

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this thesis may contain images of deceased people.

The Development of Aboriginal Education Policy in Australia – Voices of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC)

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Newcastle
Australia**

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed: Leanne Holt

Dated: July, 2016

Abstract

If there is going to be harmony between our two societies then it will have to be through education. When white people have a better awareness of Aboriginals then maybe our kids will have a better time. Stephen Albert. (Ohlsson, 1977, p. 2)

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands in which this thesis is connected, is written on and is examined on. I pay my respect to the Elders past and present who have and continue to pass on their knowledge and wisdom for the sustainability of our environment, our culture and our education.

Responding to the activist movements of the 1960s, the Commonwealth Government introduced new policy directions that called for the Self-Determination and Self-Management of Aboriginal peoples; to have a strong voice in their own future directions and their own affairs. Education was no exception. In 1973 the *Schools in Australia Report* identified the poor educational conditions and outcomes of Aboriginal children (Karmel, 1973). In 1977 the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) was established. The new Committee was to ensure a national Aboriginal voice in the development and implementation of Aboriginal education programs, initiatives and policies across all levels of education for Aboriginal people. The NAEC was active until 1989.

The 1970s and 1980s transpired to be a fundamental time for Aboriginal affairs and Aboriginal education. Past policies had stifled Aboriginal people's progression socially and academically, resulting in extremely low educational outcomes. The 1980s witnessed the biggest growth in the access and participation of Aboriginal people in all levels of education in nearly 200 years.

Through the voices of the NAEC members, this study maps the journey of the NAEC and the major priorities at this time. The study also determines the impact of the NAEC on the development of national Aboriginal education policy that would lead the future directions and strategies for the access, participation, retention and success of Aboriginal people through education.

An Indigenous methodology that included storytelling is applied to the study. Storytelling is vital in Aboriginal communities to teach and pass on important lessons. Throughout this study participants, as co-researchers, assisted me in sharing their stories that respond to the research question posed in the thesis – *How did the NAEC contribute to the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia?*

The study revealed that the NAEC contributed significantly to the development of Aboriginal education policy, establishing structures and relationships that empowered Aboriginal communities to have a voice in decision making related to Aboriginal education. This resulted in significant educational outcomes for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal communities that were sustained after the NAEC was abolished.

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Importantly I acknowledge my family and friends; especially my husband and two wonderful children Tanisha and Jaiden for their love, inspiration and patience that allowed me to prioritise my PhD over family commitments and responsibilities.

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To all the people throughout my life that have inspired me, believed in me and contributed to my personal growth to get me where I am today, I thank you.

This thesis is dedicated to Indigenous people across the world that have fought to have their voices heard for the benefit of present and future Indigenous generations who need to keep up the fight through being strong, proud and resilient – with big voices.

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Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau Statistics
ABSTUDY	Aboriginal Study Grants
ACG	Aboriginal Consultative Group
AECG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
AEO	Aboriginal Education Officer
AECC	Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee
AEP	Aboriginal Education Policy
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ASC	Australian Schools Commission
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CAE	College of Advanced Education
CDC	Curriculum Development Committee
CTEC	Curriculum Tertiary Education Commission
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs
EEATSIT	Education and Employment Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers
ERDC	Education, Research and Development Committee
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
NAC	National Aboriginal Committee
NACC	National Aboriginal Consultative Committee
NAEC	National Aboriginal Education Committee
NITE	National Inquiry into Teacher Education
SCG	State Consultative Groups
TAFE	Tertiary and Adult Further Education

Chapter 1

Introduction

200 years of nothing - 40 years of something really good. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

I have long listened to my Elders and mentors talk of a world of oppression, cultural genocide, the removal of our country, the stripping of culture and identity and the denial of our right to our traditional education systems whilst also denying us access to a Western education.

Yet, here I sit, an Aboriginal person, having been to high school, TAFE and University. Who provided me and my people this privilege of an education that enables me to take on the responsibility of contributing to my communities? A privilege those before me were denied.

Recently, Stan Grant, an Aboriginal journalist, made an inspirational speech during a debate entitled, *Racism is destroying the Australian dream*. In this context he gives reasons for his own success, claiming:

I have succeeded in spite of the Australian dream and I succeeded because of those people. (Grant, 2016)

‘Those people’ he refers to are his ancestors. They were denied an education and treated as the lowest class race in Australia; not even recognised as citizens until the late 1960s. ‘Those people’, through their resilience gave us pride and a future as Aboriginal people. They are responsible for today’s opportunities. Our Elders and expert knowledge holders are still the people who will continue to ensure our cultural and educational survival.

1.1 The Story Begins

My thesis titled, *The Development of Aboriginal Education Policy in Australia – Voices of the National Aboriginal Education Committee* investigates the contribution of Aboriginal people to the development of national Aboriginal education policy in Australia during the period of 1975 to 1989.

Since time immemorial, education has been integral to the progress and sustainability of every society, including Aboriginal society. Djagamara, quoted in Parbury (1991), compares the nature of traditional Aboriginal learning and a Western learning system:

My father really does know a lot about education. I'm not saying Aboriginal education is better than the European, I'm just saying he knows more than I do.... We have our Aboriginal degrees. Like Europeans obtain in the universities, we have the same kind of thing in our Aboriginal education. Now my father, I think would have about 30 degrees – myself, at this time, only eight. Every degree you obtain gets harder. You not only grow up to be a man or woman in Aboriginal society. As you go along you take up more responsibility and learn as you go. (p. 16)

The effect of colonisation on the education of Aboriginal people in Australia was catastrophic (Parbury, 1991). Until the late 1960s restrictions and disempowerment, brought about by the policies and laws of the colonisers, resulted in an educational success rate that was dismal. In 1971, the population of Aboriginal people in Australia was calculated at approximately 150,000. The majority of the working population was employed in either agriculture or community service. At this time there were approximately 40,000 Aboriginal students in school education and about 55 Aboriginal people attending universities across the country (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975). Stephen Albert (1978), inaugural Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), illuminates the long-term disempowerment of Aboriginal people in education, declaring:

Since 1788, the Aborigines of Australia have been subjected in varying degrees to an education system which has aimed to rationalise their dispossession from the land, deprecate their culture and, in general, endeavour to make the indigenous people of this country lose their own rich cultural background and think, act and hold the same values as middle-class Europeans. (p. 1)

Until the 1970s colonial policies were introduced in Australia to control, assimilate and civilise Aboriginal people; this resulted in removing access to a rigorous traditional education system, while effectively denying access to Western education (Parbury, 1991). The *Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty* stated that Aboriginal people had the lowest outcomes in all

aspects of their lives, including living conditions, health and education, of any Australian peoples (Sackville, 1975).

The 1970s was a turning point for Aboriginal education and policy, with the realisation that Aboriginal people had a right to a voice for their own self-determination and self-management (Maddison, 2009). A number of committees were established that provided that voice to the Commonwealth Government including the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC). This marked a clear starting point of access, participation and success for Aboriginal people within a Western education system.

My thesis tells the historical, political and personal stories that contributed to the initial development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia from 1975 to 1989, through Aboriginal voices and perspectives. Aboriginal journeys and experiences have, for too long, only been told from a Western viewpoint. This study will honour our leaders and mentors by utilising their own voices and experiences to communicate their determined and passionate journey to enable the betterment of Aboriginal peoples through education. The thesis will explore how these journeys have contributed to the development of educational policy that today provides access to education, employment and economic development and has resulted in Aboriginal doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers and other professionals making strong contributions to Aboriginal communities and the wider society.

The thesis defines the participants as storytellers and co-researchers, discussed in Chapter 3. This privileges their voices alongside my own as we share the space to illuminate the culture, dynamics and journey of the NAEC and related organisations. This privileging is represented visually by the use of coloured text, as seen on the first page in the opening quotation from Stephen Albert, and explained further in section 3.5.3. Profiles of the co-researchers are also provided so the reader can make a connection to these inspiring Aboriginal men and women who sacrificed time with families and personal endeavours to contribute to a bigger picture for the collective benefits to our communities.

1.2 Cultural Introduction and Positioning

An Aboriginal protocol is to introduce oneself reflecting one's country and cultural links to share and demonstrate connections. Morgan (1999) refers to this as 'cultural credentialing', vital to any research within Aboriginal communities:

The community is interested in with whom they are engaged rather than simply identifying academic or work related qualifications... communicating these credentials I am offered a genuine sense of connectedness and respectful reciprocity. (p. 2)

Common inquiries amongst Aboriginal people would include questions such as, 'who's your mob?', 'where are you from?' or seeking an understanding of your relative networks – where you fit.

I intend to take an insider position within this study. Therefore my introduction as an Aboriginal person will assist in positioning me as the author and storyteller. Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) point out both advantages and challenges to the development of research within Indigenous communities from an insider point of view. Some of the challenges are defined as having over-rapport, thereby missing some of the finer details, and failing sufficiently to separate participation from observation. Alternatively, the strengths of having an insider research approach provide an opportunity for personal experience and knowledge to enhance the understanding of Indigenous perspectives, knowledges and viewpoints (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000).

Referring to the North American context, but equally applicable to Australia's First Nations people, Karen G Swisher, cited by Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) points out the differences between an outsider and an insider from an Indigenous perspective:

How can an outsider really understand life on reservations, the struggle for recognition, sovereignty, economic development, preservation of language and culture? Perhaps they can gain a high degree of empathy and act as "brokers" of sorts, but it takes American Indians and Alaska Natives themselves to understand the depth of meaning incorporated in Indian education to ask appropriate questions and find appropriate answers. A non-Indian colleague summarized the issue with this

statement: The view from the outside remains the same; it's the inside view that varies. (Swisher, 1998, p. 194)

1.2.1 My Country, My Journey, My Story

I am an Aboriginal Worimi woman with strong family connections from Karuah/Port Stephens, on the mid coastal area of NSW, with further links to the Biripai nation just north of this. Although my ancestral links are from this nation, I have grown up on Darkinung country, Central Coast NSW, two hours south of my country, and have forged strong links within the Aboriginal community. I draw on my experiences, knowledges and relationships with these countries, families and communities.

To understand the reason for undertaking this doctoral journey, I believe it is necessary to introduce my passion, connection and ultimately my interest, to explain my story within this thesis.

When I was taking my first baby steps, the Australian Government was taking a first major step towards Aboriginal self-empowerment by releasing a new policy direction that was going to be an historical cornerstone for Aboriginal people. It was something that Aboriginal peoples had not experienced from a Government perspective since the arrival of the first fleet – ‘Self Determination’. The vision was to empower Aboriginal people with a voice to make decisions relating to their future as First Nation Australians. A few years later when I was walking through the gates of my first public school, a recommendation was being put forward to establish a committee of Aboriginal people that would not only shape my future but also all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s future in Western education.

My great grandparents were married on Karuah mission but lived on the outskirts of the mission where my grandfather grew up with his brother and sister. My grandfather, Herbert Arthur Lilley (Stringer), fought in WWII and shortly after his return moved to Sydney where he was married and raised his children. My grandfather left a young son at Karuah with his mother and in the earlier years he returned regularly to Karuah to visit family. However, after the death of my great-grandfather I do not recall my grandfather returning to his

country until later in his life where he reunited with his brother, nephews and nieces. Worimi country contains some of the most amazing landscape on the east coast of New South Wales. Its beautiful environment with beaches, waterways and bushland attract tourists from around the country. Generations of my family, including my father, were commercial fishermen and oyster farmers. I do not know the reason for my grandfather's dislocation from his country and family and I often think about the uncle I never met who grew up not knowing his father. I particularly find it interesting that my grandfather's last desire was to return to Karuah - to the river.

I was the first in my family to go through to Year 11 at Berkeley Vale Community High School, although my younger sister (by 8 years) achieved completion of Year 12. School was challenging to me as I was never very academically inclined and mostly disengaged. By Year 11, teachers commented in my school reports that I was 'wasting the education system money and school resources' by remaining at school. I was advised by the careers advisor that a secretarial course would be more within my capacity. Potential and aspirations were never discussed, which I now deem as vital to a young person's academic growth and development, as well as a strong sense of cultural affirmation. I was eventually informed that I would be better off leaving school.

I left school in Year 11 and enrolled in a secretarial course before finding employment as an Administrative Officer. I moved away from family and the community I knew and spent the next six years moving from one place to another, confronted with challenges of domestic violence, alcoholism and illness created through eating disorders. Once I returned I was given encouragement from individuals within my community to attend TAFE and, in 1997, the Aboriginal Education Officer at the TAFE College encouraged me to apply for a position at the University. This was met with objection from my father who had only attended school to a Year 8 level and had little respect for the education system. The day I attended my interview was the first time I had ever set foot on a university campus. After gaining administrative employment at the university I realised that I had the opportunity to further my education at a university academic level. I never dreamed that university would be an option for me as I

still carried the perception of being a waste of time to any educational system, let alone a university. Yet, I have overcome these early challenges and used the memory to make me stronger as I moved on from the completion of a Diploma in Human Resource Management to tertiary studies in management and then to this doctoral thesis. I believe my journey reflects the resilience and strengths of our communities to continue to move our agendas forward no matter what barriers or obstacles we are continually confronted with along the way.

1.2.2 Positioning in the Research

I have now been working in higher education for 19 years, currently as a Director of the Wollotuka Institute, University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia. The Wollotuka Institute (Wollotuka) celebrated 30 years of Aboriginal Education at the University of Newcastle in 2013. Wollotuka was established in 1983 by the College of Advanced Education which later amalgamated with the University. The establishment of Wollotuka was a result of the NAECs '1,000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990 initiative' devised in 1979. Its purpose was as an Aboriginal enclave to support Aboriginal students who enrol to study teaching programs. The Wollotuka enclave initially was supporting six Aboriginal students and as the numbers of students and staff increased in the early 1990s, Wollotuka moved from an Aboriginal student support enclave to developing and delivering academic programs. These included an Aboriginal Bridging Program and the Diploma of Aboriginal Studies. By the late 1990s these were replaced with the Yapug Enabling Program and the development of the Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies, which later evolved into the Bachelor of Aboriginal Professional Practice and, more recently, the Bachelor of Global Indigenous Studies.

Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal communities are the driving force behind the educational direction of Wollotuka, which attempts to ensure: access to higher education for Aboriginal communities; excellence in the delivery of Aboriginal perspectives, knowledges and histories; and strong cultural research that contributes to a positive future for Aboriginal peoples. In 2014, the University of Newcastle had the highest number of Aboriginal students enrolled of any higher education institution in Australia, with outcomes in all areas above State and national averages (Department Education and Training, 2014).

Wollotuka attributes its success to the key areas of the local 'Cultural Standards' (The Wollotuka Institute, 2013), that guide its operations and strategic positioning, namely: respect and honouring; cultural celebration; community responsiveness; academic and research; and inter-institutional relationships.

I am passionate about Aboriginal education and continue to draw on the knowledges and guidance from my family, colleagues, community and Elders. My cultural education is an endless one and makes me a stronger educational leader, educator and person. I feel empowered to have access to and able to draw on both Aboriginal and Western values, perspectives and knowledges. I point to the relevance to Dudgeon and Fielder (2006), who discusses the third space in tertiary institutions, situating a tertiary space that privileges both Western and Indigenous cultures, drawing on the values of both. The emphasis is on space over place, ie. the intellectual over the physical, in providing space that allows for diversity, creativity and academic freedom within a safe environment. Within a Western dominant education system, this space is always going to be vital if we are to achieve successful outcomes that honour our own Indigeneity and cultural integrity.

It was whilst visiting Broome, Western Australia in 2010, attending a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSHEC) meeting, that my thesis topic was revealed to me. I say 'revealed to me' as whilst on my PhD journey, an Elder told me that he believed that this path was decided for me when I was born and that it was to be revealed when the spirits felt I was ready to take the journey. During the evening Stephen Baamba Albert was entertaining us singing and playing his guitar, whilst we enjoyed a networking dinner. After he had finished singing he came down to our circle and along with Kaye Price and Peter Buckskin was recalling some of his memories of his contribution to the NAEC story. He was concerned that these stories, that reveal the basis of Aboriginal education policy in Australia today, had not been collected for the purpose of future generations and that they would die with the holders of knowledge. I started to contemplate the prospect of having the

privilege of bringing these stories together; stories that have the potential to inspire and lead the next generation of Aboriginal leaders in education.

I pondered on the revelation that these stories and this history could be lost. That already Aboriginal people were enjoying an education without understanding the historical contexts that contributed to a position of accessible education. I felt at the time that I was honoured to have the connection with some of these leaders through my own role in Aboriginal education and that I could pass on this privilege to all other Aboriginal peoples.

With excitement and anticipation about taking this opportunity, I developed a plan to focus my research on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who contributed so much to Aboriginal education. The enormous scope of the task only occurred to me later; the importance of representing accurately their voices to truly honour the opportunities that they have provided us today within education, advancement and social development. My own journey may have been a very different one if it hadn't been for the passion, commitment and intellect of the NAEC membership. Some of these people still actively contribute to continuing the journey of Aboriginal education and provide me with mentorship and guidance, for which I am extremely thankful. We must never forget those before us and honour the past and present trailblazers within our communities.

I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to further contribute to the possibilities that were unlocked by the NAEC and its collaborative communities. I look at my own past journey as preparation for me to draw on and contextualise the rich resources of oral stories about our journeys and the determination, passion and resilience that keeps us moving forward.

1.3 Background of Research Argument

In 1969, while on his campaign trail to become Prime-Minister, Gough Whitlam stated:

'When government makes opportunities for any of the citizens, it makes them for all citizens. We are all diminished as citizens when any of us are poor. Poverty is a national waste as well as individual waste. We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education. The nation is

the poorer – a poorer economy, a poorer civilisation, because of this human and national waste’. (quoted in Naylor & James, 2015, p. 3)

This statement reflected the impetus for change at this time, coinciding with one of the first significant initiatives by the Commonwealth Government to encourage the participation of Aboriginal people in education. The release of the *Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme* in 1969, which was followed a year later by the introduction of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants demonstrated an initial commitment by the then government. The grant schemes marked a new beginning; over the next forty-five years a plethora of policies, programs and initiatives were introduced focusing on the advancement of Aboriginal people through education.

This poses a key question for research: How significant was the contribution of Aboriginal people themselves in the provision of advice and decision making, and to the success of a national approach to Aboriginal policy development?

According to a study by Altman, Biddle, and Hunter (2005) the 1980s marked the most dramatic change in outcomes in Aboriginal policy, particularly in education. The study highlighted Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from 1971 through to 2001. The data related to education showed the progress of outcomes in school attendance and post-school qualifications:

Table 1: School Attendance 1971 – 2001

	1971	1991	2001
Never Attending School %			
Indigenous	39.32	5.21	0.44
Non-Indigenous	0.6	1.0	1.0
Post-School Qualifications %			
Indigenous	3.2	9.5	18.2
Non-Indigenous	23.7	32.3	41.6

Source: Altman et al. (2005, p. 284)

Although the data still show a significant gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal outcomes they do highlight the state of Aboriginal education in 1971 and the progress made since this time. Throughout most of the 1980s the

NAEC was the principal advisory body to the Commonwealth government with a key focus on: community consultation and participation; access for Aboriginal people to all levels of education; Aboriginal teacher training; Aboriginal Studies; and development of a consolidated policy position.

Hence, it is the objective of this study to identify the contributions of the NAEC and related Aboriginal bodies had on the development of policies and programs towards the advancement of Aboriginal education. One of the central tenets of this thesis revolves around relationality and connectivity of Aboriginal communities, and the strategies implemented to resurrect and reclaim an empowered Aboriginal space within education that valued Aboriginal values, principles and philosophies.

1.4 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to trace the journeys, processes and contribution of the NAEC to Aboriginal Education in Australia through its foundational work. The NAEC was appointed by the Commonwealth Government in 1977 following recommendations from a report developed by an earlier body, the Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG), for the Australian Schools Commission. The role of the NAEC was to provide advice and guidance to the Department of Education and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on the development, implementation and funding of programs and policies that would contribute to the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from early childhood through to higher education (Ohlsson, 1977). The NAEC existed until 1989.

There has been limited research that records the progress of the national movement of Aboriginal education over the past forty years, particularly as it relates to Aboriginal-informed educational policy. Reviews and reports discuss progress and challenges in terms of student engagement and numbers; however, they do not provide detail relating to the policy influences that have driven any change.

The existing literature has not given appropriate recognition to the NAEC as a significant committee that led the Aboriginal education policy agenda, or to its

substantial role in creating structures and foundations from a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. The NAEC had a diverse membership encompassing Elders, expert knowledge holders, classroom teachers and leaders in education; together they were able to contribute broad knowledge and advice to the Departments.

The study responds to the question:

How did the NAEC contribute to the development of Aboriginal Education Policy in Australia?

The research determines the impact of the NAEC on the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia; specifically in its approach to engaging Aboriginal voices nationally to influence a co-ordinated policy for achieve positive educational outcomes. The study also provides future Aboriginal educators with access to the important historical and political contexts that will inform future practice and relationships. The experiences and insights of Aboriginal scholars and leaders provide an awareness of past successes and challenges in the education of Aboriginal people in all levels of Western education. The voices of these Aboriginal leaders share and record a journey that will provide mentorship and knowledges to future generations, inspiring the continuation of the enhancement and development of self-determination individually and as a community through education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured in the following way:

Chapter Two, Aboriginal Education: From Time Immemorial presents the historical and political contexts up to the 1970s that have contributed to the disadvantage and oppression, as well as the activism and resilience, of Aboriginal peoples, particularly in education. The majority of the policies prior to the 1960s were State led and I have drawn upon various policies and practices as examples of the educational environment, acknowledging that although there were variances in the scope and timing of the policies and practices, there were

also vast similarities. The chapter includes the recognition of the rights of Aboriginal people to have access to education, self-determination and proactive policy development. It further defines the significance of the Self-Determination and Self-Management movements for Aboriginal people to reclaim a voice; highlighting the first census results that included Aboriginal people and the commencement of a new era. The chapter concludes in the 1970s when the need for change and a new way forward were recognised, influenced by the Karmel report in 1973 that detailed major concerns regarding the positioning of Aboriginal people and the accessibility of appropriate education.

Chapter Three, An Indigenous Methodology defines the methodological approach used within the study presenting an Indigenous woman's standpoint through an Indigenous methodology and research framework. A conceptual framework is introduced that connects me to the story through my ancestral country and presents a metaphor that paints a picture of the research environment for the reader. I draw on local *Cultural Standards* to define my positioning in terms of ontology, epistemology and axiology as relevant to the study. The chapter also introduces narrative and storytelling as a methodology designed to transfer knowledge to the reader, sharing the spiritual, physical and emotional journey. The importance of cultural credentialing and protocols when working with Aboriginal peoples and communities is also explored.

Chapter Four, A New Dawning: A First National Approach to Aboriginal Education; the Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG) introduces the educational movement that commenced a dialogue and undertaking for the advancement of Aboriginal education. The report by the Aboriginal Consultative Group to the Schools Commission in 1975 makes a number of recommendations towards re-empowering Aboriginal people within and through education. Chapter 4 details the lead-up to the NAEC from 1975 to 1977 and the contribution of the ACG in providing the government with advice and recommendations that would ultimately result in the establishment of a national Aboriginal education committee. The chapter further highlights other actions undertaken by the ACG that would contribute to future considerations of the NAEC once established. Throughout chapters 4 to 8 'co-researchers' are

introduced highlighting their own stories of determination and resilience as well as their passion for Aboriginal education and the empowerment of Aboriginal people; presenting their personal journeys at a time of only imagining the prospects for Aboriginal people through education.

Chapter Five, Redefining Access to Education for Aboriginal People: Early Stages of the NAEC, 1977 – 1980 commences the chronological journey of the NAEC by triennium terms. The chapter introduces the development of the NAEC and the initial agendas that would set the scene for the first three years. It discusses the relationships and connections formed by the NAEC to establish a structure that creates the opportunity for all Aboriginal people to have a voice in Aboriginal education. The chapter's central tenet is the importance of connectivity for Aboriginal people, analysing the strategies, structures and relationships to connect with communities and stakeholders that allow for a truly consultative national voice. The chapter includes: defining the roles and responsibilities of the State and Territory Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECG) and their relationships with the NAEC; inclusion of Aboriginal expertise and the building of relationships and connections with rural, regional, remote and urban communities through interactions and important national forums, including conferences that provided the opportunity for an inclusive voice, input and consultation.

Chapter Six, Taking Our Place in Education, 1980 – 1983 introduces the second term of the NAEC. The chapter discusses the agendas that continued to build on the foundational work from the first term. Relationships with government departments were being strengthened and Aboriginal voices were becoming stronger and more prominent. The concept of 'Aboriginalisation' was introduced by the NAEC to encourage the employment of Aboriginal people in government departments, particularly in education. Policies and processes in relation to Aboriginal Studies curriculum development across the educational sectors are introduced. Aboriginal Studies was a key focus during this term of the NAEC and was identified in two separate categories: Aboriginal Studies for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal Studies for non-Aboriginal students. This was a new space for Aboriginal education, ensuring appropriate curriculum

development; capacity building and identifying the inclusion within the wider curriculum were vital decisions that needed to be made. The chapter also presents the development of a discussion paper in 1980 titled *Rationale, Aims and Objectives*. This paper would be a primary focus for consultation with Aboriginal communities and key stakeholders over the next five years. Significantly, the outcomes would culminate the development of the *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*; the first Aboriginal education policy implemented by an Australian Government and developed by Aboriginal people. The policy represented a shared vision for Aboriginal people and received bipartisan government support. This document would be the foundation of all future programs and strategies adopted and recommended by the NAEC.

Chapter Seven, Asserting a Right to Self-Determination: 1983-1985

investigates the third term of the NAEC and the growth of the NAEC becoming a principal advisor on any matters relating to Aboriginal education. It continues the theme of how Aboriginal people reclaimed a space for their own education, asserting the right to self-determination. The NAEC was now providing advice on not just policy and national priorities, they also had a significant responsibility in the distribution and allocation of Commonwealth funding to relevant State and national Aboriginal education projects and strategies. The NAEC continued to work closely with AECGs to ensure they were appropriately informed for decision making. The target of '1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990' formed the basis of policy directions that were strongly supported by the Commonwealth government. The development of a suite of policies was instigated as a result of this key focus. The initiative also resulted in the opening up of tertiary institutions to Aboriginal people, increasing participation primarily in teaching programs. The NAEC further undertook a review of technical and further education and found outcomes similar to the findings of the ACG in 1976. The NAEC during this period also held its final conference focusing on Aboriginal epistemology and pedagogy. This term of the NAEC witnessed the biggest growth and movement in Aboriginal education and policy development since its inception.

Chapter Eight, Future Legacy; A Consolidated Policy, 1986-1989

investigates the fourth and final term of the NAEC. The suite of policy statements that were initiated by the third term was published thus providing policy positions for teacher education, tertiary education and early childhood. Ministerial appointments in the education portfolio changed, leading to a new government direction in education. The new Minister decided that new government structures would provide the equivalent advice and input of the NAEC. A decision was made for the NAEC to be officially disbanded as of 31 December 1988. However a Chair and Deputy Chair were provided with interim appointments until August 1989 and a transitional committee continued through to April 1989 to finalise NAEC business. Simultaneous to the closure of the NAEC the chapter discusses the appointment of a Task Force appointed to provide advice on the development of a national Aboriginal Education Policy. The report resulted in the implementation of a Joint Policy Statement between the Commonwealth and State Governments, demonstrating a long term commitment to a national consolidated policy. The chapter details the development of the policy which would influence Aboriginal education from early childhood to higher education for at least the next 25 years. The key goals defined within the policy included a strong direction towards the inclusion of an Aboriginal voice in decision making and equitable educational outcomes in access, participation and success at all levels. Although the development of the national Aboriginal Education Policy coincides with the redundancy of the NAEC, it draws on the ten years of experience and knowledge obtained throughout its lifespan.

Chapter Nine, NAEC: A Significant Contribution to Aboriginal Education

discusses the contributions of the NAEC from the areas of early childhood through to higher education. The chapter reflects upon the impacts of an Aboriginal voice in the policy and practice, as well as decision making. It details the importance of the passion and expertise of Aboriginal educators and leaders that provide mentorship and hope for future generations through education. The chapter also demonstrates factors leading to the increased access and engagement in education of Aboriginal peoples, determining the continued outcomes of programs and practices that were initiated during the term of the

NAEC and which continue to operate in an evolved state. Central among these are the inclusion of Aboriginal Studies in the curriculum, the increased appointment of Aboriginal teachers in the classroom, and the development of Aboriginal enclaves within higher education institutions. The Chapter draws a conclusion on the impacts of the NAEC to the development of educational policy and advancement in Australia.

Chapter Ten, A Celebration of Leadership and Legacy: Responsibility to Continue the Story, was initially going to be included as an appendix. However, guided by an expert knowledge holder within the community, it was suggested that this material needed to be given more credence than an appendix. I therefore present this chapter as a post final chapter which draws on the voices of the NAEC membership giving their perspectives on the contributions and legacies of the NAEC. These perspectives include future advice for the next generation of educators and leaders. The chapter also includes memorable moments from the members/co-researchers which reflect themes of self-empowerment, humour, leadership, personal achievement, challenges and most importantly relationships.

At this point I would like to clarify my terminology. Throughout the thesis I use the term Aboriginal to refer to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. It is not my intention to disregard the recognition of differences in cultures and knowledge systems among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Chapter 2

Aboriginal Education: From Time Immemorial

We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation. (Keating, 1993)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the laws, policies and practices affecting Aboriginal peoples in education leading up to the 1970s. It also highlights activism that responded to the inequalities and debilitating nature of these laws and policies. This foundational knowledge is necessary for the contextualisation of the period that follows, which is the focus of this thesis. It is presented in line with the periods identified by Armitage (1995), in his overview of the history of Aboriginal policy and education development in four periods: ,

1788 – 1830 Initial Contact

1860 – 1930 Protected Status

1930 – 1970 Assimilation

1967 – Onwards Integration and limited Self-Management. (p.15)

However, this structure lacks a recognition of Aboriginal education prior to the arrival of outsiders. While the scope of the thesis cannot encompass the millennia of traditional education, it can at least be acknowledged in the following section on pre-invasion.

2.2 Pre-Invasion

Prior to European settlement in 1788, traditional Aboriginal education was a highly complex and diverse knowledge system covering wide ranges of cultural, spiritual, societal and environmental education. Traditional education drew on a variety of different forms of pedagogical practices which included oral testimony, verbally passing on generational knowledge specific to each clan, as well as

observation and participation. Hansen (1989) quoted the leading Aboriginal educator, Eric Willmot, referring to the traditional forms of pedagogy and learning models as '*apprenticeship; schooling; and self-tuition*'. Sykes (1986) further reinforces that what Western society refer to as 'professions' corresponds to the traditional roles and educational aptitudes of Aboriginal people prior to 1788:

In traditional life there were many highly skilled people – not only doctors and lawyers but teachers, geographers, chemists, botanists, and people trained in communications (not only with the living but also with nature and the spirit world). We had linguists, historians....it was the lifetime duty of some people to carry the whole knowledge of each subject and pass it on to whoever would be replacing them. (p. 30)

The success of this educational system over thousands of years and its value within a traditional Aboriginal environment was devastated by the invasion of European settlement in just a short period of time. Hansen (1989) quoting Willmot, states:

The entire social order of old Australia was virtually destroyed within fifty years of the European arrival on the east coast. (p.42)

The invasion of European settlement occurred in the 18th century however it was not until the 19th century that any attention was given to Aboriginal peoples by the State or Federal Governments. It was from this point that legislative acts in the form of protection, assimilation and integration were evident over the subsequent 100 years. Combined with the Government's mistreatment of Aboriginal people, racial scientific theories were being promoted creating an impetus to further exploit Aboriginal people (Beresford, Partington, & Gower, 2012).

The perception of Aboriginal people by the wider Western society was so low that it was assumed that any higher level education was a waste of time. Theories were introduced that promoted Aboriginal people as having smaller brains and less capacity to learn than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In the late 1800s, J.D. Woods (1879, p. xxxvii), quoted by Hollinsworth (1998), shared this view:

In intellectual capacity the Aborigines seem to occupy a low position in the scale of humanity... In fact, they seem to be incapable of any permanent improvement, for none of those whom the benefits of civilisation have been made familiar have ever adopted them when beyond the white man's control. They seem to be like children. Their brain seems to be only partially developed, and they cannot be instructed beyond a certain point. They are, indeed a strange people. Without a history, they have no past; without a religion, they have no hope; and without habits of forethought or providence, they can have no future. Their doom is sealed, and all that civilised man can do, now that the process of annihilation is so rapidly overtaking Aborigines of Australia, is to take care that the closing hour shall not be hurried on by want, caused by culpable neglect on his part. (p. 113)

A detailed summary of policies and actions during these periods and their effects on education for Aboriginal people will be highlighted. I have drawn on policies and practices across all States to create an awareness and understanding of the full impact on all Aboriginal people. As education and Aboriginal affairs at this time were under state jurisdiction there were variances in the scope and timing of key political events although the experiences were mostly common. As Brock (1993) explains:

Government policies and legislation towards Aborigines, influenced by similar attitudes, have controlled the lives of Aborigines since colonisation. These policies and legislation have varied from colony to colony and State to State, but their impact on Aborigines has been very similar. (p. 11)

Beresford et al. (2012) speculated on the formulation of Aboriginal policies over this period, concluding that education policies and decisions for Aboriginal people were based on four factors:

- *Fears about Aborigines as a race*
- *Theories of racial inferiority which were widely used to justify limited provision of education*
- *Community views on the need for segregation of Aboriginal people from whites which underpinned the inadequacy of educational provision*
- *The official policy of assimilation of Aboriginal people within the broader Australian community, which governed the type of instruction offered to children. (p. 57)*

Until recently colonising histories have been solely written through a non-Aboriginal lens. Aboriginal researchers have emerged over the past 10 years creating an opportunity for Aboriginal people to record their own Aboriginal

history. Anderson (1983) provides an anthropologist's critical assessment of what he described as the 'new history' or recently recorded and translated histories by white historians:

Much of the 'new history' of Aboriginal contact with Europeans in Australia lacks an adequate socio-cultural understanding of Aboriginal society and its diversity. Attempts to produce overall models of contact have obscured, too, the diversity of European activity and its impact. The outcome has been too hollow and passive a view of Aboriginal responses to Australian colonial situations. (p. 473)

More recent years have witnessed Aboriginal historians taking the stage to present Indigenous viewpoints of the histories relating to invasion, resilience, activism as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships drawing on their own experiences and knowledges and that of their ancestors. Jackie Huggins (1987), a highly regarded Aboriginal scholar, issues the challenge:

Is it possible for white Australians to write "Aboriginal" history? Aboriginal history differs from white history in its concerns and perspectives and probably its methods. However whites, too, are crucially a part of the process. Whites are exercising power and making decisions which affect Aboriginal lives. White norms and values are enshrined in our institutions and white knowledge and ways of valuing are taught and recorded in our schools. We are all products of history and, as a consequence, occupy particular positions of privilege or disadvantage. (p. 1)

Aboriginal historians such as Jackie Huggins (Huggins, 1987), John Maynard (Maynard, 1997), Lorina Barker (Barker, 2011), Gary Foley (Foley, 2009) and James Miller (Miller, 1985) all draw on their own heritage and identity to retell the histories of Aboriginal people from an Indigenous Aboriginal epistemological and ontological viewpoint. As Huggins (1987) points out, whilst it is still important to reflect and consider the histories told by non-Aboriginal historians, the comparative viewpoints of Aboriginal people must be privileged to ensure a holistic perspective. I have attempted to present this literature from these comparative viewpoints.

2.3 1788 – 1830 Initial Contact

The invasion of Australia in 1788 resulted in harsh conflicts, as Aboriginal people were dispossessed of their land by the Europeans and a clash of

cultures erupted. Australian historians recorded the effects of the invasion highlighting massacre and the introduction of foreign disease. H. Reynolds (1982) attempts to explain the predicament of the Aboriginal peoples during this time:

Like the white colonists the blacks were pioneers, struggling to adjust to a new world of experience and one even stranger and more threatening than the Australian environment was to the Europeans. (p. 2)

Reynolds (2006) elaborates on this in a later publication:

Aborigines who experienced the massive impact of European invasion with fortitude and courage were....people who demanded our attention and respect. (p. 5)

A combination of ignorance by the Europeans of the rich culture and complex social structures of Aboriginal people, the naivety of Aboriginal people towards this new culture transforming their countries and the attitudes of white supremacy of the Europeans was a recipe for disaster for the Aboriginal people. Inhumane and harsh treatment of Aboriginal people continued, the general consensus being, they were nothing but 'savages' who needed to be treated as such (Maddison, 2009).

Following the first violent and devastating invasion, the emergence of a second wave of invasion occurred from the missionaries, seeking to save the 'savages' Bourke, Bourke, and Edwards (1994) cite Reynold's account:

Religion moved from the background to the foreground in Aboriginal experience of European culture with the arrival of missionaries in the 1820s when the tribes targeted for conversion were directly challenged by the doctrines and practices of the newcomers. Of all Europeans the missionaries must have seemed the most enigmatic. They didn't seek land; they were often, though not always, disinterested in black women. They were so unlike the majority of frontier settlers; and while they expressed goodwill and concern for the Aborigines, they were far more intrusive and interfering than other Europeans, often seeking to disrupt the ceremonies and beliefs that were at the heart of Aboriginal society. (p. 30)

Prior to the 1820s the concept of civilising Aboriginal people through religious instruction had already emerged. Amongst the debates regarding the inferior

intellectual capacity of Aborigines as 'savages', NSW Governor, Lachlan Macquarie responded to suggestions by ex-missionary William Shelley, that there should be some form of Western education for Aboriginal children. In response to this, Governor Macquarie established the 'Native Institutions' model. Shelley believed that placing Aboriginal children in a civilised Western learning environment would influence their social conditioning and attitudes. This would ensure assimilation was achieved, discouraging them from returning to their communities. Shelley was already taking Aboriginal children into his home and had come to the view that it was possible to educate the children from a Western perspective. Shelley, cited in Fletcher (1989) advocated:

'Let there be a public instruction containing one set of apartments for boys, and another separate set for girls; let them be taught reading, writing, religious education, the boys manual labour, agriculture, mechanic arts, etc., the girls, sewing, knitting, spinning or such useful employment as are suitable for them; let them be married at a suitable age, and settled with steady religious persons over them from the very beginning to see that they continued their employment, so as to be able to support their families, and who had skill sufficient to encourage and stimulate them by proper motives to exertion'. (p.20)

Macquarie however saw the Native Institution as a means of 'civilising' Aboriginal children, to train the boys to be labourers and the girls to be housemaids and as a means of developing 'race relations' to avoid crops and animals being raided (Fletcher, 1989). During this period there had been an increase in conflicts related to perceived theft from farming plots as settlements increased. Aboriginal people were being further forced from their lands including their access to food sources. From an Aboriginal perspective the Europeans had taken their food through the stealing of their lands therefore it seemed appropriate that they could still enter those lands to access the foods that were now available.

The first Native Institution was opened in 1814 in Parramatta, NSW, under the stewardship of Shelley and his wife Elizabeth. Initially, some of the 'inmates' were those children already within Shelley's care. However, other children were sent by their parents who were coerced through the provision of gifts if they sent their children to the Institution (Barry, Cruickshank, & Brown-May, 2008). From

this perspective some say it was the first example of the removal of children from Aboriginal parents through coercion (Calixto, 2015).

In all accounts the Institution seemed to be achieving the desired outcomes of Macquarie and Shelley with *The Sydney Gazette*, cited in Harris (1978), reporting the outcomes of the annual School Examination undertaken by about twenty children in 1819:

Prizes were prepared for distribution among such as should be found to excel in the early rudiments of education, moral and religious; and it is not less strange than pleasing to remark, in answer to an erroneous opinion which had long prevailed with many, namely, that the aborigines of this country were insusceptible to any mental improvement which could adapt them to the purpose of civilized association, that a black girl of fourteen years of age, between three and four years in school, bore away the chief prize, with much satisfaction to their worthy adjudgers and auditors. (p. 24)

Despite these 'successes' by the late 1820s the Native Institutions were deemed to have failed. In 1829 the native institution at Blacktown, which had taken over from Parramatta, had also closed down. There were a number of reasons given for the closures, including the cost of running the institutions (Parbury, 1991). Another view was there was a spate of illness and deaths so the Aboriginal parents came and took back their children (Barry et al., 2008). It was also considered that although the children were clearly able to learn, including reading and writing, they commonly returned back to their families. This was interpreted as indicating that the children retained no asset from their European learning (Fletcher, 1989). Validating this view were the findings of a committee established ten years after the closure of the Institution assessing the longer terms impacts. An interview with Elizabeth Shelley cited in Barry et al. (2008) recounted:

Several of the girls had married black men, but instead of having the effect intended of reclaiming them, they eventually followed their husbands into the bush, after having given away and destroyed all the supplies with which they had been furnished by the government. Since that period, some of them have occasionally visited me, and I found they had relapsed into all the bad habits of the untaught native. (p.117)

Over the next 40 years the determination of education for Aboriginal children was premised on attempting to assimilate, socialise and civilise for the purpose of race relations (Fletcher, 1989). The next phase of policy and practice focused on education models that would remove Aboriginal children from their homes and families and their supposedly inherent uncivilised behaviours, into an environment that would encompass the theory of 'progressive civilisation' (Fletcher, 1989). It was believed that a long term evolutionary process could correct the disfavoured race behaviours. Interest in trying to introduce schooling to Aboriginal children had diminished by the beginning of the 1860s. Reports in the mid to late 1860s by all NSW school authorities suggested that there were no Aboriginal children being educated within the European school system (Fletcher, 1989).

2.3.1 A Mission Life

Missions began to be established, firstly in 1825 in NSW when missionary, Lancelot Threlkeld was allocated 10,000 acres of land in Lake Macquarie to establish a religious mission-type facility. Funding was provided to Threlkeld towards rations and supplies to support this endeavour by the Government (Miller, 1985). Missions continued to be introduced throughout the 1830s and 1840s in the hope of transforming and civilising Aboriginal people through Christianity (Fletcher, 1989). Established by churches, the Missions or Reserves that spread across Australia were very much supported by the Government as it saved money, segregated Aboriginal people from wider society, and enabled control. The missionaries lobbied the Government to allocate land to be used for missions and reserves. Where these were approved, however the land allocated was usually poor, worthless land, not valuable for farming or economic sustainability (Fletcher, 1989). Religious instruction and conversion to Christianity was concentrated towards the population of Aboriginal people on missions, with regular church attendance and strong religious focus within the Mission or Reserve schools. By the 1880s the government had taken over control of the Missions and Reserves (Wilson, 1997).

Religious influence continued to have a major impact on many Aboriginal people, for better or worse. In Joe Perry's (2014) history of Aboriginal missions, he suggests:

In reality, missionary work in Australia contributed greatly to the decline and destruction of traditional Aboriginal culture and the destruction of Aboriginal families. Christianity, even with the best of intentions to save the souls of Aboriginal people, actually destroyed the semblance of Aboriginal identity. (p. 110)

Missionary societies that established missions across Australia, such as the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM), responsible for Mount Margaret in South Australia, Karuah in New South Wales, Colebrook Home in South Australia, Retta Dixon Homes in Northern Territory, and others, took advantage of the disconnection and disadvantage already suffered at the hands of the colonisers' efforts to evangelise and save the Aborigines. To achieve salvation they were encouraged to abandon traditional cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. In some areas a variation to this was that missionaries attempted to learn the local Aboriginal language to better teach the lessons of the bible and religious instruction. However, over time, it was determined that it was just as effective to teach in English, which also supported the efforts of assimilation (Read, 2008).

Although the missionaries were very likely the first Western educators of Aboriginal children, the education was very poor and to a low primary level, instructed by unqualified teachers. McConnochie (1982) elaborates on the state of Mission schools:

The bulk of teachers were unqualified, inexperienced and overloaded with other administrative duties, which placed them in the role of policemen rather than teachers. The education was conducted in inadequate and ill equipped buildings, following a programme which at least fitted them for ill-paid seasonal work, and which provided no possibility for movement out of this situation. Aboriginal children were refused admission to the white school system, and in many instances received absolutely no education at all. (p. 22)

2.4 1860 – 1930 Protected Status

Failure to successfully provide educational opportunities for Aboriginal children were just as much a result of the public attitudes as it was educational policy and systems. Minutes from the *Select Committee on Aborigines NSW (1845)* recorded the following statement regarding the education of Aboriginal children:

...the aboriginal native, as far as our observations extend, makes no effort to attain the advantages of civilization; and it is extremely probable that no human efforts, however well directed, will conquer the adult black's attachment to his wild though miserable mode of life; something perhaps may be done with the children, particularly half-castes...we (proprietors) cannot give any advice that would assist the Committee in its endeavour to promote the welfare of the aborigines; every exertion having been made... to make them useful, but without success. It does not appear to me that there is much hope of effecting any general improvement in the moral condition of so scattered, disunited, and indolent people as the Papuas of Australia. (Hansen, 1989, p. 42)

'Civilising' once again was seen as a solution to the problem. However, growth in the numbers of half-castes led to the realisation that there may be varied opportunities between the 'full-blood' and 'half-caste' Aborigines. Up to and during the protection era from 1860 to 1930, it was deemed that the decline in the numbers of Aboriginal people through disease, violence, and the increase of a mixed race population meant that Aboriginal people were a dying race. It was determined that this required an intervention that would assist this transition. Influenced by Social Darwinist theory of 'survival of the fittest' it was assumed that removing half-caste or mixed race children into the care of white families would result in the civilisation and westernisation of these children (Beresford et al., 2012). Social Darwinist views influenced the policies and attitudes of the colonisers up to the mid to late 1800s; viewing Aboriginal people as sub-human and not capable of an education that surpassed practical labour skills. It was the opinion of the NSW Board of National Education that there was no practicality in providing an education to Aboriginal children as they had an inferior intelligence level (Harris, 1976). Racial scientific theories further fed this opinion, concluding that different races were more or less dominant based on their intelligence, civilised nature and social credibility. The theories determined that these attributes were intrinsically linked to race and could not be changed. Aboriginal

people, as a result of these theories, were labelled as simply biologically inferior (Beresford et al., 2012).

