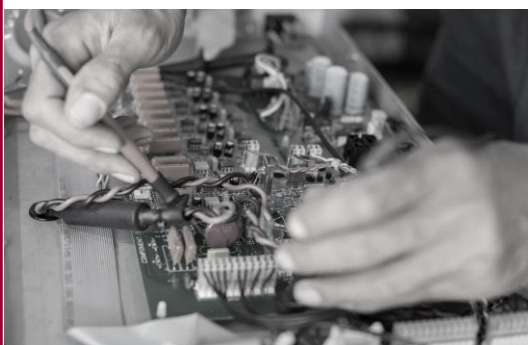
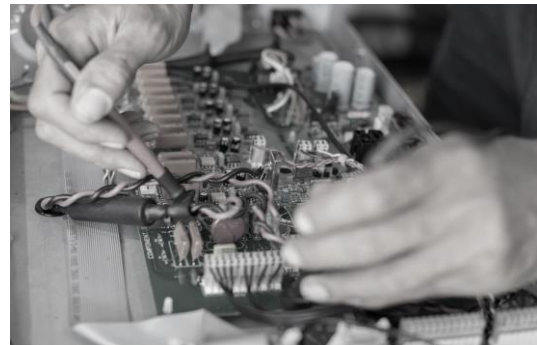


# Education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

## Report 20: 2016–17



Queensland Audit Office

Location Level 14, 53 Albert Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

PO Box 15396, City East Qld 4002

Telephone (07) 3149 6000

Email [qao@qao.qld.gov.au](mailto:qao@qao.qld.gov.au)

Online [www.qao.qld.gov.au](http://www.qao.qld.gov.au)



© The State of Queensland (Queensland Audit Office) 2017.

The Queensland Government supports and encourages the dissemination of its information. The copyright in this publication is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives (CC BY-NC-ND) 3.0 Australia licence.



To view this licence visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>

Under this licence you are free, without having to seek permission from QAO, to use this publication in accordance with the licence terms. For permissions beyond the scope of this licence contact [copyright@qao.qld.gov.au](mailto:copyright@qao.qld.gov.au)

Content from this work should be attributed as: The State of Queensland (Queensland Audit Office) Report 20 2016–17 Education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, available under [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 Australia](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/)

Photography by Tony Phillips

ISSN 1834-1128

Your ref:  
Our ref: 2017-P9152



June 2017

The Honourable P Wellington MP  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Speaker

**Report to Parliament**

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, and is titled *Education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* (Report 20: 2016–17).

In accordance with s.67 of the Act, would you please arrange for the report to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Close', is written over a faint, light blue grid background.

Anthony Close  
Auditor-General (acting)



# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Audit conclusions .....	3
Audit findings .....	5
Recommendations.....	10
Reference to comments .....	11
Report structure.....	11
Report cost.....	11
<b>1. Context.....</b>	<b>13</b>
National Indigenous Reform Agreement.....	13
Queensland's Closing the Gap activities .....	15
Queensland's senior school qualification.....	16
Population demographics .....	18
Roles and responsibilities.....	19
<b>2. Completing Year 12.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Introduction.....	24
Audit conclusions .....	25
Year 12 attainment and retention rates .....	25
Supporting students to complete Year 12.....	28
Senior Education and Training plans.....	32
Senior pathways .....	34
Student engagement with schooling.....	36
<b>3. Transition to work, training and/or higher education.....</b>	<b>41</b>
Introduction.....	42
Audit conclusions .....	43
Progress on closing the gap in employment outcomes .....	43
Support for students to find jobs .....	45
Opportunities to participate in the workforce .....	48
<b>Appendix A—Full responses from agencies.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendix B—Audit objectives and method .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendix C—Specific programs for senior students.....</b>	<b>69</b>



## Acknowledgements

---

The Queensland Audit Office acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of Australia and the Traditional Owners of this land and its waters. We pay our respect to the Elders, knowledge holders and leaders both past and present. We respect and sincerely acknowledge the important contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made to the success of this audit.

We also respectfully acknowledge the Yugumbah, Wakka Wakka and Kaurareg Traditional Owners whose country we travelled to when undertaking this audit. This report is delivered on the knowledge and perspectives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Beenleigh, Murgon and Thursday Island communities.

We thank all participants for giving their time, passion and commitment to the development of this report. We also thank other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community members who provided input.

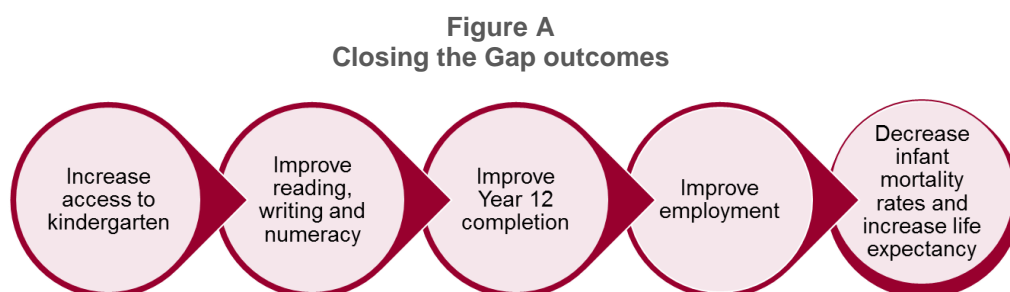
## Summary

Relatively low rates of employment contribute to the poor economic and social outcomes experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Governments expect that increasing the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment will result in a range of benefits, including:

- significant economic gains for individuals, their families and communities
- health and social benefits that flow from paid employment
- increases in the effective labour supply into the economy
- cultural diversity in the workplace providing broader perspectives.

### National Indigenous Reform Agreement—Closing the Gap

In 2007, the Commonwealth, states and territories agreed to a reform program to close the gap in various aspects of Indigenous disadvantage. Figure A shows how the Closing the Gap outcomes work together to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.



Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Two targets in the national agreement specific to Year 12 and employment outcomes are relevant to this audit. They are:

- halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (by 2018).

### Year 12 attainment

Attaining a Year 12 certificate is an important qualification for job seekers. It shows employers that a student has completed an amount of learning to the necessary standard. Not all students who complete Year 12 attain a certificate. Year 12 students comprise four main groups. They are:

- *Completers*: those who complete Year 12, but do not achieve the necessary credits to attain a certificate.
- *Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement holders*: those students with a disability or learning impairment on individualised learning programs who have completed at least 12 years of education. The Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement provides students with a summary of their skills and knowledge.
- *Queensland Certificate of Education holders*: those students who complete Year 12 and achieve the necessary requirements.
- *Overall Position (OP) eligible*: those students who studied academic subjects that made them eligible for an OP ranking for tertiary entrance. OPs range from 1 to 25; students in the OP 1 to 15 range are more likely to receive an offer of tertiary placement.



Historically, the Department of Education and Training (DET) had specific strategies for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students like *Solid partners*, *Solid futures*. DET has a new action plan *Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training*, which articulates strategies for increasing standards, expectations and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, students, and young people. DET has programs and initiatives in place to close the gap in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 completers who attain Year 12 certification compared with non-Indigenous students.

### Employment outcomes

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) contributes to economic development and closing the gap in employment outcomes. DATSIP runs the Youth Employment Program and workshops for the Indigenous businesses. The Youth Employment Program (YEP) supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully go from schools into training or employment pathways.

Indigenous businesses are more likely to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. DATSIP provides workshops to build the capability of Indigenous businesses and support sustainable business practices. DATSIP runs enterprise development workshops that cover a range of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business owners. The workshops help business owners to expand their business through government procurement, and to learn about programs and services to help their business.

### Audit objective and scope

The objective of the audit was to determine whether Queensland is reducing the gap in education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We assessed the support provided by state schools to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the senior phase of schooling (Years 10, 11 and 12) to attain Year 12 certification. We also assessed how well DET and DATSIP support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to transition from schooling into work, training, or further education. We conducted detailed fieldwork at three schools.

### Audit conclusions

---

DET has largely closed the gap in Year 12 attainment rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous state school students. In 2016, very few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who graduated from Year 12 in a state school did not achieve a Year 12 certificate. Attainment rates relate to those students that complete Year 12, and receive a certificate.

But DET has an ongoing challenge. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still over-represented in the category of students leaving school before the end of Year 12. In 2016:

- One third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander state school students who started Year 10 in 2014 did not complete Year 12, compared to one sixth of non-Indigenous state school students.
- Around a third of Indigenous students that completed Year 12 reported that they were not working or studying. This gap has remained stable for the last four years.

DET's individual case management approach has proven effective in closing the gap on attainment rates. Extending this approach to improve retention and employment outcomes, in partnership with DATSIP, could elicit similar outcomes. However, schools are already grappling with the demands placed on them to sustain an individual case management approach for attainment. This pressure will increase as larger cohorts of students in junior secondary move into senior schooling in coming years. There are 63.9 full time equivalent positions for community education councillors focused on Year 12 attainment for 4 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 11 and 12 students. If targets are to be achieved, further investment is required in case managers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to sustain attainment rates and increase retention and job-readiness.

DET's strategies, and schools themselves, acknowledge the importance of recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in all aspects of school life as a key enabler to student engagement. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not always engaging well in schooling. In 2016, state schools were three to four times more likely to cancel the enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 11 and 12 students than non-Indigenous students for not engaging in the learning program.

While DET provides guidance on approaches to cultural recognition in schools, it is not measuring the take-up and effectiveness of community involvement and cultural recognition in schools. The recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is paramount in closing the gap on education outcomes.

Following on from educational outcomes, the gap in overall employment rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-indigenous people continues to increase. As DATSIP's youth employment program only focuses on Year 12 students, it does not support the many young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who leave school before they complete Year 12. To fully realise the goal of translating educational outcomes to employment outcomes, DATSIP and DET need to increase collaboration, reaching enough Year 11 and 12 students and early school leavers to have a meaningful impact on the employment rate.

The importance of educational and employment outcomes in closing the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ultimate outcomes of improved health and life expectancy cannot be understated. The Queensland Government signed up to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement in 2007 and committed to closing the gaps within a decade. Now in 2017, it is appropriate to reflect on progress achieved by the public sector towards this ultimate outcome. Departments have demonstrated that gaps can be closed where attention is applied. Broader, more courageous, comprehensive and collaborative solutions—across education and employment—are required to break the cycle and see the government's ambitious reforms achieved.

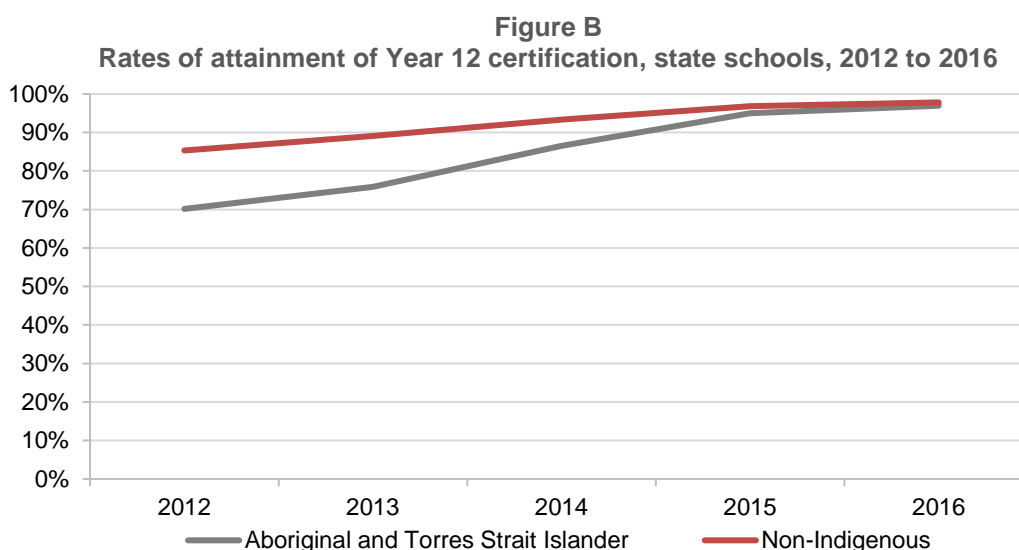
## Audit findings

DET has improved Year 12 attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, this has not yet led to a corresponding improvement in employment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

### Attaining Year 12 certification

DET has increased the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that complete Year 12 with a certificate. In 2016, 96.95 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who completed Year 12 attained a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement.

In 2016, DET had almost closed the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous for Year 12 graduate certification rates, at 0.86 percentage points. Figure B shows the progress DET has made in rates of attainment.



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing Year 12 who received an OP 1 to 15 has improved from 56.8 per cent to 62.8 per cent in 2016. The gap between the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in the 1 to 15 OP range is also closing. In 2012, the gap was 18.0 percentage points; by 2016, the gap closed to 14.8 percentage points.

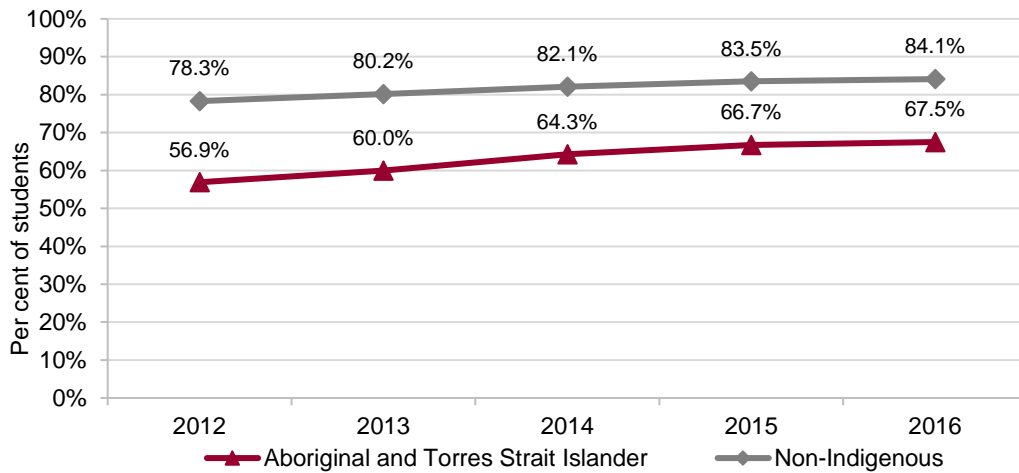
### Retention to Year 12

DET monitors and reports on the apparent retention rate of students who continue from Year 10 to Year 12. The retention rates are *apparent* as they are not the actual rate that would result from direct measurement of the movement of each individual student from Year 10 to 12. DET has made gains in improving apparent retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Figure C shows the improvements in the apparent retention rate for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students since 2012. In 2016, the apparent retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continuing from Year 10 to 12 was 67.5 per cent, an increase of 10.6 percentage points since 2012. This is 9.5 percentage points higher than the national average in 2016.

There is still a significant gap in apparent retention rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students of 16.6 percentage points in 2016. But this gap has reduced from 21.4 percentage points in 2012.

**Figure C**  
**Apparent retention rates, Years 10 to 12, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students, state schools, 2012 to 2016**



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Schools data.

### Supporting students to complete Year 12

In 2014–15, DET started a reform project to close the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. All three schools we visited had implemented the project. They all had systems and processes in place to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at risk of not completing Year 12. They also had intensive case management approaches in place to provide students with the opportunity to engage in the learning program and achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education.

Our analysis of the resources to support the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project showed that the number of Community Education Counsellors has not kept pace with the increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 11 and 12. Staff at all three schools raised concerns with us about the time available to undertake intensive case management.

The Queensland Secondary Principals' Association raised concerns with us about the expectation that all at-risk students attain a Queensland Certificate of Education by the end of Year 12.

The Queensland Teachers' Union commended DET on the successes in closing the gap in Year 12 attainment rates but raised concerns with us about the growing workload for school staff in supporting at-risk students to attain a Queensland Certificate of Education.

### Senior Education and Training plans

At the end of Year 10 all students and their parents, guardians, or carers must develop a Senior Education and Training plan. The plan becomes a student's plan of action for his or her education and training through Year 11 and 12. A Senior Education and Training plan is important to completing Year 12 because it helps the student to enrol in the subjects they need to achieve their career goals.

Not all Year 12 students had a Senior Education and Training plan. State schools are not regularly reviewing whether all senior students (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students) have a Senior Education and Training plan. Based on a sample of 13 schools, approximately one third of Year 12 students (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students) in 2016 did not have a Senior Education and Training plan.

