculum rather than have 'add on' programs, especially when students are being pulled out of regular class to do something like finger puppets because it's the English and Maths --- learning to read, write and count --- that's what's important And dedicated committed teachers can use the existing curriculum to reinforce students identity and culture ... it's there already.

The 3 parents also expressed concern at the way funding was used by the school and suggested that Aboriginal programs were only ever implemented if special, dedicated funding was made available. Aboriginal programs were never funded from the school's own budget. The reluctance of the schools to fund Aboriginal programs from their own global budget and the almost total reliance on *special* or dedicated funding for Aboriginal programs. They complained of the reluctance of the schools to fund Aboriginal programs from their own global budget and the almost total reliance on *special* or dedicated funding for Aboriginal programs.

Other concerns raised by the parents included:

- the rate of suspensions of Aboriginal students, particularly among boys, and of the refusal to consider *in school suspensions*.
- Inadequate communication with Aboriginal parents particularly about Personal Learning Plans, programming, and assessment and assignment requirements
- The possible misappropriation of dedicated funding
- the focus of programs and funding on the more difficult, disengaged students. This led to a perception of a consequent lack of support for underachieving mid-range students.

Levels of Aboriginal community engagement in the development and delivery of curriculum and units of work

The parents acknowledged several difficulties in fostering school-community engagement. The

local culture was very diverse and complicated and sometimes subject to local community politics.

The work commitments and busy family-oriented lifestyle of many Aboriginal families on the Central Coast also made it difficult for many to engage in the school.

However, one parent also raised a concern that many local AECGs were in danger of being dominated by Principals and teachers and that this was making some parents feel intimidated and reluctant to say anything.

Appendix A

Procedures for Researching, Monitoring and Evaluating the Project

The Project Agreement between DEC and DEEWR that was agreed to on May 27th 2011 provided for a range of processes to ensure ongoing evaluation of the *Connecting to Country* Project. These processes involve the Aboriginal Education and Training Unit (AETD) and several other units within DEC. As well, to ensure even greater transparency, an external evaluation process has also been set in place with the establishment of both an External Researcher (the External Research Team or ERT) and an External Evaluator.

The responsibilities of each of these entities, as defined by the Project Agreement and/or later negotiations between DEC and DEEWR are set out below:

The Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate

The AETD is responsible for:

- administering an annual survey on the developments of Personal Learning Plans for Aboriginal students in the 143 participating schools
- administering and analysing an annual survey on community mentoring in the participating schools and make this available to the external evaluator
- administering and analysing pre- and post- participation surveys of all teachers and principals participating in the Connecting to Country Project and make this available to the external evaluator
- analysing school attendance data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in participating schools collected by DEC's Data Analysis and Collections Unit

Other DEC Units

The responsibilities of other DEC units include the following

- the Human Resources Directorate will collect and compile a range of statistical data relating to staff participation in the project.
- the Human Resources directorate will also obtain data on the training of participating staff
- the Data Analysis and Collections Unit will collect and compile school attendance data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in participating schools and make this available to AETD for analysis
- the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate will collect and analyse the performance in NAPLAN of Aboriginal students in the participating schools and make this available to the external evaluator

External Evaluator

The external evaluator will be responsible for:

- conducting and analysing a documentary analysis
- conducting and analysing classroom observations in a sample of schools following the teachers completion of the cultural immersion and DEC workshop components of the project
- further analyse and comment on NAPLAN data made available from DEC's Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate

- further analyse and comment on the pre- and post CTC survey data of participating teachers and principals collected by AETD
- further analyse and comment on AETD's annual survey on community mentoring in the participating schools
- further analyse and comment on AETD's annual survey on the development of PLPs in the participating schools

External Researcher (or External Research Team --- ERT)

- interviewing and reporting on focus groups of teachers and principals from participating schools after their completion of the cultural immersion and DEC workshop components of the project
- conducting and analysing classroom observations in a sample of schools following the teachers completion of the cultural immersion and DEC workshop components of the project
- collecting qualitative data about the development of PLPs from a sample of participating schools

References

- DEEWR – DEC (2011) *Indigenous Education Act Project Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC)*;
- DEC (June 2011) Draft Memorandum of Understanding: *Connecting to Country Research Overview and Deliverables*

i Draft DEC Memorandum of Understanding dated 20th June 2011

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