It was the general attitude that over a period of time the race would die out and as a result of disease, alcoholism and massacre it seemed that this may have been true (Berndt & Berndt, 1983; Broome, 1982; Maddison, 2009; H. Reynolds, 2006). Protection policies were put in place to provide just enough comforts through to the inevitable extinction, referred to as '*smoothing the dying pillow*' (Wilson, 1997, p. 23). However, it was evident by the 1930s that this was not going to be the case and Aboriginal people were actually growing in numbers.

The first Government Act affecting Aboriginal people was introduced in 1869 (Parliament of Victoria, 1869). The Aboriginal Protection Act was initially introduced in Victoria, with all other States to follow, with the exception of Tasmania. These Aboriginal Protection Acts sought to take control of the lives and activities of all Aboriginal people. A revision was made to the Victorian Act in 1886 that moved to treat 'half-caste' Aborigines differently from 'full-blood' Aborigines. The Act stated that the function was:

... to provide for the protection and management of Aboriginal natives of Victoria. (Parliament of Victoria, 1869)

The authority for the implementation of the Act was the Governor who established the 'Board for the Protection of Aborigines'. The Board's responsibility included:

... the care custody and education of the children of Aborigines. (Parliament of Victoria, 1869)

The *Aboriginal Protection Act* essentially deprived Aboriginal people of any freedoms relating to their way of living, cultural practice, education, location, marriage, belief systems and employment conditions. Aboriginal people were moved to Reserves and Missions and education primarily took the form of basic literacy and numeracy taught by untrained teachers and/or missionaries. The educative focus was on practical skills such as farming and housekeeping (Partington, 1998). This law, although by name implied to protect Aboriginal

people, marked the start of an era of exclusion, oppression and denial of human rights, including education for Aboriginal people.

Tasmania was lacking any Aboriginal policies as it was predicted that as a primary result of genocide Tasmanian Aboriginal people were to become extinct. As of 1880, after the death of Truganini, a renowned Aboriginal woman who fought for the survival of her people, it was reported that there were no Aborigines left in Tasmania (Cameron & Miller, 2011).

From 1824 the Aboriginal Tasmanian warriors rebelled against the Europeans taking their land. Governor and Aboriginal Protector at the time, George Augustus Robinson, attempted to introduce peace through a 'friendly mission campaign' (Cameron & Miller, 2011, p. 35). However, a war on the Aboriginal people had already erupted and Aboriginal people were killed in masses. In 1830, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur declared 'black war' and while the Aboriginal people fought back hard the Europeans responded with aggressive tactics that the Aboriginal people couldn't fend off. With the assistance of Truganini many of the Aboriginal people were moved to the Bass Strait Islands for their safety however, many died of diseases (L. Ryan, 1996). A large proportion of the survivors lived on Cape Barren Island where in 1912 a half-caste Reserve was established (Cameron & Miller, 2011). The surviving Aboriginal residents in Tasmania became what Patsy Cameron refers to (in section 5.4.1 below) as, 'the forgotten people'.

2.4.1 Removal of Aboriginal Children

Prior to the initial Aborigines Act, the Government of Victoria had established the Aborigines Protection Board which operated until 1869 when the Board for the Protection of Aborigines was appointed, followed by the Aborigines Welfare Board in 1957. Under both the Aborigines Act and, later, the broader Child Welfare Act, Aboriginal children were removed from their families, either forcibly or through duress. These children are now known as part of the '*Stolen Generation*' (Armitage, 1995).

The Victorian *Aborigines Act* of 1869 legalised the process of removing children from their biological parents. Guided by the Act the legal guardianship of all Aboriginal children up to the age of 16 became the responsibility of the Chief Protector. Chief Protectors had been an appointed position since 1839, with the first appointment in South Australia following the outcomes of a report from the Select Committee of the British House of Commons on Aborigines in British colonies (Armitage, 1995). The Protectors had unmitigated control over the lives of Aboriginal people including rations, movements and child protection (Wilson, 1997). Under the direction of the Protectors, churches and Missions also continued to be established.

It was noted in the *Bringing Them Home Report* (Wilson, 1997) that there was no way to get an exact figure of the number of children taken. However, research by the historian Peter Read estimated that between 1883 and 1969 approximately 5,625 children in NSW alone were taken (noting the inaccessibility of some incomplete records at the time) (p.30). In 1939 the legal justifications through the Aborigines Welfare Board to remove Aboriginal children transferred to the *Child Welfare Act* (1939). Approval was given by the Board to open institutions that would train the children who became 'Wards of the Board' under the new Act. It was illegal for Aboriginal parents to make any contact with their children once they were placed within the institution, as the children were then deemed to be 'inmates' (Australia & Wilkie, 1997).

Education was commonly utilised as a method of duress to force parents to give up their children in the name of providing them with a chance at an education equivalent to non-Aboriginal children (Wilson, 1997). The truth of the matter was that the children would be removed by other means if the parents did not respond to this negotiation or threat. In actual fact, the promise of a better education was later proven flawed with ABS results in 1994 (cited in Wilson, 1997) showing that the qualifications of those children not taken away were slightly better than those who were removed, in all levels of education. The removal of children under these legislations continued until the early 1970s however there are still arguments that it continues today under alternative legislation.

The realisation that by 1930 Aboriginal people were not dying off, but that full-blood Aborigines were declining and mixed race Aboriginal people were increasing (Harris-Short, 2012) led to the *Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities* in Canberra in 1937. The Chairman of the *South Australian Advisory Council of Aborigines*, Professor J B Cleveland, voiced his concerns through the reading of a memorandum he had prepared on the growing number of half-caste Aboriginals across the States;

A very unfortunate situation would arise if a large half-caste population breeding within themselves eventually arose in any of the Australian States. It seems to me that there can only be one satisfactory solution to the half-caste problem, and that is the ultimate absorption of these persons in the white population. I think this would not necessarily lead to a deterioration of type, inasmuch as racial inter-mixtures seem, in most cases, to lead to increased virility. (Johnston, 1937, p. 10)

In Western Australia, A. O. Neville also held the same view, and at the same conference provided a solution to the conference attendees. Neville had been appointed the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia in 1915, and in 1936 became the Commissioner for Native Affairs. At the Conference Neville presented such a good argument for the need for absorption that the conference concluded:

...this conference believes that the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth, and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end. (p. 21)

The conference further determined that:

...efforts of all State authorities should be directed towards the education of children of mixed aboriginal blood at white standards, and their subsequent employment under the same conditions as whites with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites. (Johnston, 1937, p. 21)

A determination was made by the government to initiate a policy that would strengthen the morality and civility of the white heritage and minimise the dominance of the black heritage through biological absorption. Neville's influence on this decision later recognised him as the brain child behind 'biological absorption' for mixed blood Aboriginal people. 'Casting', for example,

half caste, quarter caste, became of interest as it was believed that the more white blood an Aboriginal person had the more possible it was going to be to civilise and educate, resulting in a full transition into Western society. It became uncommon for half-caste Aboriginal people to be provided with permission to marry an Aboriginal person darker than themselves. Removal of half-caste children into institutions or placed with white families also continued (Beresford et al., 2012).

2.4.2 Public Instruction Act

Formalised Government school systems commenced establishment by the States from the 1830s onwards, on an assumption that education would reduce ignorance therefore reduce crime. Schools were formally introduced with a focus on reading, writing and arithmetic and also social moral expectations on how to be an upstanding, law-abiding citizen (Austin & Selleck, 1975). School systems were eventually introduced in all States. However, until the 1940s Aboriginal children continued to be excluded. The little education received continued to be delivered by missionaries entailing low levels of reading and writing and more attention on labour and domestic skills.

The *Public Instruction Act* commenced across Australia in 1880. This Act made it compulsory for all children aged 6 to 14 years of age to attend school, given they lived within a two mile radius of a public school (Austin & Selleck, 1975). After a 30 year gap the *Public Instruction Act* also signified the Government's renewed interest in the education of Aboriginal children. Although the Public Instruction Act provided the basis for all children to access public schooling it resulted in a rebellion from parents of white children who did not want their children to be in the same school and classrooms as black children.

George Reid, the Minister of Public Instruction (NSW) in 1883, cited in Ramsland (2010), stated:

'No child whatever its creed of colour or circumstance ought to be excluded from a public school. But cases might arise, especially amongst the Aboriginal tribes, where admission of a child or children may be prejudicial to the whole school.' (p. 11)

Contrary to the Act, separation of a school system for Aboriginal students continued, argued for on the basis of 'health and lack of cleanliness'. However it was clear that the real reasoning was purely racial. Given that it was not possible to introduce separate schools in every region and overlooking the protests from the Aboriginal Protection Board, the new Education Minister rewrote the policy to include:

In all localities where a sufficient number of Aboriginal children can be grouped together for instruction it would be advisable to establish a school for their benefit exclusively, but in places where there are only a few such children, there will be no objection offered to their attending the nearest public school, provided they are habitually clean, decently clad and that they conduct themselves with propriety both in and out of school. (Fletcher, p. 64)

This ruling was coined by Fletcher (1989) as the 'clean, clad and courteous policy'. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the complaints from white parents continued regarding the inclusion of Aboriginal children in schools, notwithstanding that in most cases investigations showed that the children were neatly dressed and well behaved and therefore there were no grounds to exclude them. Later in the 1890s the pressure from white parents escalated, removing their children from the schools attended by Aboriginal children. The Department responded by removing Aboriginal children from the school and once again started to introduce more separate schools, no longer as a result of the policy but rather the demands made by white community.

Aboriginal children were once again excluded from schools until the 1940s. The 'Exclusion on Demand' policy promoted in NSW, was not based on an actual law but centred on the objections from the white parents claiming that their children could not be taught in the same classroom as Aboriginal children. Parents did not have to provide any reasonable objection. For example, a letter received in 1902 from a parent stated:

'I heare from the children that the Black is a loud to Go to the School... if thy are a loude to come and remane there I will take my children from the school as I consider they should not be aloud to go with the whits'. (Fletcher, p. 80)

This letter resulted in the Aboriginal children being expelled without any further investigation based on the *Exclusion on Demand* ruling. Given that these decisions were not under the premise of any laws, Aboriginal parents could have contested these decisions as against the directives of the *Public Instruction Act*. However, there are no records indicating that they were challenged (Hansen, 1989).

As children were fast being excluded from schools in 1905, the Aborigines Protection Board consistently pleaded with the Department of Education to reverse the exclusion policy and return to determining attendance on the basis of the children being polite and clean. Their pleading was to no avail, resulting in the increase of separate Aboriginal schools being erected to allow Aboriginal children to attend school. This reached the point in NSW that there were more Aboriginal children attending Aboriginal schools than the main public schools creating a segregated Aboriginal School system (Fletcher, 1989). Despite the *Aborigines Protection Board* in the 1930s arguing that segregation did not meet the needs of the assimilation agenda, exclusion continued, alongside arguments that fairer-skinned Aboriginal children needed to attend public schools.

In support of the *Exclusion on Demand* policy in NSW, the Teachers Handbook stated:

It is the policy of the Department to encourage the assimilation of Aborigine children as members of the Australian community by permitting their attendance at public schools. Nevertheless, if the principal of a school is of the opinion that there are circumstances in the home conditions of Aborigine children, whose enrolment is sought, which justify refusal or deferment of enrolment or if he is aware that substantial opposition to such enrolment exists in the local community, he should inform the district inspector of schools and await the Departmental decision on the matter. (Fletcher, 1989, p. 192)

This directive remained in the *NSW Teachers Handbook* until its removal in 1975.

Aboriginal children were therefore forced, where possible, to attend schools on missions or reserves primarily run by missionaries with low skilled teachers and

at a rudimentary level of education (Perry, 2014). As previously stated the schooling system on missions primarily focused on a basic curriculum that was enough to prepare children for a life of servitude (Ramsland, 2010). Jimmy Barker, cited in Parbury (1991) recalls his first experience at a reserve school in Brewarrina:

During my first lessons from these men I learnt that as I was black, or partly coloured, there was no place in Australia for me. I learnt that any one of my colour would always be an outcast and different from a white person. It gave me the firm idea that an Aboriginal even if he was only slightly coloured, was mentally and physically inferior to all others. He was the lowest class known in the world, he was little better than an animal; in fact, dogs were sometimes to be preferred. As I was less than twelve years old it was impossible to disbelieve men of authority who were much older. I tried to stop their remarks from bothering me, but it was hard to adjust to being treated with such cruelty and contempt. (p. 77)

There were large numbers of Aboriginal parents who objected to their children being excluded from public schools and instructed to send them to Aboriginal schools. They protested by refusing to send them to the Aboriginal school, which then put them at risk of criminal charges or having their children removed on the basis of the *Public Instruction Act* which legally enforced attendance at school. One of the first formal protests from an Aboriginal person was submitted by William Ferguson in 1837 by way of a written document known as the 'Aboriginal Manifesto' which challenged the Department of Education to both:

Allow Aboriginal people to assimilate into the European population', and; to educate Aboriginal Children in the same way that European children are educated. (quoted by Hansen, 1989, p. 43)

Whilst these educational challenges were arising, in 1901 a further complication for Aboriginal people arose with the introduction of the White Australia Policy. Designed to restrict the movement and employment of non-European immigrants, such as the Asian population, the policy also resulted in the same restrictions for Aboriginal people excluding them from employment (Bourke et al., 1994). Aboriginal people were therefore being excluded from both education and employment.

2.5 1930 – 1970 Assimilation

In 1940, the NSW Department of Education responded to these demands introducing the 'Equal with White' policy, which aimed to integrate Aboriginal children into public schools. Prior lack of appropriate educational opportunities resulted in the realisation that Aboriginal children were educationally behind the white students. Therefore the Department responded by introducing separate classes, once again with underqualified teachers. Schooling was also Western-oriented to meet the objectives of assimilation with no regard to Aboriginal values and practices which created further challenges. As a result of ongoing racial prejudice of families, Aboriginal Annex schools were also initiated continuing to provide a segregated schooling system (Fletcher, 1989). By the 1950s the Aborigines Welfare Board was objecting strongly to the public school segregation, and from the late 1940s onwards, the closure of separate Aboriginal schools and annexes commenced closure.

To further achieve the objective of absorption of Aboriginal people into Western society, the *Assimilation Policy* was introduced (Armitage, 1995). From the 1930s the Government's primary policy focus for Aboriginal people was assimilation. The definition of the Assimilation policy was finally defined by Hasluck (1963) at a Native Welfare Conference as:

.....in the view of all Australian Governments that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. (p. 1)

The transition of policies from Protection to Assimilation was on the grounds that Aboriginal people were not going to die out therefore it was now necessary to absorb them into the white population.

2.5.1 Exemption Certificates

In 1943, Aboriginal people of mixed blood were first offered Exemption Certificates, as a strategy of the Assimilation Policy, in exchange for no longer

being controlled under the Protection Act. The offering of an Exemption Certificate claimed to provide Aboriginal people with a better life for their children, including an education. The trade-off was that Aboriginal people who held an Exemption Certificate were no longer allowed to have contact with their families and communities. They were no longer able to practise their own traditional lore, ceremony, beliefs or speak a language other than English. They were required to completely assimilate into Western knowledge and belief systems or risk a criminal penalty. For those who remained with their family and community, children continued to be removed and conditions were made more difficult with resources and services minimised (Armitage, 1995). The exemption certificates were commonly posed as a privilege, offered to Aboriginal people who demonstrated potential to integrate into Western Society. Many Aboriginal people accepted the Exemption Certificates on the promise that their children would have greater opportunities for a successful life, including importantly equal access to education. The Exemption Certificates were termed 'Dog Tags' by many Aboriginal people as a derogatory explanation of the certificate representing a licence, not much unlike a dog licence, that determined or gave permission for the way in which they lived.

2.5.2 White Women as Activists

In the late 1940s there was an increase in white women acting as political activists towards the rights of Aboriginal people, women in particular. The Women's Service Guild of Western Australia (the Guild) was one of the two strongest Women's political groups in Australia, along with the Women's non-Party in South Australia (Holland, 2001). The Guild provided activism for the rights of Aboriginal woman in protecting them against sexual assault abuse by white men. Also, they advocated for the rights of Aboriginal woman to mother their children through the sanctioning of marriage rights between Aboriginal people so the Government could not class the children of the united couple 'illegitimate' therefore increasing the chances of removal. Mary M Bennett, an influential feminist activist associated with the Guild, appealed to the membership to:

....advocate a mission based policy where Aboriginal families could remain intact and through the provision of land, education and civil and political rights, overcome the widespread abuse of Aboriginal women and the denial of their human rights. (Holland, 2001, p. 300)

Although the Guild, in principle, agreed with Bennet's proposal, ultimately it opposed the views that this should be achieved through the tightening of control and legislation. This would have ensured half-caste children were educated within a white system from birth bringing them into line, consistent with a white standard of living. Broadly this also provides an example of the role white women played in colonisation. Although well meaning, their perspectives and viewpoints were derived from a position of white privilege (Moreton-Robinson, 2000).

In 1950, to enable Aboriginal children in Western Australia to go to high school in Perth, the Guild fought for a boarding home for half-caste native girls to be established in Mt Lawley. This was met with controversy with an article in *The West Australian* on the 8 September 1950, titled 'Training of Natives – Girls Being Put in False Position' stating:

There did not appear to be any future for native girls after they had completed three years of training at the new Mt Lawley home. Mr Mann said in the Legislative Assembly last night. They were being put in a false position... When the ten or fifteen girls to be trained left the home, they would either marry an inferior type of white man or would return in a native camp and marry some dirty hobo and bear children year after year... 'Aborigines could not be converted in fifty generations to the white man's way of living', said Mr Mann. They were a nomadic hopeless type and over the years the infusion of white blood has given them the 'cunning of a dingo'. They had no sense of citizenship and only wanted citizenship to enable them to get drunk. He had sympathy for them, but they were a people beyond hope. (Whitford, 1950)

Continued representation of the women's guild resulted in the approval for the home, known as 'Alvan House for Native Girl Students' to commence operation in 1951, supported by the 'Diocesan Board of Missions of the Anglican Church'. Given the petitioning against the home by local residents the negotiated outcome relied on the passing of a 'Prohibited Area for Natives' under Section 43 of the *Native Administration Act 1905* for the areas surrounding the home. The prohibited area was to avoid any undesirable natives, who were not

residents of the Mt Lawley home, to loiter or have any engagement with the residents.

The stated purpose of Alvan House was to,

...provide accommodation for coloured girls whose scholastic records show that they are worthy of higher education or special training in accordance to aptitude, with a view to their eventual assimilation into the white community. (Hastings, 1951, p. 1)

Non-Aboriginal people were not the only ones at this time fighting for the rights of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people themselves had commenced the fight for their own human rights.

2.5.3 Aboriginal People as Activists

Activism is a major factor in influencing the need for policy and attitudinal change, as evidenced from the feminist, gender and social movements occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. Indigenous activists from the early 1920s fought for recognition of self-determination and for Governments to recognise their voice in achieving human rights for Aboriginal people (Maynard, 1997). In 1924 Charles Fredrick Maynard (Fred Maynard) led a new activist group called the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA). The AAPA worked against the Aboriginal Protection Board to achieve freedom and the right to reclaim their land, a public education, and basic human rights. Fred Maynard articulates these objectives in a letter to the government outlining that the AAPA stands for:

... liberty, freedom, the right to function and act in our own interest, as right thinking citizens, not as non-intelligents devoid of all reason. That is how we are placed under the law of the Statute book. Anything is good enough, a blanket, a pinch of tea and sugar, anything thrown at us. Are we going to stand for these things any longer? Certainly not! Away with the damnable insulting methods, which are degrading. Give us a hand; stand by your native Aboriginal officers and fight for liberty and freedom for yourself and for your children. (Maynard, 1997, p. 8)

The AAPA was disbanded in 1927, but it had left a legacy of public awareness and debate. Its members had set the scene for future activism, and inspired Aboriginal people in believing that they had a voice and they could use it to be

heard. These early movements created both fear within the Governments and hope within the Aboriginal people and communities. This was the beginning of a succession of activist movements over the next 40 years (Foley & Anderson, 2006). The momentum of activism by Aboriginal people later led to the recognition of Aboriginal people as citizens of Australia with the right to have a voice in their own self-determination.

In 1956 the *Aboriginal Australian Fellowship* (AAF) was established by Pearl Gibbs and Faith Bandler. Once again the organisation was about the freedom and rights of Aboriginal people. The organisation had a membership of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together, originally concentrating on Aboriginal people's rights in NSW. However, in 1958 the Federal Council Aboriginal Advancement was founded, later to be known as the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI).

The AAF produced and distributed flyers in the early 1960s titled *Commonwealth Laws Against Aborigines*. The flyers stated that the Commonwealth constitution allowed separate laws for Aborigines based purely on race. The flyers called for a national petition for *equal citizenship for Aborigines*. It called on the State and Federal Governments to be accountable to:

... justify these laws to public opinion at home and abroad, and to the United States; Since NSW this year ended discrimination in our State Laws, Aborigines have equal rights here but not if they travel interstate; CENSUS (Section 127) implies that Aborigines are not worth counting, and this is an insult to the original Australians. (Bandler, 1989, p. 64)

FCAATSI was also represented by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership nationally and although it also advocated for equal rights, land rights and education, it is primarily remembered for its campaigning and advocacy for the 1967 constitutional change. The 1967 referendum was a landmark moment in Australian history calling for two amendments to the Constitution. The amendments were to Sections 51 and 127, removing the reference of Aboriginal people and race treated as separate to that of all citizens (Attwood, 2007). The sections referred to are:

51. The Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the commonwealth with respect to:-

(xxvi) The people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws.

127. In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted. (Bandler, 1989, p. 85)

The referendum appealed to remove the words 'other than Aboriginal people in any State' and remove all of section 127. These were the two sections that wielded the power for the Government to treat Aboriginal people separately within the law and policy, based on race.

Leading up to the referendum Charlie Perkins, the first Australian Aboriginal man to graduate from a University, instigated the *Freedom Ride* in 1965, inspired by the black movement taking place in the United States by the African-Americans. The focus of the Freedom Ride led by Charlie Perkins, with 30 white students from the University of Sydney's *Students Action for Aborigines* group, was on raising awareness of the current state of Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal rights. They travelled to some of the most racist communities across NSW and at times were scared for their lives based on the responses they received. The *Freedom Ride* however was seen as a significant public movement creating awareness not just in the communities visited but more broadly through the media (Edmonds, 2012). It also had a positive effect on some of the Aboriginal people living in those communities, who in the mid-1960s were very isolated. Bob Morgan, the longest serving member of the NAEC, recalls this event and the political influence that Charlie Perkins and the *Freedom Ride* had on him as a young person in Walgett at the time:

I remember when Charlie first came through to Walgett. I was only a kid I guess, on my last year at school, or I'd just finished. I tell people that I can never recall exactly what Charlie was saying when he was standing on the steps of the RSL, where we were never allowed to go into.... But I will never forget how Charlie's words made me feel... I was so excited about it all... it was about community empowerment... it was about giving people a new sense of capacity. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

The referendum that occurred in 1967 resulting in Aboriginal people being recognised as Australian citizens in the Constitution not only witnessed a political change but, given the overwhelming 'yes' vote, it was obvious that a long awaited social change had been initiated.

2.6 1967 – Onwards Integration and limited Self-Management

Post 1967 strong Aboriginal activists continued to advocate, protest and demonstrate for the rights of Aboriginal people. In the early 1970s the *Black Power Movement* became very active initially in Redfern, Fitzroy and South Brisbane (Foley, 2009). The *Black Power Movement* revealed a political movement which created a significant influence for the future of Aboriginal people.

The determination, inspiration and resilience of Aboriginal people fighting for the rights of Aboriginal peoples from the 1920s through to the 1970s could no longer be ignored by the Australian government. In 1972 the Whitlam Government introduced the *Self Determination policy* which presented the opportunities of a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples that would promote self-control of their own culture, heritage and language (Maddison, 2009). Whether for better or worse this policy resulted in a decline in activist groups, replaced with community controlled organisations in health, education, land, culture and heritage.

Colin Bourke, in Bourke et al. (1994) draws an analogy between the transition of Aboriginal people and the tidal features of the sea. He explains that in 1788 Aboriginal Australia was at high tide culturally and with European settlement the tide continued to go out for the next 150 years. Bourke describes the 1930s as the eventual lowest tide:

Aborigines were dispossessed, despised, uneducated and unwanted.
(Bourke et al., 1994, p. 11)

It was at this stage, in Bourke's metaphor, that Aboriginal people started making waves. The 'First Wave' classifies those who in spite of their minimal formal schooling were determined to stand up and be recognised, in their own right, in

the fight for justice and Aboriginal rights. These people contributed to: the 1967 referendum; the implementation of Secondary and Study Grants and to other policies introduced in the 1970s. They include;

William Ferguson, the first Aborigine to stand for parliament; Doug Nicholls, preacher and Governor of South Australia; Jack Patten, William Cooper, Marg Tucker, Eric and Bill Onus. Other first wavers who came a little later included, Jack Davis – playwright; Oodgeroo Noonucal – poet; Vincent Lingiari of the Gurindji. (Bourke et al., 1994, p. 11)

The transition then to the second wave witnessed a group of Aboriginal people who were the first to have access to European tertiary education. Bourke states that their participation in tertiary education was ‘an accident’ and not attributed to government policies that provided these opportunities. The outcomes however were significant to the future of Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal education. Bourke et al. (1994) lists this group, the second wave, as the likes of:

Charles Perkins, John Moriarty, Margaret Valadian, Natacha MacNamara, Eric Willmot, Colin Bourke, Pat O’Shane and Mick Miller, Isaac Brown and a small cohort of Aboriginal teachers. (p. 12)

2.6.1 Era of Transition

Although by the mid-1960s in New South Wales the majority of Aboriginal students were attending primary school there was still a significant lack of participation in secondary schooling. The New South Wales Teachers’ Federation survey in 1964, cited in the report of the *Select Committee on Aboriginal Education* (Ruddock, 1985) recorded that only 9 per cent of Aboriginal youth attended above the second year of secondary school. The report further elaborated that the impacts of the assimilation policy had not improved the outcomes of the education of Aboriginal children with the survey indicating that over 85 per cent of Aboriginal children were identified as slow learners. Responding to these educational failures the Department of Education aimed to introduce programs based on the ‘*belief that Aboriginal people had suffered “Cultural deprivation”*’ which was as a result of the external environments of the Aboriginal children outside of the education system (Ruddock, 1985).

The Select Committee report (Ruddock, 1985) quoted the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre's (TAC) views on the development of programs focused around the notion of 'cultural deprivation', declaring:

There is no doubt that in material terms Aborigines are seriously disadvantaged but in our view these assumptions have not adequately distinguished between cultural deprivation and cultural difference and have confused cultural and economic deprivation. Consequently, many of the education programs for Aborigines appear to aim at making Aboriginal children conform to Anglo-Saxon standards and norms and rarely are attempts made to develop the strengths of Aboriginal children and that which is positive in the Aboriginal experience. Material and economic disadvantage must be recognised for what it is and should be tackled on a far broader scale. (p. 28)

However, the *Schools Commission Aboriginal Consultative Group* had earlier discussed the language regarding 'cultural deprivation' arguing instead for recognition of 'cultural difference' emphasising the challenges of Aboriginal people balancing a Western education system with their own Aboriginal values and philosophies:

The tension between the Aboriginal community, with its values of kinship, sharing, mutual interdependence and emphasis on non-verbal communication, and the white, middle class school with its emphasis on verbal skills, competition and individual success, is one contributing factor which leads to an erosion of self-respect and increasing frustration amongst many young Aborigines. (Australian Schools Commission, 1975a, p. 47)

On the basis of the 1966 Australian Census data, Broom and Lancaster Jones (1970) reported on the educational status of Aboriginal people (McConnochie, 1982). Coombs (1970) categorises the findings reported by Broom and Lancaster Jones into three areas:

Aboriginal Contact with Education – There is an extreme disparity of Aboriginal student attendance at school in comparison to non-Aboriginal students. In fact, large numbers were not attending school at all in 1966 and over 50% of Aboriginal people over the age of 45 had not acquired any formal education.

Aboriginal Achievement – Academic achievement was very low, with a large proportion of Aboriginal students in slow learner classes and in grades below

their relevant age group. There was very little post-school educational options being undertaken; less than 1% of Aboriginal students completed their leaving certificate and 5% achieved intermediate level, in comparison to 50% of non-Aboriginal students.

Future Effects – The effects of the current underachievement of Aboriginal students is seen to have a cyclical effect, in that it is quite likely to affect future generations.

Responsibility for the failure of Aboriginal children in education has been continually attributed to Aboriginal communities and families with reference made to their intellectual capacity, housing environments, societal values and ethical considerations. McConnochie (1982) sums up the situation:

Aboriginal children have rarely performed the way their white teachers would wish them to. This has been widely interpreted as individual failure on the part of the Aboriginal children, and has been attributed at various times to the inevitable effect of belonging to an inferior species; to the pernicious influences of Aboriginal parents; to genetically determined low I.Q.; and to the inadequacies of the home environment of Aboriginal children. Rarely has the failure been attributed to the inadequacies of the education provided, to the discriminatory nature of white society, or to the active resistance of Aboriginal communities to the cultural destruction implicit in many of the educational programmes. (p. 20)

It was not until the late 1960s that it was apparent to the Australian government that Aboriginal education was in crisis and there needed to be a much different approach if any positive outcomes were going to be achieved. The following table from the 1971 census data cited in the *Australian Schools Commission* (1975b) report highlighted this crisis:

Table 2: School Participation Rates for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander and Total Population, Australia 1971

Age	Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander	All Australians
Years	%	%
15	59.64	81.5
16	28.16	53.7
17	7.96	28.8
18	2.51	7.6
19	0.61	1.3

Source: (Australian Schools Commission, 1975a)

The 1970s witnessed a new era which turned the tide from the old policies and practices and the focus moved to developing new strategies and policies (McConnochie, 1982a).

The Whitlam Labor Government, after a resounding election victory, took up office in December 1972. The Whitlam Government brought with it strong principles of equality and access, and its actions were to mark historic changes for Aboriginal peoples in the over 180 years since colonisation (McConnochie, 1982). The Minister for Education, Kim Beazley (Snr), from 1972 to 1975 was a strong advocate for the principles of the Government and was proactive in initiating a better future for Aboriginal people through education.

The first actions of the new Government, just five years after the 1967 referendum, introduced the *Self Determination Policy* which was to replace the disempowering policies of Assimilation and Integration. To champion the importance of this Aboriginal Affairs Policy and to ensure its implementation, the Government upgraded the Office of Aboriginal Affairs to the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). The Office of Aboriginal Affairs had been established by the previous Liberal Government as a response to the positive outcomes of the referendum (McConnochie, 1982). Gordon Bryant was appointed the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (1972 to 1973) followed by James

Cavanaugh (1973 to 1975). Self-Determination was given bi-partisan support right through to the 1990s (Altman et al., 2005).

One of the greatest achievement attributed to the Whitlam Government is the transforming of education in Australia. In 1973 the Government modernised the hitherto ad hoc educational approach, and developed an educational approach with seven key policy priorities. These were:

recurrent grants to government and non-government schools on a needs basis, capital funds, library funding for both primary and secondary schools, the disadvantaged schools program, the special education program, teacher in-service and education centres, and an innovations program. (Lingard, 2000, p. 1)

A further major initiative of the Labor Government was the abolition of fees for tertiary students in 1973, with an aim to increase access for low socio-economic students without the financial barriers. The major challenge of this initiative was that there was still a high proportion of low socio-economic students who were not achieving completion of high school (Chapman, 2001), in particular Aboriginal students. The Government had also introduced the *Aboriginal Secondary Scholarship Scheme* in 1970 and the *Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme* following a few years later for students in vocational or university studies. In 1975 the first *Overseas Study Grant for Aboriginals* was also announced. The *Aboriginal Consultative Group* (1975) reported that in 1974 to 1975, 11,000 Aboriginal students had accessed the Aboriginal Secondary Scholarship and in the first half of 1974, over 1,000 students had benefited from the Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme with 56 recipients in universities and 72 attending other tertiary institutions. These results had doubled the outcomes of 1971, which the report attributed the increased special admission schemes being introduced by universities and tertiary institutions for Aboriginal students (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975).

The referendum had resulted in the federal government taking on more responsibilities for Aboriginal people which initiated an influx of expenditure towards Aboriginal education. For the five years leading up to 1974 the Government spent more than \$30 million on State education grants and student

assistance and funded all of education for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, in addition to the expenditure by States for special projects. During this time the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, through the *Aboriginal Advancement Trust Account*, administered over \$15 million towards Aboriginal education through both State education departments and private organisations (Willmot, 1974).

State governments continued to provide funding for special projects which were primarily divided into five areas: social and cultural support systems (pre-schools and Aboriginal Teaching Assistants); linguistic compensation (bilingual education, language correction and teaching English as a second language); underachievement; curriculum development; and supplementary programs. The challenge identified by Willmot (1974) at this time were that there was limited attention given above primary education and there was little consultation with Aboriginal people and communities.

In 1975 the Fraser Government, expanding on the *Self-Determination Policy*, adopted the *Federal Policy for Self-Management*. The policy encouraged the management and implementation of Aboriginal programs to be undertaken by Aboriginal organisations. Although the introduction of self-determination and self-management policies moved in a more positive direction than the 180 years prior, there were still limitations. Both of these policies can be criticised on the basis that true self-determination would have resulted in the policies being developed by Aboriginal voices. Moreton-Robinson (2005) claims these policies of Self-Determination and Self-Management are more focused on organisation and community management than the true autonomy and rights of Aboriginal people. Moreton-Robinson (2005) describes the inadequacies of the policies:

This form of self-determination has not actualised more autonomy or drastically improved our quality of life and is based on the rights of citizenship rather than Indigenous rights, which positions us as welfare recipients and not independent autonomous Indigenous nations. (p. 63)

The *Racial Discrimination Act (1975)* was passed by the Whitlam Government to ensure everyone has the right to be treated fairly, irrespective of their race, colour, national or ethnic background. This was another positive step for

Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Affairs. However, the Act has not always protected Aboriginal peoples and the conservative Howard Government in 2007, with bipartisan support, suspended the Act under the 'special measures' provision to enforce what became known as, *The Intervention*, taking over the control of Aboriginal peoples in communities in the Northern Territory. This action was met with much controversy questioning the true intentions of the government and the necessity to suspend the *Racial Discrimination Act* to achieve proposed outcomes (Maddison, 2009).

2.6.2 Schools in Australia Report

In December 1972, following the election of the Whitlam Government, an Interim Committee for the *Australian Schools Commission* was established to undertake a review of the distribution of funding to Government and non-Government schools. The review would also recommend necessary resourcing required and a means for evaluation. Chaired by Professor Peter Karmel, the Committee was instructed to complete the review and submit a report within a very limited timeframe. The review was completed and a subsequent report, *Schools in Australia: Report to the Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission*, was tabled in May, 1973, otherwise known as the Karmel report (Karmel, 1973).

The report provided some significant observations to highlight the current environment of education for Aboriginal children. It was noted that there were funds currently restricted for 'Aboriginal Advancement' and administered by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and an informed approach should be taken to the allocation in relation to education. The annual funding allocation for Aboriginal education capital ranged from 0.7 million dollars in 1969 up to 1 million dollars in 1973 (Karmel, 1973, p. 38).

Case studies within the Karmel report demonstrated the inconsistencies in school conditions observing that schools with large enrolments of Aboriginal children had the worst conditions. The conditions experienced at one of these communities and schools led to a visiting committee member commenting:

We have nothing but admiration for the staff of this school, not only for their professional and dedicated service, but for remaining and teaching under such adverse physical conditions. (Karmel, 1973, p. 46)

Given the poor conditions, the report claimed that for Aboriginal children,

Schooling should offer a means of redress for the economic and political disadvantages of their background rather than a compounding of them. (Karmel, 1973, p. 48)

Notably, the report further claimed that for Aboriginal children '*the problems of prejudice may exacerbate those of poverty*' (Karmel, 1973, p. 92).

This was a significant review in the history of Education in Australia and the recommendations made by the Committee would direct Australian education policy development, including Aboriginal education, for the next twenty years (Schwab, 1995). The recommendations were underpinned by seven principal values, namely:

Devolution of Responsibility – localised responsibility and decision making to the 'grass roots' people involved in schooling and in consultation with key stakeholders;

Equality – All children provided quality education and resources, irrelevant of their background or economic status;

Diversity – Education that is flexible and meets the needs of the school community, valuing diversity and reflecting the differences within society;

Public and Private Schooling – A right of choice for parents to send children to private or public schools. Appropriate resourcing of private schools however priority to public schools requiring increased outcomes. Better relationships between public and private sectors;

Community Involvement – Increase the involvement and participation of the wider community in education to broaden the learning opportunities of children in school;

Special Purposes of Schools – Ensure the core purpose of schools being the *acquisition of skills and knowledge, initiation into the cultural heritage, the valuing of rationality and the broadening of opportunities to respond to and participate in artistic endeavours*, are not jeopardised; and

Recurrent Education – encouraging the concept of extended schooling or lifelong learning. (Karmel, 1973, pp. 10-15)

The Karmel Report concluded that Aboriginal children are amongst the most *educationally disadvantaged groups in Australia*. It stated that although the Government already provides restricted funding at both State and Commonwealth levels, the administration and delivery of programs from these funds is uncoordinated and at times ineffective (Karmel, 1973). The Karmel Report noted that current responsibilities for Aboriginal education were separated between the different Departments of Welfare, Aboriginal Affairs and Education. It concluded that the needs of Aboriginal education across Australia were varied, for instance, remote students in outback schools might not speak English and rural and urban students face very different challenges.

Given its limited timeframe, the Committee could not deliver a comprehensive insight into the education of Aboriginal children. Instead it recommended to the *Schools Commission* that it undertake a special study exploring the opportunities to identify a 'co-ordinated policy' for Aboriginal education (Karmel, 1973).

The Whitlam Government also established the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC), in effect from 1973 to 1977. The NACC pressured for rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples however it was challenged by the limitations to influence government or policy directives as it was purely an advisory group. The National Aboriginal Committee (NAC) the successor of the NACC, experienced similar challenges. Even though the NAC continued into the 1980s, it never really overcome this significant barrier to delivering progressive outcomes (Coombs & Smith, 1994).

2.7 Conclusion

Since 1788 it has only been in the past forty years that education for Aboriginal people has seen any form of viable progression. Prior to this, government policies and practices, as well as the attitudes of the broader society, resulted in exclusion, discrimination and the oppression of Aboriginal people. In turn Aboriginal people received little or no formal education. Whether the Government policy related to segregation, assimilation or absorption, they all had one similarity: that was to civilise the blacks who were seen to be savages, low-class and of limited intelligence.

Throughout history, government policies have created intergenerational disadvantage which has manifested the long-term institutional inequality of educational outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples evident today. Policies for Aboriginal people developed without an Aboriginal voice have time and time again proven unsuccessful. Non-Aboriginal people lack an understanding of the culture, identity, historical contexts and experiences that influence our lives. This is a key factor in the inadequate development of policies and decision making. Maddison (2009) articulates the complex role of Aboriginal policy development even for Aboriginal people:

Aboriginal people are resourceful, creative and persistent. No other group of political actors face greater challenges than Aboriginal people in their struggles to articulate a collective identity, connect with the broader Australian population and achieve urgent political outcomes. (p. xxvi)

Past policies have relied on non-Aboriginal people attempting to solve 'the problem of the Aborigines' instead of collaborative decision making for the empowerment of Aboriginal communities. The reality is that these policies did not solve anything, instead producing later policies that attempted to fix the inadequacies of past political actions. The report of the House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal (Ruddock, 1985), in distinguishing past issues of policy development for Aboriginal education, identified the requirement to have an Aboriginal voice in the development of educational policy and processes as integral to reducing the '*discontinuity between formal education and the Aboriginal community*' (p. 28).

It is in this context that the NAEC story begins.

Chapter 3

An Indigenous Knowledges and Methodological Approach

Dadirri – ‘a special quality, a unique gift of the Aboriginal people is inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. It is something like what you call contemplation. (Ungenmerr Bauman, 2002, p. 2)

3.1 Introduction

A number of years ago Bob Morgan introduced the principle of Dadirri to me explaining it as ‘listen to learn, don’t listen to respond’. I believe it to be an important lesson representing respect, the virtue of patience and reflexivity. The principle of Dadirri is relevant within Indigenous research and working with Aboriginal people and communities; capturing the true essence of spirituality, knowledges and experiences.

Indigenous Knowledge has been theorised by a growing number of Indigenous scholars internationally since the late 1990s, including the works of Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Professor Linda Smith and Associate Professor Margaret Kovach. I have drawn on Indigenous knowledges to form the primary theoretical framework for this study. In this chapter I introduce Indigenous Knowledges through an Indigenous research paradigm presenting an Indigenous ontology, epistemology and axiology, as well as an Indigenous framework guided by connection to country. An Indigenous woman’s standpoint theory is also presented. Although introduced into the academy in the late 1990s, an Indigenous Knowledges framework has of course been utilised by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial.

It has been claimed by many Indigenous researchers and Indigenous communities that Indigenous peoples have been the most researched people in the world (Rigney, 1999; L. Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). The voices and perspectives of non-Indigenous researchers investigating Indigenous people still remain dominant in the research archives. This includes study by non-Indigenous researchers of: Aboriginal people’s being, the way(s) in which they live, think, and do; all through a Western lens. In her ground-breaking work on

decolonizing methodologies, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses the need for Indigenous people to tell their own stories, '*rewriting and re-righting our position in history*' (p. 28). Through our own voices we will regain the possession of our own knowledges and worldviews resulting in greater empowerment for our people. Rigney (1997) explains:

Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research and research design to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by their communities. (p. 3)

In the Australian Indigenist research context, Martin (2003) quotes Mick Dodson (1995), the former Social Justice Commissioner, who discusses the current failures in the development of laws and policy in Australia for Aboriginal people stemming from privileging a Western viewpoint:

One of the fundamental problems in Australia (since the active and conscious endeavour to destroy our cultures was dropped as official policy) is that only those aspects of our cultures which are understood and valued by white fellas have been considered valid. The recognition and protection of Indigenous cultures has been extended from a non-Indigenous perspective. Our values have been filtered through the values of others. What has been considered worthy of protection has usually been on the basis of this scientific, historic, aesthetic or sheer curiosity value. Current laws and policy are still largely shaped by this cultural distortion and fail to extend protection in terms which are defined by our own perspectives. (p. 4, quoted by Martin, 2003, p. 5)

In line with Dodson, I present this story to give credence to the Aboriginal men and women who led the journey of Aboriginal education policy development and share this story with our wider communities so their legacy will continue. Rigney (1997) further discusses this importance for these stories of Aboriginal people to be told through an Aboriginal lens, stating:

Indigenous peoples think and interpret the world and its realities in differing ways to non-Indigenous peoples because of their experiences, histories, cultures and values. (p. 8)

Rigney (2001) outlines three core principles of Indigenous research which are intertwined. These are, 'resistance (as the emancipatory imperative), political integrity, and privileging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices' (Rigney, 2001, p. 8). The methodological and epistemological approach of this thesis

demonstrates all of these principles, constructing a journey of resilience, empowerment and cultural celebration through education.

3.2 Indigenous Knowledges and Methodologies

Indigenous methodologies have previously been linked with the theories of qualitative research however there is a strengthening view of Indigenous methodologies as constituting its own research paradigm. As Indigenous scholars present more information on Indigenous methodologies the relationships between Indigenous methodologies and qualitative research are becoming better defined (Kovach, 2010). Indigenous research methodologies privilege the epistemologies and ontologies of Aboriginal people, drawing on Indigenous values, philosophies, knowledges and principles that result in positive outcomes for our people and our communities (Moreton-Robinson & Walters, 2010).

Some argue that Western research methodologies such as Community-based Research, Emancipatory Research or Critical Race Theory draw on concepts similar to those that underpin Indigenous research methodologies. The prominent Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), points out the similarities:

Somehow community conveys a much more intimate, human space whereas field assumes a space "out there" where people may or may not be present. Social research at community level is often referred to as community action research or emancipatory research. Both community action and emancipatory research approaches to research are models which seek to make a positive difference in the conditions or lives of people. (p. 127)

Another theoretical position, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is concerned with the effects of race, gender, class, racism and discrimination on the hierarchy and power balance in the development of policy, laws and practice (Brayboy & McKinley, 2005). One of the defining factors of CRT (although primarily focused on Latino and African American societies) is its focus on *racism as, endemic in society*. Brayboy and McKinley (2005) therefore expanded the focus to an Indigenous ontology and epistemology introducing Tribal Critical Race Theory, defined by nine principles;

1. *Colonization is endemic to society.*
2. *... policies toward Indigenous peoples are rooted in imperialism, White supremacy, and a desire for material gain.*
3. *Indigenous peoples occupy a liminal space that accounts for both the political and racialized natures of our identities.*
4. *Indigenous peoples have a desire to obtain and forge tribal sovereignty, tribal autonomy, self-determination, and self-identification.*
5. *The concepts of culture, knowledge, and power take on new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens.*
6. *Governmental policies and educational policies toward Indigenous peoples are intimately linked around the problematic goal of assimilation.*
7. *Tribal philosophies, beliefs, customs, traditions, and visions for the future are central to understanding the lived realities of Indigenous peoples, but they also illustrate the differences and adaptability among individuals and groups.*
8. *Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.*
9. *Theory and practice are connected in deep and explicit ways such that scholars must work towards social change. (p. 6)*

Tribal Critical Race Theory is fully compatible with the conceptual basis of the movement of the NAEC that served as an act of resistance against the past and present politics that oppressed Indigenous people and instead began a transformative movement drawing on their own values, principles and philosophies, towards the well-being and positive future for our people and communities.

Kaupapa Maori is another example where comparisons can be drawn between Critical Theory and Indigenous Research theory. Graham Hingangaroa Smith (1997) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) describe alignment between Critical Theory and Kaupapa Maori, stating that Kaupapa Maori is:

located in relation to Critical Theory, in particular to the notions of critique, resistance, struggle and emancipation. (L. Smith, 1999, p. 185)

As demonstrated there are definite similarities between some Western research methodologies and theories, however they still lack the holistic values and principles of Indigenous methodologies as they exclude the recognition of connectivity, relationality and Indigenous values and philosophies.