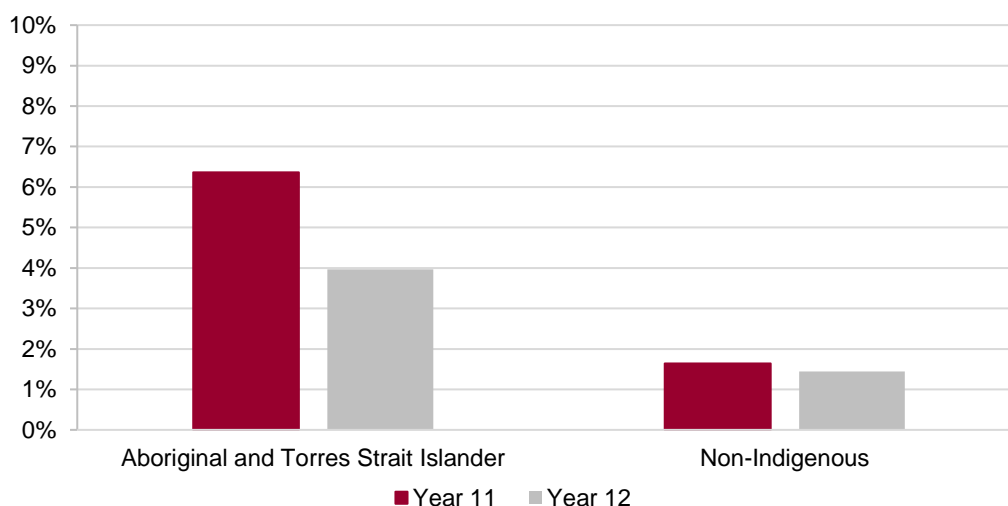
In addition, DATSIP is not providing schools, parents and students with information on regional job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to assist with the completion of their Senior Education and Training plans. Information on potential employers, upcoming projects, and industry opportunities would help them to select studies or courses that give them a better chance of getting a job.

### Student engagement

The three schools we visited emphasised that recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and integrating it into school life and the curriculum is critical to student engagement.

Despite DET having implemented strategies, programs, and projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engage with schooling, there are still significantly more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 11 and 12 having their enrolment cancelled than non-Indigenous students. Figure D shows that in 2016, 6.37 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 11 students had their enrolments cancelled compared with 1.64 per cent of non-Indigenous students. In Year 12, 3.97 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had their enrolments cancelled compared with 1.44 per cent of non-Indigenous students. Students who have their enrolment cancelled may go on to employment, or other education and training pathways, or not be studying or working.

**Figure D**  
Cancellation rates, state schools, 2016



Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Since the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project in 2015, the cancellation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are at their lowest levels since 2012.

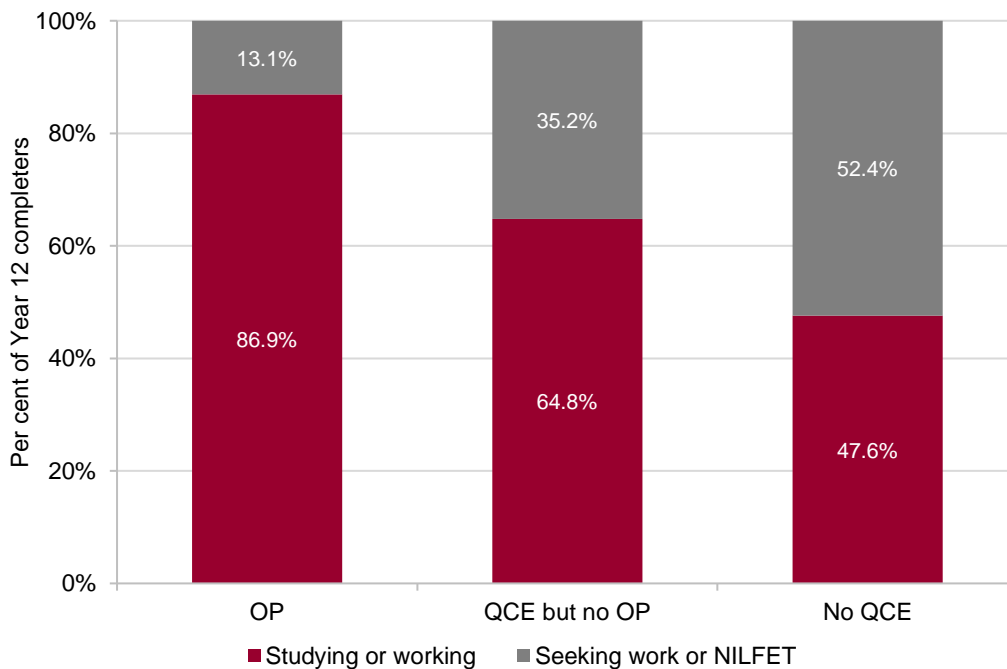
DET's new Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training action plan identifies the importance of empowering communities. However, DET doesn't currently have targets or measures to monitor the success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural recognition programs or empowerment. This reduces DET's ability to monitor progress on this important enabler for the Closing the Gap targets.

## Transitions to jobs, training and higher education

DET's post-school survey results indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students with a Queensland Certificate of Education are more likely to become employed or go on to further education than students without a Queensland Certificate of Education. However, in 2016, 68.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported they were either studying or working, compared with 83.8 per cent of non-Indigenous graduates. This is a consistent trend and has remained steady for the last four years at approximately 70 per cent, after a peak in 2012 of 72.8 per cent.

DET's post-school destination data also shows that OP eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had the highest proportion of studying or working outcomes. Figure E shows that, in 2016, 64.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 graduates with a Queensland Certificate of Education but who were not OP eligible, reported they were studying or working. In the same year, 86.9 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who were OP eligible reported that they were studying or working.

**Figure E**  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander destinations by Year 12 outcome



Notes: NILFET (Not in the labour force, education or training)—refers to people who were not working, not seeking work and not undertaking any education or training.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training—2016 Next Step survey.

### Support for students to find jobs

The Youth Employment Program is creating employment opportunities for some young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. DATSIP has found job placements through the Youth Employment Program for 2 661 post-Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, since the program started in 2015.

DATSIP is unable to maximise coverage of the Youth Employment Program due to the program restricting engagement with students to term 3, Year 12 students only. The current memorandum of understanding with DET only allows the program to start in term 3 of Year 12.

### Support for Indigenous businesses

DATSIP's small business workshops are effective in building the capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to successfully apply for and obtain government contracts. In 2015, 20 per cent of the DATSIP workshop attendees registered for the Queensland Government contract system QTender.

DATSIP has under reported the total value of contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses. Its methodology does not update past spending when it identifies new businesses. This raises the risk that stakeholders, including DATSIP's management, are relying on inaccurate data for decision-making purposes. In 2015–16, we estimate government departments awarded Indigenous businesses between \$195 million and \$268.8 million in procurement.

### Diversity of the public sector workforce

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants has continued to decrease since 2012, to a ten-year low of 1.96 per cent of the public sector workforce—4 895 people, in 2016. We acknowledge that some strategies to boost the number and proportion of public sector employees that identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may have been successful. But overall, the government has not been effective in increasing the diversity of the workforce in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants.

The government has proposed a three per cent target for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the public sector workforce by 2022. It is too early to assess if the new target-setting strategy is effective in increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participation in the public sector workforce.

We estimate that the Queensland public sector will need an additional 2 600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to achieve the three per cent target by 2022.



## Recommendations

---

### Department of Education and Training

We recommend that the Department of Education and Training (DET):

1. improves the Senior Education and Training planning process. (Chapter 2)

Improvements should include a process at the end of Year 11 for schools to review all student files to ensure that they have a Senior Education and Training plan.

DET should also develop a standard OneSchool report to identify students that do not have a Senior Education and Training plan.
2. develops additional strategies and materials to support continued improvements in retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage with schooling and successfully complete Year 12. (Chapter 2)

Strategies to improve retention rates of Indigenous students should be developed in cooperation with DATSIP to better link with employment outcomes.

The impact of the strategies to improve retention rates should be reported publicly in DET accountability reports.
3. monitors and reports on the effectiveness of school strategies to engage with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community and recognise Indigenous cultures. (Chapter 2)

DET should consider culturally appropriate ways to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine the level of school engagement.

### Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

We recommend that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP):

4. commences early engagement on the Youth Employment Program. (Chapter 3)

The memorandum of understanding for the Youth Employment Program between DET and DATSIP should be jointly reviewed by both agencies to facilitate ease of access to schools.

Engagement should commence before students undertake the Senior Education and Training plan and should be informed by local job opportunities.
5. reviews, in collaboration with DET, how its existing suite of economic development strategies supports disengaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who leave school early, to re-engage with education and training. (Chapter 3)

The review should include the scope of programs to support disengaged young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who leave school early in collaboration with DET to identify ways to support students to stay at school.
6. develops a robust methodology to report on the Queensland Government's Indigenous procurement expenditure to ensure that data on procurement to Indigenous businesses is accurate and complete as possible. (Chapter 3)

DATSIP should formalise memorandums of understanding with other agencies it collects data from to report publicly, particularly procurement data.



## Reference to comments

---

In accordance with section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to the following accountable officers, for comment:

- Director-General, Department of Education and Training
- Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Commission Chief Executive, Public Service Commission.

We received responses from the following public sector entities:

- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Public Service Commission.

Their responses are in Appendix A.

## Report structure

---

Chapter	
Chapter 1	provides the background to the audit and the context needed to understand the audit findings and conclusions.
Chapter 2	examines the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete Year 12.
Chapter 3	assesses the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully transition from school into work, training or further education.

## Report cost

---

This audit report cost \$410 000 to produce.



# 1. Context

---

In a competitive employment market and an economy facing technological change, job seekers that have completed Year 12 have an advantage. Completing a Year 12 qualification is an important step to going on to further training, higher education or successfully obtaining a job. Increasing economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contributes to their improved health, education, and home ownership. This has a flow-on effect of promoting greater independence and improving life outcomes.

## National Indigenous Reform Agreement

---

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government, known as Closing the Gap, to reduce Indigenous disadvantage. In 2008, COAG committed \$4.6 billion in specific funding for remote housing, health, early childhood development, jobs, and improvements in remote service delivery.

The Australian, state and territory governments agreed to the following six targets:

- closing the life expectancy gap within a generation
- halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
- halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

This audit specifically focuses on the Year 12 education and employment outcomes.

## Measures of education outcomes

Governments use multiple measures of both participation and attainment to monitor progress towards the Closing the Gap outcomes. The measures of Year 12 completion and attainment reported by the state and federal government are:

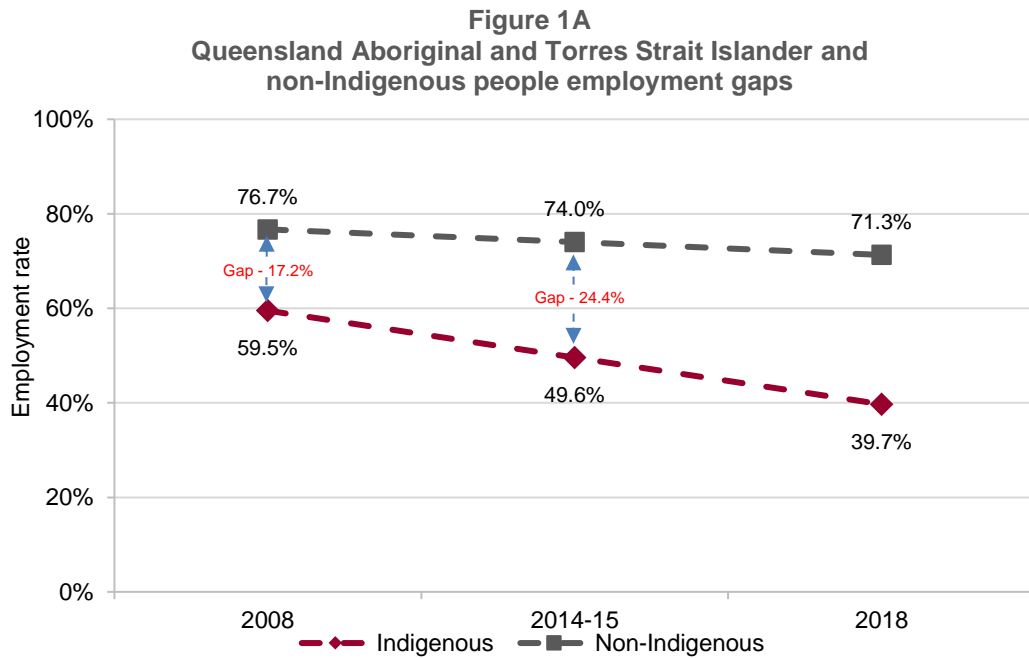
- *The proportion of the 20 to 24 year old population who have attained at least a Year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate level II or above*—the Australian Bureau of Statistics reports the highest year level completed at school and post-school qualifications through a vocational education and training course or university as a proportion of the 20 to 24 year old population. The data is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics census. The measure covers Year 12 attainment and retention for all students. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports this data nationally every five years.
- *The proportion of the potential Year 12 age group who attained Year 12 certification*—the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (ROGS) reports on attainment of Year 12 certification. Data is based on the number of students who attain a Year 12 or equivalent certification as a proportion of the age group which could have attended Year 12. The measure covers Year 12 attainment for all students and the Productivity Commission reports it annually in ROGS for all states and territories.
- *The proportion of Year 12 completers who attain Year 12 certification*—the Department of Education and Training (DET) reports on the proportion of state school students who completed Year 12 and attained Year 12 certification. The measure covers Year 12 attainment of state school students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. DET reports the measure in its annual report and budget papers.
- *Apparent retention rates from Year 10 to 12*—apparent retention Year 10 to 12 is a nationally agreed measure of student participation; DET reports the number of Year 12 students enrolled as a proportion of the number of Year 10s, two years prior. It does not match individual students at each point in time. The measure covers Year 12 retention of state school students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. DET reports this measure in selected performance reports.

## The gap in employment outcomes

Governments measure the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous employment outcomes with the *employment to population ratio* (also known as the employment rate). This ratio shows the number of employed persons of working age expressed as a percentage of the total population in the same group (15 to 64 years). National and comparable data on this measure is available from the census undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics every five years, in 2006 and 2011. The 2016 data is not yet available.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics also collect information from a sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. This survey includes information from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia, including remote areas, in 2008 and from September 2014 to June 2015.

Figure 1A shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment to population ratios in 2008 and 2014–15. It shows that the ratio decreased in 2014–15 by 9.9 percentage points since 2008. The employment to population ratio for non-Indigenous people also decreased over the same period, but by a lesser extent, a decrease of 2.7 per cent. This meant the employment gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people in Queensland widened in 2014–15 to 24.4 per cent from 17.2 per cent in 2008.



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

To halve Queensland's employment gap by 2018, we estimate, based on the 2008 to 2014–15 trend, that approximately 31 000 more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would need jobs. This is an increase of almost 54 per cent on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed in 2014–15 (57 800 persons).

### Benefits of increasing economic participation

Research from the Australian National University shows that participating in paid employment has health and social benefits. Employment can have direct economic benefits to the individual (and other members of their household). In addition, flow-on or second-round economic, health and social benefits can include:

- improved mental and physical health
- improved children's developmental outcomes
- higher rates of home ownership and higher-quality housing
- lower rates of arrest, incarceration, and lower likelihood of being a victim of crime.

### Queensland's Closing the Gap activities

The Australian Government has several programs and activities directed at the national Closing the Gap targets which we did not audit. However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of these activities and programs also influences the outcomes achieved by the Queensland Government.

Figure 1B includes the activities and programs, who is accountable and how they intend to measure success of their efforts.

**Figure 1B**  
**Key Queensland Closing the Gap activities and performance measures**

Education Phase	Strategies, projects and Initiatives	Accountability	National outcomes	Queensland accountability measures
Early childhood	Queensland Kindergarten Funding Subsidy Pre-Prep	DET	Ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years	Indigenous enrolments rates in early childhood programs
Schooling	Solid Pathways Academic success guarantee	DET	Close the gap in Indigenous student attendance Halve the gap in Indigenous student reading, writing and numeracy	Indigenous attendance rates NAPLAN rates of Indigenous students above the national minimum standards (reading, writing and numeracy)
Senior Years 10 to 12	Queensland Certificate of Education Attainment Project	DET	Halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020	Proportion of Indigenous Year 12 completers who attain Year 12 certification. Indigenous apparent retention rates Years 10–12
Year 13	Youth Employment Program	DATSIP	Halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade	Number of jobs for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people helped by DATSIP

Notes: NAPLAN—National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy; DATSIP—Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

This audit specifically assessed progress made against the Year 12 attainment of a certificate and employment outcomes.

## Queensland's senior school qualification

Year 12 certification requirements across jurisdictions vary, but most require:

- a standard of literacy, and often a standard of numeracy
- a standard and amount of learning
- an amount of continuous learning in a subject or subjects across the senior phase.