Kovach (2010) argues that we only fully privilege Indigenous methodologies as a distinctive methodology within its own right if there is not an attempt to validate the method against what is seen to be an accepted Western research methodological approach:

Indigenous methods do not flow from Western philosophy; they flow from tribal epistemologies. If tribal knowledges are not referenced as a legitimate knowledge system guiding the Indigenous methods and protocols with the research process, there is a congruency problem. (p. 36)

3.3 Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory

Although there has been much research that records the histories of Aboriginal education and policy it has been primarily concentrated on individual States and sectors of education. Further to this, the research has mostly come from a non-Indigenous perspective. This study aims to not just reflect my voice as an Aboriginal woman but to include the perspectives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. My standpoint in undertaking this research is from an Indigenous woman's standpoint, to recognise the legacy of the Aboriginal men and women who paved our way in education today. According to L. Smith (1999) a standpoint is a position from which research is '*constructed, analysed, interpreted and assessed*'. (p. 326)

Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory builds upon the earlier works of Feminist Standpoint Theory and Indigenous Standpoint Theory, as explained by Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2013). The foundations of these approaches articulate the necessity in social research to draw on the experiences and knowledges of the research participants to guide the research. The definition of the experiences and knowledges is then better analysed and validated through a shared understanding between the researcher and the participants (Moreton-Robinson, 2013).

The noted scholar, Martin Nakata (2007), the first Torres Strait Islander to complete a PhD, is particularly articulate as he defines three principles in explaining Indigenous standpoint theory:

Indigenous people are entangled in a very contested knowledge space at the cultural interface. It would therefore begin from the premise that my social position is discursively constituted within and constitutive of complex sets of social relations as expressed through the social organisation of my everyday... Indigenous standpoint theory would recognise Indigenous agency as framed within the limits and possibilities of what I can know from this constituted position – to recognise at the interface that we are constantly being asked to be both continuous with one and discontinuous with another... the idea that the constant 'tensions' that this tug-of-war creates are physically experienced, and both inform as well as limit what can be said and what is to be left unsaid in the everyday. (p. 216)

Acknowledging the work of Nakata, Moreton-Robinson (2013) argues for the recognition of gender in creating experiences and knowledges. She articulates Indigenous Women's Standpoint theory as:

Ascribed through inheritance and achieved through struggle. It is constituted by our sovereignty of the interconnectedness of our ontology (our way of being); our epistemology (our way of knowing) and our axiology (our way of doing). It generates its problematics through Indigenous women's knowledges and experiences acknowledging that intersecting oppressions will situate us in different power relations and affect our different individual experiences under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share either consciously or unconsciously. (p. 340)

I present this study from an Indigenous woman's standpoint, observed through my own lens as a Worimi woman, from coastal NSW, informing the theoretical and conceptual framework. I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister, cousin and Aunty with a sister and brother, daughter and son and many cousins, nieces and nephews. Having lived the majority of my life on Darkinung country I also see this community as an integral part of my cultural family and connection. My ontology, epistemology and axiology describe my relationality as an Indigenous woman.

3.4 The Indigenous Knowledges Framework of this thesis

3.4.1 My Relationship to Indigenous Knowledges

In order to privilege the knowledge of our ancestors and those men and women who have shared their knowledge for this study I present an Indigenous methodology that demonstrates the importance of relationality to country, self and culture. Moreton-Robinson (2013) privileges the significance of the interconnectedness of country, place and experiences as inherent to Aboriginal identity. She discusses Indigenous relationality as:

informed by our embodied connection to our respective countries, all living entities and our ancestors; our sovereignty. (p. 337)

The conceptual framework outlined below connects the thesis with my country and the relationships of my country, my knowledge, my journey and experiences.

Karuah River runs through Worimi country from the mountains of Gloucester (NSW) down to the mouth of the river at Karuah flowing out to the Tasman Sea of the Pacific Ocean. The river banks are where my ancestors lived as fisherman and oyster farmers. My grandfather's spirit (ashes) was returned to the river once he passed over to the spirit world. Although this was not the country I grew up on I feel a connection to the river through the spirits of my ancestors as a significant place to me personally but also to the Worimi people. The connectivity to my research is defined through the water in the river. As it commences its journey the fresh water gradually meets the salt water fed from the ocean; it becomes a mix of fresh and salt water (brackish).

The fresh water represents the Aboriginal people who have long journeyed through mountains, coastal lands and bush bringing with them stories/education passed through generations. The river survives through flood and drought, like the strength of our people who show resilience, sometimes varying their path dependent on environmental impacts however always continuing to flow. Fresh water gives life, just as the members of the National Aboriginal Education

Committee gave life to Aboriginal education. Through sharing their experience and expertise they were able to forge a journey for us to continue.

The salt water represents non-Aboriginal people who have travelled across the oceans to settle within Australia, bringing different viewpoints and forms of education. The salt water whilst in the ocean can sometimes be forceful and damaging and not always easy for swimming however when it enters the river or estuary it is calmer and easier to interact with. The salt water can be associated with the government, particularly in this instance, the Department of Education and Department of Aboriginal Affairs, including the non-Aboriginal people within the departments, Ministers and public servants.

The coming together of the salt and fresh water is at times a space where fish have time to adapt to different environments (eg. fresh to salt) and where as part of their lifecycle they develop social groupings. The joining of fresh and salt water is a reflective environment representing the sharing of cultures, experiences and stories based on respect and reciprocity to ensure a healthy future for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The river itself represents a journey; it gives life and sustenance to living things, it represents our future.



Figure 1: Karuah River, NSW – Worimi Country. Photo taken by Great Lakes Council.

3.4.2 How the Indigenous Knowledges Framework resonates with my research

Margaret Kovach (2012) argues that Indigenous methodology is heavily based on relationality; therefore the researcher cannot be a neutral bystander within the research:

Given that any knowledge that emerges from qualitative inquiry is filtered through the eyes of the researcher, it follows that this new knowledge must be interpretive. A significant contribution of qualitative research, then, has been its ability to gain recognition that the researcher is not a neutral instrument of the research process. (p. 32)

Additionally, Shawn Wilson (2008) articulates an Indigenous research paradigm as:

research that follows an ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology that is Indigenous. (p. 38)

My life has been moulded by both Indigenous and Western worldviews. The dominant environment that surrounds us creates a comparative viewpoint with which I can draw on varied values, philosophies and perspectives. Wilson (2008) describes his own experiences in this context:

'one of the great strengths that Indigenous scholars bring with them is the ability to see and work within both the Indigenous and dominant worldviews'. (p.44)

The opportunity to be exposed to my own cultural knowledges and teachings as well as interactions with Indigenous people across the world has allowed a continual personal and spiritual growth. Although Indigenous cultures across the world differ in practice, it is amazing to witness the similarities in values and philosophies. Wilson (2008) believes that 'relationality' is the key to an Indigenous way of knowing, quoting Patricia Steinhauer (2001) who discusses the importance of the three R's 'Respect, Reciprocity and Relationality'. I have utilised the *Wollotuka Cultural Standards* (The Wollotuka Institute, 2013) to symbolise my own ontology and epistemology. The *Wollotuka Cultural Standards* were developed by Elders and Expert Knowledge Holders from communities with which I share a connection – Darkinung, the community in

which I have lived the majority of my life; Worimi and Biripai, where I have ancestral connection; and Awabakal, the community in which I work. Out of the five Standards, I refer to the four that hold significance to me and my reflections below – *Respect and Honouring*, *Community Responsiveness*, *Cultural Celebration*, *Academic and Research*. The fifth, *Inter-institutional relationships* are based on an interaction between Western and Indigenous knowledges and values (The Wollotuka Institute, 2013). Although this is definitely important I will not utilise this Standard for the purpose of defining my own values and perspectives.

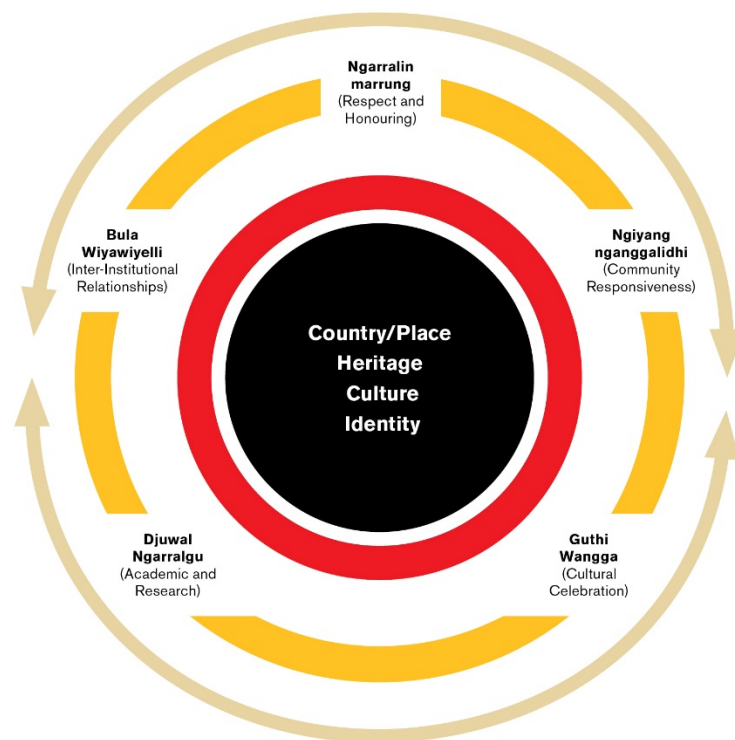


Figure 2: Source: Wollotuka Cultural Standards (2013), University of Newcastle

3.4.3 Ontology (my way of being)

Using the *Cultural Standards* as a basis of interpretation I explain ontology as the black section defining *Country/Place, Heritage, Culture and Identity*; that is, the foundations that intertwine within the Standards and represent Indigenous peoples' ontology.

My *Country/Place* is my connections to coastal countries; countries that represent the oceans, lakes, estuaries, beaches as well as the beautiful valleys and bushland: the countries created by Baiame, the creator spirit, forming the landscape and enforcing the laws that would protect and sustain all lifeforms for time immemorial.

My Aboriginal *heritage* is from my father, a Worimi man and from his father a Worimi/Biripai man and my ancestors before. My mother has English/German heritage from both her mother and father.

My *culture and identity* are founded by the knowledges and experiences that have been shared by my community Elders and Expert Knowledge Holders spiritually, physically, emotionally and intellectually. These knowledges and experiences along with my connections to community personally and professionally guide my past, current and future journeys.

3.4.4 Epistemology (my way of knowing)

I believe my knowing and epistemological viewpoint is based on the acquisition of knowledge based on Aboriginal values and principles as defined below:

Respect and Honouring is what harnesses our knowledge, relationships, connections and our future existence. Respect for our country and the sustenance it gives. Our country and environments provide us with knowledge of survival. Respect for our ancestors, our Elders and knowledge holders with their teachings, legacies and the knowledge they impart. Their generational knowledge guides our journeys, practices, perspectives and philosophies. Respect for the traditions, values and cultures that guide our futures and respect for the wellbeing and experiences of each other.

Cultural Celebration shares and promotes our knowledge and identity. Instils a sense of pride, as we celebrate our long histories of survival and resilience; celebrate our commonalities and differences as Indigenous people of Australia and across the world; celebrate our achievements and successes as well as the overcoming of adversity; celebrate the legacy of those who walked before us;

celebrate the future evolution of our cultures that remain grounded by our traditional values and perspectives. We capture future knowledge from celebrating past success.

Community Responsiveness ensures that we walk together, sharing knowledge and respecting the knowledges based on the other's journeys and experiences. The research we do with communities must benefit our communities and be returned to our communities. The Wollotuka Institute (2013) defines *Community Responsiveness* in a way that reinforces its importance, as:

Valued and respected and based on the principles of self-determination, reciprocity, social and restorative justice, equity and mutual respect... STRONG COMMUNITY, STRONG CULTURE. (p. 13)

We all have responsibility for ensuring strong, healthy Aboriginal communities. Knowledge should be reciprocal and passed on through generations.

Academic and Research recognises the longevity of our contributions to our environments, technology, science and social understandings. Our people have long been doctors, teachers, scientists, environmentalists, psychologists and law enforcers. Traditionally knowledges are provided to individuals when deemed ready to take responsibility for the knowledge imparted. Today knowledge is readily available to anyone at any time through technologies, at least at a surface level; yet it may not be fully grasped until the learner is able to take on the responsibility of knowing. Information and knowledge that is shared with us and that we impart comes with a responsibility in respect of our ancestors, our communities and our future generations.

3.4.5 Axiology (my way of doing)

My way of doing is reflected in my relationships and responsibilities to my family, my communities, my colleagues and the men and woman who form the life of my study. They are influenced by my identity as an Aboriginal woman. This is underpinned by strong values, ethics and principles informed by my experiences and environments personally and professionally.

3.5 Indigenous Methodologies Approach of this Thesis

3.5.1 Storytelling

I present the chronological journey of the NAEC and Aboriginal education policy development in Australia as a storyteller reflecting the voices of the National Aboriginal Education Committee as per the title of the thesis. Storytelling has always been used by Aboriginal people as pedagogy for the teaching and sharing of knowledge. This method is becoming more accepted within the Western research paradigm, recognising valued relationships between Aboriginal stories and the transmitting of knowledges. Klapproth (2004) defines cultural narrative discourse within the relationships between Aboriginal storytelling and transmission of knowledge:

...in Australian Aboriginal culture, traditional oral storytelling practice plays a decisive role both in the negotiation of social and personal identity as well as in the transmission of cultural knowledge, the two areas furthermore being conceived of as intrinsically linked. (p. 79)

A relational methodological approach is drawn on in the form of narrative inquiry through the representation of storytelling and reflexivity. Barton (2004) theorises that the sharing of stories and knowledges can result in the construction of new knowledges, defining narrative inquiry as:

life stories understood through the dimensions of interaction, continuity and situation. (p. 1)

Ensuring that the story is articulated in appropriate language that reflects the true journey of the NAEC members, I apply storytelling to bring alive the language of member stories. Wilson (2008) describes how storytelling allows the listener to interact with the content, linking and drawing comparisons with their own life experiences and knowledge. At times this may even move past the usual conventions of the Western model of presenting a thesis. However it is important for breaking through the non-Aboriginal discourse that has so far dominated the telling of histories.

Storytelling is vital in Aboriginal communities to teach and pass on important lessons. Throughout this study participants, as co-researchers, assist me in sharing the stories that will respond to the research question posed in the thesis. The co-researchers' stories reflect the impacts of the histories from an insider perspective bringing them to life. This method is intended to create a greater connection for an Indigenous audience.

The study utilises an intergenerational approach to pass the knowledge of the storytellers from one generation to the next ensuring the longevity of the knowledge and experiences that is to be shared. This sharing is intended to assist those interested or undertaking their own journey in Aboriginal education. Minnabarriet (2012) explains that:

Through stories we share our feelings, heal wounds, discover hope, increase understanding, and strengthen community. (p. 24)

To describe the journey of the NAEC, it makes sense that I follow the story from beginning to end. Traditional storytelling is not always chronologically sequenced (Klapproth, 2004), but for the purpose of this study it is appropriate to tell the story as a chronology of events highlighting key strategies and initiatives that had considerable impact. The desired approach to achieve this is a qualitative analysis utilising interview data and existing literature, drawing on my own experiences as an 'insider' forming a methodological approach necessary to draw conclusions from this study.

I analysed and identified both achievements and challenges in relation to the NAEC national aims and objectives over the past 40 years juxtaposed with contemporary and future journeys currently evident in Aboriginal education. The methodology utilised in this research will present some answers to these challenges by sharing the expertise and experiences of some of our first Aboriginal leaders working within the confines of a dominant Western education system. The information will be collected through respectful engagement with Aboriginal members and stakeholders of the NAEC.

3.5.2 Co-Researchers (*Participants*)

The voices within this thesis are from key members and stakeholders from the NAEC. A total of eighteen members were interviewed together with Susan Ryan, Minister for Education from 1983, when the NAEC was at its peak. All the participants were for chosen as they played key roles in the NAEC and their voices capture differences in expertise, area of educational specialisation (for example early childhood or higher education), and geographic background. The list of participants and the era of time in which they served the NAEC is listed below:

Co-Researcher	Years of Membership	Capacity
Stephen Albert	1977 – 1981, 1983 - 1986	Chairperson, Member WA
Paul Hughes	1977 – 1981, 1983 - 1986	Member SA, Chairperson
Colin Bourke	1977 - 1979	Inaugural Member VIC
May O'Brien	1977 - 1981	Inaugural Member WA
Patsy Cameron	1977 - 1979	Inaugural Member TAS
Kaye Price	1979 – 1981, 1982 - 1984	Member TAS, Executive Officer
Robert (Bob) Morgan	1979 - 1989	Member NSW
Eleanor Bourke	1979 – 1981, 1985 - 1989	Member VIC, Deputy Chairperson (1988 - 1989)
Pearl Duncan	1979 - 1983	Primary Specialisation
John Lester	1980 - 1983	Primary Specialisation
Didimain Uibo	1980 - 1984	Primary Specialisation, NT
Victor Forrest	1981 – 1983, 1983 - 1985	Member WA, Research Officer
Peter Buckskin	1981 – 1984, 1986 - 1988	Member SA
Laurie Padmore	1981 - 1984	Member TAS
Rex Granites	1983 - 1984	Traditional
John Heath	1985 - 1988	Member NSW
Wendy Ludwig	1983 - 1986	Adult Education Specialisation

Lillian Holt	1978 – 1980, 1985 - 1988	Executive Officer, Tertiary Specialisation
Susan Ryan	1983 - 1987	Minister for Education

At first I referred to these members of the NAEC as participants of the research. However, each time I made this reference it caused discomfort as it was so clinical and not related to the actual experiences shared during my interactions with them. Wilson (2008) discusses this discomfort in referring to the people in his study as participants. He describes a shared research journey refers to participants as *co-researchers* (Wilson, 2008, p. 63). I utilise Wilson's notion of co-researchers, as their shared stories are the life of this project and the ownership of their knowledge is theirs. Their voices are recorded alongside my own as we share the space to illuminate the culture, dynamics and journey of the NAEC and related organisations. I am aware that this does not conform with the usual practice in qualitative research of 'quoting' segments of transcripts however, I would argue that this approach is validated by the co-researcher status applied to the members of the NAEC that I interviewed. I also refer to the co-researchers by their given names instead of the usual academic referencing of surnames. This is deliberate in reinforcing the connectivity and respect for relationality within the spheres of Indigenous communities. To refer to the co-researchers by their last names would result in a clinical and disconnected status.

3.5.3 Stories Shared by the Co-researchers

The whole experience of connection and sharing of stories reflected an Indigenous epistemology of oral knowledge production and the passing of knowledge from generation to generation (Kovach, 2010). Kovach (2010) shares similar perspectives from her own Indigenous epistemology, of sharing stories as a means of knowledge production:

Conversation is a non-structured method of gathering knowledge. While this may seem like another way of saying interview, the term 'interview' does not capture the full essence of this approach. For this was very much a combination of reflection, story and dialogue. (p. 51)

In valuing and accurately reflecting the collected conversations and stories, I too took on the role of the storyteller with the intention of portraying the journey of Aboriginal peoples within the development of Aboriginal education policy from an Aboriginal standpoint. Aboriginal scholar, Laurel Williams (2013) utilised a different font colour to identify the different voices throughout her thesis on *People, Places and Pathways in Aboriginal Education in NSW*. I have used a similar concept relating it to my methodological framework. Therefore,

the co-researchers' stories, voices and reflections are recorded in the blue font; this blue font is the fresh water giving life through the sharing of their knowledge and expertise as detailed in the conceptual framework.

I also collected stories from the Minister for Education during the 1980s, the Honourable Susan Ryan. Her stories are recorded in green representing the salt water or the government, non-Aboriginal viewpoint. I have included Susan's viewpoint to provide a means of triangulation for the research presenting both different perspectives as well as consolidating the stories of the co-researchers.

Cultural credentialing is important within our social interactions to draw connections and relationships from within an Indigenous methodology. The voices of the co-researchers are the Aboriginal men and women who played a crucial role in initiating proactive policies and programs for Aboriginal education within a Eurocentric society. Therefore, it is relevant for me to introduce to you the co-researchers and other members of the NAEC as best I can, based on my interactions.

Thus, throughout the thesis I make these introductions, sharing the life histories of my co-researcher including their background, how they became members of the NAEC, their stories of the NAEC, and life after the NAEC. These introductions emphasise the need for respect and understanding of the journeys of those who walked before us, clearing a path in the forest for us to continue to move forward. The introductions also tell the story of their ongoing leadership post-NAEC, as they grabbed hold of the baton that was passed to them from our ancestors, to ensure the continued survival of Aboriginal peoples through education.

The stories told by members of the NAEC demonstrate the level of scholarship and expertise contributed to not just Aboriginal education but Australian education and society more broadly. Their stories exemplify Aboriginal people's commitment to and passion for education, the sacrifices made, the relationships forged, and the ongoing striving for excellence through compassion and personal dedication aimed at ensuring a better future for Aboriginal peoples.

3.5.4 Role of the Storyteller

In Aboriginal culture the traditional transmission of our knowledge was delivered through oral storytelling, song, dance, art and observation. The challenge therefore for researchers is the translation of these methods into a written form, particularly, in maintaining an accurate translation (Wilson, 2008). It is the responsibility of the researcher taking on the role of the storyteller to ensure the integrity of the story is being upheld. Kovach (2010) details the challenges of the translation and interpretation of oral story to written story:

In written narrative, the story becomes finalized as a written product to be read and considered according to the reader's interpretation. Once written, the relationship between the reader and the storyteller is conceptual, not tangible. In an oral culture, story lives, develops, and is imbued with the energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener.....Writing story becomes a concession of the Indigenous researcher. (p. 101)

Reflection is an important tool in ensuring the true nature of the story is being told. The Hawaiian Indigenous scholar, Ku Kahakalau (2004) refers to the need to reflect on the collected and analysed information before undertaking final drafts. During the last seven months of my PhD study I was given study leave by the University and this provided me with the opportunity to remain focused on the interpretation of the stories without other distractions. More importantly it gave me time for reflection about my interactions with the co-researchers and the information imparted to me through conversation. Kahakalau refers to this process as 'illumination and reflection' (p. 29). She explains this process as:

what has awakened in consciousness, I focused on all that I had learned so far, and I tried to figure out what I had yet to understand. I

allowed myself to receive many new insights. I fine-tuned many aspects of my philosophy. (Kahakalau, 2004, p. 29)

The 'illumination and reflection' process allowed me to immerse myself in the co-researchers stories to create a greater understanding of the co-researchers experiences and perspectives.

3.5.5 Locating NAEC Members and Cultural Protocols

Given that the majority of the NAEC members had retired from professional life it was at times difficult to find where they were living. In most instances I used networking within the Aboriginal community to make contact with members and those who might have contact with them. This is akin to creating a snowball approach to recruitment of participants (Marshall, 1996). As the word of my research spread, I had people contacting me providing information or volunteering for an interview. It was an excellent example of what we refer to as the 'Koori grapevine', demonstrating the connectivity and relationships of Aboriginal communities across Australia

However, this wasn't always the case and sometimes it felt as if the spirits guided my journey. To illustrate this, I tell the story of my interview with Japanangka Rex Granites, a Walpiri man from the Western Desert of Northern Territory.

I had for many months been trying to locate Japanangka for an interview with little success. He is an artist and at times had travelled with art exhibitions so I tried to locate him through the exhibitions however they had already passed and I was unsuccessful. I tried networks and colleagues at universities that Japanangka had contact with, namely Australian National University (ANU), Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Deakin University, again without any success. After months of trying different options one of the staff at Wollotuka came into my office one day and said, 'an Elder from Northern Territory has just walked into the building, we have given him lunch, however thought you might like to welcome him as the Director'. As soon as I walked out to greet the Elder, I knew straight away it was Japanangka Rex Granites. When I told him my story

of trying to locate him, he simply said, 'the spirits obviously guided me here so let us do the interview'.

3.5.6 Yarning as part of the Cultural and Research Protocol

The interview interaction was achieved by yarning. Aboriginal health researchers Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu (2010) describe yarning as a creditable form of data collection that involves building relationships prior to engaging in the interview or storytelling. 'Yarning' is often used as an appropriate cultural protocol for introduction in the form of 'whose your mob?' referring to the country and people you are connected to. Once your mob is established further discussion may occur of identifying a connection to each other. 'Yarning' was significant in building a good rapport with the co-researchers and could take as long as an hour and include discussions of my interest and link to the research topic. As the co-researchers are on the most part, Elders or expert knowledge holders it was respectful for me to await their invitation to commence the business for which I was there.

I provide an example by telling the story of my visit to Patsy Cameron, one of the initial members of the NAEC:

Patsy lives in Tasmania, two hours north of Launceston, on the Bass Strait overlooking the island on which she grew up and is a descendant of, Cape Barren Island, the largest island in the Flinders Island group. I had not met Patsy before. We organised the visit via a phone call and she had invited me to stay at her home, as it was such a distance to travel back to Launceston. When I arrived, it was just as Patsy had described, a small beautiful beach community consisting of a caravan park and a general store. Patsy welcomed me warmly into her home and we spent time over lunch introducing ourselves and drawing on our connections. Patsy and her mum still maintain the Tasmanian traditional Aboriginal practice of shell stringing and basket weaving. Patsy showed me the wonderful baskets and necklaces made by herself and her mum.

She then took me for a walk down to the beach talking to me about the island and her experiences growing up. As we walked past the vegetation she would stop along the way telling me about the native plants and what they were used for. When we arrived back to Patsy's house we had formed a connection and had a foundational understanding of each other, our experiences and our relationships to our countries and our people. We were then ready for our interview. I thank Patsy and her husband for their hospitality and for the gift of a local shell which is a reminder of the warm reception I received onto Patsy's country.

All of the interviews, although unique in each experience, followed a similar protocol. There were times when the protocol I had assumed was not regarded appropriate therefore I needed to be very careful to recognise and respect the views and protocols accepted by each individual co-researcher. I share the following example in contacting a member of the NAEC:

I had been provided contact details by another member of the NAEC and so I forwarded a letter that started like this –

'Dear Auntie, I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Leanne Holt (nee Lilley), a Worimi woman from Karuah area, NSW. I am currently enrolled at the University of Newcastle in a PhD researching the development of Aboriginal education policy, based on the journey of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC).'

The letter further went on to ask if she would be happy to meet for an interview and provided my contact details with a return envelope. About a week later I received a return email:

'Dear Leanne, Thank you for your communication which I received yesterday. First of all I do not like to be addressed as auntie. Only my close nieces and nephews may call me auntie. When whites call me auntie I feel patronized as I remember when old Indigenous men and women were laughed at and ridiculed by whites, even by little white

children. I know it is felt by many (Indigenous people) as a mark of respect but I have always had problems with it. Indigenous people always ask me how I want to be addressed and I tell them just call me (by first name).'

I undertook the interview, which proved to be another warm and welcoming interaction. During it I apologised if I caused any offence; my use of Aunty had been out of respect however it was a good lesson for me not to assume protocol.

To establish how the NAEC contributed to policy development in Australia the interviews encouraged open discussion and in the first instance explored why and how the co-researchers became members of or were involved with the NAEC. During the yarning session, prompts were used to ensure the stories encompassed:

- The effectiveness of the NAEC structure
- The importance of relationships and connections
- The strengths and challenges of the NAEC
- The NAECs significant contributions to Aboriginal education
- Most memorable moments
- Legacy and leadership with advice for future generations

As this information was obtained through yarning there was no structure to the order in which the information was delivered or consistency in how the information was relayed.

The information obtained from the interviews needed to be sorted into themes and thematically analysed to reach outcomes that respond to the research question. Aronson (1995) outlines the steps to thematic analysis as:

- Collection of interview data;
- Identification of themes and patterns;
- Thematic analysis of themes, developing sub-themes from the corresponding patterns;
- Form a comprehensive picture;
- Develop a valid argument to present the storyline or outcomes. (p. 3-4)

3.5.7 Interviews as Storytelling

In order to collect the personal stories of the co-researchers I did not utilise scripted questions but instead was directed by a 'storytelling' approach which is complementary to the Indigenous practice of sharing knowledges as outlined above. The method of storytelling for Indigenous research captures our spiritual, emotional and intellectual identity (Archibald, 2008; Castellano, 2000; L. Smith, 1999). The co-researchers were provided with a statement outlining the purpose of the research and then guided to share their story, experiences and perspectives.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and in three cases I conducted a follow-up interview, in order to clarify particular details from the initial interview. The protocol of introduction through links to country served as a positive method of connection with co-researchers. It strengthened my credibility as an insider within the research and establish a positive, trusting relationship. The interviews were inspirational and I have felt a sense of privilege for the opportunity to share their personal stories, achievements and challenges. It is vital they are reflected in a way that is culturally significant and honouring of their contributions and personal journeys. Marie Battiste (2008), a prominent Indigenous scholar, shares with us that as Indigenous researchers a vital responsibility is ensuring that the Indigenous knowledges that are shared with us are not exploited, but honoured and able to provide a contribution back to our communities.

Observation adds value to this study, as an 'insider' it enabled me to reflect on and share my own experiences in Aboriginal education and the evidence I have witnessed that complements the goals of the study. The observation approach is one of a 'participant as an observer' where it is openly known that I am undertaking this study by all stakeholders (Olson, 1977). Because of my positioning professionally and culturally within Aboriginal education, I was able to integrate observation into the study to enable research outcomes to be derived. Observation is also a crucial element in traditional Aboriginal pedagogy (Yunkaporta, 2009, 4. 43).

Kawulich (2005) applies the reasons quoted by Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, to justify the use of participant observation:

- *To identify and guide relationships with informants;*
- *To help the researcher get the feel for how things are organized and prioritized, how people interrelate, and what are the cultural parameters;*
- *To show the researcher what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos;*
- *To help the researcher become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process; and*
- *To provide the researcher with a source of questions to be addressed with participants. (p. 5)*

Within this project Observation is used with a threefold purpose – to guide my relationships with co-researchers, to identify aspects of the relationships among members of the NAEC, and to develop an understanding of the ongoing journey of Aboriginal education post NAEC.

3.5.8 Recording of Interviews

I initially made contact with the co-researchers via phone, email or post depending on the contact details I was able to access. Once securing the most effective mode of contact, co-researchers were sent an introduction of me as an Aboriginal woman and as a researcher, an overview of the project, an invitation to participate in an interview, ethics information and consent forms (Appendix A).

The interviews were held on a date and place convenient to the co-researcher. This ensured they were in an environment that was most conducive to telling their stories. It also avoided disrupting their schedules or inconveniencing them in any way. With the permission of the co-researcher the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a transcribing service. The initial interview captured

their personal story. On three occasions, there was a follow up interview clarifying particular details identified from the initial interview.

I followed up the interviews by email thanking the co-researchers for their time and the stories they shared. I also checked the accuracy of the interviews with the co-researchers as well as any additional stories I shared that referred to their experiences or our engagement.

3.5.9 Ethical Issues

Potential co-researchers were provided with a letter of invitation and a consent form for the project as outlined in the National Ethics Application Form and reviewed by the University of Newcastle Human Ethics Committee – Approval number H-2012-0304. The information on the project communicated a clear message that potential co-researchers were under no obligation to agree to be interviewed and that they were free to withdraw at any time. If they withdrew all of their information, it would be returned to them without question. Co-researchers were asked for permission to tape the interviews and, if they agreed, for a transcription service to be used, which was included in the consent form.

3.5.10 Document Analysis

Papers and information generated by the NAEC are mostly archived at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra. Most of the information is in 'Open Stacks' however a small number of important documents are located in the 'Closed or Restricted Stacks' where special permission has to be sought from the owners or custodians of the information before allowing it to be accessed.

Principal records include policy documents and discussion papers developed by the NAEC, media releases and conference papers. Other records included reviews and reports commissioned by the NAEC that respond to research and highlighted factors concerning Aboriginal education, as well as co-written reports generated to provide advice and guidance relating to the governance,

policies and administration of Aboriginal education to government agencies. The conference papers reflect a wider community and stakeholder voice for consideration of the NAEC.

3.6 Ethical Indigenous Community Research

As I commenced my interviews it became clear that as an Aboriginal person interviewing other Aboriginal people it was necessary for me to be taking an 'insider' status. Merriam et al. (2001) discuss the differences between an insider and outsider approach arguing that both deliver different perspectives to the research and both are equally effective. During all my interviews it was protocol, from an Aboriginal perspective, for me to identify connection through cultural identity and country. However, although there was a connection and commonality through our shared Aboriginality, I could not assume that this would provide an effective common-ground for a positive interview environment (Merriam et al., 2001; L. Smith, 1999).

I was fortunate in that I already had professional relationships with some of the co-researchers, and with others I could draw connections through these relationships as well as our common experiences of working in education. NAEC members were keen to share their stories. Additionally, as the co-researchers had themselves worked within education and had a first-hand understanding of research and the outcomes that I was anticipating from undertaking a thesis, there was no apparent fear or reluctance that is sometimes evident based on the past histories of unethical research undertaken within our communities. Many of our communities respond to research with fear, based on years of exploitative research practice where research has been on Aboriginal people as opposed to with Aboriginal people, resulting in racist and harmful outcomes for our people across the world (L. Smith, 1999). In this case, the anticipation was more from my own nervousness at the idea of meeting the expert knowledge holders who were held in high esteem by our people. I carried a fear of failure to tell their stories, to meet their expectations. I sometimes quietly regretted taking on the challenge because of my own lack of confidence in my capacity as a researcher. However, each of my interactions only resulted

in a valuable engagement which contributed strongly to my personal and academic growth.

Therefore, I draw on Indigenous community research that is driven by the needs of the community. In this case I act as a conduit between the members of the NAEC and the audience that will read this study. Indigenous community research is a collaborative process where I am working with community to share their knowledge and experiences. Another key aspect of Indigenous community research is the importance of the information collected in the study being returned to the community. L. Smith (1999) reinforces the need for research to be returned to our people:

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are the 'factors' to be built in to the research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as part of the research design, to be discussed as part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways. (p. 52)

It is for this purpose that I take on the challenge of this study. The study will also join the dots for the NAEC members and other stakeholders sharing the broader journey and outcomes. Even for the NAEC members over the period of time this study focuses on, individual members of the NAEC were involved at different stages. As they reflected on their experiences and memories, there was a real interest in the timeframes before and after their involvement.

To summarise and validate ethical considerations of this research from an Indigenous methodologies point of view, I draw on the questions posed by L. Smith (1999) when undertaking research with Aboriginal communities and offer my responses;

Whose research is this?

The research is conducted by me as an Aboriginal PhD student in collaboration with the co-researchers who have shared their stories and experiences.

Who owns it?

As the research has a national focus and is related to the empowering of Aboriginal education and the raising of our voices, it belongs to our ancestors who were activists, educators, Elders and knowledge holders, mums and dads; it belongs to the co-researchers and the wider communities that contributed to the journey which this research relates to. It belongs to our current and future Aboriginal communities who will hopefully continue the legacy that has been passed to them to ensure that Aboriginal people hold a valued space within education in Australia.

Whose interests does it serve?

It serves the interests of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, organisations and governments, now and into the future, creating an understanding of the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia and the philosophies and knowledges that inform this. It serves to guide the continual advancement of Aboriginal education, building on the foundations laid by the NAEC.

Who will benefit from it?

The research benefits the whole of Australian society by informing the provision of quality education for Aboriginal people that respects our own ontology and epistemology. Providing education that is viewed through multiple cultural lenses results in the creation of global citizens based on the principles of social and restorative justice.

Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?

The questions and the directions of the research were designed and guided by preliminary research and discussion with relevant Aboriginal expert knowledge holders particularly related to this period of educational advancement. They were also designed through my own observations within Aboriginal higher education, listening to the stories from the co-researchers, discussions and reflections.

Who will carry it out? Who will write it up?

The research was carried out and written up by me, a Worimi woman from coastal New South Wales. As an Aboriginal person with strong links to her communities and with eighteen years of experience in Aboriginal higher education I undertook this research as a doctoral student.

How will the results be disseminated?

The results are initially written up in the form of a doctoral thesis. I am anticipating holding a forum where all co-researchers will be invited to attend so I can present my results back to those who shared their personal experiences and insights. A recurring comment throughout the interviews was that most members only have knowledge about the timeframe during which they were involved and are interested in seeing the whole picture. I will also present the results at Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal education conferences and forums. Copies of the thesis will be held within the Wollotuka and AIATSIS collections. It is hoped that the results will be finally recorded into a published book for wider access.

3.7 Conclusion

Through the ethics process and more importantly through the permission from co-researchers and expert knowledge holders I have been given responsibility to share their stories. I draw on the values and principles reflected in *the Cultural Standards* (The Wollotuka Institute, 2013), specifically: respect and reciprocity; cultural integrity; community responsiveness; protocol and the use of Indigenous knowledges. It was a learning journey for me as much as a forum to impart knowledge to a wider community. The use of my insider knowledge allowed me to not only share the views of the co-researchers but synthesise the information within the realms of my own experiences in Indigenous education. The use of tools such as storytelling and yarning has captured the essence of the journey of Aboriginal people and the importance of Aboriginal voices in the development of Aboriginal education policy highlighting the experiences and expertise they offered.

Chapter 4

A New Dawning: The First National Approach to Aboriginal Education - The Aboriginal Consultative Group

We see education as the most important strategy for achieving realistic self-determination for the Aboriginal people of Australia. We do not see education as a method of producing an anglicised Aborigine but rather as an instrument for creating an informed community with intellectual and technological skills, in harmony with our own cultural values and identity. We wish to be Aboriginal citizens in a changing Australia. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 3)

4.1 Introduction

From 1973 to 1977 the political environment and attitude towards the needs of Aboriginal people was changing. It had become obvious to the government that, if they were going to achieve positive progression of Aboriginal education they needed Aboriginal people to determine how that should happen. Aboriginal voices were to become the key strategy for setting the agenda for the future.

This chapter introduces the appointment of the Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG) as the first step in the evolution of Aboriginal participation in Aboriginal education. A full Aboriginal committee to provide advice to the Schools Commission from an Aboriginal education perspective provided an opportunity for Aboriginal people to resurrect their traditional educational practices that had been interrupted by past Aboriginal Affairs policies. The new direction also provided an opportunity to access a Western education that Aboriginal people had been excluded from until now.

This chapter also commences the process of presenting the stories of the co-researchers and the people who were a part of this new journey beginning with the members of the ACG who went on to play instrumental roles and act as agenda setters in the subsequent NAEC. The Aboriginal people presented throughout the following chapters are central to the thesis as they were the voices that influenced the policy directions to re-empower Aboriginal people for the next generations. The introduction of the co-researchers is two-fold; to

share their journey that contributed to their involvement in Aboriginal education and secondly, detailing their contribution to the development of Aboriginal education policy and their ongoing contribution to Aboriginal education and building stronger, healthier communities. The introduction of the co-researchers' life stories will provide the reader with a closer connection to the journey of Aboriginal education policy development, drawing on their personal and professional experiences. Their contributions are detailed throughout Chapters 4 to 8, interwoven into the related journeys of the individuals within the timelines of the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia.

The following timeline stages the major events and policy movements presented in this chapter;

1973	Release of Report of the Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission. <i>Schools in Australia</i> (Karmel report).
1975	Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG) formed. Release of ACG report: <i>Education for Aborigines: Report to the Schools Commission</i> .
1976	Release of ACG report to Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission: <i>Aboriginal Access to and use of Technical and Further Education</i> 15 July - Decision made by Fraser Government to appoint National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC)

4.2 An Aboriginal Voice: The Birth of the Aboriginal Consultative Group

In 1963, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee was established by non-Aboriginal people to consult with Aboriginal people on how to increase educational outcomes. The Committee was made up of volunteers and received limited funding. Primarily, the little funding they attracted was through donations (Williams, 2013). This was the first recognition of the need for Aboriginal communities and families to have a voice in their own educational future. However, Aboriginal people were not leading this voice; non-Aboriginal people were still acting as intermediaries on behalf of the Aboriginal community. It

would take another ten years for the need for Aboriginal voices in their own decision making to be realised.

Following the advice from the Karmel Report (1973), the interim committee of the Schools Commission directed that when the Schools Commission was fully functional, an Aboriginal committee with a full membership of Aboriginal people be established to provide advice on Aboriginal education. The Karmel Report had strongly emphasised the educational disadvantage of Aboriginal people and recommended urgent action. In December 1974, the Schools Commission established the national Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG) to engage an Aboriginal voice towards the advancement of Aboriginal education. The ACG included seventeen Aboriginal members representing States and Territories, educational sectors, communities and five members of the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee (NACC). The NACC had been appointed by the Whitlam Government in 1973 to provide advice to the government; however it was more broadly concerned with Aboriginal Affairs. The linked membership demonstrates the close relationship between the NACC and the ACG.

Colin Bourke, an inaugural member of the NAEC recalls this social movement: *Whitlam got elected and Kim Beazley Snr became the Minister for Education. One of the first things they did was look at the total situation and tried to overcome some of the disadvantages. They started the Disadvantaged Schools Program and then eventually they got Ken McKinnon, ex New Guinea, to set up the Australian Schools Commission. It was that Commission that decided to get the opinion of Aboriginal people when they set up the Aboriginal Consultative Group to the Schools Commission in 1974.* (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

May O'Brien, recalls the phone call from Kim Beazley Snr requesting a meeting: *He called me and I went and saw him. I said to him, 'You're Minister for Education, what are you doing for the Aboriginal people?' He responded, 'What do you want?' and I said 'Better education! All our kids are there, they haven't got government teachers and they should be included!' He sort of looked at me and said, 'I'm doing this and this and that'. I said, 'have you asked us?' I told him there's a group of Aboriginal people, you can pick any Aboriginal people*

who are around here and who are speaking out and form a committee. So that's what he did. He got a committee going called the Aboriginal Consultative Group. With that I had made a friend in a person who could change things. (O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014)



Figure 3: Members of the Aboriginal Consultative Group - David Anderson, NAC, Vic.; Jill Churnside, Pre-School teacher, WA; Roslyn Ella, Teacher, NSW; Walter Fejo, NAC, NT; Rex Granites, Teaching Assistant, NT; Eric Hayward, Community Worker, WA; Nita Koolamatrie, Teacher, SA; Verna Langdon, Community Worker, Tas.; Ted Loban, NAC, Torres Strait Islands; Bruce McGuiness, NAC, Vic; Natascha McNamara, Lecturer, SA; Michael Miller, Teacher, Qld; George Mye, NAC, Torres Strait Islands; Wiyendji Nunggula, House-father, NT; May O'Brien, Teacher, WA; James Stewart, Teacher, SA; Margaret Valadian, Social Worker, NSW. Special Advisors: John Moriarty, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Eric Wilmott, Department of Education. Reproduced from Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975).

May, as a result of her early interactions and recommendations to Minister Beazley was an obvious appointment to the ACG. Later she was appointed to the NAEC.

May O'Brien (nee Miller) was described by Stephen Albert (Interview, 23/11/2013) as being the '*matriarch of the NAEC*'. She was born in the goldfields of Western Australia in 1933, and with a passion for teaching, May became the first Aboriginal Teacher in Western Australia and later the first

Aboriginal person as a Superintendent, Department of Education in Western Australia. Her upbringing was both full of challenges and opportunities as she points out: *I was born in the bush, because at that time there were a group of non-Aboriginal people who were saying that a good Aboriginal person is a dead one. Because I was in that era, when they were picking up all the part Aboriginal kids like me, and taking them off their parents. I was little when I was taken to the mission, I was about five. But all the time I was with my uncle. He was a young man and he was made a man [initiated through ceremony], so he could make decisions. So he looked after my mum who was a teenager. The government made a ruling that all the part-Aboriginal kids; they would be sending us to homes ... bad places, which were terrible. But I stayed at Mount Margaret [mission]. My uncle made sure, he fought them. We were allowed to come into town, 'til lunchtime, and lunchtime they wanted us to be out....the police officers used to come on their horseback, and if we were not out of town, we would be whipped out of town. Or whipped and taken. They would pick you up saying to the Aboriginal mother and families, 'we're taking your kids away'. That's how a number of kids came down here to the homes here, like New Norcia and all of those places. If we went to a government settlement we would never see our people again. I went to high school when there was a change in government here in Australia. It was the white women that were concerned about the education and welfare of Aboriginal people. They hammered the government that was in power at the time, and said all of these kids, Aboriginal black or not, or half or quarter cast, they all have to be educated. So it was the white women that fought and fought for us. So if it wasn't for the white women, I wouldn't be where I am today, because they fought hard. Everybody else would say ... 'a good nigger is a dead one'. That was their attitude. (O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014)*

May's ambition was supported by her teachers and because May was a State Ward, in line with the assimilation legislation, negotiations between the Department of Education and the Department of Native Affairs resulted in enabling May to pursue teacher training. Following is an example of one of the letters that was sent during these negotiations between 1950 and 1953;

ALL CORRESPONDENCE MUST
BE ADDRESSED TO
"THE COMMISSIONER
OF NATIVE AFFAIRS."

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

DEPARTMENT OF NATIVE AFFAIRS,

176 WELLINGTON STREET. 4.

BOX R 1268, G.P.O., PERTH. 10th September, 1951.

TELEGRAMS: "NATIVE AFFAIRS, PERTH."

TELEPHONE: B 200,
3 LINES.

IN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE

The Director of Education,
Education Department,
P E R T H.

Re May Miller.

With reference to our interview of 20th August last, in connection with a possible short course of teacher training for the above girl, a copy of her second term school report (Standard VIII), is enclosed.

The results of a test given by Mr McCall on September 5th last are so encouraging that, as suggested by you, it would seem advisable for May to continue with her schooling next year and take her Junior.

It would be appreciated if you could suggest some suitable short course for May to take in 1953, which would qualify her to teach children from infants to second standard. She hopes to return to Mt Margaret Mission and teach the younger children there.

(Encl. 1)

S. G. Middleton
COMMISSIONER OF NATIVE AFFAIRS. *SK.*

Figure 4: Letter from Dept. Native Affairs to Director, Education: given to author by May O'Brien.