In Queensland, the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) issues senior students with a senior education profile. The profile can include a senior statement, a Queensland Certificate of Education, a Tertiary Entrance Statement (OP) and/or the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement. DET does not issue these certificates.

## Senior statement

Students that complete Year 12 receive a senior statement. It shows all studies and the results achieved that may contribute to the award of a Queensland Certificate of Education or Tertiary Entrance Statement. The statement shows the subjects studied, how many semesters were completed, and the level of achievement awarded. A student who does not achieve the necessary standard to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education will still receive a senior statement.

## Queensland Certificate of Education

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority awards a Queensland Certificate of Education to eligible students, usually at the end of Year 12. Students who do not meet the credit requirements of the Queensland Certificate of Education at the end of Year 12 can continue to work towards their certificate, regardless of their age.

Students must complete a minimum of 20 credit points from a combination of courses to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education. The Queensland Certificate of Education qualification shows a student has attained:

- a significant amount of learning
- a set standard of achievement
- literacy and numeracy requirements.

To be eligible for the Queensland Certificate of Education, a student must achieve the 20 credits in a set pattern which requires:

- at least 12 credits from completed core courses of study
- at least one credit from core studies completed while enrolled at a school
- a maximum of six credits from preparatory courses, such as Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificate I courses
- a maximum of eight credits from enrichment courses, such as workplace, community or self-directed learning projects
- a maximum of eight credits from advanced courses of study, such as one or two semester university subjects and VET diplomas
- meeting literacy and numeracy requirements.

All Queensland schools (state and non-state) register senior students with the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) to open a learning account. QCAA is a statutory body responsible for syllabuses and guidelines from Kindergarten to Year 12. The QCAA learning accounts keep track of individual student learning achievements in Years 11, 12 and post-schooling.

Most students achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education at the end of Year 12. Students who do not meet the Queensland Certificate of Education requirements at the end of Year 12 can continue to work towards their certificate—their learning account stays open, for up to nine years. QCAA closes learning accounts after nine years; but a person may apply to the QCAA to have their account reopened and all credit continued. QCAA will issue a Queensland Certificate of Education, once a person becomes eligible.

The QCAA awards credit to students for partially completed studies. It awards one, two or three credits to students who complete 25 per cent, 50 per cent or 75 per cent respectively, of a VET Certificate II.

## Tertiary Entrance Statement—Overall Position (OP)

The requirements for a Queensland Certificate of Education are different to those for tertiary entrance to university. A Queensland Certificate of Education does not give students an Overall Position (OP). An OP is a statewide rank that is relevant for tertiary entrance only.

The QCAA issues eligible students a Tertiary Entrance Statement at the end of Year 12. The statement includes the student’s Overall Position (OP) and Field Positions (FPs). Universities, TAFEs and other tertiary institutions use this information to rank students for entrance into their courses.

The information on Tertiary Entrance Statements is recognised by universities and tertiary providers interstate and internationally. Students may need a Tertiary Entrance Statement to enrol in study at institutions outside Queensland.

## Certificate of Individual Achievement

Students with a disability or learning impairment who are not studying the Australian curriculum can achieve a Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement. Queensland Certificates of Individual Achievement recognise the achievements of students who are on individualised learning programs. The certificate is an official record that a student has completed at least 12 years of education, and provides the student with a summary of their skills and knowledge that they can present to employers and training providers.

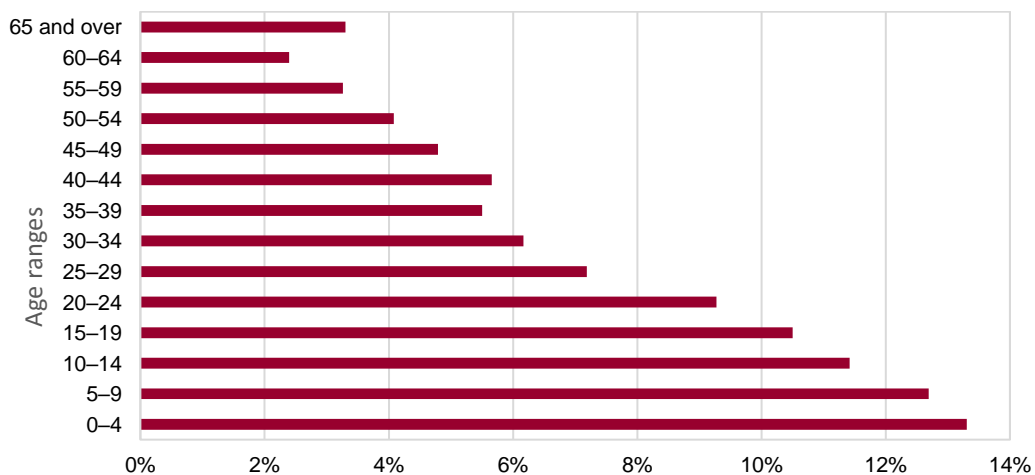
## Population demographics

### Population forecasts

Changes in demographics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will put greater pressure on job seekers in both urban and regional Queensland. In 2014–15, there were an estimated 686 800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, approximately three per cent of the total population. More than half of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived in either New South Wales (31 per cent) or Queensland (29 per cent).

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are relatively young. Figure 1C shows that in 2014–15, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were under 30 years old and 48 per cent were under 20 years old.

**Figure 1C**  
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, by age group—2014–15



Note: Australian Bureau of Statistics has randomly adjusted some of the percentages to avoid the release of confidential data. Discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014–15, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014–15. Findings based on use of Australian Bureau of Statistics TableBuilder data.



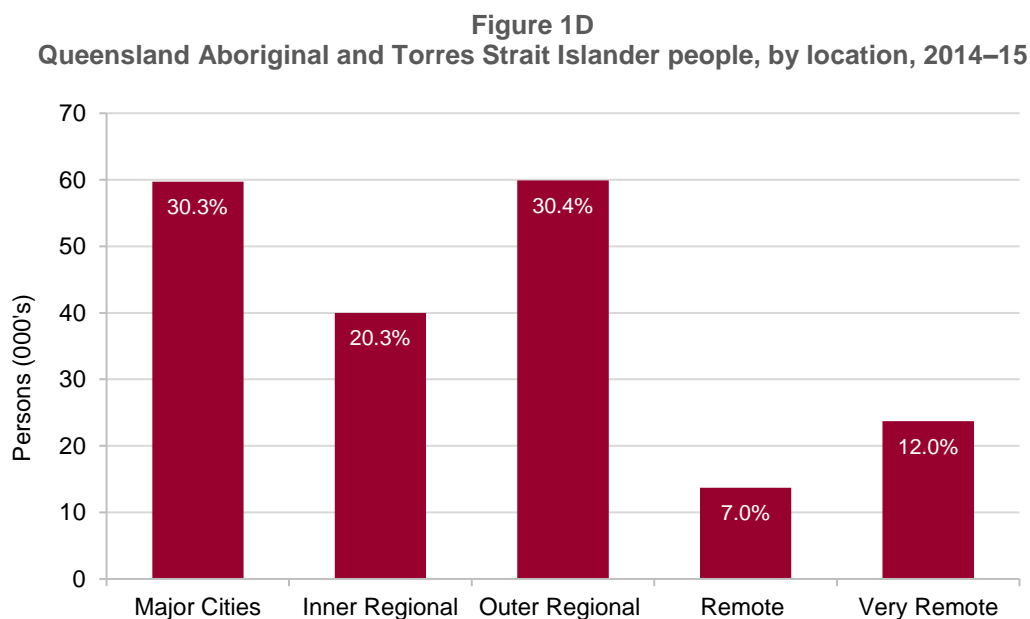
Forecast increases in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders reaching working age in the next 10 years make timely action to close the gap increasingly important.

Data from the Queensland Government Statistician's Office shows:

- In 2011, there were 112 371 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of working age.
- In 2026, there will be 50 684 more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of working age, a total of 163 055.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job locations

Figure 1D shows where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Queensland.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014–15, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014–15. Findings based on use of Australian Bureau of Statistics TableBuilder data.

In 2014–15, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were living in outer regional areas (30.4 per cent) and major cities (30.3 per cent).

### Roles and responsibilities

All Queensland Government departments have broad responsibilities to support the achievement of the Closing the Gap targets. However, the public sector entities within the scope of this audit are:

- the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP)
- the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- the Queensland Public Service Commission (PSC).

### Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

DATSIP provides whole-of-government leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships to develop policy. It also delivers services directly to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. This includes policy and program initiatives such as social policy, employment and business development.

DATSIP is responsible for two service areas called Economic Participation and Community Participation.

### Economic participation

The objectives of the economic participation service area are to:

- create more jobs and career opportunities
- foster emerging businesses and increase home and land ownership
- build in-demand skills.

### Community participation

The objectives of the community participation service area are to:

- support connected communities
- strengthen social cohesion
- support communities to value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and heritage.

DATSIP's employment initiative to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students move from school into employment is the Youth Employment Program. It offers the program to schools both state and non-state. Under the memorandum of understanding with DET, the program is offered to Year 12 students in terms 3 and 4.

DATSIP contributes to building employment opportunities by conducting business development workshops to support Indigenous businesses. The aim of the workshops is to help Indigenous-owned businesses grow by successfully tendering for government contracts.

It also has several job creation projects in Far North Queensland. These projects were outside the scope of this audit as they did not have a focus on youth employment.

## Department of Education and Training

DET provides education and training services to Queenslanders. DET's 2016–20 strategic plan outlines its objectives for ensuring Queenslanders are skilled to participate successfully in the economy and broader community. It identifies specific strategic challenges for the department, including improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

DET has specific programs for schools to close the gap between outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students. Some of these are the Queensland Certificate of Education Attainment, the Academic Success Guarantee, and Solid Pathways.

### Queensland Certificate of Education Attainment project

In 2015, DET began a new strategy to increase attainment of the Queensland Certificate of Education. The initiative included:

- reviewing Queensland Certificate of Education attainment outcome data for all state schools, including independent public schools
- delivering ongoing Queensland Certificate of Education support for school leaders in consultation with assistant regional directors and principals
- generating targeted strategies to monitor at-risk students to ensure every student is awarded either a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Attainment
- engaging community stakeholders (for example, Indigenous education councils) to help lift Queensland Certificate of Education attainment outcomes.

The strategy included tailoring support to targeted schools with high Indigenous student enrolments. The goal of the initiative was to increase the certification rate for all Year 12 students in 2016 across the state and close the gap in Indigenous Queensland Certificate of Education attainment. DET set a clear expectation for schools that a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement is attainable by every student exiting a state school.

### Completing school

The *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006* (The Act), requires young people to continue their schooling until they are 16 years, or have completed Year 10, whichever happens first. The Act also requires young people to continue in education and training until they achieve a certificate of achievement, senior statement, Certificate III or Certificate IV or turn 17.

The principal of a school has a responsibility to ensure a safe, supportive and disciplined school environment. Under the Act, a principal of a state school, at which a student who is older than compulsory school age is enrolled, may cancel the enrolment if they are reasonably satisfied the student's behaviour amounts to a refusal to participate in the education program provided at the school. Examples of refusal to participate in class and learning are unexplained absences, truancy, poor engagement, and non-submission of assessment items.

### Queensland Public Service Commission

The Queensland Public Service Commission (PSC) is an independent central agency of government with key responsibilities for workforce policy, strategy, leadership, and organisational performance across the Queensland public service. PSC aims to build workforces and workplaces that better reflect Queensland's diverse community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The public service has set a sector-wide target for representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees of three per cent of its workforce by 2022. The PSC and individual public sector entities have roles in achieving this target.

The role of the PSC is to:

- establish a system to aggregate data to ensure that, overall, the sector is on track to meet targets
- design an approach to improve quality of data through a sector-wide census day
- provide sector-wide data and profiling
- build sector capability in managing a diverse workforce
- provide workforce insights by synthesising research and ideas into practical applications
- provide guidance and support to agencies to enable their success in achieving diversity targets
- facilitate reporting through dashboards and annual reports.

It is the role of each individual public sector entity to:

- develop strategies to ensure incremental and continuous improvement
- build internal capability to manage a diverse workforce
- actively track individual progress against targets through qualitative and quantitative measures, including determination of progress targets
- determine internal governance and accountability measures including actions to be taken when targets are, or are not, met
- develop and implement initiatives which are fit for purpose.

### Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

In addition to the agencies audited, the QCAA also plays a role in issuing the Year 12 certificates. QCAA is a statutory body.

It offers a range of services to Queensland Schools and the community including:

- managing the certification of senior students, such as the Queensland Certificate of Education and the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement
- developing and revising syllabuses and guidelines from Kindergarten to Year 12
- overseeing assessment and moderation procedures in the senior years of schooling
- developing tertiary entrance procedures
- researching syllabus development and evaluation, assessment, testing, and certification.

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority awards a Queensland Certificate of Education to eligible students, usually at the end of Year 12.

## 2. Completing Year 12

### Chapter in brief

The Department of Education and Training (DET) has programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to stay at school and attain Year 12 certification. This is because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who stay at school and complete Year 12 have better employment outcomes than those who don't.

In this chapter, we examine how the three schools we audited in detail support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete Year 12. We also analyse the overall Year 12 attainment, certification and retention rates for Queensland state schools.

### Main findings

- DET has almost closed the gap in Year 12 attainment rates of Year 12 certification between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students in state schools. In 2016, there was only 0.86 percentage points difference.
- DET has also made gains in improving apparent retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. But there is still a gap in retention rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students of 16.6 percentage points.
- All three schools we visited had implemented the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project. They all had systems and processes in place to identify and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at risk of not completing Year 12. However, DET is not monitoring the impact of this approach on the workload of school staff.
- State schools are not regularly reviewing senior students' Senior Education and Training plans. At schools using OneSchool to store Senior Education and Training plans, approximately one third of Year 12 students (both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students) in 2016 did not have a Senior Education and Training plan.
- Despite DET having implemented strategies, projects and programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engage with schooling, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 11 and 12 are still three to four times more likely to have their enrolment cancelled than non-Indigenous students.
- DET's new Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training action plan identifies the importance of empowering communities. However, DET does not currently have targets or measures to monitor the success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural recognition programs or empowerment. This reduces DET's ability to monitor progress on this important enabler for the Closing the Gap targets.

## Introduction

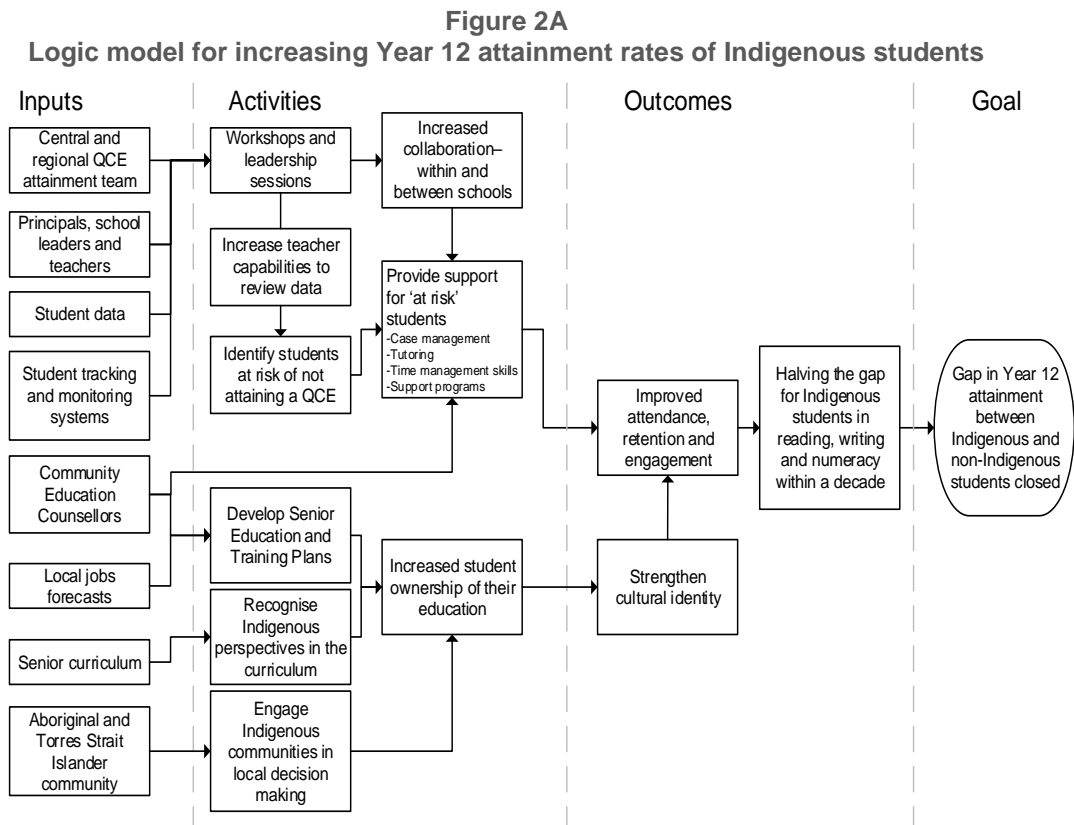
The Department of Education and Training (DET or the department) plans, implements and monitors programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to stay at school and attain Year 12 certification. These programs are aimed at working towards the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) target of halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020. So, the department contributes to this target, but it goes beyond the school years.

This chapter reports on our assessment of the:

- Year 12 attainment and retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people
- processes state schools use to track, support and monitor students through to completing Year 12
- use of Senior Education and Training Plans to map out student career goals and pathways
- impacts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement with schooling on Year 12 completion.

### How the department works to close the gap on Year 12 attainment

Figure 2A is a conceptual model showing the inputs, activities and outcomes needed to achieve the Closing the Gap target of attaining a Year 12 qualification. The model outlines how the different activities and strategies can work together to achieve the goal.



Note: QCE—Queensland Certificate of Education.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

## Audit conclusions

DET's Queensland Certificate of Education Attainment project has been effective in increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that complete Year 12 with a certificate. By encouraging schools to focus on the barriers to achieving Year 12 certification and supporting individual students, DET has largely closed the gap in this aspect of Year 12 attainment. To be able to sustain these results DET needs to ensure it monitors the workload issues for school staff and supports them appropriately.

In contrast, progress on closing the gap in apparent retention rates remains a challenge. DET's strategies and programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engage with schooling have not had a significant and sustained impact on the retention rates. DET must continue to manage the risks to retention rates to ensure that maximising the proportion of students completing a Queensland Certificate of Education is not at the expense of young people staying at school and completing Year 12.

Not all senior students have worked with the school to map out subjects and courses the student needs to complete to achieve their career goals. Incomplete Senior Education and Training plans are reducing the ability of principals to ensure that all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, have considered their goals for senior schooling. Not having a Senior Education and Training plan also reduces the ability of the school to provide individualised support for students in the senior years of schooling.

DET's new Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training action plan identifies the importance of empowering communities. However, DET doesn't currently have targets or measures to monitor the success of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural recognition programs or empowerment. This reduces DET's ability to monitor progress on this important enabler for the Closing the Gap targets.

## Year 12 attainment and retention rates

### DET's Year 12 attainment measure

DET monitors and reports on the proportion of state school students who attained a Year 12 certification as a proportion of students who completed Year 12. The calculation does not include students who started Year 12 but did not complete it.

Figure 2B shows that in 2016, 96.95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who completed Year 12, attained a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement.

**Figure 2B**  
Rates of attainment of Year 12 certification,  
Year 12 graduates, state schools, 2012 to 2016

Year	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students %	Non-Indigenous students %	Gap %
2012	70.15	85.32	15.17
2013	75.86	89.07	13.22
2014	86.49	93.34	6.85
2015	95.04	96.86	1.82
2016	96.95	97.81	0.86

Note: As percentages have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of items.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

The rate for non-Indigenous students was 97.81 per cent. DET has reduced the gap to 0.86 percentage points. In 2012, the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who completed Year 12 with a Queensland Certificate of Education was 15.17 percentage points.

DET reports the Year 12 attainment rates in its annual report and budget papers (the service delivery statements). The notes to explain the data are inconsistent in the two documents. The notes in the annual report state that the attainment rates are based on the number of students who complete Year 12. The notes in the service delivery statement state the rates are based on the number of Year 12 students. The notes in the annual report are a clearer explanation of how DET calculates the rates.

### DET's apparent retention to Year 12 measure

DET monitors and reports on the apparent retention rate of state school students who continue from Year 10 to Year 12. The retention rates are *apparent* as they are not the actual rate that would result from direct measurement of the movement of each individual student from Year 10 to 12. DET calculates the rate on total reported cohort populations in Year 12 as a percentage of the population for the Year 10 cohort, two years prior.

Figure 2C shows that the apparent retention rate in Queensland for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students has increased from 56.9 per cent in 2012 to 67.5 per cent in 2016. Nationally, the apparent retention rate from Year 10 to 12, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 58.0 per cent in 2016. The gap in retention rates between Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and non-Indigenous students closed from 21.4 percentage points in 2012 to 17.8 percentage points in 2014. However, the gap stayed at approximately 16 percentage points in 2015 and 2016.

Figure 2C

Queensland apparent retention rates, Year 10 to 12, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students, state schools, 2012 to 2016

Year	Non-Indigenous students %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students %	Gap %
2012	78.3	56.9	21.4
2013	80.2	60.0	20.2
2014	82.1	64.3	17.8
2015	83.5	66.7	16.8
2016	84.1	67.5	16.6

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

We analysed factors affecting the apparent retention rate and trends in students who started in Year 10 and:

- continued to Year 12 and achieved a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement
- continued to Year 12 but did not attain a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement
- left school at some point or had their enrolment cancelled in either Years 10, 11 or 12.

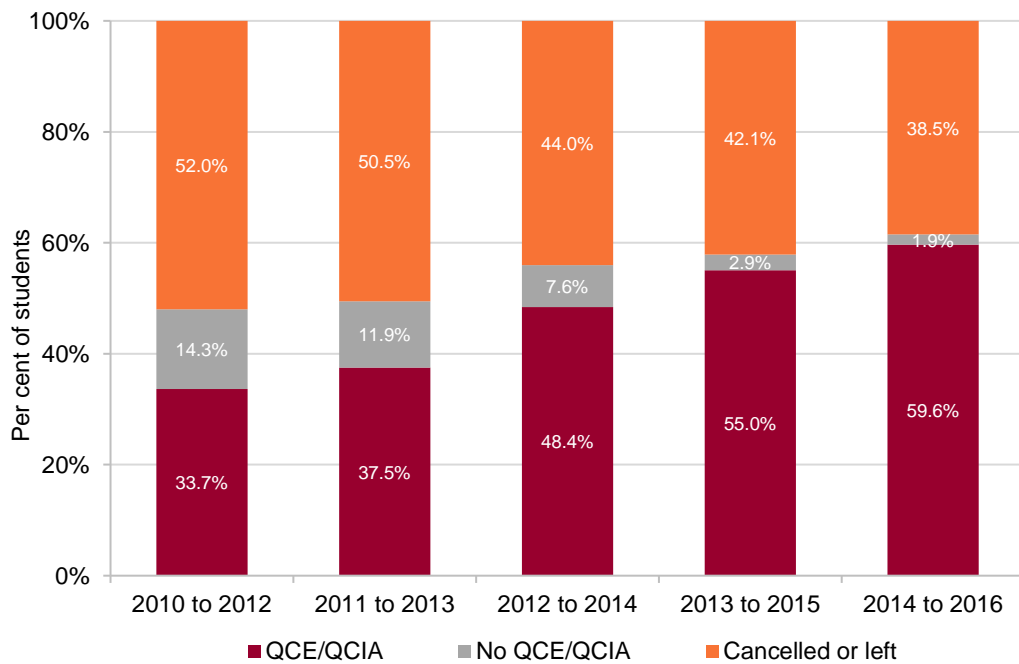


Students who left the state schooling system may have enrolled at a non-state school, another training provider, or sought employment. Students that leave school early or have their enrolment cancelled may go on to other employment or training pathways.

Figure 2D shows that, since 2010, the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior students achieving a Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement (QCIA) by the end of Year 12 has increased from 33.7 per cent in 2012 to 59.6 per cent in 2016, an increase of 25.9 percentage points.

DET has continued to improve the retention rates since 2012. However, 38.5 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student cohort that started Year 10 in 2014 left school or had their enrolments cancelled before the end of Year 12 in 2016.

**Figure 2D**  
**Proportion of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 10 to 12 state school students, achieving a QCE/QCIA, 2010 to 2016**



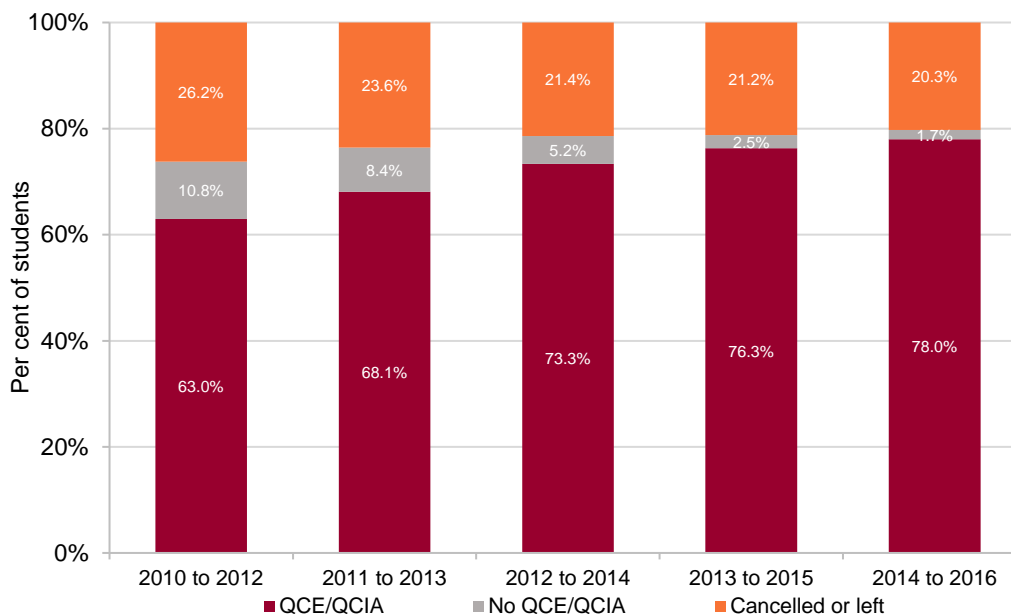
Note: The data compares the number of state school students who achieved a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement by the end of Year 12 with the number of state school students enrolled in Year 10, two years prior. The enrolment data is as at August collection point and includes both full- and part-time students.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

Over this same period, the proportion of non-Indigenous students achieving a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement by the end of Year 12 has also increased. Figure 2E shows the achievement rates for non-Indigenous students from 2010 to 2016. This makes closing the gap a challenging but still relevant target.

Since 2010, the percentage of non-Indigenous senior students achieving a QCE/QCIA by the end of Year 12 has increased from 63.0 per cent in 2012 to 78.0 per cent in 2016, an increase of 15 percentage points.

**Figure 2E**  
**Proportion of Queensland non-Indigenous Year 10 to 12 state school students, achieving a QCE/QCIA, 2010 to 2016**



Note: The data compares the number of state school students who achieved a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement by the end of Year 12 with the number of state school students enrolled in Year 10, two years prior. The enrolment data is as at August collection point and includes both full and part-time students.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

In the last five years DET has made significant improvements in closing the gap in attainment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by almost double the increase for non-Indigenous students. Apparent retention rates have also improved, but the initial gains in closing the gap on retention rates in 2012 and 2013 have stabilised.

## Supporting students to complete Year 12

### Statewide plans and strategies to support Year 12 completion

From 2013 to 2015, DET had a specific statewide strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students—*Solid partners, Solid futures*. This strategy was to address the rapidly growing young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and the significant gaps in outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

In March 2017, DET released an action plan *Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training*, in draft form for consultation. The draft action plan lists four strategies for schooling:

- connecting learning with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and language
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to remain engaged in school
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to succeed at school
- improving school performance.

DET launched the action plan on 15 March 2017 and asked for feedback by 19 May 2017. DET is also hosting three consultation roundtables with stakeholders in South East Queensland and regional consultation forums at various locations across Queensland with the support of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP).

It is too early to assess the effectiveness or efficiency of the new actions in the plan.

## Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project

In 2014–15, DET started a reform project to close the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The project involves DET:

- analysing Queensland Certificate of Education outcomes data to identify barriers to Queensland Certificate of Education attainment
- in collaboration with the Assistant Regional Directors, targeting support for schools and regions
- delivering tailored sessions to school personnel to build capacity for improving outcomes for all Queensland Certificate of Education at-risk students
- training and supporting regional Queensland Certificate of Education improvement officers in lifting Queensland Certificate of Education attainment.

Regional offices appointed Queensland Certificate of Education coaches to support schools to identify and track students at risk of not achieving a Queensland Certificate of Education by the end of Year 12. At each school, principals set up case management teams to monitor and support at-risk students.

### Project targets

The project set an expectation for state schools that all students are expected to get a Queensland Certificate of Education. The project communication stated that a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement is attainable by every student exiting a state school. However, DET's target for Queensland Certificate of Education/Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement attainment is 97 per cent.

The Queensland Secondary Principals' Association raised concerns with us about the impact of balancing the current expectations for all students to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education by the end of Year 12 and cancelling enrolments. In its submission, the association raised the following concerns:

*DET has set a target of 100% for Queensland Certificate of Education attainment for all students. For many reasons, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have not fully engaged in 12 (13 including prep) full years of schooling and hence to expect that they could meet the requirements of a Queensland Certificate of Education are not realistic, yet it is still an achievement for them to complete year 12.*

*There is significant pressure being placed on schools for all students to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education by the end of Year 12 (100 per cent), with extra emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Often principals are placed in a position where they need to be the 'buffer' between unrealistic expectations for student achievement from Central or Regional Office staff and school staff who are working to capacity to maximize student results.*

*Many QSPA members are being placed in the position of having to defend either not achieving the 100 per cent target or considering cancellation of enrolment of students. This is despite schools looking for creative ways to offer programs to students to attain Queensland Certificate of Education points.*

We acknowledge the Queensland Secondary Principals' Association's concerns and note that since the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project began, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cancellation rates have declined.

### Project principles

All three schools we visited had implemented the project with minor adaptations to suit their individual community and students' needs. Figure 2F shows the principles of the project and our assessment of how well the three schools visited have aligned their actions to them.

**Figure 2F**  
**Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project principles**

Principle	Assessment of the three schools' alignment to the project
Purposeful, consistent and deliberate nature	The schools were all clear on the policy objectives.
An overt moral imperative	The schools were clear that the purpose was to ensure all students exited state schools with a Queensland Certificate of Education, and benefited from the greater life opportunities stemming from successful Year 12 completion.
A clear line of sight to individual students and schools	Schools had established monitoring and reporting from statewide, regional and individual school levels to secure Queensland Certificate of Education attainment for all Year 12 students.
Intensive case management to meet student needs	Students at risk of not attaining a Queensland Certificate of Education were intensively case managed. School and regional staff provided intensive monitoring, tutoring and support to students and their families during school and out-of-school time.
Evidence and a data-focused nature	Schools used educational data on student characteristics and achievement to tailor support for individual students.
Students first	The schools focused on individual students, with data determining the school-based approaches.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

### Monitoring at-risk students

At the three schools we visited, staff consistently tracked and monitored at-risk students. These students are at risk of not completing Year 12 and not achieving a Queensland Certificate of Education or Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement because of poor attendance, academic performance or behaviour. The schools tracked students using:

- OneSchool data, attendance records
- teacher questionnaires
- student progress sheets
- academic reports.

Once a school identifies a student is 'at risk', school staff case-manage each student to support them to stay at school and achieve the necessary 20 credit points to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education. At-risk students are those who are at risk of either not achieving a Queensland Certificate of Education, or dropping out.

Figure 2G is a case study of how one of the three schools tracks and supports all students in the senior phase (Years 10 to 12) including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Beenleigh State High School (BSHS) is in the urban community of Logan city, which is on the south side of Brisbane. In 2016, there were 1 007 students enrolled at the school including 118 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

## Figure 2G Case Study—Tracking at-risk students

### Beenleigh State High School's approach to tracking and supporting at-risk students

A key feature of Beenleigh State High School's student tracking model is early identification of students who need additional support to attain their Queensland Certificate of Education. Tracking starts from Year 11 and continues through to the end of Year 12. The deputy principal and heads of departments lead the student tracking and monitoring process. They identify students based on three criteria:

- Attendance—teachers and Heads of department (HOD) Senior Schooling
- Performance—all staff, HOD Senior Schooling, HODs generally
- Behaviour—all staff including deputy principals and principal.

Beenleigh State High School expects all staff members to identify and support students at risk. Relevant staff, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, regularly meet to discuss students at risk.

Beenleigh State High School uses a focused case-management approach to support students to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education. They use a tracking tool that imports student data from the school's OneSchool database to identify and track students' attendance and performance.