Rex Japananka Granites had also been appointed to the ACG as one of the NACC representatives and, like May, was another member who transitioned from the ACG to the NAEC. He was a Warlpiri man from Yuendumu in the Northern Territory and was appointed on the basis of both his education and traditional knowledge. Rex had commenced his teaching qualifications at Kormilda Teachers College in the Northern Territory and then completed his Bachelor of Education at Deakin University in Victoria. As an ordained Pastor, Rex worked with Aboriginal communities, as an Elder, artist, translator and mentor to ensure the physical and spiritual healing of his people. His experiences on the NAEC allowed him to share the knowledge he had obtained from his learnings and experiences. He reflects on the contribution he was making to the NAEC, *I was still a teacher, no matter what, not trained, but also trained, but I was still a teacher and who got me there is my own people,*

listening and understanding and connecting with the country. They were my teachers. Then I had to do it in the white way, I had to go to university and teachers college.... But I already knew what was going on because I had it my knowledge and understanding. I had the experience and understanding from where I was from, to give that knowledge to others who did not. I think we did a very good job both listening from each other and me sharing my traditional background... they were mostly from a city life, city people. I was out from the bush giving them all the knowledge I had. When I'm doing that, it's with my cultural behaviours in and out of the communities – which is how it should be. What I listen to is my spirit and my spirit is the only way I can do things. (Granites, interview 07/08/2014)

The ACG met regularly from 1974 exploring all aspects of Aboriginal education. They were particularly interested in a cohort of Aboriginal people that they referred to as 'the excluded';

...those Aborigines who have not had the opportunity or the resources to take advantage of post school studies or who have been forced to withdraw because of the failure of the conventional educational systems to meet their particular educational needs. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1976, p. 1)

Past policies that led to the educational exclusion of Aboriginal people had long term effects that resulted in a lack of appropriate qualifications and low level access to Western education provisions. The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) aimed to provide opportunities that bridged the gap as a result of these past policies, providing development opportunities and access programs that would contribute to increasing the confidence of Aboriginal people previously excluded, to embark on further education.

4.3 Education for Aborigines: Report to the Schools Commission

In 1974, largely based on the recommendation in the Karmel (1973) report to undertake a separate study on Aboriginal education and the need for a coordinated policy, the Schools Commission authorised the ACG to undertake a

special enquiry. Margaret Valadian, who was the first Aboriginal female university graduate in Australia, was the Chair of the Committee. The enquiry's terms of reference called for advice on:

- *Present policies and educational provisions in respect to Aborigines;*
- *Present patterns of administering funds for the education of Aborigines;*
- *Specific matters the Group feel are of importance in respect to the education of Aborigines.* (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 2)

In June 1975, the tabling of the *Education for Aborigines: Report to the Schools Commission*, (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975) to Dr K McKinnon, Chairman of the Schools Commission, was to mark a significant milestone in the future for Aboriginal education and the education of Aboriginal peoples. The two most significant conclusions that the Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) highlighted from the enquiry were;

1. *Aboriginal people should be involved in their own education at all levels, and that they should be responsible for and have some realistic control of this process.*
2. *We do not wish to see the responsibility for the education of Aboriginal children removed from the Government education systems operated by the various States and Territories.* (p. ii)

The ACG, unlike any previous committee, had embarked on strong consultation and input from Aboriginal peoples and communities in relation to their study. The study and subsequent report responded to the statements made within the report. Karmel (1973) referring to the 'educational disadvantages faced by Aboriginal children', and made recommendations on how to move into the future. Their report would also be the impetus for the creation of the NAEC (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975).

The significance of this report to the ACG in setting the foundation for a new beginning, including the rebuilding of lives, cultures, communities and survival, was reflected in a poem, that prefaces the report:

A NEW DAWNING

We began with a dawning – Djuwani

We were always here

This place is our dreaming

We neither changed it nor harmed it

But the world changed around us

Now we must start again (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. i)

The vision of the ACG was to:

...see education as the most important strategy for achieving realistic self-determination for the Aboriginal people of Australia... Education should be a constructive process, building on what a child is and developing his or her natural potential, not destroying and denying his birthright. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 3)

This vision acknowledged the post-colonial journey of Aboriginal peoples whilst emphasising their inherent rights to culture and identity. They further emphasised the importance of maintaining cultural knowledges as a part of the education process:

...every child has a right to be brought up as a member of his own culture. This does not mean that he must be prevented from learning about (and learning from) other cultures...The child should nevertheless be educated in a way that he is able to function successfully in both his own culture and the wider Australian society if he so desires. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 5)

The ACG deemed that Aboriginal people have unique cultural values and perspectives that unite and identify them separately to non-Aboriginal people. Therefore, Aboriginal identity should be respected and fostered throughout their educational experiences. The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) report, based on the enquiry, made 37 policy recommendations, with the recommendations listed into four categories;

Administrators and Decision Makers - Aboriginal involvement and appointment of positions that would influence high level decision making;

Professionals - developing professionals that will meet the needs of Aboriginal education;

Children - providing appropriate programs and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within all modes of education; and

The Excluded - providing opportunities for Aboriginal people to re-engage in education in an appropriate setting.

The report, although not putting an emphasis on the development of a national policy, recommended significant resources that would be integral to achieving this outcome. One key objective of the report revolved around Aboriginal people leading decision making at a senior level and the provision of training and development of Aboriginal people to allow this to happen. The next section details the key initiatives from the report.

4.4 The ACG Report Priorities

4.4.1 Administrators and Decision Makers

As noted in the report, (Karmel, 1973) the administration of grants and funding for Aboriginal education was separated between the Department of Education and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. There was already discussion taking place to reallocate responsibility from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs to other relevant Departments. However, there were concerns from the ACG that there were currently only two known Aboriginal appointments in government departments that were able to provide influence on decision making, and even then at a minimal level. It was felt by the ACG that only Aboriginal people were truly able to reflect the educational aspirations and needs of Aboriginal people. It was for this reason that a recommendation was posed for a majority representation of Aboriginal people in any decision making and policy advice related to Aboriginal education. This was not reflected in current practice with the ACG stating:

Deep concern is felt over the lack of active involvement by Aboriginal people in programs being undertaken on their behalf. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 9)

Consideration was given to the need for strategies providing training, development and experience for Aboriginal people who demonstrated potential within this area. The Committee stated that a system supported by Government policy required the assurance that Aboriginal people were '*supported by non-Aborigines rather than the reverse*' (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 9).

The ACG strongly identified the need for Aboriginal people to be represented in Government decision-making through employment and adoption of advisory committees. However, just as important would be the involvement of parents, who were seen as crucial to the success of Aboriginal education. Research had provided strong evidence that parent involvement in education had substantial results in ensuring positive outcomes in education. Given that parents and community traditionally played the role of education for their children, it was pertinent that this responsibility was valued and parents were provided with appropriate training and development to empower them to play an active role. The ACG suggested that this role should not just be at a home level; involvement should be explored at a school governance level. This would require appropriate training to allow informed input to be provided. Training that would lead to increased participation by Aboriginal people in education was going to be a fundamental key to success

The first recommendation of the report was to provide a foundation for the future of Aboriginal education and policy development. Recommendation 1 concluded:

We recommend to the Australian Government that it establish a separate statutory funding body called the National Aboriginal Education Commission. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 9)

It was discussed that this body would undertake the funding responsibilities currently residing with both the Department of Education and Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The NAEC would advise the Government on the formulation and implementation of national policy and programs related to Aboriginal

education. The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) defined the broader responsibilities of the proposed committee as:

- a) *Formulating national guidelines on education for Aboriginal people after gathering and evaluating policy, programs, proposals and budgets.*
- b) *Acting as a national advisory body in matters relating to curriculum development and study programs developed for the education of Aboriginal children or Aboriginal studies for non-Aboriginal children.*
- c) *Conducting and co-ordinating investigation and research to determine the special needs of Aboriginal people and to describe how these needs can best be met by education.*
- d) *Establishing close involvement and responsiveness to the ideas and aspirations of local community groups and regional associations for educational purposes.*
- e) *Funding programs necessary for the above.* (p. 10)

The four aspirations highlighted in the ACG report that guided the NAEC committee in the early stages were to: increase Aboriginal teachers; embed Aboriginal cultural awareness; foster community inclusion; and focus on improvements for all levels of education. Priorities to increase Aboriginal teachers and other professional positions, including the development and upgrading of Aboriginal Teacher-aides, became a major strategy of the NAEC.

The second major priority for the NAEC was overcoming the lack of awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture across the Australian society. The inclusion of Aboriginal studies incorporated into the school curriculum was seen as a positive step towards education of the many aspects of Aboriginal culture, and it was envisioned that this would result in a more informed society. The provision of suitable resources and texts that provide an unbiased and accurate historical account would also be seen to complement the delivery of Aboriginal Studies. In addition to the focus on school education, continued investigation into the poor delivery of programs by TAFE, tertiary institutions and early childhood education would also become a mandate of the NAEC.

The further recommendations within this section stated that positions relating to Aboriginal education should be appointed to Aboriginal people in all States and Territories, right through to the most senior administrative positions. A lack of Aboriginal people with the qualifications to fill these positions was noted

however the exploration of strategies that would provide the suitable qualifications was highly recommended:

The number of Aborigines with expertise in educational administration is at present very small, and that there is a larger pool of potential educational administrators who have not yet had the necessary experience. We have made other recommendations in this report, which within a maximum period of two or three years will make it possible for all the necessary Aboriginal expertise to be available. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 9)

A college that provided training in high level administration in education within each State and Territory was one of the strategies recommended to meet this need.

4.4.2 Professionals

The continued appointment of Aboriginal teacher-aides to assist Aboriginal students enrolled in primary and secondary schools was supported by the Committee to bridge the gap of non-Aboriginal teachers who were not familiar with the different needs of Aboriginal students. However, the ACG determined that opportunities should also be provided for the upgrading of Aboriginal teacher aide qualifications, by offering prospects and incentives for the acquisition of full Aboriginal teacher qualifications, through a special entry provision:

We recommend to all Australian teacher-training authorities that special provisions be made for entry of Aborigines into teacher-training institutions similar to the provisions for European mature age students. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 17)

Ineffective and inequitable governance and administration of schools on the Torres Strait Islands were of grave concern to the Committee resulting in a recommendation to transfer the responsibility to a Government education authority, namely the Queensland Department of Education. This transfer of responsibility was seen as a way to diminish the inequities between Islander and non-Islander teachers in relation to salaries and employment conditions, and as a means of ensuring quality education programs:

In the area of salaries, for example, we have been informed that non-Islander teachers currently earn over four times as much as their Islander colleagues. Islander teachers with responsibility for classes and two years training were earning even less than Queensland Department of Education Classroom Assistants in 1974. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 19)

The ACG did however raise concerns about the use of unqualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Torres Strait Island schools. They felt this had detrimental effects on the quality of education provided to the children particularly relating to preparation for secondary schooling. The ACG recommended immediate action in the form of a training team to be sent to the Torres Strait Islands to provide in-service training. This would be followed up by a longer term training and development strategy.

The final area of interest in this section was the delivery of programs for Aboriginal people by Technical and Further Education (TAFE). The ACG concluded that they did not have sufficient time to undertake a thorough investigation in relation to TAFE program delivery for Aboriginal people, neither did they believe that a recent study undertaken to deliver advice on the development of TAFE in Australia provided adequate scrutiny in relation to Aboriginal education. Therefore, they recommended a further study to ascertain the needs of Aboriginal people within the TAFE system. This is expanded further in 4.5 of this chapter.

4.4.3 Children

At the other end of the age spectrum, the ACG saw pre-school education as pinnacle to the future educational success of Aboriginal children. The continued under-achievement of Aboriginal children in school was of grave concern to the ACG as it was linked to the future social advancement of Aboriginal people. The Committee explains:

Because of the social history of European settlement and development in this country, many Aborigines live today as dispossessed people. This has resulted in a loss of dignity and an inability to cope with the system they have not been permitted to be a part of. Underachievement in a single area of human endeavour is frequently generalised into an overall lack of ability for that person, persons or race. Aboriginal children with a

particular language or mathematical or environmental program are often regarded as educational 'write-offs'. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 24)

This section of the report recommended the inclusion of Aboriginal education that introduces traditional and contemporary culture to all teacher education training. In addition, recommended that, where possible, teacher education students should be exposed to teaching Aboriginal children as a part of their training. Expanding on this recommendation the ACG was once again concerned with the lack of awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture across the Australian society. In addition to teacher training, the inclusion of Aboriginal studies incorporated into the teacher training curriculum was seen as contributing to a greater knowledge of diverse Aboriginal cultures and communities. There was concern noted about the inappropriate texts currently being utilised for teaching. An example of an inappropriate text cited history publications of Tasmanian Aborigines. The books all made similar claims related to the extinction of Tasmanian Aborigines. This section further recommended that language should be more widely taught across all schools in Australia to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and that this should occur through language studies curriculum and in consultation with, and permission from, local communities who own the language.

It was proposed that additional financial assistance be provided to all Aboriginal primary school students expanding on the current Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme. The ACG tabled their concerns regarding the issues previously raised around governance and decision making however noted the current harsh reality of the morbid state of health, housing and employment in many Aboriginal communities: *'we are faced with the present reality of the Aboriginal child attending school after his morning meal of bread and black tea, saturated with sugar'* (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 30).

4.4.4 The Excluded

Expanding access of Aboriginal education to wider communities ensured that individuals who had previously not been able to take advantage of education were now included. Ensuring the inclusion of all members of Aboriginal

communities, the ACG recommended that week-long seminars, providing information on current educational practice and encouraging various communication networks, be funded by the Schools Commission. The idea was to promote the opportunities now available for Aboriginal people in education to encourage participation and confidence in making informed educational choices.

The ACG recommended that universities, colleges of advanced education and technical colleges provide targeted programs for Aboriginal adult education that meet their specific needs, including part-time study. The focus of these programs would be to provide a foundation educational experience for Aboriginal people who have had little exposure to previous education, leading to pathways for further educational opportunities.

Final recommendations included Aboriginal special guests within the classroom to share their knowledges, localised educational programing and delivery and importantly strategies that ensure effective communication and public relations between education authorities and Aboriginal communities.

4.5 Aboriginal Access to and use of Technical and Further Education: report by the ACG 1976

Although the ACG had been primarily appointed to provide advice to the Schools Commission they were also available to other departments for provision of advice on Aboriginal education programs. Further to the preliminary investigation undertaken in the report to the Schools Commission, the ACG identified the need for further examination into TAFE for Aboriginal people, to be delivered to the TAFE Commission.

The TAFE Commission provided funding and endorsed the need for the study to occur. The representatives from the ACG who were responsible for the study and subsequent report were David Anderson, Jill Churnside, Roslyn Ella, Ted Loban, Natascha McNamara, Wiyendji Nunggula, May O'Brien and Margaret Valadian. The team was supported by the Director of TAFE who compiled the

research from the study for the ACG, Research Officers, Special Consultants and a comprehensive monitoring committee made up of technical experts.

The study aimed to identify barriers to the access and delivery of TAFE programs for Aboriginal people and make recommendations that would counteract these barriers. It was hoped that the ACG report would create a stimulus for allocation of resources and the establishment of programs that better met the needs of Aboriginal communities. The terms of reference included:

- *investigate the extent to which current TAFE resources meet Aboriginal needs in the field of adult education and the extent to which these resources and opportunities are used by Aborigines;*
- *identify factors that inhibit Aboriginal involvement in and utilisation of TAFE programs;*
- *present specific recommendations to TAFEC (TAFE Commission) on the above issues in terms of policies and programmes. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1976, p. II)*

The report to the Schools Commission, *Education for Aborigines*, (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975) had noted that there was the need for further investigation into TAFE for Aboriginal people as the Kangan (1974) report had only briefly referred to Aboriginal education, stating:

Aborigines needed increased opportunities in special education. The special needs of Aborigines were listed as being courses which develop manual skills without the necessity for accompanying high academic levels, bi-lingual education, opportunities to travel interstate on study tours, opportunities to earn as they learn, individualised teaching, encouragement to take up courses such as forestry, animal husbandry, sports, artefacts, conservation and geology, and incentives to return to their own areas to pass on their skills to their tribes. (p. 297)

The ACG was not satisfied with this brief attention to the needs of Aboriginal people accessing TAFE. Particularly given that they saw TAFE as a crucial link to overcoming some of the major challenges of Aboriginal people, including the need to develop employment skills and increasing technical and managerial qualifications. The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1976) stated that:

Developing a wide range of marketable skills that can be utilized for self-management and community development programs by members of

Aboriginal communities is absolutely essential and should be given high priority. (p. 1)

Information for the study was collected from a number of sources: national statistics; questionnaire responses from TAFE institutions; responses from 230 structured interviews with Aboriginal people from urban, rural and tribal communities; written submissions received from wider stakeholders; and dialogue with TAFE staff from across the country.

The Committee was concerned with the low numbers of Aboriginal people accessing and completing TAFE courses. They assumed this was due to both the disadvantage within Aboriginal communities not recognising further educational opportunities as well as the lack of knowledge from TAFE's perspective on the needs and challenges facing Aboriginal people and communities.

The ACG developed a framework that would inform the TAFE Commission how to move forward quickly to respond to the current institutional and program limitations. The framework included special programs, support services and the employment of a national Aboriginal Co-ordinator and relevant State Aboriginal Co-ordinators to liaise with institutions, communities and students providing appropriate advice towards the successful delivery and outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The ACG determined that poverty had the most critical effect on Aboriginal people. This was backed up by the findings in the Henderson (1975) report, *Poverty in Australia*, which stated:

Many Aborigines face acute problems in obtaining reasonable housing and suffer from a lack of opportunities to obtain any employment except in unskilled work. (p. 5)

The ACG also identified lack of schooling as having a major impact on Aboriginal people deciding to undertake TAFE courses. This also affected the breadth of courses and opportunities that TAFE offered to Aboriginal people with low levels of schooling. The ACG drew on research findings from Brown, Hirschfeld, and Smith's (1974) study of Aboriginals and Islanders in Brisbane.

The study had identified findings that demonstrated low schooling achievement which was consistent with the 1971 census data:

It was found that more than half of the adult Aborigines and Islanders interviewed had left school before reaching fifteen years of age, approximately one-quarter had not completed primary schooling, only 10 per cent had finished Grade 10 while approximately one per cent had completed secondary education. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1976, p. 8)

The low numbers of enrolments of Aboriginal people in TAFE programs was of the utmost concern to the Committee. It was identified that this was partially due to the geographic locations of Aboriginal communities; however, even in regions where there were high numbers of Aboriginal people, the participation was still low as seen in the following table:

Table 3: 1975 Aboriginal enrolments for TAFE Institutions by level of Course and State

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	AUS
Certificate	3	27	2	7	21	3	63
Apprenticeship	36	4	20	6	22		88
Pre-employment	152	19	53	57	147		428
Other	124	8	17	164	2997		3310
	315	60	92	234	3193	3	3897

Source: Aboriginal Consultative Group, (1976, p. 19)

The table shows the highest numbers of students engaged in TAFE programs in Western Australia. The Committee determined this was as a result of Aboriginal Adult Education Centres set up by TAFE institutions in WA that provided special programs and support services for Aboriginal people. The table also demonstrates the lack of enrolments in higher level programs with the highest concentration in pre-employment or other programs.

The results from urban, rural and tribal communities had in common in that low numbers had undertaken or completed TAFE qualifications yet high numbers of those interviewed showed an interest in undertaking a TAFE course.

All the evidence available to the Aboriginal Consultative Group strongly suggests that the small number of Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE institutions is a matter of deep concern.... However it is encouraging that...a majority of those interviewed expressed an interest in further training, with a preference for technical courses. (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1976, p. 21)

Considering all of the information collected for the study the Committee determined two problems that needed to be addressed:

1. *TAFE Institutions are not meeting the TAFE needs of Aboriginal communities because of:*
 - *lack of significant contact with Aborigines or Aboriginal communities;*
 - *lack of flexibility in existing administrative and operational structures.*

2. *Aboriginal access to TAFE programs is restricted because of:*
 - *lack of knowledge of TAFE resources;*
 - *different cultural orientations;*
 - *differing social aspirations;*
 - *the lack of adequate schooling.*

(Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1976, p. 22)

In responding to these two areas of need, the Committee made 19 recommendations. Five recommendations were made in response to problem 1; eight for problem 2; and six that were aimed at actions for the TAFE Commission.

The recommendations called for immediate action in relation to communication and contact with Aboriginal communities. Strategies that provided a formal link between TAFE institutions and communities was seen as crucial to develop an understanding of the local needs of communities as well as the distribution of information related to the resources available at TAFE. It was identified that the success of such strategies would require cultural awareness training of TAFE staff to better understand the values and cultural differences of Aboriginal communities in comparison with Western communities. Increased employment of Aboriginal staff in both administrative and teaching roles was seen as crucial. Further recommendations related to the adoption of special programs and structures that would meet the needs of Aboriginal people developed in

collaboration with Aboriginal people as well as determining TAFE goals for Aboriginal education. This would include the development of appropriate bridging and TAFE preparation programs accompanied by support services.

There was great criticism related to the absence of statistical data that recorded information on Aboriginal enrolments, participation and completions. Statistics were collected manually for the purpose of the study which created room for error. It was highly recommended that processes that supported effective statistical data collection at each institution needed to be identified. These statistics additionally needed to have the capability of being collated nationally to ensure more effective evaluation of outcomes at both local and national levels.

The ACG finally recommended that funding resources be identified by the TAFE Commission to address the recommendations of this report. The Committee also strongly recommended that funding be provided for further research and investigation to build on the outcomes of this limited study, as well as a system to provide continual evaluation and monitoring of Aboriginal TAFE education.

4.6 Achievements of the ACG, 1974 - 1977

The ACG was appointed to give Aboriginal people a voice in the provision of advice primarily to the Schools Commission and other relevant agencies should the need arise. The Australian Schools Commission (1975a) in its *Report for the Triennium 1976 – 1978* acknowledged the work and assistance from the ACG and their viewpoints on the need for the inclusion of Aboriginal people in decision making if Aboriginal education was to move forward:

The Commission unequivocally supports their belief that the great need is for Aborigines to take more responsibility for their own advancement.
(p.45)

During the appointment of the ACG there had been a number of initiatives implemented, including State Education Departments appointing full-time Aboriginal Education Officers. Funding was provided to Aboriginal community-driven school initiatives, including the Townsville Black Community School in

Queensland and Oombulgarri in Western Australia. There had also been major expansion to pre-school services with the ACG calling for an evaluation of the outcomes as a result of the growth. An awareness of the importance of employing Aboriginal staff had started to gain traction with State Education Departments;

Over two hundred (Aboriginal staff) are employed in Northern Territory schools; South Australia employs over seventy aides, Queensland fifty, Western Australia twenty and New South Wales forty. (Australian Schools Commission, 1975a, p. 45)

Bilingual programs and attention to language teaching was progressively being implemented in different states. Lastly, post-secondary courses were being developed and introduced at several tertiary institutions to meet the needs of Aboriginal people (Australian Schools Commission, 1975a).

The foundational work of the ACG was now to have significant influence on Aboriginal educational priorities nationally. From 1975 to 1976 there was a change in government from the Labor Whitlam Government to a Liberal Fraser Government. However, the work of the ACG had bipartisan support and in 1976, Senator J L Carrick, Minister for Education, sought Cabinet approval for the *establishment of a National Committee on Aboriginal Education* as recommended by the ACG. On the 15 of July 1976, a decision was made by the Ministerial Cabinet agreeing:

- (a) to the establishment of a National Committee on Aboriginal Education appointed by the Minister for Education, consisting entirely of Aboriginal members, and attached to and serviced by the Department of Education;*
- (b) that the Committee will be responsible to the Minister for Education and will advise him and his Department on the educational needs of Aborigines – this advice to be made available to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and as appropriate to other agencies;*
- (c) to a Committee membership consisting of one full-time Chairman and 18 other members, drawn from all States, the Northern Territory and the Torres Strait Islands, and including persons with expertise at the various levels of education; and*
- (d) to a Budget allocation of \$40,000 for the Committee's operations in the Financial year 1976/77. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1976, pp. 1-2)*

A press release by Senator Carrick immediately after the cabinet decision stated that the membership would be attracted through nominations from a wide variety of sources. Senator Carrick declared:

The time is now ripe for consultation procedures to be developed on a formal basis. There is room for much more Aboriginal involvement and participation in the development, planning and assessment of activities across all educational levels. I am sure they will give us valuable guidance. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1976, p. Attach. A)

Given the short timeframes to deliver the report, the ACG had noted the need for more thorough consultation and input on a number of the priorities outlined in the report. The Schools Commission agreed with the challenges placed on the ACG as a result of time restraints. They committed \$20,000 through an Innovations Grant to continue further studies and investigations relating to the viability and potential actions that would move forward the ACG recommendations (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975). The further studies and wider consultation were to be undertaken through field studies as well as development and research. The field studies would: further identify the needs and aspirations of selected Aboriginal communities and determine reactions to the *Education for Aborigines* report recommendations; survey and examine community controlled and independent schools; and obtain input relating to bilingual programs. The priorities for development and research included: future funding and administration; viability for the development of an Administrative Staff College; evaluation of existing special Aboriginal programs including studies regarding the post-secondary educational opportunities for Aboriginal people; and evaluation of curriculum development and related programs in schools (Australian Schools Commission, 1975a).

The ACG was committed to providing quality advice, utilising its members to deliver the majority of the field study and research work and appointing a small Aboriginal secretariat. The Schools Commission continued to support the work where appropriate and for the purpose of seeking additional expertise and experience, part-time consultants would be called upon; particularly from Aboriginal people already in the field who could provide the required high level input. The ACG continued this work until the beginning of 1977.

4.7 Conclusion

The 1970s was a progressive time for the education of Aboriginal people within a Eurocentric environment. Through the recommendations of the *Education for Aborigines* report in 1975 and the *Aboriginal access to and use of technical and further education* report in 1976, Aboriginal people commenced having a voice in determining the future directions for Aboriginal education. The ACG had opened up the doors for Aboriginal people to both engage in education and have a strong voice in decision making related to policy and programs that would advance Aboriginal education.

From 1975 to 1977 the ACG undertook studies and research, proposed programs and initiatives, and provided high level advice to the Schools Commission and other relevant agencies. They advised on programs that would initiate aspiration and overcome stereotyping of under achievement crucial to the future education path of Aboriginal people in education, as well as undertaking studies that would ensure students were provided with every opportunity for achievement through educational practices that recognise cultural difference.

They had provided the conceptual framework and foundations to move Aboriginal education policy forward. Through their own recommendation the ACG was superseded by the establishment of the National Aboriginal Education Committee which would provide a full-time presence within the Department of Education.

Margaret Valadian, Natascha McNamara, May O'Brien and Rex Granites, members of the ACG all went on to be members of the NAEC. This provided a level of consistency, relating the discussions and outcomes of the ACG to the later established NAEC. The advancement of Aboriginal education was to be a primary focus of governments. The long awaited new dawn had arrived.

Chapter 5

Redefining Access to Education for Aboriginal People: Early Stages of the NAEC, 1977-1980

In the past white people had been making all our decisions, but now we were making our own. It became about playing their game and being able to beat them at it. We believed in education, and a lot had to be done. So it was our first time when we were actually in white politics, putting forward our views. Sometimes people thought we were radical. (O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014)

5.1 Introduction

The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) recommendation for a national body was based on the premise that Aboriginal people should have a voice in Aboriginal education and be able to influence decision making. This chapter explores the first term of the NAEC from 1977 to 1980. It commences with the appointment and formation of the NAEC as directed by the recommendations made by the ACG in 1975. The chapter then presents the implementation of a community driven structure that would empower Aboriginal people nationally, giving rise to their voices in determining the future of Aboriginal education. It goes on to investigate the submission to the National Inquiry into Teacher Education, prepared by the NAEC through wide-spread consultation, which emphasised the need for the appointment of Aboriginal teachers. The foundations laid in the first term would be crucial to determining the success of the NAEC into the 1980s.

The following timeline summarises the major events and policy movements presented in this chapter:

1977	National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) formed 30 March: Commencement of inaugural Chairperson of the NAEC
1976–1984	Development of State and Territory Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees
1978	Study into the Townsville Black Community School by the NAEC

1979–1980	The first and second National Aboriginal Education Conference run by the NAEC
1979	Submission paper developed by the NAEC for the National Inquiry into Teacher Education: <i>The Education and Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers</i>
1980	Release of the <i>Report of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education</i> (Auchmuty Report)

5.2 Formation of the NAEC

In March 1977, the NAEC was appointed by the Liberal Fraser government and was comprised of 19 members, including a full-time Chairperson and 18 part-time representatives. It was envisaged that the NAEC would have a holistic educational focus on pre-school education, school education, TAFE and higher education. In a media release on 17 March 1977, the Minister for Education, Senator Carrick announced the establishment of the NAEC:

It is now almost ten years since the 1967 Referendum widened the Commonwealth Government's responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This period has seen the growth of more interest and activity in Aboriginal education than ever before with Commonwealth funds developing programs and helping education authorities throughout the country to make special efforts for Aboriginal people at all levels of education. In all these activities there has been some consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people.... Consultation with the Schools Commission and with the Aboriginal Consultative Group, led to the proposal for establishment of a National Aboriginal Education Committee...The Committee will be responsible for providing my Department and me with informed Aboriginal views on the educational needs of Aboriginal people and appropriate methods of meeting these needs. Its advice will be available also to the Minister and Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other authorities concerned with education of Aboriginal people...The establishment of the Committee places significant responsibilities in the hands of Aboriginal people. I trust it will contribute to policy initiatives which will serve to redress the educational imbalance which Aboriginal people experience and which will recognize the cultural plural nature of Australian society. (Carrick, 1977, pp. 3-4)

The terms of reference included: the responsibility of informing and assisting the Minister and Department of Education on identifying the needs of Aboriginal people; contributing to Aboriginal education policy direction and development;

provision of advice relating to the development and implementation of programs relating to the enhancement of Aboriginal education; monitoring and evaluating existing programs and policies; consulting with relevant parties in relation to developing recommendations; and providing any additional relevant advice to the Department of Education and Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Ohlsson, 1977).

5.2.1 The Appointment of the First Chairperson of the NAEC

Crucial to the composition of the NAEC was the appointment of a Chairperson who would provide leadership in consolidating a future vision for the NAEC and establish its credibility in the eyes of the Aboriginal community and the government. Throughout the lifespan of the NAEC there were five Chairpersons and two Deputy Chairpersons.

Stephen Baamba Albert was appointed the inaugural Chairperson from 1977 to 1980. Interest for the position was sought through an advertisement and Stephen was identified and nominated by his peers as the best man for the job, as he explains: *I didn't even know about chairing, even getting the job. I was a student in Adelaide at the Institute of Technology doing sociology and community development, and a bit of psychology. We used to come together for a meeting for the National Congress [of Tertiary Students]. This one was at Monash, and after the meeting, there were a few Indigenous people starting tertiary study, so we set up a students' union called the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Students Union - NATSISU. It sounded a bit Japanese but that didn't worry me 'cause my old man was a Jap anyway. Gino Silvani was the Chair, Gary Foley was the PR person and I was the Treasurer - everyone trusted me with the money because I was a Catholic. When the newspaper came out Gary said, 'there's a job there with the Education Department. I don't think I'll go for it, ASIO already has my photo.' Bruce McGuinness said, 'Yeah me too', and some others agreed ... then they all looked at me and said 'They haven't got your photo black fella from the bush, we'll put your name in' – so they nominated me for the job. I was still studying and these two blokes from*

Canberra took me out for dinner and that was the interview. Went back to studying and about three months later the message came across, you got the job!....I was the youngest senior public servant in town, I was 27. (Albert, interview 23/11/2013)

Stephen, a descendant of the Bardi people in North Western Australia was born in Broome in what he describes as the 'back hospital' (as the 'front hospital was for whites only). He was bought up on the shores of Roebuck Bay at Morgan divers' camp and later Kennedy Hill. Stephen came from a Catholic family and attended a Catholic school. His passion was always music. After starting off as a diesel mechanic, Stephen's interest in education and the welfare of his people first became apparent when he was playing in his band, the Broome Beats. In an interview (Ohlsson, 1977) Stephen elaborates on this time period when he observed the poor treatment of Aboriginal people in the communities that the band played in. He was passionate about ensuring social justice for his people and on his commencement as Chairperson he stated in the interview:

If there is going to be harmony between our two societies then it will have to be through education. When white people have a better awareness of Aboriginals then maybe our kids will have a better time. (Ohlsson, 1977, p. 11)

Soon after Stephen's appointment as Chairperson, Senator Carrick, in announcing the establishment of the NAEC provided a summary of the breadth of Stephen's qualifications and experience:

Mr Albert has lectured to school students and trainee teachers. He has been a member of the Regional Council for Social Development in Alice Springs and was a member of the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement in Adelaide. He is a qualified tradesman and is currently undertaking studies at the South Australian Institute of Technology. He lectures in the Community Learning Unit at the Aboriginal Community College. His experience of traditional Aboriginal education and contemporary Australian education will be of great benefit to the Committee. (Carrick, 1977, p. 5)

The period of Stephen's Chairmanship was a time of new insights, new voices and a new page in Aboriginal education. Stephen's leadership provided an excellent springboard for the foundation committee. Colin Bourke, an inaugural

member of the NAEC discussed the attributes of Stephen's leadership: *He was a good Chairman in that he was equitable, even-handed and willing to listen. He didn't have a pre-set agenda.... Stephen didn't have that baggage...Probably couldn't have got a better person to be Chair to be honest because he had the traditional background in Broome and in his experience in the rest of Australia, plus his open-mindedness. We all had our troubles of course, we were all human beings, but as a group I would have thought it was a very good group to work with and that we all got on the one page fairly easily in relation to what we wanted to do... So it was a good working atmosphere. Plus I think the feeling of adventure, if you like, because it was all new ground. We were going where no one had gone before. So I thought the first couple of years were very prolific.* (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Patsy Cameron, another inaugural NAEC member, confirms this view of Stephen: *He had a very eloquent style, very intelligent man, young. All of us were young in those days and we all didn't know each other. So it was just an interesting time to not only wonder and look at our first direction, which would have been setting the future agenda no doubt for the first few meetings, but it was also just getting to know each other. He was very strong - he was spearheading our Committee - and all the others that stood by us.* (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

Stephen continues to be a strong ambassador for education as an Elder, teacher, musician, actor and a highly respected mentor for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

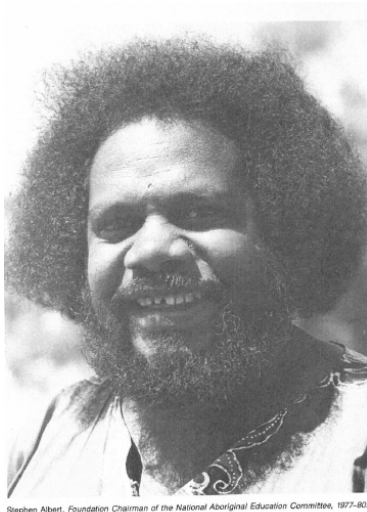


Figure 5: Stephen Baamba Albert: Reproduced from *National Aboriginal Education Committee, Aims, Philosophies and Guidelines*, 1985

The Chairperson position was an appointment as a senior public servant within the Commonwealth Department of Education, reporting directly to the Department Secretary. The seniority of the position provided the opportunity for direct access to both the Department Secretary and the Minister. The position was aligned with other Heads of Departments within the Schools Commission, including the Education, Research and Development Committee (ERDC) and migrant education. A secretariat was set up to provide administrative assistance to the Chair position and the Committee. Initially it was a team of three staff but grew to five as the role of the Committee evolved.

5.2.2 The Inaugural Members of the NAEC

With the exception of the Chairperson, the inaugural members of the NAEC were recruited as part-time appointments. They represented all levels of education, and were from all States, Territories and the Torres Strait Islands, as well as traditional/community perspectives (Carrick, 1977). Colin Bourke recalls that Eric Willmot, Commonwealth Schools Officer, was instrumental in attracting people from across Australia to nominate for positions. Willmot worked with Ken Jones, the Department of Education Secretary to do this (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013). May O'Brien, an inaugural member, explained, that the composition of the Committee was crucial to its success: *The key thing was that*

every Aboriginal person on that Committee was all melded together. There was no one saying, 'No I don't want that.' They all said, 'Better education'. We have some aims that we wanted for our kids and for our adults. Some of the non-Aboriginal people in government were saying, they wouldn't know how to choose people and that we didn't know much about education so how can we make a good choice. Well I think we made the best choices. (O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014)

The inaugural members of the NAEC were:

Stephen Baamba Albert	Inaugural Chairperson
Kevin Gilbert	NSW (Department Aboriginal Affairs)
Barbara Kennedy	NSW (Department of Education)
Colin Bourke *	VIC (Monash University)
Len Malone	QLD (Palm Island – Schools)
Jim Hamilton	QLD (Department of Education)
Paul Hughes *	SA (Department of Aboriginal Affairs)
Isobelle Norvill	SA (Department of Community Welfare)
Les Tucker	WA (Department of Education)
May O'Brien *	WA (Department of Education)
Patsy Cameron *	TAS (Community Worker)
Desmond White	NT (Department of Education)
George Passi	TSI (Department of Education)
Vera Farrell	WA (Pre-School Education)
John Budby	QLD (Department of Education)
Phil Stewart	QLD (Department of Education)
Natascha McNamara	SA (Technical and Further Education)
Margaret Valadian	Tertiary Education

Also appointed within this term:

W Nguakyukwokka	March 1978 – June 1979
Kevin Rogers (NT)	March 1978 – July 1979
Eric Craigie (NSW)	March 1978 – Jan 1979

* NAEC members interviewed for this study.

After the initial appointments, the selection process for the membership was changed. Representatives from Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees were nominated from each state and territory. In addition to these members specialist representatives were also selected through application with a nomination (further discussed in Chapter 6).

The NAEC Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and its secretariat, formed an Aboriginal presence within the Commonwealth Department of Education. This provided opportunities for important networking and collaboration with key educational areas, such as the Schools Commission and the Curriculum Development Centre. An Executive Officer within the NAEC office led the administrative team, playing a vital role in ensuring effective communications with all relevant stakeholders, and assisted with the development of media releases, coordination of the Committee and other administrative duties.

Lillian Holt was the first Executive Officer for the NAEC (1977-1980) and was a member in the later years of the NAEC, appointed for her expertise in tertiary education. Lillian was born on Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve in Queensland. She describes her childhood experiences and growing interest in education: *My mum, she was only educated to fourth grade because of the policies of the day. My father was one of those so-called stockmen. It didn't mean he was dumb, it just meant he didn't have qualifications and wasn't schooled, as was my grandfather. My grandfather was put on Cherbourg, which was supposedly set up for difficult and disadvantaged Aboriginal people. I don't think he would have seen himself as difficult nor disadvantaged but those were labels. If anything, he probably would have been difficult, because he stuck up for his rights. That's how I came to be born on Cherbourg and because my dad didn't have an education, he always said 'I want you kids to get educated. Don't be like me, you know, I can't read and write.' So mum and dad, they were also products of assimilation. Their exemption certificates, they were like the glittering prize that a lot of Aboriginal people aspired to in those days, understandably, because it meant freedom. They could leave the Mission and go out and marry who they wanted to. They could freely associate with whoever they want and they didn't have to report to anybody. (Holt, interview 17/06/2013)*

Lillian started working in 1962; at the age of 17, she was the first Aboriginal person employed by the ABC in Brisbane. She commenced a Social Work degree in the late 1960s at the University of Queensland, but later withdrew. In 1974 she recommenced studies and describes her experiences of working in tertiary education: *In those days there was no mature age entry or special entry and so I'd actually studied in the '60s to get my matriculation. I completed a BA in English and journalism. My first job after that was in Armidale at the College of Advanced Education, a tutor in the multicultural studies unit, they had an Aboriginal element in it under the umbrella of multicultural studies. There were these final year teacher trainees and there was much resistance to it, which I've encountered subsequently, about these things where they have to do a unit or two in terms of Aboriginal issues. I just hated it because having been a tutor you could smell the hostility of some of them and the attitudes, it was draining.* (Holt, interview 17/06/2013)

Lillian applied for the position of Executive Officer for the NAEC and was offered the job in Canberra. *That first week I arrived in Canberra I flew up to Alice Springs to run things and here I was the Executive Officer. I wasn't too sure what was happening but I knew that I had to make sure that the minutes got done and all this type of thing. I remember when I was appointed, my salary was \$16,000 a year and I thought I was in clover.* (Holt, interview 17/06/2013)

After serving as the Executive Officer for two years, Lillian received an Overseas Study Award where she completed a Master of Arts. On returning she worked at the College of Aboriginal Education in Adelaide, now known as Tauondi. During her work there from 1980 to 1996 she was appointed the first Aboriginal principal. After a short stint at USQ in 1997 she was employed as the Director, Centre of Indigenous Education, at the University of Melbourne in 1998 and remained there until she retired in 2005.

5.2.3 Setting the National Agenda for Aboriginal education

Shortly after Stephen was appointed the press approached him and asked what he was going to do as Chairperson. Drawing on an Aboriginal analogy he recalls responding to them in the following way: *I'm the spearhead and the*

woomera. Like the spear thrower is the Committee and there was a black hand and the hand was the people throwing us, giving us direction where to go. That's how I described myself and it just sort of come out. I thought it was just natural, and so I kept that and in our letterhead there was the spear, a woomera and a black hand throwing it. John Budby was the little turtle (Second Chair) and Paul Hughes (Third Chair) was dingo footprints going on a hunt. We all had our things. (Albert, interview 23/11/2013)



Figure 6: NAEC logo on badge worn by NAEC members. Given to author by Patsy Cameron.

Three weeks after Stephen commenced his appointment he organised the first meeting to be held in Canberra in the last week of April. The meeting provided an opportunity for members to get to know each other and exchange initial views. Stephen reflected on the mood of the first meeting: *For me in the first year my biggest challenge was bringing a group of these people, and having them in the one room because they came from all areas and walks of life. You know all different sizes, shapes, different colours, all that, it didn't matter; but having in my mind how to get them all together, help each other and synchronise, the way we were heading. But my first thoughts were, wow I have all these people I've got to deal with and work with, and realising that they probably were, the best in the country. And then after working with them I knew*

I had the best in the country because all the knowledge they brought with them. I think one of the first things I said at the meeting was, 'I hope you have left your paddles outside the room'. But then everybody looked at me and laughed and said, 'Yes, no one's rowing their own canoe here'. But I had to get that straight, that if they had an agenda they had to leave it outside. We had our agenda. I think that was the toughest thing I had to say, but I had to say it at the beginning. I let everybody have their say but not to overpower anybody else... In the end they all felt good about being together and working on the same thing. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

The outcomes of the first meeting were published in a press release by the NAEC. It emphasised the importance of the commitment by the government as well as funding support to the Committee reflecting an appropriate investment into advancing Aboriginal education. The press release also included the resolution of the first meeting which stated:

It is the opinion of this committee, that any committee, meeting to decide on any issues involving Aboriginal Education be composed of at least 50% Aboriginal membership. (Albert, 1977, p. 2)

The resolution had been made due to concerns about recent events in the Northern Territory where Aboriginal views were not considered and with decisions constantly being made without prior consultation with Aboriginal people. It was believed by members of the NAEC that in actual fact, Aboriginal views and knowledges were not being appropriately represented in decision making in relation to Aboriginal education right across the country.

The second meeting was held again in Canberra early in June 1977. The Committee wasted no time in setting priorities and called for action. They called for: a survey into early childhood education; an investigation into the Black Community School in Townsville; and a review of current curriculum development, with a vision to examining all the resources currently used in Aboriginal studies. In relation to curriculum development the Committee nominated members to the Curriculum Development Centre within the Department of Education, to assist with relevant curriculum projects. It was further determined that the Committee should focus on the training of Aboriginal

teachers to work in schools with Aboriginal populations to develop a greater awareness and understanding of Aboriginal culture by non-Aboriginal teachers and students. The Committee sought to expand bi-lingual education programs and ensure that, in the process of improving the Western educational outcomes of Aboriginal children, these children did not become disconnected from their own people and culture (Albert, 1977).

5.3 Community Involvement in NAEC Meetings

After the NAECs initial two meetings in Canberra, they decided that if they were serious about connecting to Aboriginal communities they needed to be seen in communities outside of Canberra. This community orientation was described by Patsy Cameron in the following way: *Really early at the second or third meeting we decided that we wanted to get out into communities. We wanted to go out - not sit in Canberra and have meetings there in this big, flash place. We wanted to get out into communities, go out meet the people and talk to people about their education experiences and aspirations to get feedback from them first hand. Of course, the first one was to Tasmania. We went to Alice Springs, Darwin and all over the country.* (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

Didimain Uiho also describes what it was like to take NAEC meetings to communities: *We spread across different areas and we met at different places around the Territory and around Australia which is good. We met with local people who came and talked to us and welcomed us to their country. So it was good meeting and sharing from our point of view on education and what it's like in the community. It's not a rosy posy sometimes in the community because there's a lot of other business going on and they don't always concentrate much on the education.* (Uiho, interview 04/11/2014)

The strategy was to move outside of the confines of Canberra to meet with communities and state education departments. The focus was on empowering communities to give them a voice in national educational affairs. It was also about ensuring accountability and transparency. This was a first for communities. Prior to this, any committee focused on Aboriginal education had operated out of Canberra and when required brought relevant expertise to the

Canberra-based committee. It was therefore decided that the meetings would move around to different states and territories. Travel for the Committee members was funded by the Department with sitting fees paid for the days spent at meetings (Appendix A provides a summary of the administrative allocations to the NAEC). A lot of the members hadn't travelled far from their communities and definitely not from one side of the country to the other. The opportunity to travel to communities nationally was as much an educational experience for members as it was a benefit to the communities. Kaye Price discusses the influence of these visits on her: *We used to meet all over the country - we rarely had our Committee meetings in Canberra. We had them at places like, Yuendumu, Flinders Island, Thursday Island or Cunnamulla. So we actually were able to get out and meet people. For me in particular it just opened up a whole new world. I could tell you anything about the education in Tasmania- but when we went to those places and saw how people lived and the hardships that people endured, it was just a whole educative process for most of us on that Committee. That's why the NAEC was started, to meet the educational needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

Given the controversy within Tasmania relating to the myth that Aboriginal people were extinct, Stephen decided that the third meeting in August 1977, which was the first meeting outside of Canberra, was to be held in Tasmania (the full NAEC meeting schedule is in Appendix B). The meeting went for three to four days at the State Department of Education offices in Hobart. It was an excellent opportunity for NAEC members from across Australia to understand the Aboriginal education challenges within Tasmania. Also, it sent a message to the State Department of Education and broader community of Tasmania that there needed to be a space opened up to create educational opportunities for Aboriginal people from Tasmania. Stephen explains the impact of the Tasmanian meeting: *I took the Committee to Tasmania to make a statement. Coming from a national committee, I think that was the first time that the Tasmanian Kooris were recognised, because we had one of our members from there, and I promised her we'd go to Tasmania. As the Chair I would go to all the State Ministers, State Deputy Generals and talk to them and say where we*

were coming from. So it was a good thing to go to Tasmania. (Albert, interview 23/11/2013)

The meeting in Tasmania was a success and the media promotion related to the meeting sent a strong but positive message. The flow-on effect from this meeting was that the NAEC supported the development of a Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee.