School leaders use the information and input from teachers to prepare a traffic light report for all Year 11 and 12 students. Heads of departments regularly review the traffic light report to check the following for each student:

- number of subjects failed and literacy and numeracy results
- whether the school has had a meeting with parent/guardian/carer
- proposed action items.

The school supports at-risk students by giving guidance on subject choice and offering mandatory tutoring for students at risk—during, before, and after school. Teachers work one-on-one to help students complete the assessment tasks.

The school also supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by connecting them with other services, such as the Eagleby Learning College, which offers a range of education and training programs and workforce pathways programs, and the Police Citizens Youth Club.

The students we interviewed were positive about the academic-based attendance programs and cultural and social support services given by the school. They believed the support had a significant impact on their attendance, academic, and cultural learning outcomes.

*Source: Queensland Audit Office.*

Beenleigh State High School has developed and implemented processes to track and support at-risk students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Heads of department (HOD) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait support staff jointly case-manage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The school set up the Mibunn Jinndi Indigenous unit to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In 2016, all the Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students identified by the school as being at risk of not attaining Queensland Certificate of Education either attained Queensland Certificate of Education or transitioned to other education pathways to continue working on Queensland Certificate of Education attainment.

### Programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

As well as providing educational support like case management, the three schools had formal programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The programs were either developed and funded by the school themselves, DET, or Australian Government funded programs from sporting groups. We did not audit the individual programs but we noted that they were available and that schools were making use of them. Figure 2H provides a list of some of the specific programs available and Appendix C gives further details about these programs.

**Figure 2H**  
**School programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

Program	Provider	Description
Solid Pathways	DET	The program is an academic extension program that supports high achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
Academic Success Guarantee	DET	The program aims to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a high attendance rate will meet or beat their year level benchmarks
Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education	Queensland Former Origin Greats	The program encourages and rewards improvements in school attendance, behaviour, academic achievement, effort, and ultimately Year 12 attainment or its equivalent.
Clontarf	Clontarf foundation –NGO	The program uses the passion that Aboriginal boys have for football to attract them into school and keep them there

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

## Senior Education and Training plans

One of the processes to support all students complete Year 12 successfully and achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education is the Senior Education and Training plan. Figure 2I outlines the purpose and process for completing Senior Education and Training plans.

**Figure 2I**  
**Senior Education and Training plans**

Description	
Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To map out a student's plan of action for his or her education and training through the compulsory participation phase (until they achieve a certificate of achievement, senior statement, Certificate III or Certificate IV, or turn 17)</li> <li>To consider flexible and coordinated options for their pathway of senior study</li> <li>To plan their education, training and career options after Year 12</li> </ul>
Who?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is compulsory for all Year 10 students in state and non-state schools</li> <li>The plans include parents/carers or teachers/careers counsellors in decisions that affect students' post-school plans</li> </ul>
When?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically, completed in terms 3 and 4 of Year 10</li> <li>There is no requirement for schools to update or regularly review Senior Education and Training plans</li> <li>Students who complete Senior Education and Training Plans online can review them at any time</li> </ul>
What?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structuring student learning (subject selections) in Years 11 and 12 around abilities, interests and ambitions</li> <li>Consider starting school-based apprenticeships and traineeships</li> <li>Setting their learning goals in Years 11 and 12, and beyond</li> </ul>
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Education and Training plans are developed in a one-on-one interview with senior school staff, the student and their parent/guardian/caregiver. The result of the interview is recorded on a paper based form or in DETs (state schools) online database 'OneSchool'</li> </ul>

Note: Not all state schools were using OneSchool to record the Senior Education and Training plans for the 2016 Year 12 cohort who were in Year 10 in 2014.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

## Completeness of Senior Education and Training plans

Schools can use DET's OneSchool portal to record student's individual Senior Education and Training plans or the plans can be paper based. At the schools we audited:

- they all offered sessions for Year 10 students to develop a Senior Education and Training plan with their parents/guardians/carers
- some students had completed Senior Education and Training plans online in OneSchool and some had printed them out and completed them manually
- the system included notes that their parents/guardians/carers were involved in preparing the plans.

However, some schools could not find Senior Education and Training plans for all students. Figure 2J shows that at the three schools, 67.1 per cent of the Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had a Senior Education and Training plan in DET's OneSchool database.

We contacted another 10 schools and assessed their OneSchool reports to check whether Year 12 students had Senior Education and Training plans. The results for these schools are also in Figure 2J. Altogether, the 13 schools selected covered 15 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 students enrolled at state schools in 2016.

**Figure 2J**  
Percentage of students with a Senior Education and Training Plan—Year 12, 2016

	The three schools visited %	Additional ten schools %	Total %
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a Senior Education and Training plan	67.1	63.0	63.8
Non-Indigenous students with a Senior Education and Training plan	75.1	56.4	58.3

Note: Sample based on 13 state schools that used OneSchool to record Senior Education and Training plans.

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

The high proportion of students without Senior Education and Training plans for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students is similar. This shows that state schools are not routinely reviewing Senior Education and Training plans to ensure all senior school students have a Senior Education and Training plan. While schools offer sessions for parents to take part in the Senior Education and Training planning process, schools advised us that not all parents, guardians or carers attend the sessions.

## Information to guide Senior Education and Training plans

At the three schools we visited, staff ran sessions to work individually with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their parents, guardians or carers to develop their Senior Education and Training plan. Schools held the sessions before, during and after school.

School staff had access to information about each students' interests, academic achievements, subject preferences, and career aspirations to help develop the plans. However, they did not have current information about skills demand by local industries and employers.



The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) coordinates with industries and employers across the state on new and upcoming construction, mining and tourism projects. However, DATSIP is not communicating information about upcoming employment opportunities and the skills needed to local schools to inform career planning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and help them with their Senior Education and Training plans.

### Student views

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students had negative views on the value of the Senior Education and Training planning process at the three schools we visited. We interviewed 49 senior students about the Senior Education and Training planning process. Students generally identified that improvements were needed in Senior Education and Training plan timing and the guidance provided.

The themes from the focus groups and interviews we conducted were:

- The process for subject selection needed more information sessions, including further pathway planning as part of the process.
- Planning should begin before Year 10, and continue to build in successive years leading up to the Senior Education and Training plan process.
- The process was rushed, with students not given enough time to properly consider the impact of their subject selections.
- Some students chose their subjects based on what their friends were doing, or the teachers they would like to have.

## Senior pathways

---

### Work, training or higher education

Senior students can choose different pathways to achieve their desired post-school destination. There are three main options with many variations to choose from: work, training and/or higher education. Students intending to go on to higher education at university will typically choose subjects that will make them eligible for an OP. Universities offer a tertiary place to about 80 per cent of students in the OP 1–15 range. Students may also gain entry to university without an OP. Students may access these alternative pathways through completion of qualifications at Certificate III level or above, or combinations of different types of senior studies, including Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority subjects, vocational education and training modules and the results of the Queensland Core Skills Test.

Students looking for an apprenticeship or trade can enrol in school-based training courses, apprenticeships, and traineeships.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to enrol in Certificate I and II courses, rather than higher level Certificate III or IV courses, or studying subjects that would allow them to get an OP. They are under-represented in the higher level academic courses.

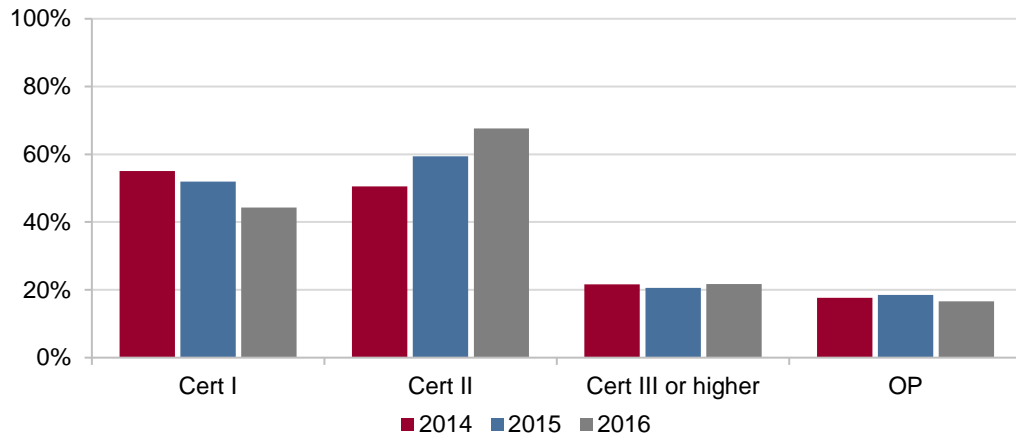
Figure 2K shows that the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing Certificate I vocational educational and training courses is decreasing, and the proportion completing Certificate II courses is increasing. However, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing higher level courses such as a Certificate III is stable. DET has identified factors that may contribute to this over representation.



They are:

- literacy and numeracy
- previous school achievement
- English as an additional language or dialect
- socio-economic background.

**Figure 2K**  
**Completion of vocational education and training courses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Year 12 graduates, 2014 to 2016**

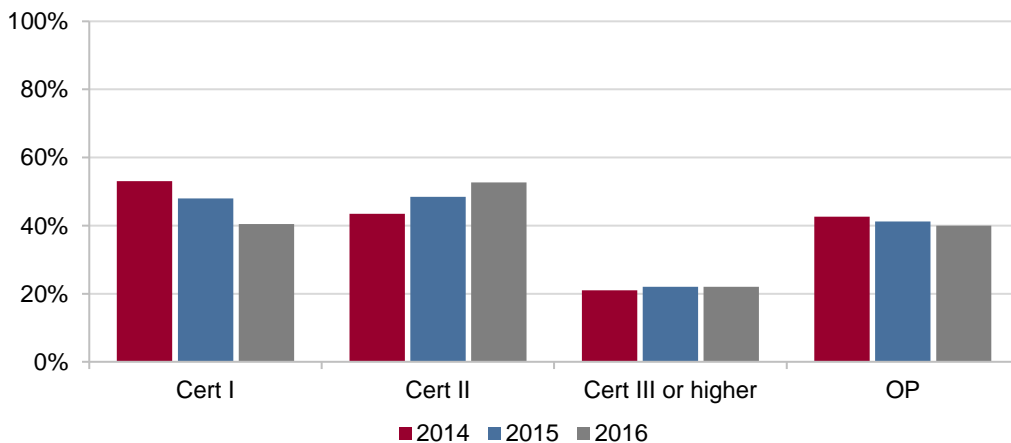


Source: Queensland Audit Office, based on Department of Education and Training data.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing courses that make them eligible for an Overall Position (OP) has decreased slightly in 2016 to 16.6 per cent from 17.7 per cent in 2014. The decrease is in the proportion of students receiving an OP in the 16–25 range. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the 1–15 range has increased. This follows a similar pattern for non-Indigenous students.

Figure 2L shows non-Indigenous students are more likely to be undertaking higher level courses that will make them eligible for an OP and access to university. In 2016, 40 per cent of non-Indigenous students were OP-eligible, compared with 16.6 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**Figure 2L**  
**Completion of vocational education and training courses, non-Indigenous students, 2014 to 2016**



Source: Queensland Audit Office, based on Department of Education and Training data.

At the three schools visited, school staff raised concerns with us that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were encouraged to undertake predominately Certificate I and II courses to obtain the needed credits to achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education.

Staff also raised concerns that students often had to attend vocational education and training sessions out-of-class and off-campus. In some cases, students were missing class for up to 10 days and staff raised concerns on students' ability to catch-up on their work for core subjects.

## Student engagement with schooling

---

### Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in schools

At the three schools we visited, staff, parents, and students identified that recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures was critical to improving student engagement.

The common themes from the interviews and focus groups were:

- Students valued opportunities for their parents and community to participate in school activities and events.
- Schools felt that parents were disengaged on the whole, parents felt the school only contacted them if their child was in trouble and the community felt the school did not see the importance of their participation.
- Teachers and students believed connecting to families and giving them practical knowledge on how to engage in the school was important. It helped them continue to support their children in their education and transition to employment.
- Teachers and students believed that the role of the school community education counsellor was critical to supporting engagement with parents and community members.
- Teachers, students, parents and community members valued the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee celebrations that had occurred at the schools.
- Staff and students commented that many students performed traditional dance at school events and ceremonies. Opportunities to dance help students feel engaged and like they belong to the school community.

DET internally monitors its programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a range of student and parent data including:

- student enrolment, attendance, behaviour and academic performance
- student retention and completion
- Year 12 Overall Position distribution
- early leaver and post-school destinations
- parent and student satisfaction with schooling.

DET does not, however, have internal or external data on the recognition of and connections to Aboriginal culture at schools. It does not measure whether schools' approaches are having an impact on maximising the chances of success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

### Resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

Schools have dedicated staff to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The role of the Community Education Counsellor (CEC) is to provide educational counselling and support services to ensure that the best possible assistance services are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students and communities. The CEC also has a responsibility to provide cross-cultural awareness training to the broader school community.

Since 2011, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in secondary schools has increased by 12 per cent. Over the same period the number of CEC staff allocated to schools by regions has decreased by 4.2 per cent. Schools have increased the number of CEC staff they fund themselves, from 15.9 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in 2013 to 28.7 FTE in 2017. In 2013, the department funded 78.6 per cent of CEC positions; this number dropped in 2017, to 66.1 per cent.

Community Education Counsellors are not the only resources in schools to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Schools have access to other funding, including 'Investing for Success' funds to make local decisions to achieve their priorities.

School staff raised concerns with us about the impact on their workload of providing individualised support programs for students. The Queensland Secondary Principals' Association (QSPA) in its submission also raised concerns about the impact on school staff of the additional workload.

*High, unrealistic expectations for 100% success of senior students, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has required schools to provide intensive resources to ensure that students complete programs required for Queensland Certificate of Education attainment. The resultant stresses on both the students and the school staff is of concern to the QSPA. The expectation of providing students opportunities to re-sit tests or resubmit assignments is adding to the workload of already busy staff.*

The Queensland Teachers' Union in its submission to the audit, recognised the significant outcomes being made and noted the efforts of its members to achieve them. However, it also raised concerns about the sustainability of the efforts and the need for additional resources.

*The incredible distance travelled here reflects the ongoing hard work and support of school leaders and teachers, in many cases without the additional support to make this happen.*

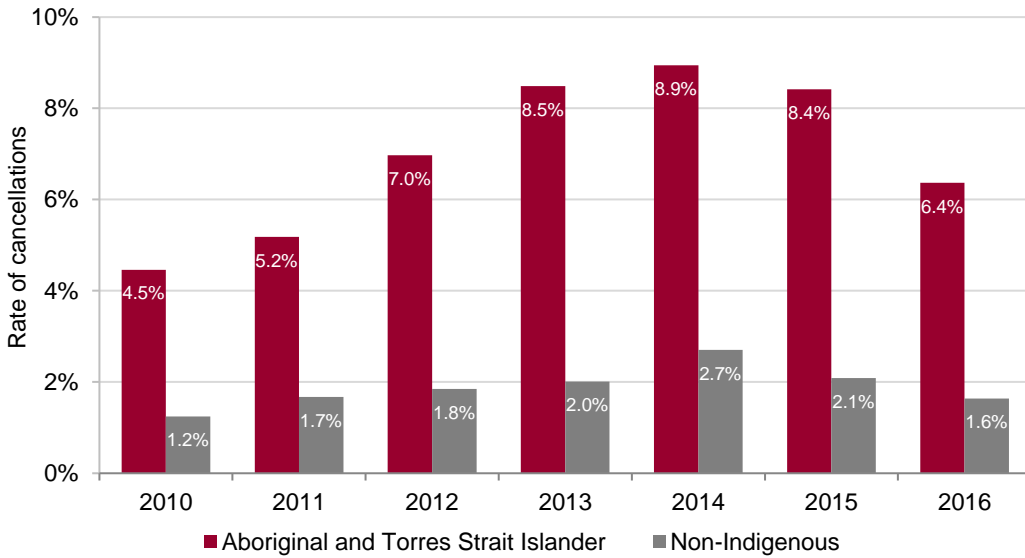
*While the successes so far are highly commendable, if this progress is to be sustained, and furthered, additional support to schools will be required. The Queensland Teachers' Union acknowledges the growing workload required in supporting at risk students to attain a Queensland Certificate of Education. In continuing these successes, additional support could be provided to assist classroom teachers and support staff in coordinating strategies and plans to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In this context, additional support could take the form of dedicated case managers.*

### Cancelling enrolments

DET monitors the level of senior student enrolments cancelled as an indicator of student engagement. The strategy and performance unit in DET creates quarterly reports at a regional and school level. Engaged students come to school regularly, go to classes, actively participate in their learning program and feel valued. If students do not engage with school, principals can cancel their enrolment.

The rate of enrolment cancellations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander senior students has increased over the last seven years, peaking in 2014, before the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment program began. Figure 2M shows that, in 2010, the rate of cancellations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 11 students was 4.5 per cent. The rate peaked in 2014 at 8.9 per cent and then dropped in 2016 to 6.4 per cent.

**Figure 2M**  
Rate of Year 11 state school student enrolment cancellations—2010 to 2016

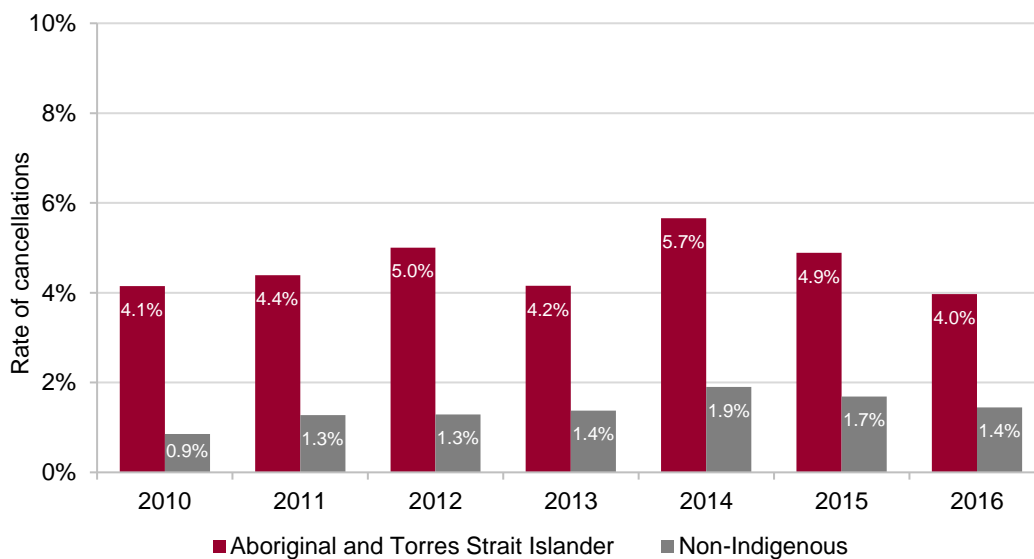


Note: 2016 data is provisional.

Source: Queensland Audit Office based on Department of Education and Training data.

Figure 2N shows that, in 2010, the rate of cancellations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 students was 4.1 per cent. The rates peaked in 2014 at 5.7 per cent and dropped in 2016 to 4 per cent. The rate of enrolment cancellations of non-Indigenous students has also changed over the same period, with a similar peak and decline.

**Figure 2N**  
Rate of Year 12 state school student enrolment cancellations—2010 to 2016



Note: 2016 data is provisional.

Source: Queensland Audit Office based on Department of Education and Training data.

Since the introduction of the Queensland Certificate of Education attainment project in 2015, the cancellation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have declined from the high rates in 2014. But Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are still three to four times more likely to have their enrolments cancelled than non-Indigenous students.



### 3. Transition to work, training and/or higher education

#### Chapter in brief

The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) has strategies and programs aimed at working towards the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) target of halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

In this chapter, we assess the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully transition from school into work, training, or further education. We also analyse opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to work for the Queensland Government and for Indigenous businesses to obtain procurement contracts.

#### Main findings

- The Department of Education and Training's (DET) post-destination school survey results indicate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students with a Queensland Certificate of Education are more likely to become employed or go on to further education. But overall, the increase in Year 12 attainment has not yet translated into youth employment growth for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly outside South East Queensland.
- DATSIP's Youth Employment Program is creating employment opportunities for some young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. DATSIP has found job placements through its Youth Employment Program for 2 661 post-Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, since the program started in 2015. However, DATSIP is unable to maximise coverage of the program due to the program restricting engagement with students to term 3, Year 12 students only.
- DATSIP's small business workshops are building the capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to successfully apply and obtain government contracts. In 2015, 20 per cent of the DATSIP workshop attendees registered for the Queensland Government contract system QTender.
- DATSIP has under reported the total value of contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses. Its methodology does not update past spending when it identifies new businesses. This raises the risk that stakeholders, including DATSIP's management, are relying on inaccurate data for decision-making purposes.
- Efforts to ensure that the Queensland public service reflects the diversity of the Queensland community have not been effective. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants has continued to decrease since 2012 to a 10-year low of 1.96 per cent of the public sector workforce.

## Introduction

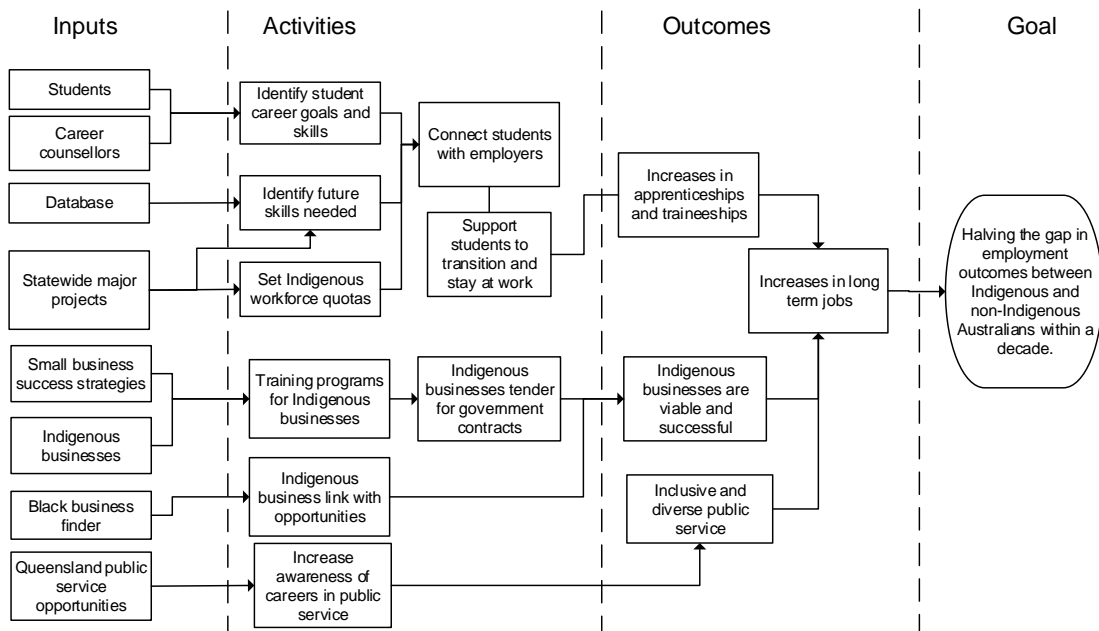
The Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) is responsible for improving the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Its strategies and programs work towards the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) target of halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

This chapter reports on our assessment of the:

- current employment gaps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people
- post-schooling destinations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people after finishing Year 12
- support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the year after they finish Year 12—the Youth Employment Program (YEP)
- programs and initiatives to provide opportunities to increase participation in the workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Figure 3A shows the inputs, activities and outcomes of current state government programs in Queensland to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people go from school into further training, higher education and work. The model does not include programs funded by the Australian Government as they are outside the scope of this audit.

**Figure 3A**  
**Logic model for supporting Indigenous young people to transition from school to work**



Source: Queensland Audit Office.

Research conducted by the Australian Research Council and Indigenous Business Australia, found that Indigenous businesses are more likely to employ an Indigenous person than non-Indigenous businesses. Indigenous entrepreneurship in Australia plays a central and growing role in the Indigenous economy in Australia and in reducing Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage in Australia.



DATSIP provides services to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to start new businesses and expand existing businesses. This includes business development workshops and raising awareness of Queensland Government procurement opportunities and careers in the public service.

## Audit conclusions

The gap in employment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is not closing, based on current trends. The state-funded employment programs to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to transition to work are not reaching enough students to have an impact on the unemployment rate. By focusing on high-achieving Year 12 students, the employment programs are not catering to the needs of the significant number of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who leave school before they complete Year 12.

DATSIP's strategies to support Indigenous businesses are effective in increasing the amount of government procurement contracts they are tendering and winning. However, due to shortcomings in the method of calculating expenditure, and errors in the data, DATSIP is not accurately reporting this information. Stakeholders, including DATSIP's management, rely on data in reports for decision-making purposes. The risk of not validating data for internal and external reporting is that stakeholders make poor decisions or judgements based on incorrect data.

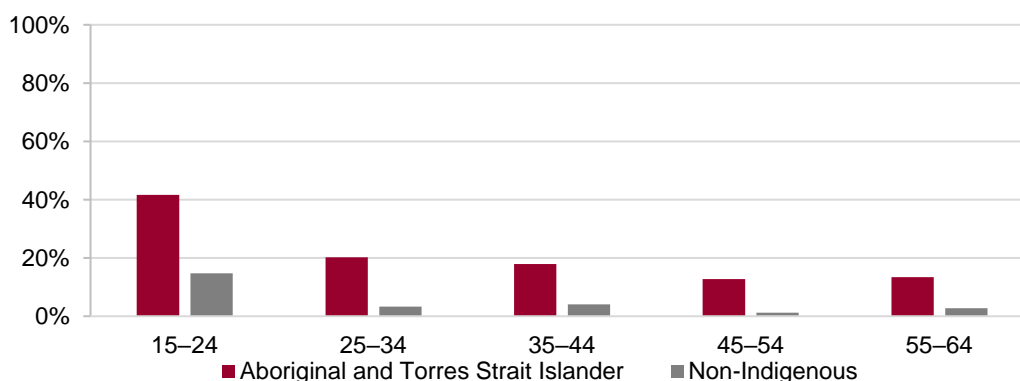
Overall the strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work in the public sector have not been effective in ensuring the public sector workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3 per cent of the population but only 1.96 per cent of the public sector workforce.

## Progress on closing the gap in employment outcomes

### Youth employment rates

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports labour force statistics each month on a sample basis. In 2014–15, it undertook a special collection, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey. Figure 3B shows the gap in unemployment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people, by age group. This data shows that youth unemployment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 26.9 percentage points higher than non-Indigenous youth. Despite the improvements in Year 12 attainment, there is a large gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous youth employment.

**Figure 3B**  
Estimates of unemployment rates, by age group, 2014–15



Note: Some estimates have a relative standard error of 25 per cent to 50 per cent and should be used as indicators only. Findings based on use of Australian Bureau of Statistics TableBuilder data.

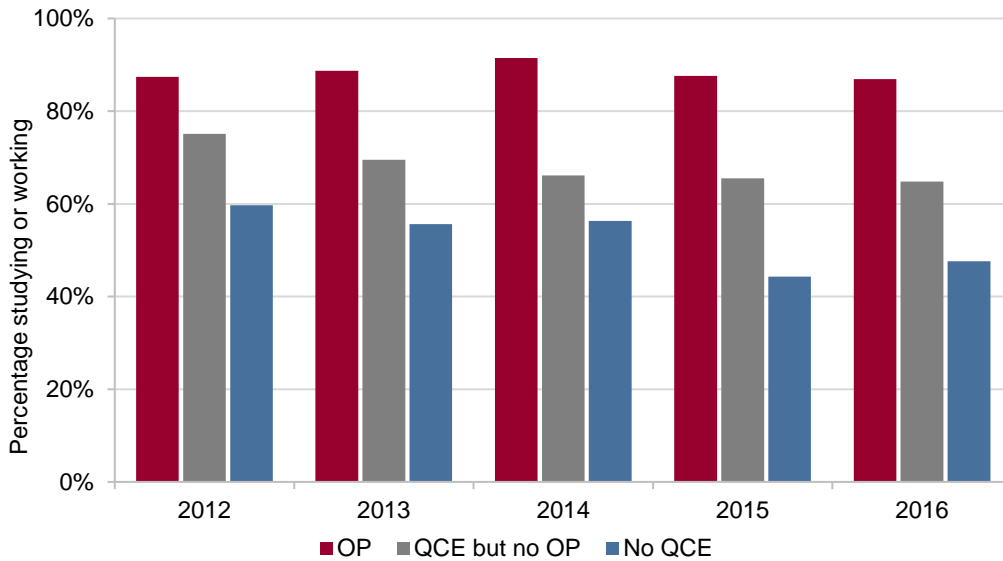
Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2014–15, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014–15.

### Post-school student destinations

The Department of Education and Training (DET) undertakes an annual survey—*Next Step* survey of students who completed Year 12 in the previous year in Queensland state and non-state schools. The survey aims to show the initial study and work destinations of students after completing school.

The post-school destination data shows a strong link between levels of education and employment. Figure 3C shows students who completed Year 12 with an overall position ranking (OP) were more likely to have jobs or be in higher education.

**Figure 3C**  
**Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander state school graduates, studying or working, 2012–2016**



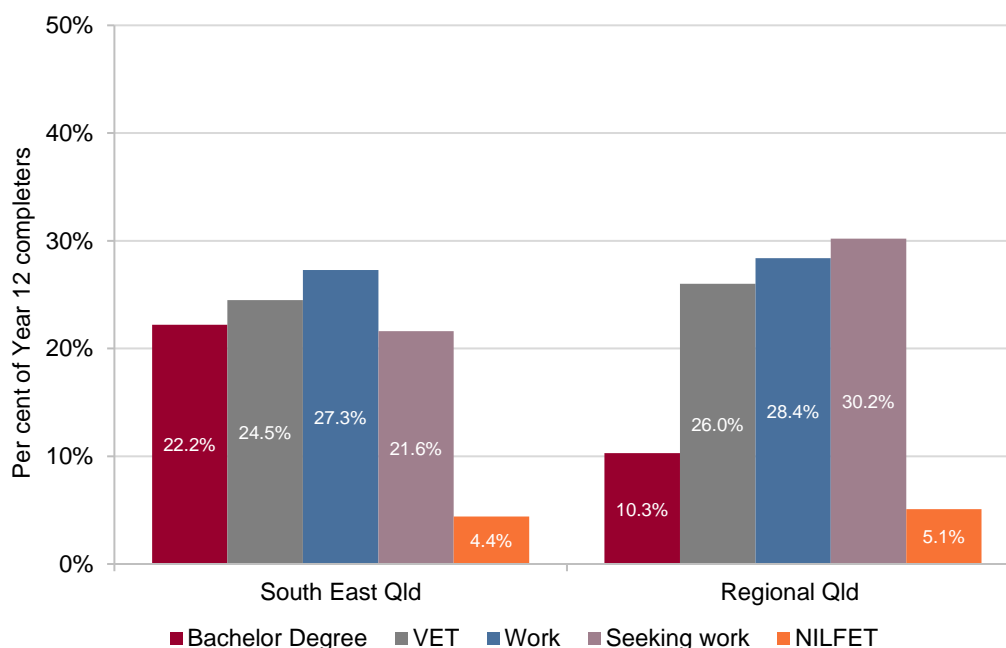
Note: OP is an Overall Position ranking, QCE is a Queensland Certificate of Education. Participation in the Next Steps Destination Survey is voluntary. The response rates are approximately 64 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and 81 per cent for non-Indigenous students.

Source: Queensland Audit Office, based on Department of Education and Training Next Steps Destination data.

Of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who achieved an OP in 2016, 86.9 per cent were either studying or working, compared with 64.8 per cent of students who only achieved a Queensland Certificate of Education but no OP. Less than half the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who graduated Year 12 without a Queensland Certificate of Education reported they were studying or working.

Post-schooling outcomes for Year 12 completers vary by location. Figure 3D compares the main destinations of Year 12 completers by Indigenous status from South East Queensland with those from regional areas. The rate of transition to further education and training was higher in South East Queensland than in regional areas. This is a consistent trend for the last five years. In 2016, 22.2 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in South East Queensland went on to study a bachelor degree compared with 10.3 per cent of students from regional areas.

**Figure 3D**  
**Main destination Year 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander state school students, South East Queensland/Regional Queensland, 2016**



Note: NILFET (Not in the labour force, education or training)—refers to people who were not working, not seeking work and not undertaking any education or training.

Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training—2016 Next Step survey.

At two schools we visited in a remote and rural area, parents and teachers raised concerns about the lack of transition support for students from remote areas. It made it difficult for students if they needed to leave home when they finish schooling. Parents considered the financial costs of moving away to look for work or study at university a barrier to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote areas. Programs at universities are a Commonwealth responsibility and, as such, were out of the scope of this audit.

Research from the Australian Council for Educational Research confirms that students from low socio-economic backgrounds, remote, regional and Indigenous students are more likely to have lower university completion rates than those in provincial centres, non-Indigenous, or from high socio-economic background.