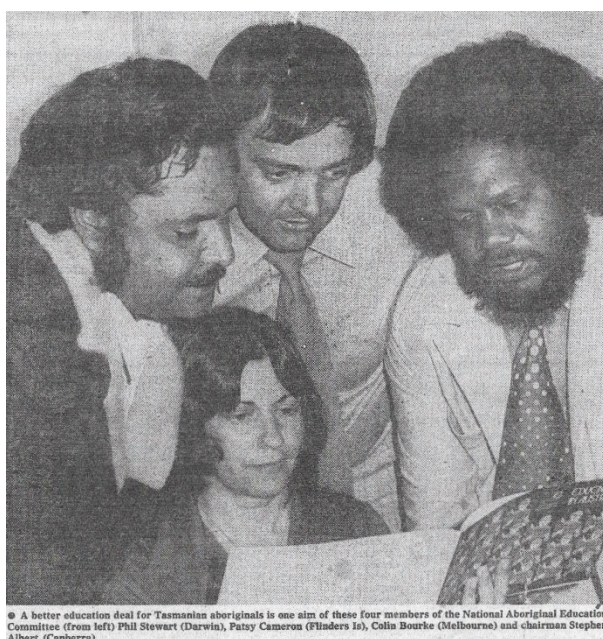


Figure 7: Phil Stewart, Patsy Cameron, Colin Bourke and Stephen Albert at meeting in Tasmania from *The Hobart Mercury* newspaper. Photo supplied to the author by Patsy Cameron.

The NAEC had three to four general meetings per year. The whole Committee saw the strategy of visiting different communities as essential and a plan was established to ensure that the majority of the meetings each year would be held outside of Canberra. Stephen discussed the strategy of meeting around the country with Minister Carrick. Although the Minister was happy to support the strategy, the travel arrangements for the Committee still needed to be negotiated as it was the policy that senior public servants at the Chairperson's level, were to fly first class. Stephen wanted to ensure that every member felt they were equally valued and there was not any privilege for one member over the others, as he explains: *I said to the Minister, 'I can't fly first class if my Committee is flying economy. I might as well book my tickets economy'. And he*

said, 'No you can't do that, otherwise all the heads of government will have to go economy'... He said, 'I will tell you what, you fly your members First Class'. So everybody got to fly first class. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

As well as ensuring that there was not a perceived hierarchy, the other significant advantage to flying first class was that members were able to interact with Ministers as well as other key senior government staff whilst travelling to forums. This was particularly useful when everyone was travelling to the same event or meeting, allowing positions and priorities to be discussed informally prior to the event. In an interview with Bob Morgan (interviewed 18/03/16), he explained that this ensured open exchange and created opportunities for positive discussions.

Developing relationships with non-Aboriginal people was an important initiative as it would have been impossible for the NAEC to achieve to the extent necessary without the support and collaboration of non-Aboriginal people. It was also vital that the NAEC worked to change the negative attitudes of society against Aboriginal people. The NAEC actively engaged with non-Aboriginal people across different government departments and community organisations, as Stephen explained: *We were soon making networks with all the non-Indigenous people around the country and some of them could see the turning point. They wanted to be in that journey so there was a whole heap of white people around the place that ended up giving us a hand. There's a few I could name, but there was a whole lot of them, you know, but every time we see each other now, we're all like, 'Hello, how you going?' And I must say the non-Indigenous staff we had were very dedicated, including, Ian Hason, Anne Sipalene. It was like being on a ship, we had to do it because it wasn't done before and in reality we didn't really know how fast we were moving because we couldn't see things happening. (Albert, interview 23/11/2013)*

Although, travelling to visit different places was seen as extremely valuable to the consultation and a two way communication with communities and wider networks, it was also a big commitment for the members to make balancing their local and State commitments, family commitments and national

commitments which at times were quite stressful. Patsy describes the effect of the travel on her private life: *We would travel one day, for a three-day meeting. It was like every month I was packing my bag for a week for that two-and-a-half years. I was forever travelling. I remember one time I had a dear, old uncle. He'd turn up at my house inebriated, getting me to play Charley Pride and doing things. This was just as I'm packing to go on the plane, trying to organise my children and everything else. Dear, old uncle would turn up. I remember arriving in Brisbane once with a pair of desert boots on. I had no other shoes and it was 35 degrees up there. Anyway, it was a lot of travel. It was a lot of commitment. Sometimes I just wonder now in hindsight how on earth I managed to do it all. We did. All of us did. It was not just for me but for the other members that were from all over.* (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

It was also the case that some of the community responsibilities overlapped and priorities had to be considered or negotiations made. At these times it was sometimes difficult for members to navigate the local expectations with the national ones, as Kaye explains: *I came under some criticism. At the time I was a member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre; they had nominated my membership for the NAEC. There would be some times when I might have to go to the NAEC when it meant I couldn't go to a TAC meeting. That's why I would be criticised, 'oh you can go to a meeting up there, but you can't come here to this meeting'. I said, 'well make up your mind, you either want me to do this or you don't. Tasmania's got a voice on this committee so, what do you want?' At the end of the day, I always felt that members of the community were on-side because of the very nature of the way that we'd conduct the meetings. I've actually got a photograph of Eddie Mabo on my desk, where we were sitting at Cape Barren Island - we went there as a community of people and people appreciated the fact that you did that.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

There were also times when the visits to different communities would expose challenges, such as racism and negative social attitudes. Colin Bourke provides a telling illustration of encountering racism during his NAEC work: *We went down to Tasmania and it was quite interesting because we met in the Commonwealth offices down there and at lunch we went down to the cafeteria*

for lunch. As we walked in Stephen was in front and George Passi and a few others followed. The whole conversation in the place stopped. Just like if someone said, 'Be quiet!' They just looked at us like they'd never seen eighteen Aboriginal people before. One old lady, we called her old, I don't know, she was probably in her fifties, she sat there with her mouth open. She was at the next table to George Passi and she just looked at him and looked at him and looked at him. She said to the person next to her, 'Isn't he black?' It was quite strange. So that was an interesting thing that happened. It was a big place, probably a couple of hundred people and they stopped, absolutely stopped. (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Learning first-hand the racial experiences of Aboriginal people through visiting different communities was not just confined to Tasmania. Eleanor reflects on visiting a community in North Western Australia for a meeting: *We were in a place where we were staying at this accommodation, which was pretty basic, but it had a separate bar for Aboriginal people. Well, when all the eastern seaboard people saw that, they were just absolutely horrified. We said, 'well, why are we staying in a place like this, where there's a separate bar?' Those sorts of things, they pull you up. Here we were talking about high-level policy and arguing things, finer points of curriculum and the rest of it and here, this was, still with us, you know? Those sorts of things really were challenges and how you handled them were challenges. (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)*

However, visiting communities was overall a good opportunity for the NAEC members to witness the breadth of educational disadvantage for Aboriginal people across regional, rural and urban Australia. Few of the members had travelled outside of their communities or regions and to get this exposure was extremely valuable. In addition to holding the general meeting, workshops would be held with community and members would see what programs were being delivered currently. This provided the NAEC members with a national viewpoint that ensured they were well informed from a first-hand experience and it motivated their momentum to continue to fight for better educational conditions, as Pearl Duncan explained: *I became more outspoken and a real fighter for Aboriginal education, gaining an understanding of the disadvantage*

of Aboriginal people across the whole of Australia. It was wonderful going to those communities. Everybody seemed to have great enthusiasm. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

Communities would also approach the NAEC to provide support to them and endorse educational initiatives. In the late 1980s a proposal came from a group in the Northern Territory to the NAEC, aiming to establish an Aboriginal run television station named Imparja in the Northern Territory. It was proposed that the television station would provide education to Aboriginal people and communities through Aboriginal stories, voices and perspectives. It would profile achievements of Aboriginal people and communities as well as report on the challenges through a culturally appropriate lens. The NAEC saw this strategy as a positive move towards advancing education for Aboriginal people, particularly in the Northern Territory. John Heath explicates the importance of the NAEC in supporting the initiative: *One of the key decisions I think that we made in those days, was the funding of Imparja Television, which survives still now as NITV. The people that were setting up Imparja asked for the support of the NAEC to help with funding to get Imparja off the ground. We were able to do that through emphasizing the educational aspect of it, and it was in recognition of the need and of the value of broadcasting not just television, but also radio, towards the education of Aboriginal peoples. (Heath, interview 18/01/2016)*

5.4 NAEC Support for State Aboriginal Education Consultative Committees

Within the ACG report to the Schools Commission it was recommended that one of the roles of the NAEC was to:

Establish close involvement and responsiveness to the ideas and aspirations of local communities groups and regional associations for educational purposes. (ACG, 1975, p. 5)

The strategy that would underpin this recommendation was the establishment of State and Territory Aboriginal education consultative groups which would ensure a continuum of relevant input into the NAEC and provide a conduit between national and State educational initiatives and discussions. Responding

to the ACG's recommendation, in one of Stephen's first public presentations as Chairperson of the NAEC, he announced:

Consultation with Aboriginal people at all levels is one of the major roles of the NAEC. In order to carry out this role the NAEC has requested that State Aboriginal Education Advisory groups be set up to advise the State Departments of Education. This would ensure that consultation within the state with Aborigines can be achieved and the outcome expressed.

Between the NAEC and the State Aboriginal Consultative Groups, a national network could evolve which would include Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal organisations, Aboriginal Teachers, Teacher Assistants, Teacher Aides, individuals and most important by Aboriginal parents. When this network is achieved and becomes a working component it is then up to the Government to respond positively. (Albert, 1977, p. 3)

By the time the NAEC was operational in 1977, Victoria and Queensland already had established state education consultative groups. On advice from the NAEC, the Commonwealth Schools Commission provided funding to establish consultative groups across all States and Territories for the purpose of providing advice to State Government as well as contributing to the agendas and priorities of the NAEC (West, 1988). Over the next three years this was achieved with the exception of Western Australia which did not set up a consultative committee until 1984. West (1988) highlights the importance of the establishment of these committees:

Through continued negotiation and liaison with Aboriginal communities, governmental departments and relevant ministers, the NAEC has established a network in which 'grass roots' opinions can be co-ordinated to maintain the Government's commitment to self-management and self-determination. (p. 22)

The links with the State and Territory consultative groups was a major strength of the NAEC. The NAEC only got involved in national programs and advice; the State consultative committees were responsible for consulting and advising the State government departments, including State policy and funding. The outcomes of state relationships were communicated to the NAEC by the State representatives however it was operationally outside the scope of the NAEC. *What they said at the State level we were saying in that room, that was how the network worked. We always had somebody from the State Consultative Group*

on the Committee, like Bob from NSW. So when somebody came on the national committee, we would encourage the State Committee to get them on their committee, so that there was continuity and there wasn't any sort of you can have that, you can't have that... we were all part of forming as one group and that's the way it was. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

State education committees played a vital role in bringing the Aboriginal community together and collaborating with the NAEC to ensure all States and Territories were given a voice into developing a national agenda. It was an exciting time for Aboriginal communities; at last they were having a voice in determining their own futures and that of future generations. It entrenched the principles of community accountability. This State and national collaborative model provided the NAEC with Aboriginal voices that stretched across all States, Territories and related regions:

The terms of reference for the committees ensured that Aboriginal education was embedded within the structures of the relevant State departments and encompassed an Aboriginal viewpoint. The Committees provided advice on new and existing programs as well as reviewed and evaluated outcomes against the needs of Aboriginal people and communities. Although there were similarities and common goals, there were also differences between the NAEC and State consultative groups which reflected their own politics, histories, geography and cultural perspectives. The following brief overview of the development of AECGs across Australia provides evidence of the varied nature by which the AECGs were introduced.

5.4.1 Development of State Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Committee

In 1976 the *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee* was the first State consultative committee established by the State Education Department, reporting to the Director General of the Queensland Department of Education. Victoria had also been ahead of the rest of the states in introducing the *Victorian Aboriginal Consultative Committee*. In 1975 the

Acting Supervisor, Aboriginal Education Branch was an Aboriginal person and had initiated a number of actions and strategies reflective of the recommendations made in the ACG's report to the Schools Commission (Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975). However, in 1976 the recruitment of a new Acting Supervisor resulted in a non-Aboriginal appointment. The Department decided that this created the need to set up a consultative structure that would provide a link between the Department of Education and the Aboriginal community (Beaton, 1978). The process adopted by the Victorian Department of Education was to set up an interim steering group that would provide recommendations on the composition and guidelines for the introduction of the State consultative committee and additionally seek funding through a submission to the Schools Commission. In 1976, the funding proposal resulted in funding not only for the establishment of the Victorian AECG, it also proposed the delivery of a seminar series across the State for local Aboriginal communities to promote education opportunities and receive input regarding the communities' expectations and aspirations.

The *NSW Aboriginal Education Advisory Group* was established as a State committee in 1977 with nominations drawn from across all regions of the State to form the Committee. In 1979 the Committee changed its name to the *NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (NSWAECG)*. The NSW State government took over the funding of the NSWAECG in 1980 when Commonwealth Government funding was no longer available. John Lester was working in the Department of Education at the time with a responsibility to work closely with the AECG. He recalls: *In the early '80s, the AECG was starting to pick up momentum and it was a pretty halcyon period of time in New South Wales itself. The AECG was being established, as were AECGs all around the country. New South Wales had an AECG since about '77, but it was a Departmental-run show. The original chair of the AECG was Bobby Merritt. He had no educational background, but had written 'The Cake Man'. He was there for a while, and then John Heath got the role. Bob [Morgan] took over after John Heath, when we reconstituted the AECG and we went about making it more community-based and community-driven.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

In recognition of the quality of advice being provided to the State Government, the NSW Minister for Education, Hon. Paul Lander, in 1981, formally recognised the NSWAECEG as the principal advisory body to the State in relation to Aboriginal education. Following this, in 1982, the State Committee formed local consultative groups to provide localised advice and decision making. Bob Morgan recalls how this move came about: *We probably became the first group that was truly autonomous and that weren't appointed by the State. In New South Wales, the AECEG used to be an appointed committee. Its members were appointed by the Department. The person who was driving it all was the then-Assistant Director of Special Programs from the Department of Education, Bill Rose. I became a member of the NAEC before I became President of the AECEG, because when I became an NAEC member, I was then invited to attend one of the meetings of the AECEG. I still remember the meeting. It was in the Aboriginal Hostel's building... some of the people that I admired and some of the people that I got to know were there, like Evelyn Crawford and others that I was connected to, even Chicka Dixon, he was a past member of the NAEC and mentor in many ways. I remember going to that meeting and they asked if I wanted to be a member of the AECEG. I said, 'no, I disagree with the structure.' I said I don't believe that someone like Bill Rose - who became one of our best allies and our best supporters actually - he shouldn't have the power that he had - and he did have a lot of power at that time in deciding who would sit on the AECEG. I disagreed with the way in which the members were selected and appointed.*

So they gave me a challenge and said, 'well, what should it be like?' That's when I worked with John Lester and Chubby [Keith] Hall. We came up with a model. I wrote it up and then took it back to them at the next meeting of the AECEG. I recommended that we should have a structure in New South Wales that was community-based and the community should elect who we want to represent our interests. To my amazement, all of the then-members of the AECEG agreed. They said, 'Yeah, this is how it should be'. Because of my membership on the NAEC, I was then able to negotiate funding to allow for us to go out into our communities and set up local AECEGs which then nominated their representative to the regional AECEGs and which then formed the State

Committee. They never let me forget it, but I never did any of that. I had an accident at Parliament House. I was working with Pat O'Shane on land rights stuff and I fell down the stairs and busted my back and ended up in hospital. So Chubby and Johnny had to go all around the State and set up all those committees. They had a ball.

That was a really heady period of our evolution as a community-based organisation as well. I'm proud of the fact that it still exists and that we had some role in deciding how that should operate. So that relationship between the AECG and the NAEC was important for us, because from the New South Wales point of view, we can strictly from a community perspective and all the stuff that I argued and advocated for at the national level, that came from the AECG. I had my own ideas about some stuff, but I gave an undertaking to our Committee that I would only push for stuff that was endorsed and came from the State Committee. There were other things that I did, spoke about and advocated for that was outside of this but primarily that's what the source of the motivation and accountability was. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

Bob Morgan, a Gumilaroi man, born and raised in Walgett, NSW was the longest serving member of the NAEC, commencing his appointment in 1979 through to the abolition of the Committee in 1989, serving under every Chair.

Bob was raised by his mother and spent his early years living in a shanty on the banks of the Namoi River in Walgett, NSW. His mother was of the generations who were denied access to a white school so she never learnt how to read or write. However, she reinforced to Bob the importance of education which resulted in a lifelong passion for education.

Whilst Bob was studying at the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale, NSW, he shared a flat with Lillian Holt, who was the first Executive Officer of the NAEC. A few years later when Bob was working for the Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) in Sydney he reconnected with Lillian at a conference and she encouraged him to apply for a position on the NAEC: *I remember her giving me a form, so I filled it out and never thought anything about it after that.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

It was a very competitive process to get a position on the NAEC and Bob explained how he was not the first choice: *I always tell my mates in the NAEC that I was second choice. Because, they made the offer firstly to a mate of mine who's now passed - Jacko Walker. Jacko couldn't get approval from his employer, so he declined. So, I was the next person on the ladder and that's how I became a member of the NAEC.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

The AMS, where Bob was working at the time, also refused to provide him with leave to attend meetings. However, he resigned and started his membership of the NAEC. In 1981 Bob commenced as full-time President of the NSW AECG. After Bob's first term on the NAEC, subsequent appointments were on the basis of his representation of the NSW AECG. Bob recalls how young he was at the time of his appointment and how overwhelmed he was at first: *I was a little bit overawed by the intellect that was around the table. I was tremendously impressed with blokes like Eric Willmot, whom I believe had the greatest impact, that I'd met at that time, and Hughsie [Paul Hughes], [John] Budby and Colin [Bourke], all the blokes I spent many, many years as a colleague and friend with... all those people had a profound impact on my thinking.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

Bob's post-school education story starts in the late 1960s when Bob left Walgett to catch a train to Sydney to attend the Sydney Technical College. After undertaking further studies in Armidale he returned to Sydney to take up a position as a Youth Officer at the now defunct Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs. In 1980, he was appointed as a Commissioner of the NSW Education Commission and served as a member of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB). Even after leaving Walgett Bob maintained a strong connection back to his community providing mentorship, leadership, and helped to negotiate funding to implement community driven projects. After retiring from the position of President of the NSW AECG in 1988, Bob spent a year with the NSW Ministry of Education before taking up the position of Director, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at University Technology Sydney which he held until 2000 when he semi-retired.

In 1982 the NSW AECG was heavily involved in the introduction of the first NSW Department of Education, *Aboriginal Education Policy* (NSW AECG, 2015). 1983 saw the NSW AECG become an incorporated body which is still operational today. Its work is a testament to the men and women associated with the NSW AECG as Eleanor Bourke explained: *New South Wales has always had the problem of being so large and having people right across the State. It was slow to get the AECG going, but once it got going, it was powerful, absolutely powerful, including their work with the teachers' union. The education union did some terrific work for them, really pushed national policy as well. But it always had a problem in terms of the size and the local groups having the tyranny of distance problem.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

The *South Australian AECG* was established in 1977 with a five person all Aboriginal membership. It was funded through a grant from the Commonwealth Schools Commission. Growing in membership to twelve in 1978 and again in the early 1980s to fourteen, it continued to be funded through the Ministry of Education. The Committee was formed as a link between community and the government to undertake research, collect and disseminate information, and provide advice and involvement in policy and planning.

It was determined by the South Australian AECG that the establishment of State principles and philosophies needed to form the foundation of the Committee. This was similar to a document simultaneously being worked on by the NAEC from a national perspective:

Establishment of philosophies and purposes for Aboriginal education are a necessary foundation for Aboriginal social and community development, these philosophies and purposes can best be established by regular consultation and review by Aboriginal people, communities and professionals. (SA AECG, 1983, p. 22)

In 1983, the South Australian AECG released a document entitled, *Rationale, Aims and Objectives for Aboriginal Education in South Australia* (SA AECG, 1983). The rationale behind the document was to respond to the past failures of the education system for Aboriginal people. This included the provision of an educational environment that acknowledges Aboriginal heritage, culture and

identity, emphasising that the methodology and pedagogy used with Western education is not solely appropriate for Aboriginal students. Deficit model thinking was also called into question and the document stated that education decision makers needed to look past blaming Aboriginal people for educational limitations and look to producing proactive educational programs that responded to Aboriginal values and perspectives to bring about positive outcomes. Finally, the rationale defined the rights of every Aboriginal person: a right to an education that recognises Aboriginal identity whilst achieving academic success (SA AECG, 1983). Although the content of this document definitely had similarities to and alignment with the NAEC *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*, the variance of the South Australian document was that it reflected the specific principles, aims and philosophies of the South Australian Aboriginal communities, experiences and cultures.

The *Northern Territory AECG* was established in 1978 to provide an Aboriginal viewpoint on education to the NT Minister for Education. Shortly after its inception the Committee believed it should have an Aboriginal name from the local language; and so it became known as Feppi which is an Aboriginal word from the Murrinh-Patha language, meaning 'rock' or 'foundation' (West, 1988). Members were appointed by the Minister and the Committee was funded and supported by the Northern Territory Department of Education. The Committee had representation from all regional areas of the NT as well as specialist appointments. A full-time secretariat was also employed by the Territory Department, inclusive of the Chairperson, two Deputy Chairpersons, policy analyst, project co-ordinator, field officer and general administration officer. West (1988) identified the strengths of Feppi in an article he wrote as Chairperson of the NAEC:

Feppi is the voice of Aboriginal people in the NT. It provides the NT Education Department and the NT Government with Aboriginal views on education and can ensure that those views highlight such things as the needs and aspirations of the various groups of Aborigines in the NT; and the influences and values which must be considered when educational issues arise. (p.24)

The Department control, however, was and continues to be contested, arguing for community control similar to the NSW AECG model. This was reiterated by Wendy Ludwig, a member of the NAEC during 1983 and 1986: *For a long time there was a very conservative government in the Northern Territory - the Country Liberal Party. Despite all of the hard work that individual people did inside Feppi, for those of us that were outside of that set of arrangements, and certainly from my point of view, I saw it as a very conservative group. They had good intentions, strong views and good vision about where things should be going but totally hamstrung by NT government.* (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

Feppi provided a model for national and State education information to be shared across different communities: *Numbulwar was my home so I had to send in information what the school was doing. So I put a report to the National Committee which I did that, and also because we met at different locations around Australia, we had to have one or two meeting outside of Canberra and one was here in Darwin.* (Uibo, interview 04/11/2014)

The *Tasmanian AECG* was established in 1979 through the negotiations of Patsy Cameron, an NAEC member and the Tasmanian Department of Education. Like the NSW AECG the members were elected from regions across the whole of Tasmania by the local Aboriginal communities as well as the NAEC representative from Tasmania. The purpose of the Committee was to provide the Department of Education with advice to increase the participation of Aboriginal people in education and to provide input into the national agenda through the NAEC.

In her negotiations for the development of an AECG in Tasmania, Patsy called on the NAEC to provide support. *I needed the NAEC to rally behind that and to help me then pursue the aim of establishing an Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee in Tasmania. The first step towards that was flying to Victoria to go to the Victorian Aboriginal Consultative Committee meetings and to take part in the Victorian discussion. From that, some of the Victorians came into Tasmania and assisted me in developing our consultative committee here. That's how we first started the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Consultative*

Committee. Since then it's metamorphosed into different committees. Now it's an incorporated body and still very much with community people. It was important having State consultative committees where Aboriginal people could ensure that the aims, objectives and the aspirations of Aboriginal communities, families and school bodies could develop programs that would meet the needs of Aboriginal people and kids. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

Patsy was a community worker on Flinders Islands in Tasmania when she was appointed to the NAEC. She continues to contribute to education, culture and heritage on her traditional community of Cape Barren Island and in the wider Australian communities. She tells of her own educational background: *My education level was I'd completed grade nine. I never did go on. Then it was immediately into raising a family. So my level of education was very restricted to a very basic secondary schooling. I certainly had a lot to learn. My learning was in terms of experiencing the cultural diversity across Australia...I think I probably was the greenhorn amongst all of them with the least worldview. Mine was very much a Tasmanian experience up until then. Of course my knowledge of my own community, of our experiences, of our educational levels and standards at that time were certainly known. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)*

Patsy was born in 1947 and grew up on Flinders Island. Patsy has traced her family back on her mother's side four generations from the Flinders and Cape Barren Islands and her father's connections to the Coastal Plains nation. Prior to her appointment to the NAEC, Patsy had been very involved in local politics, following in her father's footsteps, not just within her local community but across the State. She had been a member of the National Museum of Australia Advisory Committee and the World Heritage Committee in Tasmania. When Patsy attended her first NAEC meeting, she was met with surprise by the other Aboriginal members of the Committee. She recalls this meeting of the NAEC in Canberra: *The first thing I was challenged with was one of the members who commented to me, 'Oh, I thought you were extinct. I thought all of you in Tasmania were extinct'. Of course, the worst thing that can happen to a Tasmanian is to be challenged, especially with other black fellas. In the midst of all this I found myself explaining me, myself and my heritage. The person who*

challenged my Aboriginality, in a warm sense I must say, not the usual way, but still challenged it, probably incited me then to say, 'well, it seems to me that Australia knows about what goes on amongst Aboriginal Australians, especially the Top End. Tasmania has been missed off the map.' I remember talking about the fact that Tasmania had been neglected, that we were the invisible people; we seem to be the forgotten people. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

Patsy was an inaugural member of the NAEC and founder of the Tasmanian AECG. After her term on the NAEC, Patsy maintained membership on the Tasmanian AECG and became very involved in the development of the Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education/Riawunna at the University of Tasmania. She was appointed in the role of Aboriginal Employment Strategy co-ordinator and before retiring she was Deputy Head of the Centre and was responsible for the introduction of the Aboriginal Studies major. Patsy continues her work providing cultural knowledges and education to school students and visitors to Cape Barren Island.

Kaye Price explains the process of the link between the State and the Tasmanian AECG: *As an NAEC member I was an ex-officio member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. So you actually could feed in from my State.... and then you told the committee that you came from, what was happening with the NAEC. So it was a real sharing of information from the ground up. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)*

The *Australian Capital Territory AECG* (ACT AECG) was established shortly after this with representatives from the Schools Department, Canberra College of Advanced Education, Australian National University and Teachers Federation. The ACT AECG was appointed by the ACT government and were recognised as the principal advisor on Aboriginal education in the ACT (West, 1988).

Western Australia was the last State to implement a consultative committee, eventually introducing the *Western Australian AECG* (WAAECG) in June 1984. May O'Brien was ultimately responsible for the development of the subgroups that led to the establishment of the WAAECG. She had left the NAEC and was

working as a Superintendent for the Western Australian Department of Education. *They made me a superintendent in the Education Department. I hated the job because I was marking people who were at Teachers College with me. So I said, 'I don't want this job in the Education Department because I have to mark teachers who were at Teachers College with me'. Then they said, 'Well go and do your own thing then'. I said, 'My own thing? Why thank you'. I did my own thing in the Education Department. I set up all the Aboriginal Committees on Education (ACOE) in all the areas in Western Australia. So every area we had an Aboriginal education committee, funded by my funds that they gave me for what I was doing. So that's how it all started up. So I set up all these committees. Let them go and helped them with whatever they needed. That's how ACOEs in Western Australia all started up.* (O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014)

From this movement in 1984 a State body was elected to form the WAAECG.

5.4.2 Collaborative Workshops NAEC/State Consultative Groups

The collaborative efforts of the NAEC and State Consultative Groups (SCG) ensured that they were presenting a consolidated viewpoint which held more weight in the negotiations of strategies that called for long-term commitments. To ensure that wider consultations happened between the NAEC and SCGs, workshops would be held to discuss joint priorities. The first of the workshops was held in Canberra in February 1979 with a second workshop held in November 1979. The workshops: clarified the independent roles of the SCGs; provided the NAEC with guidance in relation to setting priorities; established closer links; and encouraged SCGs to establish and support local and regional Aboriginal education committees (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980a).

From the 9 to the 11 March 1980, the NAEC held a three day collaborative workshop in Tasmania with representatives from each of the SCGs. Following this a briefing document was prepared with the outcomes and recommendations of the workshop for the purpose of a meeting with State Superintendents on 12 March. The briefing paper emphasised major areas for

discussion, including: the importance of formal consultation processes with Aboriginal people; commitment to the organisation of SCG's; the development of Aboriginal professional staff; and attention to the development of Aboriginal curriculum and Aboriginal studies (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980a).

The concluding recommendations to the State Education Departments were:

- *To develop a policy on the development and training of Indigenous professional staff*
- *To employ more Indigenous teachers in those capacities within the sphere of education*
- *To develop appropriate career education programs for Indigenous students*
- *To provide study leave for existing staff*
- *To implement an understudy scheme.* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980a, p. 15)

These meetings were extremely important and it was taken very seriously as it was the very first time Aboriginal voices were coming into play at a senior level in education. *You were talking directly to superintendents who had the policy and program responsibilities for Aboriginal education in State and Territory jurisdictions. That was really for the leadership of the NAEC, bringing the players in the room and having really decent conversations, but also putting the money on the table because the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in those days used to have Aboriginal funding.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)



Figure 8: Margaret Valadian, Kaye Price, Stephen Albert, Natascha McNamara at DAA State Superintendents Meeting, Hobart, 1980. *The Hobart Mercury* newspaper. Photo supplied to the author by Kaye Price.

5.5 National Inquiry into Aboriginal Education

One of the major roles of the NAEC was to provide advice to government on the development of policy. In 1978, the NAEC had identified the need for a *National Inquiry into Aboriginal Education*. In the NAECs first year of operation they had raised the concerns that:

Despite increasing expenditure on Aboriginal education, and many apparent changes and innovations implemented for Aborigines, there is little evidence of proportionate improvement in the educational standards achieved by the Aboriginal community. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1978)

It was proposed that the inquiry would examine all areas of Aboriginal education, including existing policy, practice and programs as well as identifying the impacts that affected the advancement of Aboriginal education. The Committee strongly believed the inquiry was needed to progress effectively. However, the Committee was constrained by the resources of a part-time committee and a small secretariat and therefore required additional funding to secure appropriate resources. Although Minister Carrick was fully supportive of the inquiry (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1978), the funding was denied when proposed at the Ad Hoc Cabinet committee meeting where it was declared that:

Against the background of the very difficult budgetary situation, the Committee agreed that the following Submissions by the Minister not be listed for consideration in Budget Cabinet for funding in the 1978-1979 Budget. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1978)

This was a disappointing outcome for the NAEC and although there never ended up being a formal government inquiry, throughout the 1980s the NAEC developed specialised papers providing direction for key areas of Aboriginal education. The government would also look to the NAEC to undertake research to inform government on projects, programs or initiatives that aimed to deliver Aboriginal education outcomes. Research was either undertaken by a sub-committee of the NAEC or commissioned to an external party with the terms of reference and a management group driven by the NAEC.

5.6 A Study into the Townsville Black Community School

At the first meeting of the NAEC, April 1977, the Department of Education raised concerns about the Black Community School in Townsville as detailed in the following correspondence:

The situation at this moment is that the school faces closure at the end of first term, ie. in May, if the Department of Aboriginal Affairs withdraws its financial support, as it is thinking of doing.

DAA is concerned about the low student attendance and apparent lack of interest by the parents. While DAA considers it to be an important educational facility, they take the view that they should avoid funding projects which they consider important but which the community does not.

Before making a decision about withdrawal of funding, they have asked for the advice of this Department. Our response has been to request DAA to postpone a final decision until the National Aboriginal Education Committee has had the chance to decide whether it would wish to be involved in the matter. DAA has agreed to this.

From the Department's point of view, NAEC involvement would be highly desirable. Much of the issue turns on the question of community support, and Aboriginal community feeling about such an intensively Aboriginal project as the Black Community School and its future is something which the NAEC is, we believe, particularly qualified to investigate. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977, p. 2)

During the second meeting of the NAEC a resolution was passed;

The National Aboriginal Education Committee wishes to evaluate the school and requests that the funding continue to the end of the 1977 school year and include provisions of transport for students. The Committee considers that an evaluation cannot be carried out unless teachers and students are secure and operating under normal conditions. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977, p. 3)

The school was a community driven initiative which had been under a lot of scrutiny since its inception. The study by the NAEC sub-committee related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community perceptions and to the School's effectiveness in contributing to Aboriginal educational outcomes.

The Black Community School in Townsville was opened in 1973 in response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents concerned that their children were not engaged or succeeding in the public school system. Parents and community members formed a committee and opened an independent school known as the *Black Community School*. The school immediately attracted attention from the Queensland Education Minister and Department of Education who was opposed to the opening of the school because they thought that it was segregationist (M. Reynolds, 1981). This was a hypocritical stance given the past policies of Queensland and other Australian State Governments that had long excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from attending school (M. Reynolds, 1981). The Queensland Education Department initially rejected the opening of the school stating that it was against the *Education Act (1964-1970)*. In the initial stages of the attempting to register the School, the Minister for Education announced:

It is most unlikely I would approve of a school based on such provocative and emotional principles. I certainly do not approve of such a move. (M. Reynolds, 1981, p. 64)

The parents and community sought legal advice which concluded that there were no grounds to reject the application to open the school. Despite continued criticism, the school commenced with an enrolment of ten primary aged students and two teachers who undertook to teach at half pay as they believed in the school's aims. Up until independent assessments were undertaken in 1976 and 1978 all of the speculations of failure made by the Department and other parties were unfounded and without evidence. In actual fact the Australian Schools Commission Report in 1977 had reported in relation to State schools that:

...most school syllabuses, value systems and operational patterns both fail to reinforce the group identity of black students or to utilise the experiences and traditions students bring. (M. Reynolds, 1981, p. 65)

The parents involved in establishing the Black Community School had sought to provide an alternative educational environment that was respectful of the values, beliefs and experiences of their children. They believed that their children were not being provided a positive school environment within the public

school system due to racism and discrimination and teachers' lack of awareness of the environments and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Alternatively, the Black School aimed to: harness the involvement of parents and community in the learning experience; inspire aspiration and hope in children; appoint teachers with the same visions as the community; and create further education opportunities post school (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977). The Principal of the School, Edward Koiki (Eddie) Mabo, had a philosophy that reflected that:

All children should be taught in their own school by their own people. He sees this school as the first in attaining this ideal where children learn from base of their own culture and identity moving gradually into the learning needed for life in European society. This is what the normal European school does from the European base. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977, p. 3)

Initial funding for the school was provided through the Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme, also supplemented by the Australian Council of Churches and the Aboriginal Arts Board. In 1975 the school was recognised by the Department Aboriginal Affairs and provided with special projects funding (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977).

The NAEC conducted an intensive week-long study of the school in August 1977. The study was conducted by a sub-committee of the NAEC (S Albert, P Hughes, J Budby, P Cameron & G Passi), and in December 1977, the NAEC tabled an evaluation report of the Black Community School. *There was quite a lot of discussion about who was using the school, what the purposes of the school was and whether funding should be continued. The Australian Schools Commission was contributing to their funding at the time. So the NAEC was asked to go and do a study of the Black Community School. I remember Colin, Paul and I was involved, Stephen and of course our executive. Stephen and I did the community consultations. We went out talking to all the families around Townsville which included Torres Strait Islander families and Aboriginal families. Paul and Colin were doing a lot of the gathering of data. So we'd meet each evening. We were probably a week up there really doing intensive data collection and interviews with community and bringing it all together in order to*

come up with recommendations to the Australian Schools Commission about whether funding should continue. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

The report tabled findings regarding concerns about the school governance, administration and leadership, as well as the lack of support by government agencies. Due to the financial restrictions Eddy Mabo's position as the Director/Principal and Chairperson of the School Council was unpaid. Additionally, the school appointed one trained teacher and three teacher aides with one of these was unpaid. The major concern was that even though the Director/Principal was passionate and fully committed to the School he lacked governance, finance and management experience and qualifications. This was having a detrimental effect on the day to day running of the school, the quality of education offered and opportunities for future funding. Added to this was the Director/Principal's need to balance running the school with seeking other employment to attract an income to survive. The lack of involvement from the Queensland Department of Education and Department Aboriginal Affairs was also noted in the study report. The response from both Departments was that the Director was not forthcoming in asking for their involvement or assistance (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977).

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1977) report also found, from a more positive viewpoint, that the children were very happy in the school environment and this created a high level of motivation towards their studies and a willingness to learn. Parents and the wider Torres Strait Islander community involved in the school spoke highly of having an alternative option for their children.

The NAEC made 11 recommendations, primarily relating to professional training and development of staff and management, as well as encouraging a high level of support and assistance from relevant Departments. The NAEC concluded their study stating:

The NAEC feels that the school lacks so many support services that we consider it almost impossible to evaluate its success or otherwise. It certainly needs a number of conditions applying to it and to other agencies to enable it to function well. It cannot be considered a failure at

this stage... At this point in time the people who use its services do not see anything wrong with the school. The NAEC supports them in their views that their children are learning in a happy school environment which gives them the opportunity to develop personally and socially within their own cultural milieu, free of the pressures and potential damage involved in attending other schools. The students have a security and confidence which may assist them to cope better with secondary education than in other primary schools.

We therefore recommend that the Department of Aboriginal Affairs funding continue, at least to the end of the 1979 school year provided that the recommendations the NAEC has made are implemented or are in motion by the end of this financial year. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1977, p. 26)

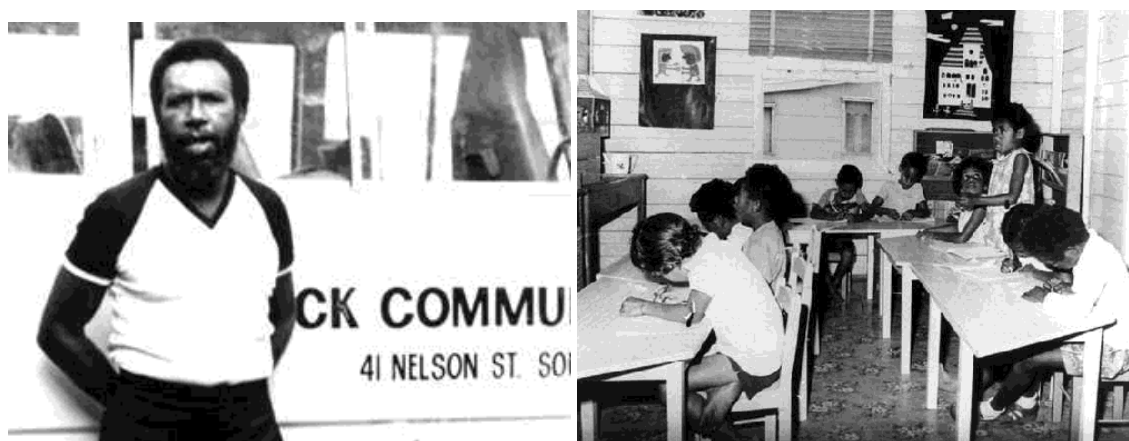


Figure 9: Photos of Eddie Mabo and the Townsville Black Community School. Accessed from NAEC archives.

Following the NAEC's study on the Black Community School the NAEC was asked to review the outcomes of the study by the Commonwealth Department of Education to ascertain whether the recommendations had been implemented. Three of the NAEC members, including the Chairperson, visited the school in early August 1979 and discussed progress with the DAA and Eddy Mabo. At the conclusion of this meeting the DAA and Schools Commission agreed to support the future of the Black Community School.

The school was seen as highly innovative and although it had low enrolment numbers it had provided significant evidence of the values of an alternative educational environment based on principles of self-determination. The recommendations aimed to build on the foundations that were laid under

challenging political circumstances. Unfortunately, the Black Community School closed in 1985 due to insufficient funding.

Alternative schooling for Aboriginal students was being explored by many Aboriginal communities. However, changing attitudes of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers in their relationships with communities was at times challenging. Communities and AECGs appealed to the NAEC to assist in negotiations with Ministers and senior government officials. An example of this was when the NAEC was asked by senior members of the community in Alice Springs to negotiate with the State Government for registration of their proposed community driven and managed school. They were constantly being blocked by the attitudes of the Territory Government: *One of the tough cats we had was Marshall Perron, Cabinet Member for Education and Planning in the Northern Territory. The Arrernte Council of Elders wanted to register the Yipirinya Aboriginal School. There were fringe dwellers that had their own camp and they wanted to put a school on it because the kids weren't attending the normal school. They had come to the (Northern Territory) Department with their registrations the same as other schools but they wanted to also teach in language and they were continually being knocked back. I went to Alice Springs with Errol West and we took Mr Perron out to the Casino the night we arrived. The next day we met at the proposed school and in the end we got the registration.* (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

At the NAEC conference in Brisbane in 1979 a resolution was passed that supported the Yipirinya School Council in their objectives to operate an Aboriginal school in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. At the fifth conference at Katoomba in 1980 a further supportive resolution was made to continue the schools operations (Budby, 1980a).

5.7 Empowering Community Voices: National Aboriginal Education Conferences

The first National Aboriginal Education Conference was held in 1976 in Adelaide, initiated by the South Australian Institute of Teachers (Hughes,

interview 18/06/2013). The second and third conferences were in Perth and Darwin respectively. These first three conferences had little input from Aboriginal people. However, at the fourth conference in 1979, at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, the NAEC was invited to co-manage the conference. *The fourth National Aboriginal Education conference was hosted by Queensland University. There was a woman named Betty Watts who was a great supporter of Aboriginal education and through Queensland University produced the 'Aboriginal Child at School' journal as well. The NAEC had decided that the conferences were something that Aboriginal people - educators - should be doing and that it should be our conference. Then to Betty's credit, who had been very involved in the Aboriginal education conferences, and to the other people that had been involved in running the conferences, they agreed. They said, 'yeah, we should be supporting them and not running them.' So the NAEC took them over. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)*

Prior to 1979, the presentations and discussions at the Aboriginal education conferences had been led mainly by white teachers and academics. The time had come for Aboriginal voices to dominate the space. McConnochie (1982a) describes the 'unprecedented' change in the space of Aboriginal education:

The National Aboriginal Education Conference at Brisbane in 1979 was a unique and stirring event: planned and organised by the NAEC and several Aboriginal consultants, with Aborigines giving all the keynote addresses and taking most leadership roles, with more Aborigines than non-Aborigines in attendance, and with preference being given to Aboriginal input, the conference had an unprecedented Aboriginal character.....Gone are the days of 'the same old white faces, year after year'. (p.36)

The NAEC now aligned these conferences with their current priorities inviting State AECG members as well as other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders. The conferences were funded by the Commonwealth Schools Commission and were co-coordinated by the NAEC and the State Aboriginal consultative committees who organised location and accommodation and advised their members on travel arrangements. At times the conferences attracted attendance of over two hundred people.

The conference agendas focused on all aspects of education, including early childhood, primary, secondary, TAFE, tertiary, traditional and non-traditional education. The conference outcomes formed the basis of wider consultation, debate and discussion for the provision of advice to the Commonwealth government: *They were the foundation of the way we got information in from community, broad scoping sort of advice about where we were going. So NAEC was well substantiated by community direction. Workshops that were held at these national conferences were outstanding. There was a clause in the Commonwealth Study Grants in those days, where you could hold conferences and they would pay for them. That's how we funded it. We were funding the AECG and we were funding these national conferences. They were called activities and there was a subset in the policy where we could do that. So it gave us the opportunity to bring these people together, which was fairly unique. Eventually it stopped when they tightened up on money.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

The first two national Aboriginal education conferences in which the NAEC took over co-ordination focused on reinforcing the imperative of an Aboriginal voice in Aboriginal education. These were:

1979 4th NAEC: *Education in the 80s: Role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, University Queensland, Brisbane

1980 5th NAEC: *An Aboriginal Perspective on Creating Positive Learning Environments*, Medlow Bath, Katoomba, NSW

The conferences ran for five days, concluding with recommendations and outcomes: *We had a national conference that lasted a week, five days of concentrating on all the things currently going on. Nowadays if a national conference lasts a couple of days it's a big conference. So getting into depth about things was a lot more the case in those days, even given how much we knew to get into depth about things. We spent a lot more time looking at information coming forward but nobody had done a whole lot of particular research about the best way to teach Aboriginal studies or the best way to teach Aboriginal kids, the best way to deal with racism. All those sorts of things*

were in their infancy in terms of anybody else making comment about them or researching them in various sorts of ways. (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The conferences were truly consultative. They ran workshops, discussions and debate and sessions where a person could presents a paper with a five minute question time at the conclusion of the presentation. They attracted participation from State and Territory Aboriginal consultative groups, Aboriginal people employed within the education system, and other key stakeholders. The NAEC Chairperson, supported by the NAEC members, would provide leadership ensuring the appropriate conversation and discussions for the workshop resulted in productive recommendations and policy advice. Initially the last day of recommendations would provide the opportunity for any individual recommendations to be heard; however, as the conferences grew this process was reviewed. The new process allowed only for recommendations to be made that evolved from the discussions and themes of the conference, which achieved more productive results for the outcomes of the conferences (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013).

The fifth conference held in Medlow Bath, Katoomba, was co-ordinated by the NSW AECG in collaboration with the NAEC. The conference focused on heightening the voices of students and parents (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1981). Aboriginal Year 12 students were invited to participate and engage in workshops. They were then invited to deliver a presentation defining their perspectives and a list of recommendations for consideration by the NAEC and wider conference audience. They also outlined what they saw as the responsibilities in the future of Aboriginal education such as more Aboriginal teachers in schools. Aboriginal parents presented their views and ideas on Aboriginal education. The two primary areas of concern and for action raised at this conference were:

1. *Techniques to change negative teacher attitudes about Aborigines, and*
2. *Ways of increasing Aboriginal involvement to develop relevant Aboriginal education programs.* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1981, p. 14)

The conferences provided a forum for a collective Aboriginal community voice in the development of State and National policies and programs. They instilled a sharing of information between the States and Territories, providing the NAEC with wider community perspectives that informed their decision making. Additionally, they provided Aboriginal teachers, who were usually minorities within their school environments, an empowering space to discuss and debate Aboriginal education and a means of forming professional relationships. *It was about sharing knowledge and getting Indigenous voices into the education systems where there were very little voices because there weren't a lot of Aboriginal teachers. There wasn't a lot of Aboriginal leadership.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

In the evenings of the conferences activities would be organised to bring everyone together in an informal setting to continue building connections and relationships. These activities included games, dancing, singing, skits or just getting together. This time was seen as just as important as the formal conference allowing people to unwind and strengthen bonds. Activity nights became a regular part of the conference agendas allowing the blending of serious Committee work with important social interaction.