The research also indicates that for students considering dropping out of university, disadvantaged students tend to cite financial matters, caring responsibilities, and issues relating to 'getting by' as reasons. More advantaged students are more likely to have reasons relating to choices that they had control over, such as wanting to 'change direction'.

## Support for students to find jobs

### Moving Ahead Strategy

In September 2016, the Queensland Government released its *Moving Ahead Strategy*. The goal is for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people to participate fully in Queensland's growing economy through skilling, training and employment, and business growth and development.

The strategy has 27 actions to drive specific improvements in economic participation outcomes—aligned with the following five priorities:

- Build a more skilled and diverse workforce—by offering additional assistance to develop the skills and confidence to get on a path to training, skilling and future employment.
- Focus on youth, and plan for future success—through YEP, the Solid Pathways Program and the Digital Careers Program.
- Build partnership with industry—by developing a whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy, the Building and Construction Training Policy, the Land and Sea Rangers program, and the Commonwealth Games.
- Increase entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation—by offering support and aid in building the skills and knowledge of Indigenous business owners and operators.
- Overcome barriers and realise opportunities to completion—by removing barriers that impede access to housing. Obtaining a driver's license and accessing education and training resources can assist individuals to gain meaningful employment and fully leverage current and future economic opportunities.

It is too early to assess the effectiveness or efficiency of the new actions in the strategy.

### Youth Employment Program

The Youth Employment Program was launched in May 2015, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully go from schools into training or employment pathways. DATSIP implements and manages the program with support from DET.

The Youth Employment Program aims to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers. DATSIP offers the program to schools in partnership with DET. It seeks to identify for students who have finished school pathways into employment, industry and business. The Youth Employment Program targets Year 12 school leavers, using a questionnaire to identify students' aspirations, career goals, and skills. It uses this information once students have completed Year 12 (referred to as Year 13) to match students to potential employers and jobs in their local area.

The program includes a career planning component called *Talk it Up*. Talk it Up assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to map out a career pathway. Its aims are to help students:

- understand what to expect at each phase of getting 'job ready'
- gain practical tools and tips for their job search journey
- become aware of what employers are seeking throughout the recruitment and selection process
- understand their interpersonal skills and how to use them to the fullest potential to secure a job
- map out a career pathway to find a job.

The Youth Employment Program includes a post-placement support process for successful job applicants. DATSIP team members follow up with each job placement after five days, 30 days and again after 90 days to provide cultural support and resolve any issues.

Figure 3E shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students registered with the Youth Employment Program and job placement numbers.

**Figure 3E**  
**Youth Employment Program—job outcomes**

Year	Number of new candidates registered	Number of Year 12 students—state schools	Registration rate	Number of candidates placed in jobs	Placement rate
2014 and 2015	2256	4196	53.8 %	2001	88.7 %
2016	1872	2192	85.4 %	660	35.3 %

Note: Data pre-2016 was stored in a legacy system and cannot be disaggregated by calendar year. Unaudited figures.

Source: Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between DATSIP and DET has been in place since October 2015. The purpose of the MOU is to guide collaboration and information sharing between the two departments.

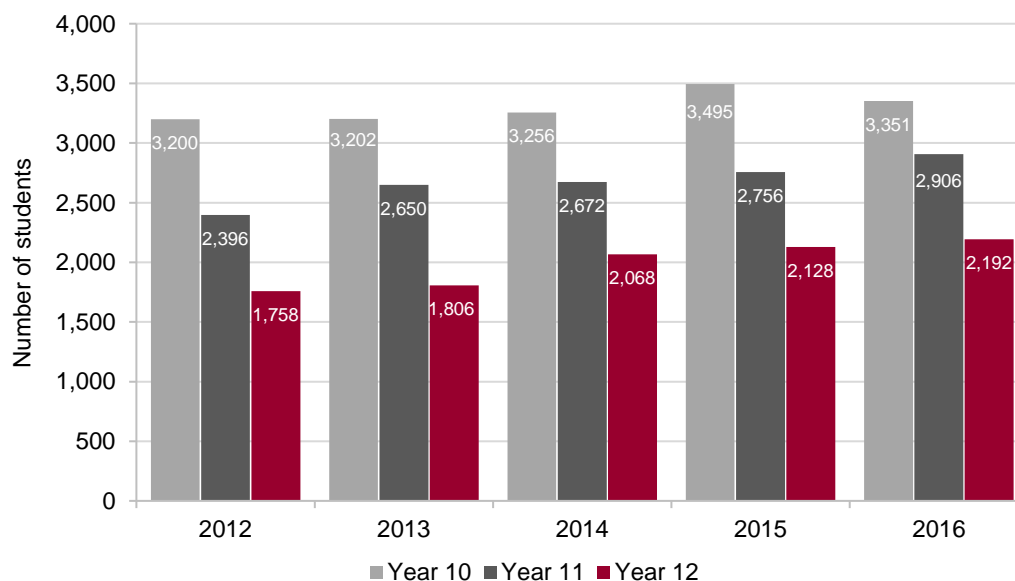
Teachers, support workers and students we spoke to raised concerns that engaging with Year 12 students in term 3 was too late. The reasons given were:

- Relationships are important culturally and take time to build.
- Students are making subject choices in Year 10 without knowledge of the local job market.

The current MOU with DET restricts engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to term 3 of Year 12. Meeting for the first time in term 3, Year 12 does not give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enough time to build effective relationships with the Youth Employment Program staff.

Early engagement in schools is also important as many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students leave school before starting Year 12. Figure 3F shows the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment levels in senior years. The enrolment numbers significantly decrease in Year 11 and Year 12 compared to Year 10.

**Figure 3F**  
**Number of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in senior years of education—2012–2016**



Source: Queensland Audit Office from Department of Education and Training data.

DATSIP uses its partnerships with the Department of Education and Training, industry and other businesses to identify pathways into employment for these students.

## Opportunities to participate in the workforce

---

There are a range of new and established state government strategies designed to increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in the workforce. The two strategies within the scope of this audit are the responsibility of DATSIP and the Public Service Commission. DATSIP offers support for Indigenous businesses. The Public Service Commission works to support the public service to be an inclusive and diverse workforce.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business workshops

DATSIP delivers enterprise development workshops that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business owners to:

- expand their business through government procurement
- submit conforming tenders
- clearly understand how government evaluates and awards tenders
- maximise their chances of winning contracts
- navigate critical websites to find key information
- learn more about available programs and services to help their business.

In 2015 and 2016, DATSIP ran 20 procurement and capability workshops for 203 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. It also ran three strategy workshops for 17 businesses. DATSIP ran the workshops across the state at centres such as Weipa, Dalby and the Gold Coast.

In 2015 and 2016, DATSIP evaluated the procurement and capability workshops. Respondents said the workshops they attended:

- were beneficial and useful
- improved their understanding about tendering for government tenders
- improved their confidence in tendering
- were well structured
- offered good opportunities to network with other business.

### Contracts awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and councils

In 2014–15, DATSIP reported that the value of Queensland Government procurement awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and councils was \$59.7 million. In 2015–16, DATSIP estimated that the expenditure had increased by \$130 million to more than \$170 million to 282 business and 12 Indigenous councils.

However, the way DATSIP reports the value of procurement awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and councils was inaccurate and incomplete due to double counting, omitting some procurement and a council, and excluding past procurement. We estimate that in 2015–16, the value of procurement to Indigenous businesses and councils was between \$195 million and \$268 million compared to the \$170 million DATSIP reported.

### Double counting

We found an error in the calculation of the 2015–16 figures. DATSIP did not validate the procurement expenditure data provided by the Department of Housing and Public Works to ensure that the data was reliable and fairly represented performance. The data provided by the Department of Housing and Public Works included duplicate expense transactions for some types of procurement.

In our *Report 1: 2016–17 Strategic Procurement* we found that the Procurement Transformation Division of the Department of Housing and Public Works used government departments' financial data to analyse procurement spend, but the data it used for its analyses was materially inaccurate and unreliable for informing strategic procurement decisions. The error led to an over-estimation of procurement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses of \$8.5 million. DATSIP has since corrected its expenditure data before including it in their annual report.

We recommended that Office of the Chief Advisor—Procurement and the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation collaborate with government departments to develop a procurement data strategy that identifies and assesses:

- what procurement data government departments need to record
- how procurement data should be categorised, ideally using a universally recognised categorisation approach
- cost-benefit of options for modifying existing systems to improve the quality and accessibility of procurement data from a central source.

The departments accepted our recommendation.

### Some procurement omitted

We calculated expenditure using the same listing of businesses as DATSIP and identified approximately \$195.0 million in procurement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and councils in 2015–16. The Department of Housing and Public works did not identify some types of procurement to the identified businesses. Our figures exclude corporate card and QFleet transactions.

### Council omitted

We identified an Indigenous council that won government contracts in 2015–16 not on DATSIP's list. The value of those contracts was \$22.9 million. Indigenous councils are major employers in remote and rural Indigenous communities and the value of procurement is a significant contribution to economic development for their communities.

### Excluding past procurement

DATSIP keeps a listing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and councils, which it updates quarterly with any newly identified businesses that meet the definition of an Indigenous business. It also removes businesses that no longer meet the definition or are no longer carrying on as a business. If DATSIP finds an eligible Indigenous business or council, during a quarter, it calculates the procurement expenditure from the start of the respective quarter. It does not confirm with the business the date from when the business met the eligibility criteria. This means DATSIP is unable to report on the value of past procurement.

Over quarters two, three and four of 2015–16, DATSIP identified 245 new businesses and councils. To date, DATSIP has been unable to confirm which of these businesses were eligible Indigenous businesses for all four quarters. We calculated the value of government procurement awarded these businesses and councils for the whole of 2015–16. We estimate that if these businesses and councils were eligible as Indigenous businesses and councils for the whole period there may have been as much as an additional \$50.7 million in procurement.



### Data sharing between government agencies

DATSIP collects and shares data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses with the Department of Housing and Public Works. It also shares data with Department of Education (DET) about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and students.

There are no formal agreements in place for data sharing between DATSIP and the other two departments. To share data effectively, agencies should agree on data definitions, roles and responsibilities for managing, sharing and quality assuring the data. The National Statistical Service recommends the establishment of formal data sharing agreements between relevant agencies to make sure sharing arrangements are clear. DATSIP has developed a schedule that lists the scope of data it requires from the Department of Housing and Public Works and DET but, at the time of the audit, it had not formalised this into any agreements.

### Public sector employment

The Queensland Government is one of the state's largest employers and offers a range of employment opportunities across Queensland. It can directly contribute to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment outcomes through its own operations.

Queensland Government has announced *Moving Ahead 2016–2022*—a whole-of-government strategy aimed at boosting opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. One of the initiatives included in the strategy is increasing the Queensland Government's proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to three per cent by 2022. Under the strategy, government asked all Queensland public sector departments to improve their existing practices in attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, to contribute to the aggregate target.

The leadership board of directors-general and commissioners, representing 22 agencies in the Queensland public service, agreed on 19 February 2016 to introduce targets for diverse groups. In January 2017, the Public Service Commission (PSC) also invited all government owned corporations, statutory authorities, public service offices and government entities (34 in total) to consider setting targets for diversity. By the closing date, eight of these organisations advised the PSC of their interest to participate.

The government has endorsed a three per cent target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the public sector workforce by 2022. It is too early to assess if the new target-setting strategy is effective in increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participation in the public sector workforce.

### Monitoring diversity targets

The Public Service Commission monitors and reports on diversity in the Queensland public service and publishes data periodically. It publishes the *Inclusion and diversity in the Queensland public sector* report. In early 2017, the PSC asked public servants to update their diversity data to get a better understanding of the true representation of employee groups, including those identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This report analyses the Equality of Employment Opportunity (EEO) profile of the Queensland public sector workforce, focusing on four target groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- women
- people from a non-English speaking background
- people with disability.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are under-represented at higher salary levels and in professional roles.



Figure 3G shows that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees' representation in the Queensland public sector has continued to decline since 2012 (2.2 per cent), and is now at the lowest rate in 10 years at 1.96 per cent, as at 30 March 2016.

**Figure 3G**  
**Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees**  
**in the Queensland public sector—2012–2016**

Year	Public sector employees identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	
	Number	Per cent
2012	5 364	2.20
2013	4 983	2.16
2014	4 859	2.10
2015	4 862	2.02
2016	4 895	1.96

Note: 2016 data is to the end of March.

Source: Public Service Commission MOHRI data.

To meet the Queensland Government's target of three per cent, we estimate that the number of extra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees needed in the Queensland public sector is approximately 2 600 by 2022. This is an increase of 53.1 per cent from 2016. This estimate assumes that the total size of the Queensland public sector stays at similar levels of 2016 (249 745 employees) and all current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the Queensland public sector in 2016 (4 895 employees) stay until 2022.

#### Graduate recruitment programs

Some departments are undertaking initiatives directed at improving the current low levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the Queensland public sector. Figure 3H is a case study of how the Department of the Premier and Cabinet designed its graduate program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

### Figure 3H Case study

#### Graduate recruitment program at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet

As part of the 2017 intake of the Policy Futures Graduate Program, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) committed to increasing the number of applications from those who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent as well as offering placements to at least two candidates.

In March 2016, DPC began its recruitment campaign and focused on targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advertising through:

- online graduate job boards
- promotion within university-run Indigenous career units
- the use of personal and professional networks.

DPC received 19 applications from candidates who identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, which equated to 1.3% of total applications. The team emailed each candidate offering to meet them to better support applicants who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to:

- provide them with information about the program
- demystify the selection process and to start building a relationship with the applicants.

Of the 19 applicants, 12 took up the opportunity to meet with a member of the program team and were offered ongoing support throughout the selection process. This led to an increase in completion at all stages of the selection process, compared with 2015.

- 15 completed cognitive testing and 13 completed video screening
- 10 attended assessment centres
- 7 attended interviews and 3 were successful (which is approximately 10% of roles offered).

*Source: Queensland Audit Office from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.*

# Appendices

<b>Appendix A—Full responses from agencies</b> .....	<b>54</b>
Comments received from Director-General, Department of Education and Training.....	55
Comments received from Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.....	60
Comments received from Commission Chief Executive (Acting), Public Service Commission .....	65
<b>Appendix B—Audit objectives and method</b> .....	<b>67</b>
Entities subject to this audit .....	67
<b>Appendix C—Specific programs for senior students</b> .....	<b>69</b>
Solid Pathways .....	69
Academic Success Guarantee .....	69
Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE) .....	69
Clontarf.....	70

## Appendix A—Full responses from agencies

---

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to:

- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Public Service Commission.

The head of these agencies are responsible for the accuracy, fairness and balance of their comments.

This appendix contains their detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

## Comments received from Director-General, Department of Education and Training



Office of the  
**Director-General**

Department of  
**Education and  
Training**

22 JUN 2017

Mr Anthony Close  
Acting Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office

Email: [gao@gao.qld.gov.au](mailto:gao@gao.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Close

Thank you for your letter dated 1 June 2017 regarding the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) Performance Audit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Employment outcomes.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a response to the proposed report and the courtesy the QAO has extended to my officers throughout its development.

I am very pleased to see the proposed report acknowledges recent efforts in closing the gap in Year 12 attainment and improving apparent retention rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students since 2012.

I accept the three recommendations in the report focused on the Department of Education and Training (DET). We will work with schools and other key stakeholders to improve the Senior Education and Training Plan process, strengthen retention rates, and enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and cultural recognition within schools. DET's formal response to these recommendations is enclosed for your consideration and inclusion in the final report.

DET is already putting in place actions that align with these recommendations, including:

- the recently released Youth Engagement Plan, which has 13 strategic actions to support re-engagement of at-risk and disengaged students with education, training or employment;
- development of a cultural capability actionable playbook to guide evidence-informed improvement in development of school staff; and
- development of an online tool to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with training and employment opportunities.

DET is also committed to working with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships on the recommendations relating to the Youth Employment Program and re-engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with education or training.

Level 37 1WS  
1 William Street Brisbane  
Queensland 4000 Australia  
PO Box 15033 City East  
Queensland 4002 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3034 4754  
Facsimile +61 7 3034 4769  
Website [www.det.qld.gov.au](http://www.det.qld.gov.au)  
ABN 76 337 613 647

2

Relevant actions will be outlined in the final *Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training Action Plan*.

It is disappointing the report does not more fully recognise the significant role of all school and regional support staff such as Queensland Certificate of Education coaches in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student Year 12 outcomes. National comparisons in outcomes might also have highlighted the significant progress being made in Queensland.

Should you require any further information or wish to discuss the details of this letter, I invite you to contact Mr Andrew Walker, Executive Director, Indigenous Policy and Strategic Innovation, on telephone 3034 5933 or by email at [andrew.walker@det.qld.gov.au](mailto:andrew.walker@det.qld.gov.au).