At the fifth conference in Katoomba, the Minister for Education, Mr Fife addressed the conference, detailing the progress of Aboriginal people having a voice in the directions and priorities of Aboriginal education. He stated that in 1971 at a similar conference there were only 4 Aboriginal participants or 10% of conference participants and this was in contrast to the current conference which had at least 75% Aboriginal participation (Fife, 1980b).

5.8 The Education and Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers: Submission to the National Inquiry into Teacher Education

In 1979, the NAEC undertook research to develop a submission into the *National Inquiry into Teacher Education* (NITE) (Auchmuty, 1980). To prepare the submission, the NAEC performed substantial research that responded to

the needs of Aboriginal people from their own perspectives. This contrasted with previous research that had instead focused on existing challenges in Aboriginal education that often resulted in a deficit view (Hughes & Willmot, 1979). The final paper for the submission was entitled, *The Education and Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers* (EEATSIT) (Hughes & Willmot, 1979). The outcomes of this paper and the subsequent submission to the NITE resulted in some strong future directives, including the development of the NAEC's *1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990* initiative.

The study for the EEATSIT paper was undertaken between April and September 1979. The NAEC put together a steering committee and research team. The steering committee consisted of a subcommittee of seven NAEC members:

Paul Hughes (Co-ordinator Steering Committee)
Stephen Albert
John Budby
Margaret Valadian
Colin Bourke
Patsy Cameron
May O'Brien
Kevin Rogers

The Research Team was drawn from government appointments and added a consultant from the Commonwealth Department of Education and the University of Adelaide. The team and their roles included:

Eric Willmot – Senior Research Officer
Michael Mace – Research Assistant
Carolyn Bronsch – Administrative Officer
Margaret Pakenam – Computer Assistant
Deidre Jordan - Consultant

The terms of reference set out to examine and assess the quality of pre-service teacher education programs in Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) and other educational institutions. The study investigated: appropriateness of

programs for Aboriginal students; level of Aboriginal student outcomes; contributions to students' personal and social development; recruitment and access; and the employment of Aboriginal teachers. The sub-committee had provided clear guidance that the study was to be investigative rather than evaluative, and should identify future opportunities for a national approach to Aboriginal teacher training and employment.

A societal framework was developed for the EEASTIT paper utilising social, economic and geographic data from the census that ensured recognition of diverse cultural groups across Australia. The framework grouped Aboriginal communities into four categories and then examined Aboriginal education and teacher training within each of these:

- Category 1* Traditional communities that are the most isolated from the wider Australian society.
- Category 2* Rural communities living on reserves or missions, with limited connections to the wider Australian society.
- Category 3* Urban communities largely embedded into the geographic and economic environments of non-Aboriginal society however are engaged largely with Aboriginal community therefore has a degree of separation from the wider society.
- Category 4* Urban dispersed communities that are fully integrated at all levels into a non-Aboriginal society. (Hughes & Willmot, 1982)

The framework would guide a greater understanding of the differences between Aboriginal peoples from different geographic areas: *Eric [Willmot] and Paul [Hughes] are pretty smart guys and having been involved for a long time now they could see that things were different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait kids in urban, rural, remote and very remote areas and that while some things might be the same we at times needed to do things differently, define them into categories.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

As a part of the wider consultation undertaken for the report in September 1979, the NAEC held a National Workshop in Sydney for Aboriginal teachers and teacher aides. The outcome of the workshop was the provision of input into the EEASTIT. The workshop had highlighted that in 1977, there were more than 600 Aboriginal Teacher Aides employed across the States and the Northern Territory and only 72 qualified Aboriginal teachers teaching in schools (Albert, 1979).

The EEATSIT report (Hughes and Willmot (1979) concluded that the employment of Aboriginal teachers provided a means for Aboriginal people to achieve *social and economic equality*. It was identified that although there was great potential to increase participation in teacher education the current environment did not provide a self-sustainable foundation. The challenge related to sustainability was focused on the longitudinal commitment by the government to continue support for special Aboriginal teacher education programs and a further commitment to employing more Aboriginal teachers. An increase Aboriginal teachers being employed and Aboriginal teaching students within current pre-service teaching programs was becoming evident. There were also a number of Aboriginal targeted programs that had recently been introduced and had the potential attracting increased enrolments in initial teacher education. However, there needed to be more attention to increasing participation in teacher education if an impact was to be achieved.

The report also found that at the current rate there would only be approximately 400 Aboriginal teacher graduates in the next decade, instead of 5,000 required by 1990 to achieve parity with non-Aboriginal teachers on representative population basis: *When they did the report we had 72 identified Aboriginal people as teachers. What they did was look at the number of Aboriginal students in the country and they said if we've got this number of students we should have this number of teachers. That was the rationale behind the figure of 1000 Aboriginal teachers in classrooms and people always leave off the bit about 1000 Aboriginal teachers in classrooms. Because we had people like me and Paul, a growing number of people, working in government departments, we wanted to see the teachers in the classroom.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

The figure of 1,000 gave the Committee a goal to work towards. It was also a goal that the Australian Government could adopt as a positive promise in their overall approach to Indigenous Affairs. (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

The EEATSIT report (Hughes & Willmot, 1979) recommended two major areas of action. Firstly, to graduate 1000 trained Aboriginal teachers by 1990. This strategy would be vital to produce enough Aboriginal teachers to have a broad positive impact on the outcomes of Aboriginal children in the classroom and Aboriginal communities more generally:

a next generation of economists, engineers, doctors, politicians, journalists and public servants of the future. In one generation Aboriginal society will have produced its managerial and political head, and more importantly, an intellectual arm that will be able to contribute to the shaping of Australia's destiny. (Hughes & Willmot, 1982, p. 22)

Training and graduating teachers, however, was the priority: *We recognised the importance of training professionals in all facets of life. But we all thought teachers were more important than anybody because we were trying to influence education. Not architectural designs or even health, though we recognised health was very important too. (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)*

It was also noted in the report that there was urgency in attracting Aboriginal teachers from Category 1 of the framework as at this stage no qualified teachers or current teaching students were from traditional communities.

Secondly, it was recommended that Aboriginal teachers were to be properly prepared to teach both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and contribute to both societies. From an Aboriginal community perspective preparing teachers relevant to the particular geographic categories listed above and based on where they intended to work was integral to developing successful relationships with communities that would result in better educational outcomes. If this education on Aboriginal societies and perspectives was not incorporated into teaching programs there was a risk of the continued privilege of Western knowledges in schools which would be detrimental to Aboriginal communities:

It will be a most important role for indigenous people to ensure that the philosophies and ideologies on which these future programs are based do create a new part of native Australian society, and does not simply take part of it away and lose it forever. (Hughes & Willmot, 1979, p. 148)

There was also an emphasis on upskilling of Aboriginal Teacher-Aides to allow them more influence in children's learning. It was noted that the appointment of Aboriginal Teacher-Aides had made a significant difference to the educational outcomes of Aboriginal children. However, as time progressed it became more problematic as it meant that Aboriginal people remain as a guest in the classroom instead of being trained teachers (Hughes & Willmot, 1979). *I went to Sydney during my first round teaching, It was green pastures in a sense because there was a national inquiry into teacher education at the same time and so people like Deirdre Jordan, she was a consultant and she met us Aboriginal teachers - well, there wasn't too many, but Aboriginal education workers and Aboriginal teachers. Myself and Cora were the only two registered teachers that were teaching in the Kimberley. So we were quite novel in the eyes of the community because they saw teacher aides and assistants working for us in the classroom. The fact that we had influence - well, we didn't think we had too much influence, but they saw us having great power and having the same responsibilities as other teachers, and teachers paying us a respect that they probably didn't to teacher's aides. I thought they were treating everyone the same, but the education workers thought we were quite privileged in terms of the teachers that negotiated with us, unlike how they negotiated with them in terms of their role in the school. (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)*

The excellence of the study was recognised by the Commonwealth Minister for Education who stated in a press release that the NAEC submission to the NITE had been:

a thorough and thoughtful piece of work, based on careful research promoted and controlled by the NAEC itself. (Fife, 1980a, p. 3)

The NITE report (Auchmuty, 1980), also sent a strong message on the importance of education for the future of Aboriginal people:

The [Auchmuty] Committee believes that the schooling system has failed to meet the needs of the Aboriginal people. Education is the key to development and self-management of Aboriginals as of any other people: to fulfil this role, the education system must both reflect and meet the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal people. (p. 26)

In response to the NAEC submission, the Auchmuty Report (1980) made a number of recommendations related to teacher education including, endorsing the target of 1000 teachers by 1990:

The Aboriginal community desires that many of its people who are both willing and able should gain entry to various professions. Teaching is one of these professions. The committee endorses the initial target of one thousand trained teachers set by the National Aboriginal Education Committee in its submission. If this target is to be attained from the base number of 72 trained teachers in 1979, a significant number of Aboriginal people must gain entry to the teacher education institutions. (p.196)

The NITE additionally recommended that the NAEC undertake an evaluation into the three enclaves that currently existed at the time within tertiary institutions, which included special entry programs and support services, to identify effective models that attract and retain Aboriginal students (Auchmuty, 1980).

5.9 Conclusion

The development of the NAEC was a main driver in empowering Aboriginal voices in the national education arena. Reaching out into communities and the establishment of State and Territory education advisory committees were major strategies for the widening of Aboriginal perspectives. It provided an opportunity for the inclusion of Aboriginal voices for individuals and communities across Australia. Having State and Territory AECG representation on the NAEC would provide a strong framework for drawing on diverse Aboriginal values and perspectives contributing strongly towards Aboriginal education policy development. The interviews and associated publications determined that Aboriginal people's preference for the structure of the State committees was one that was autonomous from the Department of Education, empowering their own voices, self-management and control without any dominant influences. It

was a model that moved further away what Bob Morgan coined the 'guest paradigm' for Aboriginal people in systems of education.

Equally important were, the connections to Aboriginal communities whose input was deemed integral for to understanding the diverse aspects of Aboriginal education across regional, rural, remote and urban communities. The NAEC allowed Aboriginal people an opportunity to engage in their own educational futures, and those of their children, for the first time since the arrival of the colonisers. This marked a move for inclusion of a whole nation towards the advancement of Aboriginal education.

In 1979, Stephen Albert suggested that the evolution of Aboriginal education should move from consultation to involvement to responsibility (Hughes and Willmot, 2012). This phase in the development of the NAEC marked this evolution, providing a means of real consultation in directing the policy and operations of Aboriginal education. Responsibility would become a reality when overcoming being guests within the Western system. This was reflected in the NAEC's submission to the NITE which would now have a significant impact on the NAEC's priorities and future directions.

The drought was over. Freshwater had flowed strongly down the mountains bringing life to the river once again.

Chapter 6

Taking Our Place in Education, 1980 – 1983

The NAEC wishes to make it very clear that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The time has come for us to take the major responsibility for its development. Our people's futures are at stake. We cannot be a part of this country unless we ensure that education allows us to take our place as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with pride in our own identity and with confidence that we can play our part in Australian society. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b, p. 5)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the second term of the NAEC (1980 to 1983), under the Chairmanship of John Budby. Throughout the duration of this term, the Committee was largely concerned with consolidating policy that would provide direction across all levels of Aboriginal education, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators. During this term there was a strong focus during on the inclusion of Aboriginal Studies at all levels of school curriculum and teacher training.

Additionally, during this phase there was much discussion related to employing Aboriginal people across all government departments and appointing them to senior positions with the Departments of Education and Aboriginal Affairs.

The following timeline outlines the major events and policy movements presented in this chapter;

1980	9 April: Appointment of New Chairperson, 2 nd Term NAEC Appointment of Specialist and State representatives to the NAEC Implementation of 'Aboriginalisation' strategy
1980-1985	Development of <i>Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education</i>
1982	March: <i>NAEC and Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, Report to the Australian Education Council</i>

6.2 The Second Term of the NAEC Committee

6.2.1 Commencement and Visions of a New Chair

The NAEC Chair was a three year appointment. Following Stephen's term, John Budby was appointed as the second Chairperson by the Minister for Education, Mr Fife, on 9 April 1980. John introduced a strong emphasis on curriculum development and Aboriginal studies (Fife, 1980a). He had previously worked in Papua New Guinea and drew on this experience to move these priorities forward for Aboriginal people.

John had completed his schooling in Mackay, Queensland, in 1964. He completed a teacher training course through the Australian School of Pacific Administration. The training was aimed at preparing educators to teach in either the Northern Territory or Papua New Guinea. Once he completed his teacher training, John took up a teaching appointment in Papua New Guinea, where he remained for the next seven years, returning to Australia in 1975. Shortly after his return he was appointed as an advisory teacher for the Queensland Department of Education, and this included the role of Executive Officer to the newly established Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Consultative Committee (Budby, 1980b).

Eleanor Bourke recollects that: *Educationally, Budby was really strong, being a secondary teacher... When he came, it (the NAEC) was right into really focusing on education policy and to some extent debate about theory; in particular Aboriginal Studies.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)



Figure 10: John Budby. Reproduced from National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985), *Aims, Philosophies and Guidelines*.

Immediately after John's appointment to Chairperson of the NAEC in 1980, he published an article in the *Aboriginal Child at School* journal which focused on his insights into the past, present and future position of Aboriginal education (Budby, 1980b). Within this article he drew on his experience in the 1970s of working in education in Papua New Guinea. An understudy program existed in Papua New Guinea which trained the local people with them shadowing the expatriates who were working within the education system. Accompanied by other training and the simultaneous acquisition of teaching qualifications, the local people were able to take over the positions in the longer term. This was a model John believed needed to be adopted in Australia if it were going to encourage the 600 Aboriginal people that were at the time working as teacher's aides to become qualified teachers:

If we are going to look at people already in the field, such as the teacher aides/teacher assistants, we need then to negotiate not only with colleges of teacher education to encourage them to make some allowance for the practical experience of our present teacher aide force and provide some sort of bridging enrichment courses to assist them to become teachers, but also improve financial assistance to such people. (Budby, 1980b, p. 9)

Another area that John identified as integral to the improvement of Aboriginal education was parent and community involvement in the school. He suggested that this would contribute to: greater parent involvement in their child's education, inside and outside the classroom; parent and community contribution to curriculum development; teacher awareness of community culture and perspectives; and an increased student interest in schooling for Aboriginal students.

John discussed the model adopted by the Queensland Education Department which had two types of local advisory groups that included parents. The first model was attached to a school principal. The second was a regional structure with representatives on the advisory group from each high school, and responsible to the Regional Director. John explained that the groups were responsible for identifying appropriate selection of Aboriginal Student Counsellors to work with students on academic development, goal setting and to provide an individual assistance with their education. Student Counsellors

would also be an important link between the school, advisory committees and parents, and would therefore be expected to have strong engagement with these groups (Budby, 1980b).

From John's perspective, the most significant developments over the past decade were related to both the increase of Aboriginal people in decision making around policy and the increase of Aboriginal students remaining in school to complete Years 11 and 12:

In the past, statistics had indicated that Aboriginal children tend to leave school either at Year 10 or at age 15, whichever comes first, but in the last five years at least there has been a greater number of Aboriginal children attending school beyond Year 10, and this has been a very important factor which needs to be followed through in the next few years. (Budby, 1980b, p. 7)

Budby (1980b) proposed the contributing factors to the increase in senior school enrolment were the involvement of parents, greater awareness of the educational systems and a growing perception with Aboriginal communities of the value of education. Initiatives established by the State education departments to support Aboriginal education included the appointment of positions that focused on the needs and aspirations of students. The Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme (ASGS) had also assisted in overcoming some of the financial challenges of remaining at school for the individual and the family (Budby, 1980b). John did believe however, that the ASGS did place students under a great deal of pressure because of the assumptions by teacher that the grants were equivalent to a scholarship with the same expectations:

In my experience as an advisory teacher, in which I travelled around most of Queensland and talked to many secondary teachers, some of them seemed to believe falsely that because you get paid to come to school you should be able to learn. (Budby, 1980b, p. 10)

The ASGS was not a scholarship and therefore there was no logic to this reasoning. It highlighted the need for more education of non-Aboriginal teachers teaching Aboriginal students.

6.2.2 Specialist Appointments and State Representatives

After the first term of the NAEC, five specialist positions would be appointed to the Committee through nominations by the Department of Education. Each NAEC term, different people with specific expertise would contribute up-to-date knowledge related to modes of education or other relevant specialisations. The specialist positions would also be responsible for leading relevant subgroups or studies aimed at advising the NAEC to allow informed discussion and decision making. Specific studies were normally funded through the Education, Research and Development Committee (ERDC) within the Commonwealth Department of Education. An example of this was the investigation into bilingual education: *We had two bi-lingual programs we were looking into to get a sense of how they worked, so we had to rely on Rex Granites' expertise as one was at Yuendumu [Rex's country] and another program in Maningrida.* (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

The importance of the expert positions grew as the NAEC became more established and was responsible for providing advice on a wide range of operational and strategic education matters to the Departments of Education and Aboriginal Affairs. All specialist positions were not necessarily filled for each of the NAEC appointment periods; it was dependent on the accessibility of experts and the particular needs of the NAEC at the time of selection.

This was also the first term in which State representatives had been included through nominations and endorsement from the State Aboriginal Education Committees or equivalent community groups. This marked a distinct shift in self-determination: no longer were NAEC members selected by the Commonwealth government. Instead, representation was decided by Aboriginal people. The AECGs would endorse or ratify the representative appointments ensuring accountability back to the community. Given this selection process there was no opposition to who was selected to sit on the NAEC and in a lot of cases the representative was the Chairperson of the State and Territory committees. These people were in a good position to disseminate information in and out of their AECGs. Bob Morgan explains the significance of this shift towards self-

determination: *The AECG (Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group) had to be in a power position where we'd endorsed or ratified all the appointments. Because our position was that if you don't have accountability to the community, then all you are is an appointee to a government organisation or committee like NAEC, without being accountable to the community. So, all of our members on the NAEC would be required to come to AECG committees and report.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

In the February 1980 meeting held in Adelaide, the NAEC had decided upon new criteria for future members and developed a nomination form. The nomination form now put a greater emphasis on community involvement (see Appendix C for the nomination form).

The membership for the 1980 to 1983 term was:

Name	Representation	Years
Stephen Baamba Albert *	Continuing Member, WA	1980 - 1983
Paul Hughes *	Continuing Member, SA	1980 - 1981
May O'Brien *	Continuing Member, WA	1980 - 1981
Vera Farrell (Budby)	Continuing Member, WA	1980
Phil Stewart	Continuing Member, NT	1980
Robert (Bob) Morgan *	New South Wales	1980 – 1983
Eleanor Bourke *	Victorian AECG	1980 - 1981
Kaye Price *	Tasmania AECG	1980 - 1981
Eddie Mabo	Torres Strait Islands	1980 - 1981
Esther Bevan	Western Australia	1980 – 1981
Elizabeth McCann	Queensland	1980
Hazel McKellar	Queensland	1980 - 1981
John Thomas	South Australia	1980
Alfie Bamblett	TAFE	1980
George Tongerie	South Australia	1980 - 1981
Victor Tjakamara Forrest *	Western Australia	1981 – 1983
Raelene Hudson	South Australia	1980 – 1983
John Lester *	Primary Teacher	1980 - 1983

Eve Fesl	Language Development	1981 – 1983
Oriel Murphy	Queensland AECG	1980 – 1983
Maurie Ryan	Northern Territory	1980 – 1983
Didimain Uibo *	NT AECG	1980 – 1983
Pearl Duncan *	Primary Education	1980 - 1983
Laurie Padmore *	Tasmania AECG	1981 – 1983
Peter Buckskin *	SA AECG	1981 - 1983
Mary Atkinson	Victorian AECG	1981 – 1983
Glen Miller	Queensland	1981 – 1982
Robin Granites	Northern Territory	1980
Eric Hampton	Queensland AECG	1980 – 1983
Les Hegarty	Queensland AECG	1980 - 1982
Patsy Williamson	Traditional	1981 – 1983
Sepi Woosup	Queensland AECG	1981 – 1983
Pat (Julia) Williamson	Northern Territory	1981 – 1982

* NAEC members interviewed for this study.

6.2.3 Educational Stories from some NAEC Members (1980-1983)

Pearl Duncan, a Gumilaroi woman, was a specialist appointment from 1981-1983. Pearl was a school teacher in Queensland and applied to become a member of the NAEC in its second intake. She missed out to a person from Moree who only attended two meetings before resigning and Pearl was next in line. Pearl felt she had a lot to contribute to the NAEC: *I was the first qualified Aboriginal school teacher in Australia to have graduated at a tertiary institution.* (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015). Additionally, she felt the NAEC could also contribute a lot to her own knowledge and experience.

Pearl grew up and went to school in a small town called Bundarra, NSW, where racism was rife. Pearl says she was very lucky growing up and talks about the Postmaster's wife taking an interest in her education: *I was always known at the school to be a bright girl. The teacher told my mother I was clever when I was in the kindergarten class. The postmaster's wife took an interest in me and*

encouraged my education. My mother knew everybody because she used to do everybody's housework. She was a single mother and she scrubbed floors and did the washing. In those days they didn't have washing machines or vacuum cleaners. So everyone took an interest in me. But my mother would always say to me 'Education is a right not a privilege'. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

Pearl started her post school education when she was 17 through funding by the Australian [Anglican] Board of Missions. She attended Sydney Teachers' College. Nearly twenty years later Pearl completed a Bachelor of Letters in Anthropology (with Honours) at ANU before completing a Master of Education at University of Canberra in 1992. Whilst studying in Canberra she worked for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and AIATSIS as a Research Officer. Pearl commenced her teaching in Yarrabah Aboriginal Community School in North Queensland and then after two years moved to a Torres Strait Islander Community School also in North Queensland. *I worked in the Torres Strait. I loved the Torres Strait people and had a lovely time there. My nickname was Pearl of the Pacific, the children called me. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)*

She later taught in Sydney metropolitan schools and did a stint teaching in Auckland, New Zealand. *The only time I taught Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was the two years at Yarrabah when I taught there, and the three years when I was in the Torres Strait. After that it was just 30 years in public schools, mainly in Sydney. I taught mainly white children. So I was removed from Aboriginal stuff at the time. I had no idea about how ill-educated Aboriginal people were. See, my mother had a good education and her aunties all had good education. They all were integrated sort of. They knew their rights. I had no idea about these separate schools and things that they had, and how the schools were ill-equipped and some of the teachers weren't even properly qualified. I had no idea that was going on until I joined the NAEC – so it was good for me. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)*

Pearl ended her long career working in the tertiary sector. She had a seven year appointment at Northern Rivers CAE (now Southern Cross University) and was Head of the Aboriginal Unit at Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

for four years. Pearl was a visiting scholar at prestigious international universities, such as University British Columbia (UBC) in Canada. On her retirement Pearl completed a PhD at University of Queensland. Her thesis was titled, *The Role of Aboriginal Humour in Cultural Survival and Resistance*.

John Lester was also appointed as a specialist with expertise in primary teaching. John, a Wonnarua man, was a member of the NAEC from 1980 to 1982. When John was appointed to the NAEC he was a teacher at Darlington Primary School. He had completed a Diploma of Teaching at the College of Advanced Education, Armidale (now UNE), and had commenced his teaching career as the first Aboriginal teacher at Redfern Primary School before moving to Darlington, again as the first Aboriginal teacher: *After spending three years at Redfern I transferred to Darlington because there were more Aboriginal kids there. There was a large percentage at Redfern Primary but most of the kids from 'The Block' went to Darlington...and that's the school I attended when I was a kid, so I wanted to go back there.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

John's membership to the NAEC was encouraged by Bob Morgan, who at that stage was just an acquaintance: *I was asked if I was prepared to be nominated as a specialist representative in New South Wales... Bob was on there, and he was representing New South Wales in his own right... I was to be appointed representing primary school teachers.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

Just after John's appointment to the NAEC, he took up an acting position with the NSW Department of Education as the Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Later he was appointed to the upgraded role of Senior Education Officer. The position also incorporated the role of Executive Officer of the NSW AECG, so it was vital to ensure these responsibilities blended into each other. However, with the further addition of the NAEC membership it became a balancing act between the three responsibilities which, although they nicely complimented each other, were all significant roles to undertake.

When the position for Chairperson came up John threw his hat in the ring, and he knew that Paul Hughes had also applied for the position: *Paul was very cemented in Comm-Ed [Commonwealth Education], he was very well*

respected. He was doing a lot of work at that stage and he was most dominant. I used it [applying for Chair] as a learning tool and to understand the politics. (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

Although John was unsuccessful for the Chair position, Paul invited John to act as Deputy Chair for a period of six months while a vacancy occurred. John agreed to the position which was located in Canberra. He recalls how difficult it was leaving his family in Sydney and how this experience influenced his future priorities. *I remember I used to come home most weekends if I could. At the time my son would have been about three... He was really upset one night and my wife said you better go in and see him. So I went in, and he's crying and wouldn't go to sleep. I said, 'well what's up mate?' He looked me in the eye, and he said, 'I don't want to go to sleep because I know when I go to sleep you won't be here in the morning'...it just teared at my heart. I could have chased other things at a national level but I chose [after the six months Deputy Chair appointment] to concentrate on New South Wales, which I had a genuine commitment to.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)

In 1983, post NAEC membership, John became the first Head of an Aboriginal unit at NSW TAFE followed by an appointment as the first Aboriginal Principal of a TAFE college at Griffith. Through winning a promotion John was then appointed to another TAFE Principal position at Grafton College before acting as Assistant Director at Coffs Harbour Education Campus. He went on to assume senior roles in State Aboriginal education and Indigenous higher education.

Didimain Uibo at the time of her appointment to the NAEC was living and studying at Batchelor College. When the call for applications for NAEC membership came out Didimain was nominated and encouraged to apply by Batchelor College: *Someone from the College said we've nominated you, go along and just see if you like it or not.... There was three representatives from the Northern Territory. There was Maurie Ryan, myself and a gentleman by the name of Ted Hampton and for a while Rex Granites.* (Uibo, interview 04/11/2014)

Didimain had a strong focus on bi-cultural teaching and preparing Aboriginal students to take over positions in Aboriginal communities, such as teachers or teacher aides, police or running their own business. She put a large emphasis on parent involvement to overcome school being such a foreign environment, especially for Aboriginal students. She recalls her own school experience: *When 10 o'clock came the bell would go and I thought that meant home time. I used to go down to the beach. My brother said, 'Why did you run away from school?' I thought it was home time; the bell would ring you would have morning tea and go home. So next time I stayed and then the second bell would go, I would have my lunch and go home. My brother would find me sitting on the beach playing. Slowly, my brother had to hold my hand and walk me back up until I knew when it was the right time to go home.* (Uibo, interview 04/11/2014)

Didimain went back to her community in 2000 to work as a teacher. Whilst in the role she was asked to act as the Principal at Numbulwar School, which incorporated pre-school, primary, high school and post-secondary students. She acted in the Principal role for twelve months before successfully applying for the position and staying on. Didimain remained the Principal of Numbulwar School for many years. Unfortunately, due to her health she had to return to Darwin and commenced employment with the Northern Territory Department of Education as a Senior Advisor involved in the cross culture awareness for teachers; remote and urban. She also would attend schools promoting Indigenous studies and providing Aboriginal educational advice.

Peter Buckskin, a Narungga man, was the youngest appointment to the NAEC (1981 to 1988). Peter was a trained primary teacher in the Kimberley, Western Australia, when he was appointed and had a number of people watching his progress: *I was one of the very first intakes of the Aboriginal Teacher Educational Program at Mount Lawley Teachers' College and May O'Brien was a Superintendent in the Education Department responsible for Aboriginal Education. Part of her job was to advise us on the course and the program, but also was to find us jobs at the end of the three or four years training... so she kept a close eye on us and helped us work out which part of the State we would want to go to.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

While Peter was at school in South Australia he stayed in an Aboriginal hostel with children who had come to school in Adelaide from the Kimberley. Peter became interested in teaching in the Kimberley where he had already completed some of the practical component of his degree at Nulungu Catholic College, Broome, Western Australia. Although he was offered a position with a public school, he decided to go back to the Catholic system and acquired a full time role at Nulungu: *Part of my study was to do majors in remedial maths and teaching English as a second language, because I knew I wanted to go into a bush school and work with kids who probably would have issues in terms of their competencies around English and skills with maths. I participated in the community and indeed the Catholic community of Broome. Then I met a bloke called Stevie Albert. He had just become Chairman of the NAEC.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

As May O'Brien and Stephen Albert watched Peter's career progression they started to encourage him to consider membership of the NAEC. On an invitation from May, Peter became involved in a project in Sydney where he had the opportunity to meet other Aboriginal teachers and education workers: *I went to a conference on the east coast in Sydney, meeting Margaret Valadian and Natascha McNamara....running a conference around Aboriginal leadership and promoting Aboriginal teachers in a sense. That's where I met Kaye Price... and later I got to meet Linda Burney and that network kind of grew.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2105)

A short time later Peter returned home to Adelaide as his grandfather was quite ill: *He was like my first parent in a sense, so I wanted to go home and give something back to the family.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

Once back in Adelaide, Peter worked at the newly established Alternative School for Aboriginal secondary students and became involved in the South Australian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (SA AECG). Through this group he reconnected with Paul Hughes who he had initially met at Mt Lawley's Teachers' College. Encouraged by Paul, he successfully applied for a position with the South Australian Education Department and commenced a part-time

position on the SA AECG: *There were few Aboriginal teachers in the space, so people were looking for leadership. People wanted to engage Aboriginal voices, and so they approached people like me to sit on the Consultative Committee... I continually learnt about the NAEC through Paul and the other State member, a wonderful old fella called George Tongerie who is now passed. Uncle George wanted to retire because he was an old fella. He said, 'Hey, get the young fella to go on – Paul you know, that young teacher at the school you met the other day. That dark skinned bloke, you know'.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2105)

Peter was elected as the SAAECG Chairperson at the age of 23 in 1983. At the time the Chairperson position was a part-time role. Peter then applied for a position on the NAEC and was successful: *In a sense I was projected up in a leadership role probably far too early in my life I think now. We were doing some pretty heavy lifting with very little resources, but the NAEC members, people like Uncle George who were experienced and came from a community welfare type portfolio so were truly outside the education system, was bringing that community perspective into how you support kids from community welfare in the education system.... Around the table was this amazing group of people, who decided to take me under their wing.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

While on the NAEC, Peter continued working as an Education Officer in the South Australia Department of Education. Like John Lester, he was balancing working in the Department, being Chairperson of the AECG and being on the executive of the NAEC. Peter recalls the discomfort of staff within the Department when the Minister for Education visited because she would choose to spend time to talk to him: *When the Minister would come into the State, it was Susan Ryan's practice to catch up with the NAEC people. So I'd be a very junior Education Officer, class one, and the Minister would come in, and everyone would know the Minister is on the floor. Then I'd probably get half an hour with her in an office, in a very hierarchical Department of Education, where even in the tearoom, people had their seats and their particular cup.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

The Chairperson position on the South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Committee then became a full-time role, which Peter filled. After his term as Chairperson, he was appointed Superintendent of Schools for Aboriginal education in South Australia. Post NAEC Peter transferred to Canberra to work for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) before being appointed Assistant Secretary and Group Manager in the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Training in 1995. Peter remained in this position for eight years working on reviews and with committees, influencing policy development at the highest level. Over Peter's career he also held senior positions responsible for broader Aboriginal Affairs. He now holds the position of Dean, Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research at the University of South Australia. Peter continues to contribute strongly to education locally, nationally and internationally.

Laurie Padmore, a Dulguburra Yidinji man, was the third Tasmanian representative on the NAEC from 1982 to 1985, and was nominated through TAECC. Although living in Tasmania he had originally come from Queensland: *I was doing factory work then, and I was glad that I was able to do something for the people around Tasmania. I was just getting to know the different cultural aspects associated with Aboriginal people down here and I really admired them. I still really admire them for the tenacity and for people like Patsy... and Kaye Price... and Alma, she came after me. I'm a mainlander, however they told me at the time, they chose me in some respects because I was more or less a grass roots person. I thought that was an advantage but also a disadvantage because I had no idea about education.* (Padmore, interview 20/06/2013)

Laurie was really nervous about his first NAEC meeting, not previously being involved in education and not having a good understanding of the related political aspects. At his first meeting, Paul Hughes was chairing and he recalls Peter Buckskin, Vic Forrest and Maurie Ryan making him feel comfortable: *They're legends those guys. I went there and they said, 'Look mate, don't worry, you learn off us.' I was really amazed the way it all worked, the way Paul chaired. I really enjoyed it because they taught me so much. It really educated*

me politically and when I came back it gave me ideas. (Padmore, interview 20/06/2013)

Just prior to joining the NAEC, Laurie commenced working with the Tasmanian Department of Education as a Home School Liaison Officer, the second to be appointed in the State. He didn't know any of the community or families in the area so he joined the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) to get a better understanding of the local communities. Here he met Roy Maynard who was the Legal Aid Officer at TAC at the time. Laurie later teamed up with Roy at the Aboriginal education unit and found his mentorship and cultural teachings as invaluable to his local knowledge. He worked closely with the TAECC and adopted many educational programs and initiatives. He attributes his achievements to the contacts and networks he built up while on the NAEC as well as the knowledge and confidence he gained. With the Consultative Committee and Patsy, he was active in negotiating funding for the first Aboriginal Counsellor at the University of. He was also responsible for developing mentoring and cultural programs with school students, and homework centres across the State. He actively encouraged parent involvement in education. Laurie remained in education for the rest of his career with a real passion for working with youth and communities to achieve better educational outcomes.



Figure 11: Peter Buckskin, Laurie Padmore, Vic Forrest, Pat (Julia) Williamson, Mary Atkinson and Ted (Eric) Hampton at a NAEC meeting – Photo supplied to author by Kaye Price.

6.3 Forming Productive Relationships with Government

The education portfolio was extensive, responsible for universities, colleges of advanced education, schools' policy, Commonwealth involvement with TAFE, ACT education system, Schools Commission, Tertiary Education Commission, Aboriginal education and international education. To ensure Aboriginal education was a priority within the breadth of the education portfolio it was crucial to have a strong and positive relationship with the Ministers responsible for Education.

The focus of Aboriginal education was an area that fit well with the Commonwealth government's broader policies, promoting a positive profile. It suited their current philosophy and they were able to commit funding to ensure that actions were achieved to meet the priorities. This created a good starting position and a positive environment for the NAEC. There had been a time in the first couple of years of the NAECs existence where there was a reluctance to accept NAEC advice by the Government. However, after the NAEC registered a protest in 1978 to Senator Carrick, Minister for Education and Mr Viner, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Departments were instructed to be more responsive to the advice of the NAEC (Budby, 1980a).

Achieving bipartisan government support for Aboriginal education was also vital to ensuring longer term policy and strategies were maintained, as a change of government could bring undone years of positive work. *It's a very interesting area of social policy because it does demonstrate how long it takes to get this kind of policy reform embedded. You can get a key and energetic Minister who says we'll do it. The next person who comes in may not have that same view. Then the government after a long time changes and it goes back to, no we're not going to do that. So you make a bit of progress and then you're back again. For example, it is quite extraordinary in the year 2016 that we don't have totally embedded Aboriginal experience in its broader sense across all of our curricula. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)*

The implementation of the State and Territory AECGs had been successful and the Chairpersons of the Committees all had developed strong connections with

their State and Territory Ministers. Usually, this resulted in negotiations and discussions between the State governments and the AECGs already occurring before they were presented to the NAEC. Most of the State Chairpersons were now also represented on the NAEC allowing a consistency in communications between State and national perspectives. Although the relationships across all States were productive, it wasn't all smooth sailing. Some States were harder than others to get a natural progressive flow of outcomes achieved. This was particularly the case in Queensland and the Northern Territory which both had conservative governments at the time: *The most difficult thing was the inequities between States which we really didn't have any control over. The West [Western Australia] and the [Northern] Territory, even Queensland, were always very hard because they had conservative governments and it was very hard to break through that sometimes. There were a whole lot of politics that we seemed to be able to sometimes break down, but other times pretty scary. I can remember, under John Budby's Chairmanship, we were to visit the Torres Strait and when the trip was planned for us to fly in and land at Horn Island, before going to Thursday Island then you had to get a boat across. The initial feedback was that the Queensland Government wouldn't approve people going and that's hard to believe in this day and age. It was approved partly because John Budby was a Queenslander and he was critical - because Queensland was pretty archaic then, as was the Territory and parts of the West. So in the initial organising, there was talk about us not being able to go, but eventually it happened. It would have been too embarrassing. I mean this is the '80s, for heaven's sake! It wasn't uncommon to happen in Queensland because they were so accustomed to controlling people's movement.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Although the Chairperson of the State committees would be a constant voice to the State Departments of Education, the NAEC would additionally meet with all the Education Ministers and Superintendents of each jurisdiction, along with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs at least twice a year. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs also had responsibility for funding educational programs so the relationships needed to span both Departments. Discussions related to the key focus of the NAEC at any given time and reinforced the State and Territory

AECGs position to complement the national agenda. The NAEC supported what the States were doing in terms of community consultation, community involvement, community employment, and community bilingual or bicultural education. It demonstrated to all levels of government the strength and consistency of consolidated Aboriginal voices nationally. In addition to the community voices being established outside of government, the NAEC also saw the need for stronger Aboriginal voices from within the government departments.

6.3.1 Aboriginalisation

The NAEC identified the need for the Department of Education to employ Aboriginal people in positions across all areas of the Department. They coined this strategy 'Aboriginalisation' (Albert, interview 23/11/2012). The NAEC determined that Aboriginal people must move from a role of consultation to a position of involvement, including holding positions of inclusion and internal influence in decision making: *You've got to get people in the system and the systems of running things. That was a big push from us because as a member group we knew how limited our long term influence was. You were meeting five times or six times a year, for three days, various places, you needed to know that once you'd leave that there'd be someone behind you carrying on the message.* (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

The Commonwealth Department responded positively to the recommended idea of 'Aboriginalisation' and it was subsequently also extended to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). It didn't take long for the idea of 'Aboriginalisation' to spread across Canberra, being adopted by all Government departments. 'Aboriginalisation' was also the basis for one of the NAECs primary initiatives; the appointment of 1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990 (1000 Teachers Initiative). 'Aboriginalisation' would, to some extent become detrimental to the 1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990 initiative. *Stephen came up with the whole idea of 'Aboriginalising' ... then the public service decided that's a good idea and started having schemes to try to get Aboriginal people working in the public service. These teachers that were graduating were going*

straight into public services they were never in the classroom. That was something that we hadn't counted on, that we didn't get our teachers in the schools. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

Over time, Aboriginal people were successfully moving into senior positions across all areas of government. This not only had a positive effect on the provision of an Aboriginal voice from within the Departments but also created a pride within the Aboriginal community, seeing their brothers and sisters holding senior government appointments: *I think all the Aboriginal education units were headed by non-Indigenous Superintendents or Directors. So when I met people like Penny Tripcony, who was the first Director of Aboriginal Education in the Victorian education system, I was real privileged to see Penny and her contribution. Because we thought she was quite special, in being this lone Aboriginal woman from Queensland but married into a big Victorian family, and then getting promoted to being a Superintendent in the Victorian education system.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

The NAEC saw this as a necessity for the successful future of Aboriginal education: *I thought that the next step for us is to start to win those jobs, to be the Aboriginal Director versus the administration secretary, to be the Directors of the units inside the Commonwealth Education Department. At the end of the day I became Assistant Secretary and then Group Manager for a number of years in the Commonwealth, so I was well known for being the Aboriginal voice in that Department.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

Members of the NAEC developed enough confidence to apply for senior government positions and were 'headhunted' for them. The mentorship and exposure to the increasing Aboriginal leadership inspired the career aspirations of NAEC members and other Aboriginal people: *We say you can't be what you can't see. So I was lucky enough to be exposed from an early age, even undergraduate, to meet people like May O'Brien and Paul Hughes, Natascha McNamara, people like Margaret Valadian.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

Throughout the 1980s employment of Aboriginal people in the public service increased substantially (Larkin, 2013). Networking across the different

Departments was crucial to a holistic approach to Aboriginal advancement. However, although the number of Aboriginal public servants had increased Aboriginal people were still very much a minority, and so continued social connections and professional mentorship to other Aboriginal people across government departments remained of high importance to their ongoing wellbeing: *Being able to play guitar and entertain people, I think that was really good because on the weekends I'd bring the guitar and get everybody together, because in Canberra they were now working in hostels, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and they'd just started working in Social Security Services.* (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

6.4 Development of *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*

The second term of the NAEC placed a particularly strong focus on the consultation and development of a document that would develop aims, objectives and guidelines for Aboriginal education, from an Aboriginal perspective. It would be the first holistic policy document developed by Aboriginal people in Australia that looked to advancing Aboriginal education within a Western system. It would be aimed at providing the foundations for future Aboriginal programs and policies, as well as consolidating a vision for the Committee and the Department of Education. Colin Bourke explains the initial challenges of the NAEC and the importance of producing a document that specified a directive: *We had the whole scope of education for Indigenous Australians and at the time there's basically nothing there. That's a huge challenge. Then how do you get it all together, how do you actually get it down as to what you want? Once we got our aims and objectives in place I thought that straightened us up quite a lot. If we hadn't had them we would have probably gone a bit hither and thither.* (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

At the first meeting of the NAEC a paper titled, *Aims in Aboriginal Education*, developed by the Departmental Advisory Group on Aboriginal Education, had been tabled. Soon after the NAEC resolved that they needed to develop a comprehensive paper that would provide from an Aboriginal viewpoint;

rationales, aims and objectives. Between 1978 and 1979 consultation with over 1,000 Aboriginal communities occurred regarding the contents and expectations of such a document. In February 1980 at an NAEC meeting in Adelaide, the first draft of the paper, *Rationale, Aims and Objectives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b) was received and passed by the Committee. The initial document reinforced the need for a significant change in education for Aboriginal people, stating:

Since 1788 the Aborigines of Australia have been subjected in varying degrees to an education system which has aimed to rationalise their dispossession from the land, deprecate their culture and, in general, endeavour to make the indigenous people of this country lose their own rich cultural background and think, act and hold the same values as middle-class Europeans. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b, p. 1)

The NAEC concluded that there still needed to be further consultation with both Aboriginal people and education providers. The aim of the further consultation was to expand on the original document by developing a plan of action that linked to the aims and objectives. This became one of the priorities of the NAEC from 1980 through to 1985 when the final document was tabled. The original NAEC document was used as a discussion paper and distributed to education groups, Aboriginal organisations and committees across all States, Territories and the Torres Strait Islands for consultation and input. Additionally, forums and summits were held to ensure sufficient opportunities were provided for Aboriginal voices to be heard (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b).

Colin Bourke played a significant role in the drafting of the initial NAEC document. Colin, a Gamilaroi man who grew up in Yarrawonga, was an inaugural member of the NAEC and at the time of his appointment was the Director, Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs at Monash University. Colin was one of the first Aboriginal people to hold a senior position within a university, which was an outstanding achievement, considering the challenges he faced in attaining university qualifications: *Things have changed. I went to teachers' college in 1955. At that time I applied to go to Melbourne University. There was one university in Victoria... To get into university... there was no*

commerce... there was only the arts stream or the science stream. To do science you had to have two maths, pure calculus and pure maths, plus two sciences, physics and chemistry. To get into Arts you had to have a language and in most cases in Australia that was French. If you didn't have them you couldn't go to university. There were no special entries that I know of. I couldn't go to Melbourne University because I didn't have French in form 6. I didn't have any languages. So things have changed there.

I went to the Geelong Teachers' College. It was good. I became a teacher, taught for 20 years before I became supervisor for Aboriginal Education. I was the head teacher in 1957 in a little school and then I was Principal of Lakeside - Whittlesea Primary School in '70-'72 and Lakeside Primary School '74...and then I went to become a supervisor for Aboriginal Education in '75. I started my degree in 1968. I couldn't get into commerce. I was teaching at Bacchus Marsh and I used to drive down two nights a week after school to Melbourne Uni. I had to redo my matric before I got in because it wasn't good enough. Twenty years teaching and I had to redo my matric because I didn't have any honours on my matric. Education was for the privileged and Aboriginal people weren't part of the privileged. See when I was at school if you got your merit, which was Year 8, you could leave school at 14 and you were educated. That was in Yarrawonga where I grew up. A Year 8 merit was it. There was no high school in Yarrawonga, so there was no provision for Aboriginal people to go to university until about '68. It was '68 when Aboriginal Study Grants had started. (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Colin was a member of the NAEC for a total of five years over two separate appointments. He later went on to complete a Master's degree in Education at the Canberra College of Advanced Education. He had been employed as the General Manager, Aboriginal Development Commission and soon after acquired the role of Assistant Secretary, Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Later he became Deputy Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, before relocating to South Australia where he led the Aboriginal Task Force at the South Australian Institute of Technology (SAIT). Once SAIT merged with the University of South Australia the Task Force

became the School of Aboriginal and Islander Administration and with Colin's leadership evolved to the Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, the first in any university in Australia. Colin retired from the University of South Australia in 1998 and at the time was acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The same year Colin was conferred Emeritus Professor by the University of South Australia. Colin was the first Aboriginal Principal in Victoria, the first Aboriginal Assistant Secretary, the first Aboriginal Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the first Chairperson of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, of which he was also one of the founders.

Bob Morgan discusses the contributions that Colin made to the NAEC and wider Aboriginal education agenda: *Colin was quiet, unassuming, a really deep thinker...I think he's one of those unsung heroes and doesn't get enough of the recognition that I believe he deserves for his role in Aboriginal education, and he's a gun of a man.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

The sixth and seventh conferences focused on the development of policy and actions within the initial *Rationale, Aims and Objectives* paper (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b).

1981 6th NAEC: *Aboriginal Education Achievements and Future Directions*, Bendigo, Victoria

1982 7th NAEC: *'Words into Actions', Priority Programmes in Aboriginal Education*, Goulburn, NSW



Figure 12: Logo for the 6th National Aboriginal Education Conference 1981. Accessed from State Library, Victoria

The initial paper (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b) provided the foundation for policy discussion and workshops. After more than three years of consultation and research, the policy document now titled, *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*, was finally published in 1985 (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b). The document included a philosophical viewpoint that was then able to inform the aims for the future of Aboriginal education from early childhood through to vocational and higher education.

At the core of this philosophical viewpoint were the following principles: education was the key to an ongoing existence for Aboriginal people; educational practices must consider Aboriginal epistemologies; the need for the acquisition of academic and technological skills should occur in conjunction with cultural identity and values; knowledge and understanding was needed by all Australians of the history and perspectives of Aboriginal people as traditional custodians of the land; cross cultural programs promoting the value of cultural diversity and the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture, enabling respectful and productive relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; involvement of Aboriginal people was necessary in policy development and decision making; and the employment of Aboriginal people should occur across professions and service delivery (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b).

The aims that flowed on, reflective of these principles, were:

- *'That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education be a process that builds on our cultural heritage and world view.*
- *That educational programs be developed using Aboriginal learning styles accompanied by an appropriate pedagogy.*
- *That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education lead to personal development and the acquisition of the skills and learning needed for Australia today.*
- *That Australia as a whole become aware of its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and history.*
- *That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies be the core of further cross-cultural studies for multicultural Australia.*
- *That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be given the responsibility for planning and implementing policies on Aboriginal education.*

- *That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be trained for and employed in education service delivery.* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 5)

The final document of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) provided guidelines in relation to each area of education including: *Education for our Community; Curriculum; Early Childhood Education; Primary Education; Secondary Education; Bicultural Bilingual Education; Tertiary Education; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies; Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schools; Research; and Administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education.*

The following section of this chapter provides an overview of these guidelines which were comprehensive, providing the reader with definitions, current environments and considerations for future action. Consultation and co-ordination with the NAEC and Aboriginal communities were recommended in the development of all key areas to advance the priorities.

6.4.1 Education for our Community

The Guidelines (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b) identified the importance of non-formal education courses for those who had previously been denied educational opportunities. The guidelines defined non-formal courses as expanding the:

World view of participants in much the same manner as the more formal institutionalised courses; the significant difference is the degree to which non-formal courses can be adopted to allow for the individual needs and objectives of each particular community. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 6)

These courses would have a broad range of content including: numeracy and literacy; cultural skills; personal development; and preparation for formal education courses. Non-formal courses would provide the opportunity for varied pedagogy and teaching practices to be utilised to ensure learning outcomes culturally appropriate to Aboriginal communities were being met. Stephen Albert talks about one of the first letters he received requesting a non-formal course to be run in the community It was from his Aunty: *She said, 'My son, whatever you*

do, you got to teach our people to vote'.. One of my mates worked in Commonwealth Education and he got transferred to the electoral office, and he said to me, 'Bro, is there anything I can do for you bud?' and I said, 'Yes! Can you get up an education program from the electoral office?' He said, 'Yeah, I guess I could work something out'. We decided that we would get two people from each State, and they could go as partners, they had to be partners rather than two single people so they could be together. And they got those partners and we put them around the country, up in the Kimberley, everywhere, and that's how we did our electoral education for the Indigenous peoples.... all cause my Auntie wrote to me about it. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

This ground-breaking nature of this educational initiative is clear considering the context of the right to vote for Aboriginal people. The 1967 Referendum in Australia was a watershed in Aboriginal affairs with Aboriginal people given the right to be counted as citizens and so the ability to vote. However, the Government had not considered educating Aboriginal people on how to vote. The non-formal course met the needs of communities and taught them the importance of voting, Government structures and the processes of an election.

One of the clear benefits the NAEC saw in non-formal community education was the reinvigorating and valuing of education from the community. It was deemed that providing a positive educational environment would flow on to mature-age students down to the youth, creating an interest to continue to formal education programs.

6.4.2 Curriculum

The Guidelines (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b) identified that existing curriculum and pedagogy were shaped by a purely Western knowledge approach. No consideration had been given to the appropriate education of Aboriginal students or the teaching of Aboriginal Studies to non-Aboriginal students. The Guidelines stated that curriculum development and the responsibility of the school must take account of the make-up of Aboriginal society, individuals and cultural heritage. It was considered that the current practice was vague in its adherence to these requirements.

It also recognised that the curriculum content was inconsistent in that only Aboriginal educators or some non-Aboriginal teachers delivered culturally appropriate content. The Guidelines called for the continual evaluation of the quality, accuracy and appropriateness of the content, materials and resources being used within the curriculum. A directive was provided that educators should embrace a more holistic curriculum:

To embrace a holistic approach to appropriate curriculum development, the following dimensions and their methodology must be carefully considered and developed: aims and objectives; selection of learning experiences; selection of content; organisation and integration of learning experiences and content; and evaluation, relating back to aims and objectives. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 8)

It was noted that the only area that focused any attention on Aboriginal curriculum development was in Aboriginal Studies. This was not deemed sufficient to ensure successful outcomes to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students overall educational experience. This could not be achieved by a simple adaptation of current curriculum as it evidently lacked Aboriginal approaches of learning, resulting in a poor quality education: *'It is like trying to teach Japanese in Arabic – there is no equation'* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 9).

6.4.3 Early Childhood Education

The Guidelines identified that children should be exposed to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learning experiences, customs, skills, values and expectations in early childhood education:

Currently the practices used in early childhood education are based on a western epistemology with the result that the theories and pedagogy used are generally inappropriate. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 10)

The Guidelines further explained that the same as with any child, Aboriginal children needed to be engaged in the environment with activities that enhance motor skills and co-ordination. Creating an understanding of societal practices and social skills, and preparing them for the next level of education, were also

seen important The Guidelines highlighted that it was crucial at this early stage of learning for the environment to be positive, relative to their individual experiences and responsive to the cultural diversity of the children. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) considered that a child's identity as an Aboriginal should be maintained.

6.4.4 Primary Education

Like early childhood education, the importance of ensuring culturally appropriate learning environment was highlighted as integral to the success of Aboriginal students. The guidelines stipulated that primary education should:

Provide a basis for a broad education, and adequate academic and social preparation for future educational achievement, by developing a positive self-identity and by promoting our own cultural mores. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 13)

It was stipulated that educators needed to have an understanding of the cultural differences experienced by Aboriginal students to ensure a dominant Western educational environment was not detrimental to their learning. A lack of understanding or consideration of these differences could result in conflict, disengagement and the exclusion of Aboriginal students from class. This included having a clear understanding of the nature of interactions and relationships within Aboriginal communities. The Guidelines provided an example of the obligations and rules between family members:

So strong are these obligations that, at times, individual Aboriginal students who are deemed 'capable' by their teachers deliberately fail, misbehave or underachieve because their peer group, frequently their brothers, sisters and cousins, are not as 'capable' as they are. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 13)

The Guidelines pointed out that it was the teacher's responsibility to acknowledge their role as educators and mentors to ensure that Aboriginal students reach their potential.

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) indicated the importance of understanding that the value of a Western education at school was not

necessarily as valued in the home environment. They deemed that the utilisation of Aboriginal pedagogy would assist in bridging this divide and create a more effective learning environment for students. The additional advantage was the increased professional development of teachers.

6.4.5 Secondary Education

Given the long history of Aboriginal students being excluded from secondary education, with some Aboriginal students of a secondary age still not having access to school, an environment conducive to Aboriginal student participation was believed to be essential by the NAEC. The Guidelines stipulated the importance of a secondary education environment that met the needs of Aboriginal students. The Guidelines determined that:

Secondary education must develop pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, continue understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society, encourage self-confidence and personal autonomy, and offer opportunities for competence and achievement in intellectual, academic and technical skills. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 15)

The Guidelines indicated that research outcomes at the time had indicated that Aboriginal students saw little motivation to remain at school once the leaving age had been reached. Schools needed to provide curriculum and programs that were relevant to Aboriginal students and developed their aspirations. It was suggested that applying appropriate curriculum and programs would result in an increase in retention and success rates.

The guidelines recommended that culture should be a visible part of the day to day environment of the school:

Principles of cultural maintenance should be included in school policy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be involved in the day-to-day school activities. Aboriginal society and issues should be promoted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers, teachers and parents who should visit the school frequently. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 15)

6.4.6 Bicultural Bilingual Education

Through the experience of linguistic and cultural genocide enacted through past policies and practices, the Guidelines (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b) stated that a large number of Aboriginal languages had been lost. For the communities that still maintained their language it was considered imperative that they were supported in this. The Guidelines advocated that bilingual education must be an option in these communities, with their home language taught as a first language and English as a second language:

It is commonly believed that 'education is enculturation'. This principle obligates the agencies responsible for education service delivery to recognise the need and right of Australia's indigenous people to bilingual and bicultural education. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 17)

The Guidelines explained that every Aboriginal group holds its own Aboriginal cultures, laws, values and practices that define their identity and their way of life. Education plays an important role in ensuring culture and language is maintained and valued. It was viewed that there was currently little evidence to demonstrate that the education system acknowledged the importance of language and culture in the engagement of Aboriginal students in the education system. The Guidelines explained that:

If education is enculturation, the present system of education, for the majority of Aboriginal people, is assimilative and demoralising for it pays no respect to cultural values and aspirations other than those of the major society. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 17)

The outcome of this environment was that many Aboriginal students were leaving school earlier than non-Aboriginal students. It was recommended that the teaching of Aboriginal languages should be maintained throughout early childhood through to secondary education. The Guidelines stipulated that it was vital that the teaching of Aboriginal languages be undertaken by fluent speakers. It was also noted that it was important that students were provided with quality English language programs to prepare students for the multicultural environments they would be exposed to.

6.4.7 Tertiary Education

6.4.7.1 Technical and Further Education

The NAEC argued that tertiary education needed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities and individuals. The Guidelines (National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) outlined the expectations that Aboriginal people had for technical and further education programs. These were:

- *‘Community education programs which are determined by the community and directed to the development of the whole community;*
- *Needs based, so that programs are designed to meet actual current or potential needs, rather than be part of a predetermined set of courses; and*
- *Non-formal, or provided outside the framework of standard education institutions and structured programs.’ (p.19)*

The Guidelines suggested that the employment of Aboriginal staff needed immediate attention with succession/under study planning adopted where there was no availability of Aboriginal people with appropriate qualifications. It was suggested that positions should be identified across all aspects of technical and further education including administrative, teaching, research, community engagement, counselling and management roles.

In relation to the flexibility of the delivery of courses, it was advised that options needed to be explored to meet specific needs including longer term full or part time courses, intensive courses, bridging and transition programs, on the job training, and correspondence courses. It was determined that the qualifications should range from trade and vocational courses, and paraprofessional, management, arts based and special interest courses.

6.4.7.2 Higher Education

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) highlighted the importance of Aboriginal people obtaining qualifications across a broad range of professional areas, in particular health, education, law and business administration. Paraprofessional qualifications in these fields were also

considered vital as a means of ensuring effective service provision for Aboriginal communities by Aboriginal people.

Three areas were identified in the guidelines that required change including:

1. *Aboriginal input into general operation of institutions* – this should be achieved through employment of Aboriginal people in ongoing positions across all areas of the university, setting employment targets, membership on university council and committees and the establishment of Aboriginal advisory committees for consultation and collaboration.
2. *Recognising special programs for Aborigines as part of the 'normal' operations of the institution* – providing appropriate resources for Aboriginal programs and courses, including proper teaching facilities, administrative assistance and employment conditions of Aboriginal staff.
3. *Aboriginal control of special programs* – Aboriginal control should be a compulsory component of the funding stipulations or if necessary an appropriate timeline and plan for ensuring Aboriginal control (p. 22) .

6.4.7.3 Enclave Programs

Enclave programs had commenced introduction in higher education institutions providing additional support in a culturally appropriate setting for Aboriginal students enrolling in courses. It was regarded that these programs should be embedded into the structures of the institution and not structured as a short term program or strategy. It was recommended that enclave programs should include personal and academic support including tutoring, counselling, cultural programs and a culturally safe space.

Other considerations included the appointment of an Aboriginal student officer, bridging programs, paraprofessional correspondence courses, research centres for Aboriginal student research, teaching programs and education programs introduced in communities (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b).

6.4.8 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

A strong message from the National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) was that Aboriginal Studies should be available to all students across all levels of education, as an integral part of their learning and understanding. The NAEC argued that Aboriginal people should be involved in the development and teaching of Aboriginal Studies to ensure the appropriate content and resources, understanding and sensitivities are provided. The guidelines defined Aboriginal Studies as the study of:

history, cultures, languages and lifestyles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, before and after colonisation. The study involves understanding issues that are central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary society, and their relevance to the total Australian community. (p. 30)

However, it was believed that there were two classifications when it came to discussing Aboriginal Studies: *Aboriginal studies for everybody white and black - Aboriginal education you had in two parts, education of Aborigines and education of non-Aborigines. This still gets clouded, however we thought that it was very, very clearly different. One of them it's your own cultural background and the other one you're learning about another group. So we saw Aboriginal Studies as being very important. (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)*

The NAEC argued that for non-Aboriginal people, Aboriginal Studies initially needed to provide a knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal peoples and communities prior to European contact, including lifestyle, education, societal relationships, spirituality and laws. The content should then cover the post-contact history and cultural conflicts which influenced and affected contemporary Aboriginal society.

The guidelines identified some strategies in the teaching of Aboriginal Studies:

- *'Establishing the content of Aboriginal Studies courses and identifying the place of these studies in the curriculum by level and by subject.*
- *Encouraging the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives in general themes and issues.*

- *Using Aboriginal examples to illustrate topics within units.*
- *Choosing Aboriginal themes as a major focus of study, eg. local studies, Australian history.*
- *Designing specific courses for use as accredited subjects.'*
(National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 32)

6.4.9 Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schools

By the 1980s, Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schools had been introduced as an assertion of self-determination through education. The NAEC defined these schools as:

an alternative system of education which fosters Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, p. 33)

The Independent schools still maintained European curriculum and content however they emphasised the teachings of Aboriginal culture and used Aboriginal pedagogy. The schools were community controlled, with the Aboriginal community determining the curriculum, the teaching pedagogy, the school's system and management processes, including the employment of appropriate staffing. Independent schools were considered as an excellent alternative for Aboriginal students struggling in mainstream schools which resulted in low attendance. There were some Government schools that were also recognised as Aboriginal schools based on their emphasis on Aboriginal culture and other specialised programs (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b).

6.4.10 Research

The Guidelines highlighted the need for appropriate research ethics when undertaking Aboriginal research. It was necessary for research to be community-driven responding to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities. Aboriginal research committees needed to have majority Aboriginal membership and in the best case scenario, projects should have an Aboriginal principal researcher appointed. Research training needed to be

offered to Aboriginal people to ensure appropriate qualifications and skills were obtained, and to enable access to suitably qualified Aboriginal researchers.

Dissemination of research outcomes needed to be made available to the relevant communities and stakeholders and in appropriate language and formats to ensure the outcomes were understood. Majority Aboriginal participation and viewpoints were believed to be integral to ensure successful outcomes in Aboriginal research (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b). To date, research on Aboriginal people had been undertaken with a lack of ethics or recognised protocols for accessing communities: *We had debates about what was going on in research and being in control of research. And on understanding protocols and how people should conduct themselves when they're in the field with Aboriginal people. The Institute [Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies] at that time, it was very different from what it is now, but anybody who wanted to come to Australia to do research, they could come through the universities and some did, but a lot came through the institute. They could be approved to come into Australia and just land in a community and do whatever they wanted and then go; there was no accountability, no real expectation that they should actually have those people's agreement before they drop in. That all changed in my time. When I was at South Australia, I was involved with ethics. I wrote an ethics paper because I went over there in charge of the Centre that became the Aboriginal Research Centre. One of the first bits of work was on protocols, working with Aboriginal communities. The Institute still didn't have any at that time, so the challenge was really put out there to them.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

The NAEC outlined the importance of Aboriginal people playing a strong role in Aboriginal research, defining the importance of consultation with AECGs:

- *'In concert with State Aboriginal education consultative groups and other specialist organisations, examine proposals and initiate educational research.*
- *Monitor research and disseminate information on material of value, so that results can be applied.*
- *Advise communities of their rights in relation to research.*

- *Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake research training, so that the damage done by previous research can be rectified.*
- *Advise on salaries and strategies for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers.*

The State Aboriginal education consultative groups should:

- *Consult with the NAEC and be involved in policy determination.*
- *Scrutinise proposals for research carried out in government schools and provide advice on research proposals for non-government schools in their particular State. They can also advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and communities of their rights and of the implications of research.'* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b, pp. 35-36)

6.4.11 Administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

The Commonwealth and State Departments of Education and Aboriginal Affairs were the policy makers and funding bodies for all educational programs from early childhood through to higher education. The majority of decision-makers within these Departments were non-Aboriginal. The NAEC was appointed to provide high level advice to these Departments to ensure an Aboriginal viewpoint was represented as it was felt that many in the Departments had limited understanding and sensitivity regarding Aboriginal perspectives. Hence, the NAEC assumed responsibility for: developing national educational policy guidelines; provision of advice in relation to delivery of Aboriginal studies and curriculum development; undertaking or commissioning relevant research; collaborating with Aboriginal people and communities to identify educational needs; and, identifying funding resources. The NAEC also highlighted the advantages of the NAEC having full responsibility over the allocation, administration and policy formation of funding to Aboriginal education programs (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b).

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985b) called for an Aboriginal Education Commission, as a statutory body, to be developed with wider membership than the Committee and increased staffing. It was determined that this would strengthen the outcomes conducive to the government priorities of *consultation and self-determination*. The Commission would have overall

responsibility for: administering and evaluating Aboriginal education programs at all levels; training and employment of Aboriginal people within education; educational research; delivery of Commonwealth Aboriginal support programs, such as the Aboriginal Study Grants and Abstudy; provision of expertise to education providers; monitoring education outcomes; and the development and implementation of relevant policies.

Susan Ryan, Minister for Education at the time, recalls the controversy related to the establishment of another Commission, the National Aboriginal Education Commission, when there was already a Schools Commission and a Tertiary Education Commission. *I appointed Paul [Hughes] onto the Schools Commission. The possibility of an Aboriginal Education Commission had many strengths but I imagine one of the reasons why it didn't progress was that there was a mood in the Cabinet I was a part of, against commissions like the Schools Commission and the Tertiary Education Commission. There was resentment of them. My Cabinet colleagues took the view that the commissions go and they put in these reports about resource needs, expectations are raised and of course we were dealing with very tight budgeting. So there was a feeling that they caused the Government trouble because they raised hopes. I didn't share that concern because my view was that you want to have it all set up where they could provide advice like, we can't do all that but we can do this or this. But they were becoming unpopular. When I lost the education portfolio after the 1987 election, John Dawkins was my replacement and he abolished the Commissions.* (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

The *Aims, Philosophies and Guidelines for Aboriginal Education* document (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985b) was tabled by Minister Susan Ryan in parliament in 1985. Her parliamentary address stated:

The NAEC is the Government's principal adviser in the field of Aboriginal education. I value that advice very highly. In this report as in all its work, the NAEC has taken pains to ensure that its approach reflects Aboriginal community views, that its conclusions have been reached only after extensive consultation, and that its recommendations are directly related to the resolution of some of the practical, day-to-day problems facing Aboriginals. All honourable senators will appreciate the difficulties entailed in formulating a coherent and comprehensive set of aims and

guidelines for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We need to start, as the NAEC has started, by recognising the importance of diversity, of flexibility, of incremental progress and of continuing consultations with all the communities involved.

Our policies in the field of Aboriginal education are developed in full cooperation with the States and the Northern Territory. We would also welcome cooperation from the Opposition and the Australian Democrats. The stakes are too high for any partisan squabbling or divisions. We all need to work together to make progress in the important areas the NAEC has outlined, since achievement of those aims will benefit and develop all Australians. (Ryan, 1985)

The paper received bi-partisan support and resulted in the first consolidated national policy for Aboriginal education.

6.5 Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, Report to the Australian Education Council

Aboriginal Studies had become a key focus of the NAEC during its second term. Eleanor recalls the discussions and debates regarding the meaning of Aboriginal Studies: *We were right into debating what Aboriginal studies meant and the distinction between Aboriginal studies meaning teaching other Australians about things Aboriginal and then the need for something different for Aboriginal people in terms of knowing certain things about culture. But not necessarily wanting to have the same curriculum as non-Aboriginal people had. So that entire sort of debate was going on. (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)*

The offering of Aboriginal Studies to all students' generated knowledge of the values, practices and histories of Aboriginal peoples developing a better understanding of the *culture clash* that challenged Aboriginal people. Alternatively, the education of Aboriginal students demonstrated consideration for their culture and identity as well as the values and experiences they brought from their communities. The work of the Aboriginal Consultative Group provided a foundation for this study who had argued that education of Aboriginal students should equally value an Aboriginal and Western viewpoint;

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture should be retained and that Aboriginal identity should be actively developed through education. It is

accepted that some parts of Aboriginal culture and folklore associated with survival in pre-European times should now be replaced with those skills which will allow the Aboriginal people to participate equally in the trade and professional areas of the Australian economy....We are not prepared, however, to sacrifice social values such as responsibility for the well-being of others, sharing and non-destructive competition. These are a fundamental part of our identity. (Aboriginal Consultative Aboriginal Consultative Group, 1975, p. 4)

Throughout the 1980s there were numerous national and State led conferences, workshops and research that focused on the implementation of Aboriginal Studies into the education curriculum. In July 1980, the Australian Education Council (AEC) requested the establishment of a Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group. The terms of reference for the group were to:

- i. Ascertain the extent and nature of Aboriginal Studies programs in the States and Territories; and*
- ii. Identify areas of need.* (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 1)

The establishment of an Aboriginal Studies Working Group was recommended as a result of an NAEC discussion paper *Teaching About Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders* (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982). This paper was developed from the views expressed at the 1978 *National Aboriginal Studies Seminar* in Alice Springs. In October 1980, the Aboriginal Studies Working Group was set up, chaired by John Budby, the then Chairperson of the NAEC, and comprised representation from:

*National Aboriginal Education Committee
Commonwealth Department of Education
National Aboriginal Conference
Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies
Commonwealth Schools Commission
Curriculum Development Centre
Office of the Commissioner for Community Relations
NSW Department of Education (from October 1981)*
(Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. x)

Due to the enormity and complex nature of the project, the Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group provided an interim report (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982) detailing an extended timeline which would result in a final report to be delivered in 1982. However, the NAEC and the working party did develop a draft statement on Aboriginal Studies in 1981. This was informed by workshops and seminars that had been held in 1978 and 1979 relating to the development of Aboriginal Studies (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982). These forums had been held as a response to a report from the *Select Committee on Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* chaired by Neville Bonner in 1976, which had argued for the importance of Aboriginal Studies for all Australians (Bonner, 1976). Aboriginal Studies was high on the NAECs agenda as a strategy for contributing to moving Australian society toward a true and accurate knowledge of Aboriginal people and communities: *The whole need to have Aboriginal studies, of whatever version or style, was a big one. You can look back at the recommendations and look at the ones that were taken up and implemented and maybe the kinds of things we said weren't new. But if you go back to Neville Bonner's first enquiry that he chaired and his report, his Committee recommended that there should be Aboriginal studies in every school curriculum. So it wasn't new, but we were actually able to get in and do it as a group of people. So as the Curriculum Subcommittee member and I must admit I knew nothing about curriculum at that stage. I just taught what was in the Tasmanian curriculum. I didn't know anything about writing curriculum. At that time we had the Curriculum Development Centre. They would have a project going so I would go and work and sit in these meetings. Having membership on the CDC Subcommittee was important. I remember that the Aboriginal Studies team at the Canberra region was meeting at that time and I can remember how they'd written, 'Aboriginal Dreaming stories are like fairy stories'.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

The 1978 *National Aboriginal Studies Seminar* held in Alice Springs had recommended that Aboriginal Studies should be taught at all levels of education and embedded across the curriculum. Separate units and/or subjects should also be developed to ensure in-depth studies are undertaken (Australian

Schools Commission, 1978). Similarly, the National Conference of Teachers of Aboriginal Children in 1977 had recommended that:

Training institutions incorporate Aboriginal Studies in all teacher education programmes as a fully integrated core element. That a working committee be established to examine the strategies involved. (Brumby & Green, 1978, p. 56)

The draft statement would be used for consultation to allow the Working Group and the NAEC to adopt a final policy position on the embedding of Aboriginal Studies into the education curriculum for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. The NAEC believed that when implementing Aboriginal Studies it should be a part of an ongoing learning process throughout students' educational experience and not just isolated to a single unit of work;

Aboriginal Studies should never be seen as a simple unit of work which will be presented and completed in a given period. The area of Aboriginal Studies must be seen as a continuous one which will involve all teachers and subject areas from early childhood education to tertiary. (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 33)

The draft statement on Aboriginal Studies, defined Aboriginal Studies as having two important components:

- a) *Develop an appreciation and understanding of cultural values;*
- b) *Explore the impact of the historical and cross-cultural contact and the effects this has had on contemporary Aboriginal life. (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 34)*

It was also stipulated that Aboriginal people are best suited to passing on knowledge related to their own values and histories and therefore that teaching should be done by or in collaboration with Aboriginal people. *We fought hard to get Aboriginal studies taught in the schools. So we had Aboriginal Elders giving addresses in the schools. It was all new, novel, and exciting. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)* However, it was also a massive undertaking to have all Aboriginal Studies taught by Aboriginal people: *We would call ourselves the burned-out-blacks because, for starters, in some places, whether you like to admit it or not, there weren't Aboriginal people, so how can you get Aboriginal people to teach Aboriginal studies? And not all Aboriginal people know everything. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)*

The general lack of understanding of Aboriginal history and culture created tensions for Aboriginal students, raising awareness of how important it was for educators to consider differences in lifestyles, values and practices. *I think the emphasis to give a curriculum that would make Aboriginal people, or make the population aware of where Aboriginal people fit into Australia was vital. I remember in primary school they started talking about Dick and Dora walking their dog on a chain, or on a lead. I said what do they do this for? Because we don't - I had a dog and the dog had never been tied up in its life. Of course, the teacher then said to me stop being disruptive.* (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

At the time there was also commonly debate about whether the responsibility to teach Aboriginal Studies to Aboriginal students was that of the schools. However, it was determined that Aboriginal people should have formal opportunities to learn about their identity and culture especially given the history of attempts at cultural genocide; some Aboriginal people struggled with their identity. *The thing was, with Aboriginal Studies, we would say everybody should do Aboriginal Studies so they learn about the place and the people, whose country they live in. And that was for non-Aboriginal people. And then there's this culture and history, especially for us, growing up and our history and our stories and how we do it, even Aboriginal people who think they don't know anything. When I was in charge of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Security central office, I ran a workshop for all the Liaison Officers in each State or major regional centre. We did it in New South Wales and most of the fellas in the group said they didn't know much. But when they started talking, they all had something different to offer; something that they knew or somebody that had an influence on them or somebody that they really valued and that was really interesting. Then the other thing that I did in that workshop, among other work related sessions, is that we went to the New South Wales Museum's warehouse. We had half a day to go up and look through the shelves, where they saw stuff that wasn't on display. The thing that impacted on me most was the scarred trees, something like a dozen scarred trees stuck away with the most beautiful geometric patterns you've ever seen. Everybody then was looking to see something that they can relate to. We only had half a day but it really had a big impact on them. I like to think it had a good influence*

on them, because they were rapt in the course afterwards, but they were very wary at the beginning. That's all about them having their identity. (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

In 1982, the Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group compiled the report (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982) that audited the quality and quantity of Aboriginal Studies programs being offered. The outcomes identified the following key issues: Extent of Aboriginal Studies in Schools; Aboriginal Studies: Policy Aims and Objectives; Place of Aboriginal Studies in School Curriculum; Aboriginal Studies: Nature and Content; Staffing; Material Resources; and Curriculum Development as elaborated on below.

6.5.1 Extent of Aboriginal Studies in Schools

After endorsement by the AEC of the principle of integrating Aboriginal learning into the curriculum, it seemed that most schools had attempted to embed Aboriginal Studies at some level. Of schools that responded to a survey set by the Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, indicating that 13% had no related content at all. Of the schools that did include Aboriginal Studies, most content concentrated between Years 3-6 with minimal inclusion in the other years. It was also evident that the content that was available, was not taught as separate curriculum, rather it was embedded into social science and history studies (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982).

The Working Group would consider as 'substantial' (and desirable) an Aboriginal Studies program which:

- (i) Includes sequential studies from year-levels K to 12;*
- (ii) Is embedded within most subject areas;*
- (iii) Gives all students an opportunity at some time to take Aboriginal Studies as a separate topic in an intensive fashion. (p. 110)*

The responses of schools in relation to the inclusion of Aboriginal content varied; however some of the schools that did not have any content shared their reasons which included: not seeing relevance to the school environment; not having a high population of Aboriginal students; a view that multicultural societies should teach unity and not single out ethnic groups; a view that Tribal

Schools have input from community and Elders; and pressures placed on the already expanded curriculum (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982). Racism was also cited as a reason for the lack of response by schools:

Being a European dominated and racist community, Aboriginal Studies are not conducted at the school. Earlier attempts to introduce such activities resulted in unbelievable responses and pressures being brought to bear on the school and its staff. In the interests of survival no studies are conducted. (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 111)

The Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) report recommended a publicity campaign to be organised and funded by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in collaboration with the NAEC to support the inclusion of Aboriginal Studies in schools.

6.5.2 Aboriginal Studies: Policy Aims and Objectives

The Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) identified that only 6% of schools had any formal policies, aims or objectives for Aboriginal Studies. The group believed that for Aboriginal Studies to be effectively embedded into the curriculum, formal policy development was integral. It was noted that State Education Departments in Queensland and South Australia, and more recently New South Wales, had issued policies and guidelines for Aboriginal Studies, in collaboration with the AECGs. However schools were not informed about these developments, having no knowledge of their existence.

The other concern was that without any formal policies and guidelines the quality and accuracy of Aboriginal Studies was at risk. The Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) suggested that policy statements on Aboriginal Studies should:

- *Include a statement of rationale*
- *Define aims and objectives*
- *Describe the scope of content*
- *Describe the way in which Aboriginal people are to be involved*
- *Identify the desired skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, and include these in a planned development program*

- *Describe the priority given to and the place in the curriculum of Aboriginal Studies according to subject, level and emphasis*
- *Describe evaluation strategies.* (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 114)

6.5.3 Place of Aboriginal Studies in School Curriculum

The research determined that there were only a small number of schools that had implemented a structured approach to including Aboriginal Studies into the curriculum. There were also a small number of schools that had accessed appropriate resources and materials to support the curriculum being taught. The schools that had taken a whole-school coordinated approach were quite obviously to the study the schools that were achieving the best outcomes in this area. However, there was a concern that the level of Aboriginal Studies taught declined in secondary schools. There was contention in many schools related to integrating Aboriginal Studies across the curriculum as opposed to one separate course.

The Working Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) recommended that the best approach to the development of Aboriginal studies was to implement:

- *Nomination of an Aboriginal Studies co-ordinator to advise teachers in other subject areas;*
- *Introducing a separate subject at a particular level first, before attempting to integrate Aboriginal Studies into other subjects;*
- *Identifying priority subject areas and encouraging integration of Aboriginal Studies into those subjects before others.* (p.115)

They also recommended that the State and Territory Department of Education identify Aboriginal Studies as an accredited course in Years 11 and 12.

6.5.4 Aboriginal Studies: Nature and Content

The research showed that there was more emphasis on traditional Aboriginal societies and lifestyles than any other area in Aboriginal Studies. Aboriginal people had identified the importance of students learning about contemporary Aborigines people and communities as a starting point. This was not the case in the majority of instances. The study revealed that there was the feeling from

schools that there were limited materials and resources that provided a contemporary focus, particularly on urban Aboriginal life. A lack of appropriate resources and materials were cited as the primary reasons by schools for not having a broader implementation of Aboriginal Studies within the curriculum (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982).

Schools also voiced concerns with teaching the complexities of Aboriginal Studies, with one school commenting:

We have a deliberate policy of discouraging teachers from undertaking major units of Aboriginal Studies prior to years 5/6 because of our fear that children might develop simplistic notions leading to paternalistic attitudes if more complex understandings of Aboriginal culture are not developed later.

The impact of the loss of a whole culture on an individual is a very difficult idea to communicate. (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 117)

It was recommended that further consultation led by the NAEC and AECGs with Aboriginal communities needed to identify a community-led strategy identifying expectations related to the content and scope of Aboriginal Studies.

6.5.5 Staffing

The Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) concluded that Aboriginal people needed to have a high level of involvement in the teaching and development of Aboriginal Studies. There was limited evidence of this occurring. Aboriginal Teaching Aides were utilised as a primary resource when teaching Aboriginal Studies, however, this created challenges given their lack of formal qualifications and the expectations on them to develop and implement curriculum. The use of Aboriginal school visitors, appointed by the Department of Education to impart cultural knowledge and expertise in schools, also posed challenges. Although they provided quality input, they were expected to go to many schools, thus limiting their availability at any one school.

The involvement of Aboriginal people within schools was a major concern of the Working Group. In particular, the lack of involvement of parents and local

AECGs was a point of contention. Schools felt that if they had few Aboriginal students then there was no necessity to engage Aboriginal people. A recommendation was made by the NAEC (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982) that every school should have Aboriginal people involved in Aboriginal studies and that Aboriginal people should be employed in such roles. This included as : qualified teachers and teacher aides; Aboriginal school visitors; community guest speakers; advisors; curriculum co-ordinators; and resource staff (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982).

The Working Group further called for in-service training of non-Aboriginal teachers and other relevant staff teaching Aboriginal Studies. Once again consultation and involvement of Aboriginal people was seen as integral.

6.5.6 Material Resources

The Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group (1982) indicated that AIATSIS was about to release comprehensive course materials for teaching Aboriginal Studies from Years K-12. In addition, materials were being developed in consultation with Aboriginal people at a rate of approximately 100 items per year. However, the Working Group expressed apprehension about the quality, usability and consistency of all the materials being produced, It also questioned whether they were relevant to local and regional school environments.

The Working Group (1982) suggested that the Department of Education, Curriculum Development Branch of the Department of Education, develop guidelines, as well as a national Aboriginal Studies handbook, that would provide comprehensive advice and guidance on the consideration of appropriate materials and resources. It was recommended that this information be disseminated throughout schools and other relevant educational bodies, organisations and committees. Furthermore, it was emphasised that the information should put a strong focus on ongoing consultation and collaboration with Aboriginal communities and AECGs.

6.5.7 Curriculum Development

Main areas highlighted in this section of the Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group report (1982) related to the capacity or the expertise of schools to sustain the Aboriginal Studies curriculum. Instead of seeking support, the report suggested that schools were likely not to attempt extending Aboriginal Studies beyond the minimal expectations. The Working Group emphasised the importance of Aboriginal people's involvement in this sphere. The Working Group recommended that Aboriginal Studies Curriculum Development Units needed to be established in State Education Departments. A further recommendation was for the NAEC and Commonwealth Education Department to co-ordinate a national approach to Aboriginal Studies program development and resources. The Working Group concluded its report stating:

Any national effort should not proceed without the involvement of Aboriginal people. We recommend the involvement of Aboriginal people at all levels in the development of policies and strategies, the preparation of materials and the teaching of Aboriginal Studies, and the provision of appropriate training to facilitate this involvement. (Commonwealth Aboriginal Studies Working Group, 1982, p. 138)

6.6 Conclusion

During the period 1980 to 1983, the NAEC carried on the momentum of the previous era by enacting agendas that had previously been identified. The primary focus of the Budby term was the attention given to expanding on the initial *Aims, Philosophies and Rationale* paper (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1980b) to include guidelines to ensure the visions of Aboriginal people in Aboriginal education could be actioned resulting in increased educational outcomes at all levels. This document provided a comprehensive and co-ordinated policy position across all levels of Aboriginal education that ensured a shared vision. The other primary focus was the appropriate application of Aboriginal Studies across the curriculum at all levels of education and the priority to continue to develop strategies for increasing Aboriginal employment within government.

Momentum was building. During this period, the NAEC was developing relationships with government based on respect and accountability. Its members were being seen as true experts in the advancement of Aboriginal education. This resulted in significant policy development responding to the visions of the Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975):

We see the need for change in education for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, teachers and their children: to create an Australia where the values and cultures of both people thrive. (p. 3)

It was time for the government to respond effectively to the NAECs policy directives, as there would only be a sustainable future where the saltwater and the freshwater met.

Chapter 7

Asserting a Right to Self-Determination: 1983–1985

Aboriginal society has existed in Australia for over 40 000 years and provided for its members a unique social and educational system of learning... Nothing is more fundamental than the right of all Aboriginal children to an appropriate basic education, and the right of Aboriginal people to expect equity in education beyond the compulsory years of schooling. (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, p. 1)

7.1 Introduction

The period 1983-1985 saw a change of Commonwealth government from a Liberal government to a Labor government. Throughout this period the NAEC was named as principal advisor to the Minister for Education. This role increased the NAECs responsibility for funding allocation and national agenda. The NAEC had built respect and credibility with government leaders and was at the high point of influence. The Committee was starting to see results from the earlier work of its predecessors. It was also the first term where a Deputy Chairperson was appointed, together with an expansion of the Secretariat. This reflected the breadth and high level work that was being undertaken by the NAEC Executive, Secretariat and Committee.

This chapter focuses on a time period when the NAEC took its place as the principal advisor to the Commonwealth Minister for Education. Strong priorities were set including the significant policy target of 1,000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990 recommended in the NITE outcomes. This was a momentous time in the life of the NAEC when there was considerable movement in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal Studies from early childhood through to higher education. However, TAFE was also back on the agenda with concerns about the lack of movement that responds to the recommendations of the last report by the ACG in 1976 (National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party, 1984).

The following timeline outlines the major events and policy movements presented in this chapter:

1983	5 March 1983: Labor party led by Hawke wins Federal Election April: Appointment of New Chairperson, 3 rd Term NAEC Appointment of Specialist and State representatives
1984	July: Paper tabled by NAEC and Commonwealth Schools Commission: <i>Funding Priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education</i> November: Paper tabled by NAEC to Commonwealth Government, <i>Technical and Further Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders</i>
1984-1987	1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers by 1990 flagged by the Commonwealth government as the major priority in Indigenous education
1985	<i>Support Systems for Aboriginal Students in Higher Education Institutions</i> 9 th NAEC Conference: <i>Epistemology and Pedagogy</i>

7.2 The Third Term of the NAEC Committee

7.2.1 The Longest Serving Chairperson

In April 1983, Paul Hughes was appointed as the third Chairperson of the NAEC. Concurrent with his appointment, and for the first time on a full-time basis, a Deputy Chairperson was advertised and subsequently filled by Errol West. Paul, a Yunkunyatjatjara/Narunnga/Kurna man, had already worked within the Department of Education and had also been an inaugural member of the NAEC. His experience and knowledge allowed him to consolidate the initial work of the NAEC and commence work towards longer term strategies and policy positions. Paul was not only the longest serving Chairperson of the NAEC, he was also the Chairperson of the Taskforce responsible for the development of the report that would inform the National Aboriginal Education Policy (see Chapter 8). These were pinnacle points in the evolution of contemporary Aboriginal education.

An article in *Education News* (Isles, 1984), on role models in Aboriginal education highlighted the importance of Paul's position as Chairperson of the NAEC. The article describes the two Exemption Certificates hanging in Paul's

office for the resolution of the *South Australian Aborigines Act 1934-39* and the effects they have had on his life:

The certificates declare that 'by reason of character and standard of intelligence and development', the subjects had earned unprovisional exemption and 'shall cease to be an Aborigine for the purpose of the said Act'.

Paul Hughes, now chairman of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, received his certificate on 3 December 1952, when he was eight years old. His father, Tim, received his at the age of 38, after he had served in the AIF during World War II and won the Military Medal during the Buna campaign in New Guinea. He served with the South Australian 2/10th infantry battalion.

The Act has long since been repealed but Paul Hughes keeps the certificate as a reminder of being born 'a second class citizen' on the Point Pearce Aboriginal reserve. He grew up in Lucindale, a small farming centre in south-east of the State, where his father had been granted a Soldier Settler's farm on his return from the war. 'All of our people have something to prove; I suppose you could say it is simply two things. The first is that we are a people in our own right and the second is that we are second to none in our abilities if given a chance to do it.' (pp. 7-8)

At the time of Paul's initial appointment to the NAEC he was an Executive Officer for the South Australian Department of Education. Paul reflects that most of the Committee were quite young for the responsibility being given to them: *In '77, I was 33 when I first joined the Committee so under 40 when I was Chair. So people were (young) - we called Ethel Munn 'Mrs Munn' because we thought she was old but she probably would have only been about 52, 53 or something. Now as I approach being 69, 53 is a kid.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

By the time of his appointment as Chairperson, Paul held the positions of Director, Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education Centre as well as, Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs at the South Australian College of Advanced Education. Prior to his membership of the NAEC, Paul had completed a Diploma in Teaching (Primary) at the Torrens College of Advanced Education and went on to also undertake an Advanced Diploma in Teaching (Aboriginal Studies) at the Adelaide College of Arts and Education. In 1979, he

was the inaugural Chairperson of the South Australia Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee (University South Australia, 2008). By the time he had joined the NAEC he had a broad range of educational experience nationally and internationally. Paul gained qualifications in community development at the Australian National University in 1974, before embarking on an International Study Tour in America and Canada to research Indian and Inuit teacher education programs. Whilst he was Chairperson he was also given an additional part-time appointment with the Commonwealth Schools Commission (S. Ryan, 1983).

Post the NAEC, Paul graduated with a Master of Education from Harvard University. Paul was a Professor at the University of South Australia at the time of his retirement. In recognition of his initial work with the NAEC, as well as his continued contribution to Aboriginal education over 43 years, he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Flinders University. Paul's very significant contribution to Aboriginal education was also recognised when he was awarded a UNESCO Comenius Medal for Education Excellence, Citizen of Humanity by UN Human Rights Council and an Order of Australia in 1993. He was conferred Emeritus Professor of the University of South Australia (University of South Australia, 2008). He continues to contribute to Aboriginal education through participation and leadership on committees, key note addresses, publications and involvement in national strategies such as the *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative* (MATSITI).



Figure 13: Paul Hughes. Photo supplied to author by Kaye Price.

7.2.2 New Secretariat and Membership Appointments

After a one term membership from 1980 to 1981, Kaye Price was appointed Executive Officer to the NAEC from 1982 to 1984. Patsy recalls the first time that Kaye introduced herself to the NAEC at a meeting being held in Hobart in 1977. The local paper and radio had released a media piece relating to the NAEC meeting held in Tasmania: *The article was talking about Aboriginal education in Tasmania, the neglect of Aboriginal kids in this State in terms of their education and what their aspirations and our aspirations were to be then. We also mentioned that we could only locate one Tasmanian Aboriginal teacher. That's when we first met Kaye Price. Kaye actually arrived at our accommodation that night....she said, 'Hey, here I am. I'm an Aboriginal teacher. I'm number two'.* (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

Kaye was teaching in Hobart, having graduated with a Diploma of Teaching from the University of Tasmania. Throughout her career Kaye continued building on her qualifications, completing a Bachelor of Education at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Master of Education at the University of South Australia and in 2007, a PhD from the Australian National University (ANU). Kaye attributes much of her career aspirations to the NAEC: *I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing today if it hadn't been for the NAEC. I was a primary school teacher. I was going to do my time and become a Principal and get a school near the sea. That was my aim in life. So I'd have this school by the sea and then I'd retire and I'd still be by the sea. That was my aim. You never thought about going on to Masters.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

Kaye was nominated to the NAEC once Patsy's membership had expired. She was nominated by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. Kay recalls the first NAEC meeting she attended on Thursday Island: *I'd lived in Tasmania all my life. I used to save up to go to Melbourne so I could go to the art gallery once a year. And so to go all the way from Hobart to Thursday Island was magic, because Patsy was also with me for that meeting. As we went we collected people, like John Thomas from Adelaide joined us in Melbourne and Hazel McKellar from Cunnamulla.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

After her term on the NAEC and her subsequent appointment as Executive Officer, she accepted a role as section head in the Aboriginal Education at the Commonwealth Department of Education. She later went to the NSW Department of Education and completed some short appointments with NSW AECG before returning to Canberra to the department, ACT Education. Kaye moved into higher education working as a lecturer, and was appointed as Director of the Ngunnawal Centre, University of Canberra. She participated in many major studies on Aboriginal education, published and edited many books and journal articles and recently, has been a principal researcher with co-members of the NAEC, Paul Hughes and Peter Buckskin, in the MATSITI project.

At the same time as Kaye's appointment as Executive Officer, a Research Officer, Victor Forrest, was also added to the NAEC secretariat. Victor, like Kaye, had also just served a term as a member of the NAEC, and was a representative of Western Australia when he took on the role of Research Officer.