I thank you and the audit team for your work on this important matter and consideration of DET's feedback throughout the audit.

Yours sincerely



**DR JIM WATTERSTON**  
**Director-General**

Ref: 17/281428

Enc

## Responses to recommendations

---



Department of Education and Training, Education and  
Employment Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People  
(Report No. 19: 2016–17)

Response to recommendations, provided by the Department of Education and Training.



Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Education and Training (DET):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. improves the Senior Education and Training planning process. (Chapter 2)</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements should include a process at the end of Year 11 for schools to review all student files to ensure that they have a Senior Education and Training plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Q2 2018</p>	<p>The Senior Education and Training (SET) plan procedure was reviewed and updated in April 2017. This new procedure requires schools to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that students in Year 10 develop a SET plan in partnership with their parents.</li> <li>• ensure students are supported to acquire the skills and knowledge to develop their SET plan and to revise it during their studies.</li> <li>• review and update the SET Plan as necessary and transfer to another learning provider (as appropriate) when required.</li> <li>• record all SET plans in OneSchool.</li> <li>• ensure that Indigenous support networks are used to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in consultation with their families and communities to consider a range of options for making suitable pathways after school.</li> <li>• devise a review cycle and ensure students are provided with the opportunity to review their SET plans, and supported through the process.</li> <li>• ensure that the review of SET plans takes into consideration students' eligibility to achieve the Queensland Certificate of Education or the Queensland Certificate of Individual Achievement.</li> </ul> <p>The Department will work closely with schools to support and monitor awareness and implementation of the new procedure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DET should also develop a standard OneSchool report to identify students that do not have a Senior Education and Training plan.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree</p>	<p>Q2 2018</p>	<p>A standard OneSchool report will be developed to identify students that do not have a SET plan, pending consideration of technical feasibility.</p>





Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation	Additional comments
		(Quarter and year)	
<p>2. develops additional strategies and materials to support continued improvements in retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage with schooling and successfully complete Year 12 (Chapter 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies to improve retention rates of Indigenous students should be developed in cooperation with DATSIP to better link with employment outcomes.</li> <li>• The impact of the strategies to improve retention rates should be reported publicly in DET accountability reports.</li> </ul>	Agree	Q4 2017	<p>DET recently released its Youth Engagement Plan. This has thirteen strategic actions of benefit to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and young people through a range of supports, including case management and programs to re-engage at-risk and disengaged students with education, training or employment.</p> <p>Other strategies being pursued by DET to increase retention will be detailed in the final Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training action plan.</p> <p>DATSIP is best placed to provide information for school staff on local job opportunities and industry demand specifically targeted to Indigenous students to inform SET planning processes with students.</p> <p>DET will publicly report Year 10 to Year 12 apparent retention rates (including disaggregation by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status) in relevant reports (such as the DET Annual Report).</p>
<p>3. monitors and reports on the effectiveness of school strategies to engage with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community and recognise Indigenous cultures. (Chapter 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DET should consider culturally appropriate ways to engage with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine the level of school engagement.</li> </ul>	Agree	Q1 2018	<p>DET will continue to undertake the School Opinion Survey.</p> <p>DET is undertaking work to build cultural capability in state schools, including development of a cultural capability actionable playbook to guide evidence-informed improvement for the cultural competency development of state school staff, and development of a continuum tool to assess and report on schools' cultural capability journey.</p>

## Comments received from Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships



Department of  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander Partnerships

Our reference: DATSIP 03329-2017

26 JUN 2017

Mr Anthony Close  
Acting Auditor-General  
Queensland Audit Office  
PO Box 15396  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Close

I refer to your letter of 1 June 2017 regarding the proposed report to Parliament for the Performance Audit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and employment Outcomes.

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the recommendations in the report. I am pleased to advise that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) accepts all three recommendations outlined in the report.

DATSIP acknowledges the work undertaken by the Queensland Audit Office in the performance of this audit and the focus it brings to highlighting achievements and opportunities to improve economic participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

DATSIP aims to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people in the Queensland economy by delivering policies, programs and services that result in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering and actively participating in the workforce and accessing opportunities to supply goods and services to the public sector and industry.

DATSIP achieves this through partnerships it develops with other Queensland Government agencies, the Commonwealth and Local Governments, industry and communities, and providing leadership to the Queensland Government on actions that enhance employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Further, DATSIP works closely with the Public Service Commission and other agencies to work towards a three per cent representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across the public service by 2022.

DATSIP's Youth Employment Program (YEP) is creating job opportunities for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, the report states the maximum benefits from YEP may not be realised as DATSIP's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through YEP begins in Term 3 of Year 12. This engagement has been outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DATSIP and DET and both departments are committed to renegotiating the terms of the MoU.

1 William Street Brisbane  
PO Box 15397 City East  
Queensland 4002 Australia  
Telephone: +61 7 3003 6451  
[www.datsip.qld.gov.au](http://www.datsip.qld.gov.au)  
ABN: 73882262700

-2-

However, it must be acknowledged that early engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by DATSIP will require additional resourcing which is currently not available. DATSIP will explore how early engagement will impact on current deliverables.

The report also highlighted issues with collecting and reporting Queensland Government procurement awarded to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. To address the identified shortcomings, DATSIP has begun developing a methodology for collecting the Queensland Government spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses. DATSIP will consult with relevant agencies about data collection and reporting. This consultation will also investigate appropriate mechanisms for formalising quality assurance, sharing and reporting data.

Please find enclosed DATSIP's response to the recommendations of the report.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Helena Wright, Deputy Director-General, Culture and Economic Participation, DATSIP on 3003 6311.

Yours sincerely



Clare O'Connor  
**Director-General**

Enc. (1)

## Responses to recommendations

---



Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Education and Employment Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Report No. 19: 2016–17)

Response to recommendations provided by Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.



Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commences early engagement on the Youth Employment Program (YEP) (Chapter 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The memorandum of understanding for the Youth Employment Program between the Department of Education and Training (DET) and DATSIP should be jointly reviewed by both agencies to facilitate ease of access to schools.</li> <li>Engagement should commence before students undertake the Senior Education and Training plan and should be informed by local job opportunities.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Quarter 2, 2018 (June 2018)</p>	<p>DATSIP and DET have commenced discussions on the renegotiation of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).</p> <p>DET/DATSIP are investigating the possibility of YEP being presented to students at Senior Education and Training (SET) Planning in order for parents and young people at-risk to be more informed about YEP and post-school opportunities. This approach would also ensure parents sign and complete consent forms and that they are returned to DATSIP.</p> <p>Early engagement is resource intensive in its implementation and application. DATSIP engagement with Year 10 students during the SET Planning process will require careful consideration of resourcing given the current level of delivery expectations of regional staff.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviews, in collaboration with DET, how its existing suite of economic development strategies supports disengaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who leave school early, to re-engage with education and training (Chapter 3):                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The review should include the scope of programs to support disengaged young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who leave school early, in collaboration with DET to identify ways to support students to stay at school.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Quarter 2, 2018 (June 2018)</p>	<p>DATSIP would support the recommendation that a review should be done and are of the opinion this review should be led by DET as they have responsibility for school attendance and retentions of students.</p>



Recommendation	Agree / Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and year)	Additional comments
----------------	------------------	--	---------------------

<p>3. Develops a robust methodology to report on the Queensland Government's Indigenous procurement expenditure, to ensure that data on procurement to Indigenous businesses is accurate and complete as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DATSIP should formalise MoUs with other agencies it collects data from to report publicly, particularly procurement data.</li> </ul>	Agreed	Quarter 4, 2017 (December 2017)	<p>DATSIP has commenced the development of a methodology to collate and report Queensland Government spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned businesses, incorporating the issues raised in this report.</p> <p>DATSIP will investigate the most appropriate approach to access data with all relevant agencies and where appropriate, will seek to document and formalise these relationships to ensure a predictable, sustainable and coherent data management and reporting regime is established and maintained, particularly in the context of Queensland Government procurement spend data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.</p>
--	--------	------------------------------------	--



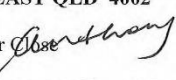
## Comments received from Commission Chief Executive (Acting), Public Service Commission



Public Service Commission

Please quote: **TF/17/7638**

Mr Anthony Close  
Auditor-General (acting)  
Queensland Audit Office  
PO Box 15396  
**CITY EAST QLD 4002**

Dear Mr 

### **Performance audit on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and employment outcomes**

Thank you for your letter of 1 June 2017 regarding the preliminary draft of the above audit and for the opportunity to comment on the proposed report to Parliament in June 2017.

In August 2016 the Queensland Government Chief Executive Officer Leadership Board established service-wide diversity targets for which they are accountable through the Chief Executive Performance Framework.

The target for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce is 3% by 2022. The Public Service Commission (PSC) continues to work with agencies to embed inclusion and diversity in the Queensland Government workforce and workplaces. As referenced in the proposed report, one initiative was a *Diversity Data Drive* in February 2017 to improve the quality of data on people identifying as of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

The March 2017 Queensland Public Service Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI) collection indicates that 2.04 per cent of people identify as of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Together with the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP), the PSC is working towards increasing the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in senior leadership positions through a co-designed approach to building an Indigenous leadership talent pool.

Also in partnership with DATSIP, the PSC is exploring options to formally partner with universities to improve the potential pipeline of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates into the Queensland Government.

Level 27, 1 William Street Brisbane  
PO Box 15190 City East  
Queensland 4002 Australia  
Telephone +61 7 3003 2800  
Facsimile +61 7 3224 2635  
Website [www.psc.qld.gov.au](http://www.psc.qld.gov.au)  
ABN 73 289 606 743

The PSC is also consulting widely to develop a sector-wide Youth Employment Strategy, aimed at improving entry pathways to government for 15 – 24 year olds who are unemployed or underemployed. Included in the target groups are Aboriginal youth and Torres Strait Islander youth.

These service-wide initiatives will further support agencies to achieve their commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation of 3 per cent by 2022.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

  
Robert Setter  
**Commission Chief Executive (Acting)**



## Appendix B—Audit objectives and method

The objective of the audit was to determine whether Queensland is reducing the gap in education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The audit addressed the objective through the sub-objectives and lines of inquiry set out in Figure B1.

**Figure B1**  
**Sub-objective and lines of inquiry**

Sub-objectives		Lines of inquiry	
1	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attain the high school education standard they need to be employable.	1.1	Does Queensland Government contribute effectively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing Year 12 or equivalent?
2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students transition successfully to employment or to further education and then employment.	2.1	Are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students well prepared to participate in the workforce?
		2.2	Do staff who support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to the resources and information they need to successfully transition from education to work?
3	The gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is on track to halve by 2019.	3.1	Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people actively and equitably participate in the private and public service workforces?
		3.2	Do state and local government procurement processes benefit employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses?
		3.3	Is Queensland's forecast contribution towards the 2019 national target on Indigenous employment outcomes realistic and achievable?

Source: Queensland Audit Office.

### Entities subject to this audit

- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- Department of Education and Training
- Queensland Public Service Commission.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Auditor-General of Queensland Auditing Standards—September 2012, which incorporate the requirements of standards issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.

The audit was conducted between May 2016 and March 2017. The audit included interviews with:

- Department of Education and Training (DET) staff from the Office of State Schools Indigenous Education and Indigenous Policy and Strategic Innovation unit
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) staff from the Office of Culture Social Policy and Economic Participation
- Public Service Commission (PSC) staff from the performance analytics and workforce strategy teams.

The audit analysed a range of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and employment, including:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics census data and samples
- DET data on student and school performance
- DATSIP data on employment outcomes and Indigenous businesses
- Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority data on Year 12 participation and completion
- PSC data from the Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information collection.

We visited three communities across the state and conducted interviews with school leaders, teachers, counsellors and students. We also held forums with parents, community members and employers. The team included consultants with experience and expertise in engaging with Indigenous communities in culturally sensitive ways.

## Appendix C—Specific programs for senior students

---

### Solid Pathways

Solid Pathways is an academic extension program that supports high achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. DET funds the program. The program aims to assist students continue their academic success from Year 4 to Year 12 through higher order thinking skills.

To be eligible for Solid Pathways students must:

- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- achieve in the upper two bands of NAPLAN domains of reading and/or numeracy in Year 3.

In 2016, there were 623 students in the Solid Pathways program from 1 577 eligible students (39.5 per cent participation rate). Students join in weekly one-hour culturally inclusive web-conference lessons designed to develop their capability in critical and creative thinking. Lessons aim to connect students with other high achieving students from schools across the following four regions—Metropolitan, South East, North Coast and Darling Downs South West.

The students can engage in year level appropriate face-to-face workshops, camps and extension activities that align with the Australian Curriculum and expand on the material taught to students in their online lessons.

In February 2015, an evaluation of the Solid Pathways program found that the program has the potential to meet its long-term goals. To maximise its success, improvements to the program could include better ongoing monitoring and administration of the activities.

### Academic Success Guarantee

Academic Success Guarantee aims to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a high attendance rate will meet or beat their year level benchmarks. DET funds the program. Academic Success Guarantee involves a signed service commitment between the parents and the school outlining:

- for parents—if you want your child to be successful send them to school
- for schools—if students come to school every day then the schools must do whatever it takes to help them be successful.

By working in partnership with parents, the school individually case manages the students who do not meet their year level benchmarks. The school reviews students' progress and attendance data on a regular basis, which enables early intervention and remediation of difficulties.

### Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education (ARTIE)

The Australian Government funds the Former Origin Greats ARTIE (Achieving Results Through Indigenous Education) Academy to assist to close the gap in educational outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their non-Indigenous peers.

It provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending Queensland secondary schools within Central Queensland, Caboolture, Brisbane, Ipswich and Logan regions, the opportunity to participate in a program that encourages and rewards improvements in school attendance, behaviour, academic achievement, effort and ultimately Year 12 attainment or its equivalent. The ARTIE Academy currently operates in 16 schools across Queensland supporting over 2 000 students.

Using innovative approaches to capture the attention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, the ARTIE Academy aims to operate with and create high expectations for effort, behaviour, achievement and commitment. The ARTIE Academy's fundamental vision is to inspire its participants, encourage and inform students of their progress, celebrate their successes, and provide academic assistance in literacy and numeracy through the ARTIE Academy Tutoring Program.

The ARTIE program provides incentives and rewards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to have 90 per cent attendance and pass their studies. Students not meeting the mandated standards are case managed to support them to meet attendance and learning thresholds.

## Clontarf

The Clontarf Foundation's role is to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and, by doing so, equip them to participate meaningfully in society. The program is funded by the Australian Government, relevant states and territories, and corporate and philanthropic sectors.

Since opening its first academy for 25 boys in 2000, the foundation has grown to cater for about 4 700 boys in 84 schools across Queensland, Northern Territory, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia.

The foundation uses the passion that Aboriginal boys have for football to attract them into school and keep them there. A network of football academies deliver the programs in partnership with local schools. Any Aboriginal male enrolled at the school is eligible to participate in the Clontarf Academy.

Full-time, locally based Clontarf staff mentor and counsel students on a range of behavioural and lifestyle issues, while the school caters for their educational needs. Using a comprehensive approach of supportive relationships, a welcoming environment, and a diverse range of activities, the students develop improved self-esteem and confidence.

Upon completing the program, Specialist Employment Officers assist the graduates to find employment. The Specialist Employment Officers provide support until graduates become comfortable with their new jobs and surroundings.

# Auditor-General reports to parliament

## Reports tabled in 2016–17

Number	Title	Date tabled in Legislative Assembly
1.	Strategic procurement	September 2016
2.	Forecasting long-term sustainability of local government	October 2016
3.	Follow-up: Monitoring and reporting performance	November 2016
4.	Criminal justice system—prison sentences	November 2016
5.	Energy: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
6.	Rail and ports: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
7.	Water: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
8.	Queensland state government: 2015–16 results of financial audits	December 2016
9.	Hospital and Health Services: 2015–16 results of financial audits	January 2017
10.	Efficient and effective use of high value medical equipment	February 2017
11.	Audit of Aurukun school partnership arrangement	February 2017
12.	Biosecurity Queensland's management of agricultural pests and diseases	March 2017
13.	Local government entities: 2015–16 results of financial audits	April 2017
14.	Criminal justice system—reliability and integration of data	April 2017
15.	Managing performance of teachers in Queensland state schools	April 2017
16.	Government advertising	May 2017
17.	Organisational structure and accountability	May 2017
18.	Universities and grammar schools: 2016 results of financial audits	June 2017
19.	Security of critical water infrastructure	June 2017
20.	Education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	June 2017

[www.gao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/parliament](http://www.gao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/parliament)