The Research Officer was responsible for applying for grants, collating research for inquiries undertaken by the NAEC, and reviewing submissions for Commonwealth grants: *Part of my role was to review submissions for Commonwealth grants in the area where Aboriginal education, Aboriginal history or Aboriginal subjects were involved. I was the person who perused the application to see if in fact they were fair dinkum about doing something about Aboriginals. Making sure that the submission views were in line with the NAEC - not only regarding education for Aboriginal people but education of non-Aboriginal people to ensure they were looking at proper aspects of where improvements might be made for Aboriginal people.* (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

Victor (Vic) had left his home on Mount Magnet Aboriginal reserve and moved to Perth at a young age: *My last home with my parents was living on an Aboriginal Reserve at Mount Magnet. I left home with ten shillings in my pocket and a blanket.* Vic realised very quickly that education was going to be an

important aspect of his future: *I was virtually the third Aboriginal person to graduate from Curtin University, in those days Western Australian Institute of Technology. So education I guess was my way of looking at the world and saying without the English language, without the white Australian education qualifications, Aboriginal people are doomed to rot in Hell for a very long time. Being a stubborn person, I thought no. So, I went back to night school and that's how I got into education. Well I finished a Bachelor of Arts degree at Curtin University and then I did a Graduate Diploma in Secondary Education. I was lecturing at Mount Lawley [CAE] in their Centre for Multicultural Studies. May O'Brien is a relative of mine and she was member of the NAEC. At the same time she was with Aboriginal Education, a section of the Western Australian Department of Education. So when a vacancy arrived on the NAEC, I put in an application with mainly the support of people like May and Stephen Albert. Stephen had completed some of his early education in Perth so I knew a lot of people involved in education. At that stage the Western Australian Department of Education didn't have an Aboriginal Advisory Committee. From application, lo and behold I was accepted and that's how I become a member.* (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

Sometime after he resigned from the secretariat, Vic embarked on a Law degree at the Australian National University graduating in 1993 and then in 1994 graduated with a Regional Diploma in Legal Practice: *Now I'm admitted as a barrister and solicitor in the ACT and as a solicitor in New South Wales, and of course I'm on the roll on the High Court. People say to me why did I do a law degree? I said, 'To keep myself out of jail and because of the high incarceration rate of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal children in Australia – education is the key'.* (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

In addition to the Chairperson, executive officer and research officer, the membership appointments during this term included:

Name	Position	Years
Errol West	Deputy Chairperson	Full Term
Stephen Baamba Albert *	Member	1986

Rex Japanangka Granites *	Traditional	1983 – 1984
Robert (Bob) Morgan *	NSW AECG	1983 – 1985
Eleanor Bourke *	Victorian AECG	1985
Eve Fesl	Language Development	1983 – 1984
Didimain Uiibo *	NT AECG	1983 – 1984
Laurie Padmore *	Tasmania AECG	1983 – 1984
Eric Law	TAFE	1983 – 1985
Oriel Green	WA AECG	1983 – 1985
Rex Garlett	WA AECG	1983 – 1985
Ethel Munn	Early Childhood	1983 – 1985
Peter Buckskin *	SA AECG	1984 – 1985
John Heath *	NSW AECG	1984 – 1985
Davina Tyrell	Curriculum Development	1983 – 1985
Mary Atkinson	Victoria AECG	1984 – 1985
Wendy Clinch	SA AECG	1983 – 1985
Charles (Chicka) Dixon	NSW	1983
Helena Gulash	Primary/Secondary Education	1983 – 1985
Wendy Ludwig *	Adult Education	1983 – 1985
Sepi Woosup	Queensland AECG	1984 – 1985

* NAEC members interviewed for this study.



Figure 14: NAEC membership. Accessed from NAEC Archives.

New specialist appointments were also identified and Wendy Ludwig was appointed as a specialist, representing adult education and continued to be a member of the NAEC from 1983-1986. Wendy started teaching in 1980 at the Darwin Community College after completing a double Diploma in Community Work and Welfare Work. Whilst she was completing her Diploma she was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education to attend the National Student Union Conference in Melbourne. It was here that she started developing her national networks with other Aboriginal educators as it was at this conference that National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Union was being proposed: *I met people like Michael Mansel, Mickey Dodson and Jeannie Bell and we were hosted by Gary Foley. Bruce McGuinness and Stephen Albert were there too.* In 1981 she had the opportunity to attend an NAEC conference in Bendigo: *I attended an NAEC conference and was just blown away by all of these amazing people and being involved in so many different things.* Through her attendance and involvement in this conference and the networks she had now established, she was nominated for a position on the NAEC. *I kept teaching and running a teacher ed. enclave in what was then Darwin Institute. Darwin Community College had morphed into Darwin Institute of Technology, then University College of Queensland to Northern Territory University and then Charles Darwin [University]. I resigned in 1989 and in that time I completed a degree and started a Masters in Education, again as an external student, juggling a child and work and study. I did my Masters externally through Uni of New England and then I went to Queensland; 12 years as Head of a Faculty in a TAFE Institute.* (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

Following this role she was appointed Director of Employment Programs working with community organisations and long-term unemployed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in areas as traineeships and cadets. It was a massive undertaking, working with staff from Palm Island up to Thursday Island, out to Doomadgee and to Mt Isa. Wendy later moved back to the Northern Territory and is currently Director, Operations at the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE) at Charles Darwin University.

John Heath, a Biripai man, was appointed a member of the NAEC from 1984 to 1988. He recalls his journey to becoming a member: *I was always interested in education - I was the third eldest of seven kids - the eldest boy with a Koori mother and white father. I enjoyed school, and I did reasonably well. My parents separated for the last time towards the end of my Year 10, because of domestic violence and so on, it was all through our lives. I arranged to spend the last two years of my schooling with a mate of mine. They're not an Aboriginal family, but just in housing commission area, so we shared the same little bedroom. I'm just relating that because it's an example of my determination to finish schooling. I was a recipient of a State Bursary. In those days they were payments to the disadvantaged people, and this was before ABSTUDY and ABSEC. This provided further incentive to me, because I guess I felt that there was some belief in one's ability.*

I finished the HSC with fairly good results and I had this determination to teach, but I couldn't take up the teacher's scholarship, because of the financial restrictions. It just wasn't enough when you didn't have a secure family base. At the end of 1969, I saw an ad in the paper, Aboriginal students who wanted to go to university, could apply for ABSTUDY. This was a new scheme then, it had only been operating for one year, and so I applied and was awarded an Aboriginal Study Grant. In those days university fees weren't free, so this study grant would pay for the fees and also give you a book allowance as a part-time student. I elected to do an Arts degree (part-time whilst working as a cadet Industrial Engineer), and I structured it so that I could teach geography and economics. After graduating I wanted to be a history and economics teacher, but in those days you had the choice of either History and English, or Geography and Economics. I went on and did the Dip. Ed which meant I was a qualified secondary school teacher. After teaching at a Catholic college for eighteen months I took up an appointment with Commonwealth Education at ABSTUDY and ABSEC to administer both those programs.

Around the same time the New South Wales Government had established an Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee under some different name, but it had a few Aboriginal people on it. They then advertised in the press for Aboriginal

educators, who were interested to apply. You had to have the endorsement of an Aboriginal organisation, so the Awabakal Co-op in Newcastle, of which I was a Director and Treasurer - nominated me. I became a member of that, which was the forerunner to the New South Wales AECG. I was then on the New South Wales AECG during the early stages of the NAEC, given that the AECG had emerged basically through the push of people like Stephen Albert. I left ABSTUDY in 1984, and took up a lecturing position at Newcastle College of Advanced Education as it was in those days. I guess in those days as with a lot of the other NAEC members I'm sure, we wore a lot of hats because we had to. At that stage in Newcastle, the only other Aboriginal person who was actively involved in Aboriginal advancement, or Aboriginal politics, who had a high level formal education, was Bill Jonas. Coincidentally, Bill had been one of my teachers in Secondary School. Then through all of this I was appointed to the NAEC. (Heath, interview 18/01/2016)

John still plays a significant role in education as well as Aboriginal Affairs.

7.3 Aboriginal Education: A Government Priority

The Labor party led by the Hon. Bob Hawke won the Australian Federal Election on the 5 March 1983. Continuing the commitment of self-determination for Aboriginal people, the Australian Labor Party Policy Statement for the 1983 election declared:

The aim of the Labor Government policies will be to ensure that... Aboriginals as a group have the possibility of self-determination. This will require structural change... Labor's program will be directed at creating a situation where Aboriginals can control basic services such as health, education, housing, so that they can come in a form and of a standard that meet Aboriginal needs as defined by Aboriginal people themselves.

From the earliest attempts Government policies for Aboriginals have failed because they were not based on an understanding of Aboriginal culture and society and because Aboriginals were not involved in their formulation and did not want them. Programs in which Aboriginals determine their own needs and priorities are not only more equitable, they are more successful and cost effective.

Labor's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination has two important implications for service policy. First the way federal funds are distributed is as important as what decisions are made. A program, however expertly devised, imposed on Aboriginals has very little chance of success. Aboriginals do not only want improved services but also control over them. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b, p. 15)

Under the new Labor government, the Hon. Susan Ryan was appointed Minister for Education in 1983. Minister Ryan was very committed to Aboriginal education and she recalls her first meeting with the NAEC where she wanted to make a positive and respectful impression: *I remember actually feeling a bit nervous about how it would go and whether they would accept my goodwill or whether they'd say this is all a waste of time, 'You guys never do anything'. People were saying, 'Oh they're very tough' but it turned out to be very professional. We talked about the aims and what we were going to do. In all these kinds of meetings the language of the meeting can make a big difference to how everyone feels about it. I was very keen to demonstrate my respect and that this was a national committee of great significance to the government. But on the other hand you don't want to be pompous and sound as if you took yourself too seriously but you certainly took them seriously. So it was always a bit of a balance about language and so forth. But I remember saying to Peter Wilenski (Department Secretary, Department of Education) afterwards – 'Oh that went well'. He said, 'Yes Minister'. He was relieved too because he was expecting some antagonism or something unrealistic like we've got to have all this now otherwise we'll know you don't want to do anything. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)*

Although the NAEC Secretariat had been placed within the Department of Education, the change of government opened up renewed debate over the location of the NAEC. The NAEC and the Minister for Education were to ensure that Aboriginal education remained primarily based in the Education portfolio and not housed within the DAA. Charlie Perkins had argued a case for Aboriginal education to be part of the wider Aboriginal Affairs portfolio. The DAA funded early childhood and other special education programs so it was a viable argument. Susan Ryan recalls the tension: *Charlie wanted Aboriginal education to go to DAA and be in his domain. As much as I respected Charles, and I had*

known him for a very, very long time and I really respected him - I thought he was terrific and a great choice by Clyde (Holding) to make him Head of the Department - I said, 'Look, education is not like everything else. We've got to do it through the education bureaucracies and the other education Ministers'. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

In the end it was concluded, with the agreement of the NAEC and the Minister for Education, that to get the attention and priorities it required, the NAEC should maintain its position within the education portfolio but act in an advisory capacity to the DAA: *So the transfer of Aboriginal funding came out of DAA, which I don't think Clyde liked very much. I know that he didn't like it at all. To be part of that Executive meeting in the Parliament House when Susan requested a meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister had to bring Charlie. Then they were given the instructions that this needs to be transferred and we had it signed off by the PM. So to see that realised, I thought, 'Well that's power'.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

The State challenges still remained, however from a national perspective Minister Ryan was willing to do everything she could to ensure Aboriginal education was seen as a significant priority of the Commonwealth Government. One of her strategies was to make it her business to meet with NAEC members when she was in their regions: *It's not often that a Minister will come and sit in your office and have a yarn and that used to happen. We had regular meetings with the Minister. We had regular meetings with Susan Ryan when she was Minister and with John Dawkins. We used to also have regular big meetings with the union. We knew everyone in the Australian Education Union then - they were, I think at the time, non-Aboriginal people. We'd have a meeting at ANU with the NAEC and the Minister, such as John Dawkins would come or the Shadow Minister would come to those meetings. So we must have been a pretty powerful group to have that happen. I suppose during the first five, six or seven years of the NAEC, there must've been an awful lot of goodwill.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

Ryan claims it went beyond goodwill; it was a true reflection of the Labor Government's commitment to ensuring Aboriginal education was a high priority: *I had been Labor's Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs from 1980 to 1983. So in that time I had come from kind of a standing start to being pretty well informed. I'd travelled a lot, particularly to remote communities around the Kimberley and the Pilbara and Northern Territory. I had some contact with the urban Indigenous people and the regional services but I had to educate myself about the conditions in the remote areas. So when I became Minister for Education I was determined to try and use that knowledge and awareness to make something happen in education. It fitted in with my central political philosophy which is, education is the building block for everything else, whether it's women, whether it's migrant groups, whether it's Indigenous, whether it's children with disability - education is the thing that can overcome disadvantage. So I decided to take the NAEC very seriously.*

I remember having a discussion with the Head of my Department, a very well-known policy thinker, Dr Peter Wilenski. He's just absolutely brilliant. He'd worked for Gough Whitlam as a young man when Gough was Prime Minister. I remember having the discussion about the NAEC saying, 'It must be real, can't just be one of these groups we meet with occasionally.' Wilenski agreed with me because he was very committed to such things too. So I think that's how we started off. I was really in a good position because there were so many capable people on the NAEC. Paul Hughes I thought was absolutely brilliant. They were very experienced educators themselves, very successful, very effective. They really knew what they were talking about. So I said, 'Okay, you advise me. As far as it's possible for me I will accept that advice and implement it.' So it started in a very positive and strong way. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

The NAEC initially had been delegated the role of an advisory capacity to the Commonwealth on Aboriginal education. In its new role as principal advisor, its level of influence was increased in determining government policy development and funding allocations. Paul Hughes discusses the change and how it affected the operations of the NAEC: *At one stage we were policy advisers. Then we formally got named as principal policy advisers. That's a big change to the*

Federal Government. A policy adviser is one of a mob of people that they might want to talk to, including Department of Aboriginal Affairs. The change came through most particularly at about the same time Susan Ryan got in and she made us the principal policy advisers. Now a principal policy adviser meant that you're even more principal than the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is, who was funding education. So that's a major sort of a change. John Parr was the Head (Aboriginal Education) when I was in there and he'd often come in and say 'You're the principal policy advisers, what do we do now', or 'We've got a problem here, what do you guys recommend' (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013).

On the 23 August 1983 Minister Ryan announced:

The government will enhance the capacity of the National Aboriginal Education Committee to enable it to carry out its role as the principal adviser on Aboriginal education... and the intention is to expand progressively the NAECs functions. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b, p. 15)

In a subsequent speech on behalf of the Minister on 4 September 1983 it was declared:

It is the ultimate aim of the Government to vest operational as well as policy responsibility for Aboriginal education in the National Aboriginal Education Committee. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b, p. 16)

Throughout the 1980s the NAEC provided comprehensive policy advice, information on programs, evaluation and research, as well as the allocation of resources across the nation. NAEC members would ensure they were well prepared for any meetings with Ministers or government officials, working out what questions needed to be asked and who was going to ask them. As time went on the NAEC had built up a good level of knowledge on the government systems, structures and politics, resulting in a confidence to make the most out of their meetings: *We used to have a rehearsal about who was going to say what and how you will say it. For example, we would get together before the DAA Superintendents' meeting. We rehearsed the whole thing, we probably were quite clever. We used to, I suppose, try to out-manoeuvre them. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)*

Minister Ryan relied heavily on the NAEC to provide the appropriate advice to ensure engagement of parliamentary bi-partisan support of Aboriginal education as a priority: *I was very grateful for the good open relationships. I really admired all those members, which is not true of every advisory committee a Minister can have. But they were just excellent. I think the biggest value was putting Indigenous education as a top priority instead of a 'something else we have to worry about' kind of priority. Because of the standing of the NAEC and the quality of their ideas it got a lot of attention; its importance was grasped for that period of time. It was a lot more than lip service. It was bipartisan, so it wasn't an area where I was attacked by the opposition or anything like that. It really started when we were embedding objectives about Aboriginal education into teacher training and it became a major policy objective. We did that because of the calibre and the work of the NAEC.* (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

The Commonwealth Education Department and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs had really close relationships with the NAEC, working together particularly on policy and funding. With the establishment of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in the early 1970s, Aboriginal Education Officers were established. Key people, such as the Aboriginal Education Officers, from both Departments worked closely with the NAEC and even sat in on certain parts of the NAEC meetings to both provide input and develop an understanding of the priorities and perspectives from an NAEC viewpoint: *The Commonwealth Education Department were really supportive. There were Commonwealth Education Officers who worked directly with us. There were a number of them, and gradually more Indigenous than non-Indigenous - they worked profoundly positive with us.* (Lester, interview 09/11/2016)

Although Aboriginal groups were quickly starting to emerge across the nation, the NAEC was the first one to be fully funded by the Government to provide advice directly to the Minister with a high level of influence and power. The key was providing advice that had clear policy objectives that would be broadly understood. The policy directives had to be supported by not just Commonwealth departments but also State governments, education institutions and related departments. Good relationships with all stakeholders were

therefore integral to achieving any sort of progress in Aboriginal education policy.

In February 1984, the Commonwealth Minister for Education and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs made a joint statement that the National Aboriginal Education Committee was to be involved in the decision making related to all aspects of Aboriginal education (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984a). Additionally, to show the Government's commitment, it announced the allocation of 100 study awards with a living allowance of \$150 per week for Aboriginal students over the age of 25, which could be accessed in addition to the existing Aboriginal Study Grants (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b).

7.3.1 Funding Allocations

Previous to the NAEC, Commonwealth funding distributed to the States was based on applications from the State, largely influenced by the State's interests and resources in Aboriginal education. South Australia was the first state to introduce a Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and the presence of this office with an Aboriginal appointment had a big influence to the ongoing development of Aboriginal education programs as well as attracting significant funding for the area. Paul Hughes was appointed as the first Aboriginal Education Officer: *I was the only person outside of Canberra in a State office putting up schemes applying for money. We had the Task Force, we had the Aboriginal Community College and we had a couple of other bits and pieces around the place that were being funded. At one stage as much as 28 per cent of the Commonwealth money came to South Australia. That's as much as me writing it all up and putting it all in because we were the only office out in a State. Gradually other States got their own offices but for a long, long time we held a quarter of the money here in South Australia.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The NAEC was to provide a more equitable solution to distributing monies to the States from the Commonwealth. In the early stages the NAEC would sit in and be a part of the discussions relating to the budget allocations and relevant programs. As the Committee evolved to become the principal advisor there

came a higher level of responsibility for making decisions related to the funding allocations. State committees and other stakeholders would nominate programs within their State or Territory that required funding along with justifications and priorities. The NAEC would assess all the proposals that were submitted from all States and Territories. They would then prioritise the programs to be funded and the determined amount, based on the national pool of funds available. The recommendations for Aboriginal education funding distribution would then be made by the NAEC to the Commonwealth. Funding was distributed by both the Commonwealth Schools Commission and the DAA.

Given the number of valuable Aboriginal education programs being established, it was not possible to fund all of them at once. The NAEC therefore adopted a rotation system that would allow consideration of 'near-miss' programs in the next round. This provided the opportunity for more programs to receive funding. Even though this process was adopted, the programs were always recommended on a merit based approach (Morgan, interview 18/03/2016).

The NAEC would be provided with high level access to resources and information that allowed for the identification of programs that were aligned with national and State priorities, as informed by the State and Territory consultative committees and in consideration of special national programs: *We used to run through the entire budgets. We got the entire proposed Cabinet in Confidence papers on budgets, which you'd never get nowadays. We knew the entire budget the DAA was planning to spend and we went through it with a fine-toothed comb and made recommendations, taking some off the top for national programs; deciding, for example, about the Medical School - there were two universities in the running for that, Flinders and Newcastle. They were the two places that were proposing Aboriginal medical education at the time and we decided that the money should go to Newcastle. Other national projects that were being held around the place, the Aboriginal Task Force in Adelaide, things like that, we creamed them off the top. Even though we were all coming from different States and obviously wanted to get our own monies, we worked those things through and made decisions based on; how do we grow certain things and what needed to be done nationally. Then what was left over and how would*

that be split up amongst the States. The States, because the consultative groups had discussions about what they were interested in as well, came down to the business of deciding what the priorities were for them. (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

Bob also recalls the negotiations around the development of an Aboriginal Medical School at the University of Newcastle. *The Medical School, when they came to us and they wanted to start their medical programs, they came, not to the NAEC, but to the AECG. The meeting that we had about that was up in Taree. We had to endorse it before it went off to the NAEC and the Federal Government for funding. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)*

To ensure there was an Aboriginal voice at the table when discussing issues like Aboriginal programs the NAEC Chairperson would have membership on the Schools Commission Board. This would ensure that the messages and recommendations from the NAEC could be filtered through to other relevant discussions. In the end, the process resulted in a tri-partite approach to funding allocations for Aboriginal education between the NAEC, States and Commonwealth.

Initially, allocating of funding was relatively straight forward because there were fewer programs. However, as the priority of Aboriginal education became stronger and the funding grew, the politics and bureaucracy became more difficult. The funding became more competitive, resulting in tougher decisions being made, although there was a sense of equity, and a strong belief in addressing disadvantage. It was accepted that across Australia, most Aboriginal people were disadvantaged but among those peoples some were more disadvantaged than others. There were many considerations made when determining the allocation of funding however, from an Aboriginal community perspective, the process undertaken by the NAEC provided a strong Aboriginal voice in the important process of decision making.

7.4 Funding Priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

On the 28 July 1983, the Commonwealth Education Commission requested a review related to the education of Aboriginal students for consideration in the funding guidelines for 1984. The request stated:

The Government wishes the Commission to give special consideration to measures that might be taken with existing programs, or through new initiatives, to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal children. It is concerned about both the quality of educational experience of Aborigines and their low participation rates in the higher levels of secondary schooling and tertiary education. The Government asks the Commission to review these matters in co-operation with the National Aboriginal Education Committee, the States and non-government school authorities, and Aboriginal communities and to report to the Government as early in 1984 as is practicable. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. vii)

A review committee was established consisting of a working party comprised of eight people, five representing the NAEC and three representing the Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC). The working party was co-chaired by Paul Hughes, Chairperson of the NAEC, and Dr Robert Andrews, full-time Commissioner. Additionally, representatives from the Commonwealth Department of Education and Youth Affairs and the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs were invited to provide further input. The terms of reference were:

- (a) *To broadly advise the Commission on policy development and options in Aboriginal education beyond 1984, and contribute to a major Commission paper to be submitted to the Government early in 1984.*
- (b) *More specifically, to give consideration to measures that might be taken within existing programs or through new initiatives, to improve the educational outcomes for Aboriginal children. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. vii)*

The report titled, *Funding Priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b), was tabled in July 1984 and proposed the implementation of an *Aboriginal Education Program* that comprised four specific components:

- (a) *An Aboriginal Education Recurrent Grants Program*
- (b) *A Language and Cultural Studies Program*
- (c) *An Aboriginal Education Development Program*
- (d) *A Scheme for Teachers in Aboriginal Community Schools* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. xi)

The Aboriginal Education Program aimed to provide targeted support towards increasing the outcomes of Aboriginal education. It was noted at the time of the report that there were no programs offered by the Commission that directly targeted Aboriginal people. Instead, Aboriginal people needed to compete against other groups such as ethnic communities, to access funding or resources within an already limited scheme. The working party recommended that the funding for this program be distributed to States and Territories as well as government and non-government schools on the basis of a formula that took into consideration the number of overall students compared with the number of Aboriginal students. States and schools with the highest populations should receive the highest funding.

7.4.1 Aboriginal Education Recurrent Grants Program

The Aboriginal Education Recurrent Grants (AERG) program included the appointment of Aboriginal Support Staff. This could be in the form of Aboriginal Teaching Assistants or Teachers' Aides, Aboriginal Counsellors, Aboriginal Liaison officers or equivalent. It was determined that support staff play an important role in ensuring Aboriginal students have access to appropriate cultural and educational objectives. They also provided an important connection between schools and communities. It was also suggested that Aboriginal staff within these roles should be encouraged to continue to obtain qualifications towards a full teaching requirement. The presence of Aboriginal professional and teaching staff was seen to be valuable in the connection they are able to make with Aboriginal students as well as an understanding of Aboriginality and the deficiencies of school programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal students:

We wanted more support for kids in schools, so we argued for teacher aides in the school. Now there are teacher aides for everybody in schools. We got them going just for Aboriginal kids, because Aboriginal kids needed that extra support in the schools; because schools in those days were alien places for Aboriginal

kids. That's where they immediately lost their identity and their dignity, as soon as they went into those white schools. So teacher aides were very important. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

The AERG program would also provide funding to States and Territories to contribute to curriculum development through the development of Aboriginal Education Curriculum units. The support of these units in conjunction with broader curriculum units and the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) would be required to undertake specific projects that contributed to the development of curriculum supporting Aboriginal people and Aboriginal Studies.

Finally, it was proposed that the AERG program funding would support the ongoing functions of the Aboriginal Consultative Network. The development of the State and Territory AECGs provided a substantial community asset and resource connecting education bodies with communities. This was identified by the Working Party as vital for school programming and initiatives as well as contributing to the cultural environment of the school.

7.4.2 Language and Cultural Studies Program

The function of the Language and Cultural Studies program was to support government and non-government schools in the teaching of Aboriginal languages and culture. There was a strong message throughout the report that recognising the differences between Aboriginal and Western cultures, environments and learning styles was crucial to the success of students. Aboriginal students who feel that their identity is respected were seen to have more opportunities for academic success. The report highlighted an example of a school that considers this philosophy:

Educationalists are increasingly taking the view that for Aboriginal children to succeed at school they must find themselves; the initial educational step might be taken by answering the question, "Who am I?". This is the approach followed at Worawa College, a small Aboriginal community school at Frankston, Victoria. The pivot of the curriculum at this school is Aboriginal culture. Once an appreciation of culture is established among students attention to basic skills and other subject offerings can proceed profitably. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. 4)

7.4.3 Aboriginal Education Development Program

The Aboriginal Education Development Program (AEDP) called for special support of community operated schools. It was understood by the Working Party that, because of the special cultural and language programs that are the nucleus of community operated schools, they were more costly to run per student. This was the case particularly as it related to the curriculum and school environment. Even though the numbers in the school were usually quite small, the standard funding allocated to schools limited the capacity of schools to specialise the curriculum and education programs, in addition to offering the same programs as other schools.

The AEDP was also inclusive of the provision of student development initiatives such as the introduction of enclaves to support students and tutoring service. The focus of these initiatives was towards enhancing the academic outcomes of Aboriginal students. It was suggested that enclaves would provide additional academic support that would be culturally appropriate and contribute to building the educational self-confidence of students.

School-based initiatives that connect schools and communities thus increasing the interaction were once again seen as vital to student and school success in Aboriginal education. The development of regional language and cultural resource centres in collaboration with communities was an area of importance. It was believed these centres could further contribute to the development of curriculum and exploring appropriate teaching methodologies that met the needs of Aboriginal students.

7.4.4 Scheme for Teachers in Aboriginal Schools

The Working Party determined that there needed to be increased support, advice and development in relation to both the appointment of teachers in community operated schools and for the teachers working in these schools. As the schools were small, the role of the teacher was sometimes an isolated role with additional expectations than those of teachers in mainstream schools. Also, there was a clear need to build the capacity of communities that have

responsibilities in the schools, such as selection of staff and other governance activities. Although the Working Party recognised that there were only a limited number of Aboriginal schools, the alternative environment of the schools required attention, to ensuring successful outcomes are met.

7.4.5 Implementation

The Report (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b) recommended that implementation of the above initiatives should be led by a designated Taskforce representative of the NAEC and CSC, appointed and funded for a three month period. It was also emphasised that the success of the *Aboriginal Education Program* would be determined by strong consultation with Aboriginal community groups. The report further recommended that funding currently controlled by the DAA for school based activities should be transferred to the Department of Education, CSC. The report concluded:

Aboriginal children continue to be conspicuously short-changed in terms of the educational resources allotted them, and the general, although not complete, failure of schools to address their needs through acknowledgement of their self-identity and cultural background. Attention must be shifted toward both the process of schooling and, where appropriate, Aboriginal approaches to learning as a means of ameliorating educational deficiencies, and away from an assumed culpability of the student for failure to gain from the education offered. It is time for the despatch of a long-held and erroneous view that Aboriginal children are the enemies of their own educational advancement. Aboriginal children often face distressing social and economic circumstances in their approach to schooling; community attitudes and even those of some educators must not be allowed to compound the obstacles Aboriginal children have to surmount. Along with a positive community attitude to Aboriginal education must go the willingness to allocate the necessary resources. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. 1)

7.5 Technical and Further Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – Participation and Self-Determination

The Aboriginal Consultative Group (1976) report on TAFE study had determined the need for more comprehensive research and advice regarding increasing Aboriginal participation in vocational education. Responding to this

recommendation the NAEC set up a *NAEC TAFE Working Party*. The Working Party was appointed for two years during which the group resolved to undertake;

- i) *investigation of the current situation (during 1984);*
- ii) *preparation of an interim report (by the end of 1984) providing a program for action;*
- iii) *implementation of the program (during 1985).* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984b, p. 5)

The Working Party was chaired by Eric Law, a member of the NAEC, and comprised draw on expertise inside and outside the NAEC. The comprehensive National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party (1984) report, *Technical and Further Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders – ‘Participation and Self-Determination’* (NAEC, 1984) was the first step towards investigating the lack of Aboriginal students enrolling in TAFE. The paper was to be subsequently used for discussion and dialogue at the National Conference held in Brisbane, 22-24 November 1984, and co-hosted by the NAEC and the TAFE Teachers’ Association. The National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party (1984) paper was aimed at providing an Aboriginal viewpoint and perspective that was aligned with the government philosophy of consultation and self-determination. The Working Party believed that within the TAFE system there had been little evidence of this being practiced:

Despite statements of good intent about consultation and self-determination, unfortunately it has been the case at all levels, from the Commonwealth Government through to individual instructors, that non-Aboriginal people have generally given only lip service to this policy and have continued to make decisions affecting Aboriginal people, often with only scant regard for clearly stated Aboriginal wishes. (p. 6)

Although TAFE had been highlighted by both the ACG and the NAEC as an important sector for the education of Aboriginal people there was a continued belief that schooling and higher education were prioritised in relation to resources and funding over TAFE: *I've got to tell you for a long time that the VET and the TAFE area were the poor cousins at the party. The absolute focus was at the schooling sector and the higher ed. sector. John Lester was one of the few people along with myself that hung in that VET space. Some of the activities or initiatives that were implemented and driven in the VET space really*

came as a result of agitation in terms of that broader kind of influence from people like John. (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

The National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party (1984) emphasised the importance of recognising TAFE as an integral part of Aboriginal education, equal to the other sectors. They considered that TAFE was able to meet three fundamental needs of Aboriginal people in education;

- *overcoming the inadequacy of the schooling which has been provided to Aborigines;*
- *providing an alternative for students who do not wish to continue school beyond the legal leaving age;*
- *providing the skills necessary for effective self-determination, particularly at a community level. (p. 9)*

The Working Party further saw TAFE as vital in the advancement of Aboriginalisation. There was a feeling that Aboriginal people were having unreasonable expectations placed on them without being provided with the opportunity to develop their skills and qualifications effectively. Aboriginal people wanted an end result of being responsible for their own futures and actions. However, without appropriate development, the Working Party saw that this was to remain a dream and that self-determination would remain an *abstract phrase* (National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party, 1984, p. 11).

The Working Party concluded its report with an endorsement of the principle that was presented within a statement at the July 1983 Darwin National Conference on TAFE:

Technical and further education should be given much higher priority in the general educational context of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and that, in particular, the technical and further education of Aboriginal and Islander people should receive greater priority in terms of status and funding. (National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party, 1984, p. 12)

The Working Party surmised:

The importance of TAFE and the situation and needs have long been recognised by Aboriginal people. The major study conducted by the

former Schools Commission Aboriginal Consultative Group was on TAFE, and now for the first the time the NAEC has seen the need to establish a committee from outside its own ranks, to promote action in the TAFE field. Yet TAFE continue to be regarded in many quarters as the least important sector in Aboriginal education. (National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party, 1984, p. 12)

The Working Party determined that there had been little evidence of any change based on the recommendations by the Aboriginal Consultative Group (1976) *Access to and use of Technical and Further Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*. It was clear, however, that Aboriginal people saw TAFE as an essential education provider: *To this day I see that the VET environment is the springboard for so many of our people into employment; into further studies; or allowing people to gain a whole set of skills and knowledge that allow them to operate as better members of their family and community. Being able to go to a shopping centre and read all the signs and in the shops being able to make sure they're not getting ripped off at the cash register, just those really basic fundamental skills for living in other communities and the current environments that we live in.* (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

At the NAEC meeting in Darwin (15-19 July 1985), the outcomes of the TAFE study were discussed in addition to other reports from States and Territories. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1985a) press release for the meeting highlighted the concern and frustration from delegates relating to the slow progress of advancing Aboriginal education:

They resemble (educational outcomes) those that are found in Third World countries. To have such a situation in Australia is intolerable. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985a, p. 1)

Susan Ryan also recalled experiencing Aboriginal people's frustrations and tensions relating to the slow progress of advancing educational outcomes at the time: *There was a very big conference that I went to up in Townsville. There were some people who weren't happy with anything, so it was a bit stormy. Again I was a bit on my guard. They really wanted me to fight because apart from the Committee there were a lot of other players who felt things weren't going fast enough for their views. Of course there was quite a lot of competition*

to be on the Committee. It was a bit of a turbulent atmosphere and I was a bit uneasy. But again it seemed to go okay. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

The meeting concluded making two major resolutions:

1. *The endorsement of a policy that addresses itself to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in the Technical and Further Education Government sector. The policy argues for an increase in the provision of TAFE services particularly the need for community based programs.*
2. *That an extensive three year study be embarked upon to examine the concept of an Aboriginal Pedagogy. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1985a, p. 2)*

7.6 1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990

One of the NAECs major policy initiatives was the *1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990* target. The target which was a key recommendation in the NAEC submission to the NITE review was endorsed by the Auchmuty (1980) report becoming a focused priority; responding to the critical need for Aboriginal teachers nationally. The 1000 Aboriginal Teachers initiative was an initial conservative target with the figure of parity more than double this figure. From the time of the NITE submission the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers had grown from 72 in 1977 to 220 in 1982 (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a). In 1982, the 1990 national target was distributed into State targets determined by the Aboriginal population and geographic spread as seen in the following table.

Table 4: Teacher Targets by State, 1982

State	State target	actual number
New South Wales	258	58
Victoria	80	27
Queensland	263	71
South Australia	70	13
Western Australia	173	43
Tasmania	16	1
Northern Territory	137	3
Australian Capital Territory	3	4
Total	1000	220

Source: National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986a, p. 13)

In the Commonwealth Government's 1984–1987 triennium report on Aboriginal Education (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984a) the 1000 Aboriginal Teachers initiative was flagged as the major priority. It was anticipated this initiative would increase Aboriginal school student outcomes as well as overcome other issues such as Aboriginal student attendance rates. Colin Bourke provides an example of the educational issues in the Northern Territory that resulted from poor teacher quality: *The lack of commitment of the education departments, especially in the Northern Territory was terrible. They just hired anybody to teach. Teacher training was pathetic and the whole emphasis really was providing white programs and wondering why black kids didn't do any good. That's why we pushed so hard for teacher training of Indigenous people.* (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

An additional proposal for a National Teaching Service was raised by the NAEC. This initiative was proposed as a means of attracting high calibre teachers to schools with high Aboriginal enrolment rates, particularly regional and remote schools. Susan Ryan was very supportive of such a proposal but was not able to get enough government backing for it to come to fruition: *A lot of the NAEC members were teachers who had a teacher background or a teacher training background so together we understood the needs. At one stage we considered the idea of having a National Teaching Service which people could apply to come from any of the State teaching services but specifically to go and teach in Indigenous schools in the more remote areas. People would join the service for a period of time, maybe say a five or 10 year commitment, but they would be very high calibre teachers. Because to tell you the truth what was happening when you travelled around the remote areas, where there were schools, and the calibre of the teachers was often not good. Some of the teachers were great but a lot of the teachers were kind of drop-outs; there was a lot of goodwill but no concept of what the challenge was to get these kids from the desert and give them enough education so that they could have choices about their lives. So we were very concerned about teacher quality. We developed this idea but it didn't proceed. The State Departments (of Education), of course, didn't like anything called national. I mean it would have been a massive thing to set up. The Commonwealth would have had to fund the extra*

costs. I think the idea was for example, if you came out of the New South Wales teaching service to join this service for 10 years that the supplementary costs would be borne by the Commonwealth but maybe the States would continue paying your base salary. But we couldn't take it forward and it never happened. (Ryan, interview 03/02/2016)

Writing at the time, Hughes and Willmot (1982) raised a concern relating to the social and economic advancement of Aboriginal people, stating:

While white Australians may open their social and political arms to their black brothers, their economic sorting machine is certain to steer Aboriginals to the lower end of the employment spectrum. Such a process is linked with education, not so much in the effect that education has upon economic mobility, but through the educational barriers that prevent access to employment. (p. 22)

They suggested that the increase in Aboriginal people in professions such as teaching would contribute to the economic and social advancement of Aboriginal communities both in gaining their own educational qualifications as well as empowering students to continue to engage in education.

Hughes and Willmot (1982) concluded that the employment of Aboriginal teacher aides had been one of the most successful strategies so far in improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. However, the employment of 1,000 Aboriginal teachers was seen as critical in taking the inclusion of Aboriginal people in education to the next level:

As far as Aboriginal children are concerned, the thousand teachers will have a profound effect on their self-image and on their aspirations towards finding a place in Australian society. (p. 22)

In 1983, the NAEC convened the 8th National Aboriginal Education Conference at Riverina CAE, Goulburn, NSW. It was titled, *NAEC Summit - Policy Development*. The conference was run over the whole week from the 3-9 September and focused on the *1000 Aboriginal teacher* initiative. One hundred Aboriginal people had been selected to attend the summit. There were twenty participants each from early childhood, primary, secondary, TAFE and university sectors. This representation provided the opportunity for a broad

range of Aboriginal voices from each sector to contribute to discussions and agendas: *That was proper consultation in my view. We ran two conferences doing that.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013) In addition to Aboriginal educators and experts, representation was encouraged by tertiary institutions and relevant government agencies.

The aim of the conference was to discuss the draft policy statement on the training of Aboriginal teachers developed by Hughes, Forrest and Sherwood in consultation with the wider NAEC Committee (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a). The conference was delivered in a workshop format with guest speakers facilitating discussions in specialised interest groups.

As a result of the conference and wider consultation, the NAEC determined that the current programs offered to increase teacher education outcomes would at best result in the completed training of 500 Aboriginal teachers by 1990. To harness formal support from the government toward achieving the *1000 Aboriginal teacher* target, the NAEC tabled its policy statement titled, *Policy Statement on Teacher Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a).



Figure 15: NAEC Chairperson and Secretariat, 1983 Policy Summit. Reproduced from the MATSITI website.

The target objective created a shared vision for the NAEC, government and tertiary institutions. Although it seemed an impossible task it provided the opportunity for much needed discussion and action: *The teacher project was the biggest success of the whole lot. The selling of policy about Aboriginal involvement, the creation of structures and to get people involved in the discussions was a big deal.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The *1000 Aboriginal Teachers* Initiative stimulated a lot of movement during the third term of the NAEC. Emphasis was placed on the development of enclaves, as a major resource to ensure access, retention and success of Aboriginal students to teaching courses and other disciplines within a tertiary environment. In 1985, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) and the NAEC commissioned a study on the experience of Aboriginal students in tertiary institutions (Jordan & Howard, 1985). This study put a strong emphasis on the presence of enclaves. Following this study, the NAEC produced two policy statements in 1986 (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a, 1986b).

The graduation of *1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990* was achieved however many did not end up in the classroom: *Unfortunately our 1000 Teachers were got but not all of them stayed teaching. They all went off into various other walks of life in quite large numbers, which is good in the long run for Indigenous affairs but it wasn't having an impact in the schools that we'd hoped it would have.* (C Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

With the 1000 teachers, we were trying to grow people in terms of knowledge so we got more of our own people educated to be able to educate the next lot and so on. But now it's actually following that through in some sort of detail. But it's understandable when you look back on it. If you get some/body with a qualification, a teacher's qualification, they're going to get snapped up to do other things because nobody else had anything. That led to a whole pile of other teacher education type programs and so on and eventually led to that whole business of any person turning up at a university automatically being given a per capita amount of money that allowed for the development of

enclaves, that later became support centres and became collections of people.
(Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

7.6.1 Support Systems for Aboriginal Students in Higher Education Institutions

In 1985, the CTEC in consultation with the NAEC commissioned a study into support mechanisms in tertiary institutions. The study was led by Deirdre Jordan titled *Support Systems for Aboriginal Students in Higher Education Institutions* with the report tabled in December 1985 (Jordan & Howard, 1985). The study would be subsequently utilised to inform policy making and funding decisions.

Teacher training programs for Aboriginal people had already commenced in the mid-1970s, before the introduction of the 1000 Aboriginal teacher target. The three existing programs were referred to in the NITE report to be assessed as a good practice to be expanded. The teacher training programs were primarily supported by enclaves and it was determined that the enclaves played a significant role in attracting, retaining and graduating Aboriginal teacher education students (Jordan & Howard, 1985).

The existing Aboriginal teacher education programs had been introduced as part of *affirmative action programs*. Mt Lawley Campus of the Western Australian CAE (now Edith Cowan University) introduced the first *Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Education Program* (AITEP) encouraging access to the Diploma of Teaching (Primary) program through a special entry pathway in 1976. This was soon followed by special programs being developed by the Townsville CAE (now known as James Cook University) in 1977, which had previously established the College of Aboriginal Education in 1973 and The Torrens CAE (now the University of South Australia) in 1978. The South Australian Institute of Technology (amalgamated later with the CAE to form the University of South Australia) had already introduced the South Australian Aboriginal Task Force in 1973 which was attracting Aboriginal students from across Australia. Specific Aboriginal entry programs including enclaves were

gradually being introduced that also provided personal, social and academic support (Jordan & Howard, 1985):

People like Paul and others in the NAEC had been involved in developing the Aboriginal task force for the South Australian Institute of Technology, the AITEP Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs that took off in Townsville, Mount Lawley here in Western Australia. They influenced it when they were doing work around the Commonwealth Schools Commission Working Groups, which was a group that was prior to the inception of the NAEC. So you had those people getting together as a loose collective of people that then started to be the very first members of the NAEC. Some only did one or two terms, but it got voices in the higher education sector because they were connected with the [Commonwealth] Aboriginal Affairs Department and others were working in the Department of Education at the time. They were able to assist the government in setting up things like the Task Force to increase the access and numbers of Aboriginal people around teaching, social work and public administration. (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

If the target of 1,000 Aboriginal teachers was to be met special entry programs were crucial. The school system had poor outcomes in relation to Aboriginal people, resulting in most not receiving a Year 12 certificate (Jordan & Howard, 1985). Additionally, there were only small numbers of Aboriginal people who had graduated from tertiary programs, creating a lack of awareness or aspiration for tertiary study: *We weren't getting our people through Year 12 so we just teased [adjusted] the entry. We said when our people are older, they are wiser, they will study harder. So, we tried this special entry and we were getting everybody to do that. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)*

The special entry programs were primarily focused at mature aged students (Jordan & Howard, 1985). The entry programs considered other attributes in addition to academic qualifications that would contribute to success in tertiary programs. In some instances they included extended completion time, academic preparation courses and tutoring (Jordan & Howard, 1985). Once special entry programs were adopted, it became obvious that further support

services would be required to ensure Aboriginal students succeeded in 'foreign' tertiary learning environments. Exposure to a Western-dominant learning environment resulted in students feeling isolated, having lower schooling levels and personal environments that were not conducive to tertiary study, all created the impetus for a space on campus that would counteract these challenges.

The NAEC had created the name of these spaces as 'enclaves' within the EEATSIT report and then, in the National Aboriginal Education Committee (1984a) report to the Minister for Education, titled *Aborigines & Tertiary Education: a framework for the 1985-1987 Triennium Report*, defined them as a place:

where Aboriginal students enrolled in standard courses within institutions are given additional support appropriate to their culture, lifestyles and educational background. (p.6)

The report additionally noted the success enclave programs had already achieved and although wanting to maintain the momentum in teacher education, also encouraged institutions to roll out enclave programs to wider disciplines (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1984a). *Enclaves were for all the students to go, but in the first instance we were encouraging people into teacher training. But when other students were doing things like law, they used our resource, they came to our library and that was putting a hub in all the universities. That was the creation of a place where people could come and feel comfortable and so that when they would come to their lectures, they would do the same lectures, they had the same tutors, they came out with the same qualification. And that's the standard we wanted all the time. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)*

One of the outcomes proposed by the Jordan and Howard (1985) study was to change the naming of 'enclaves' to 'support systems'. This was based on both the restrictions placed on the perception of services provided by an enclave as well as identifying a name that would allow future growth. The study also proposed that institutions needed to maintain contact with the NAEC in establishing support systems. It was strongly recommended that institutions and the government should ensure adequate funding and resourcing of support

systems. It was recommended that staff should be appointed under the same guidelines and conditions as other institutional academic and administrative staff and strategies developed to: increase future opportunities and grow the Aboriginal tertiary workforce; provide a culturally appropriate space; offer a broad range of student services that respond to personal, academic, financial and cultural needs; and implement an appropriate evaluation and review process developed in consultation with the NAEC (Jordan & Howard, 1985).

By 1985, when the study was undertaken, the majority of States had support systems for Aboriginal students and as a result the enrolments of Aboriginal students at these institutions increased substantially. Table 5 highlights this increase, indicating a rise of 85 Indigenous students before the introduction of enclaves to 551 after the implementation of enclaves or support systems. As the CAEs were amalgamated with Universities in the mid to late 1980s, the enclaves and support systems automatically became a part of the university structures.

Table 5: Aboriginal students in institutions with support systems compared to enrolments prior to the support systems, 1984

Institution	Year Support System Established	No. students known to be enrolled in year preceding establishment	No. students enrolled in award courses 1984	No. students enrolled in bridging courses 1984	No. of graduates from bridging courses	No. of graduates from award courses	No. of graduates from graduate programmes
Armidale CAE	1981	1	30			24	5
Bendigo CAE	1983		12	11		4	
Brisbane CAE							
Kelvin Grove campus	1984	6	18			N/A	
Mt Gravatt campus	1983	2	13			N/A	
Darwin Community College	1984	3	12	160F/T 28P/T		2	
James Cook University	1977	2	118			31	
Macarthur Institute of Higher Education	1982	3	45	12	18	1	
Mitchell CAE	1982	4	43			-	
Monash University	1984	1	-	12	N/A	-	
Newcastle CAE	1984	7	9			-	
Northern Rivers CAE	1983	7	37	18	34	3	
SACAE							
Magill campus	1982	N/K	11		53	7	
Underdale campus	1978	2	32			11	
SAIT	1973	-	95		134(Cert)	68	
Uni. of Queensland	1984	35	35			9	
WACAE							
Mt Lawley campus	1976		26	80		21	
Broome off campus	1983	N/A	11			-	
Nedlands campus	1982	4	19			-	
WAIT	1978	10	17	42		8	
TOTAL		85	551	363	239	189	5

Source: Jordan & Howard, (1985)

The NAEC recommended to the Commonwealth Government that there needed to be an allocation of funding. The funding would be used to negotiate with all tertiary institutions across Australia the adoption of enclave programs or student support systems. NAEC members were delegated to carry out these negotiations with CAEs and universities, in collaboration with the State AECGs. *The 1000 Teachers by 1990 became the catchcry of the movement and it opened up tertiary education – CAEs and universities for Aboriginal people. I became the NAEC tertiary education person. My role was to negotiate with all the universities around setting up programs and, because we controlled the funding, if you didn't think they were genuine, I would either recommend that they be supported or not. Then the members would debate that around the table. We were articulating aspirations and ideas that since became realities - including these spaces at universities. We used to call them enclaves and for all intents and purposes that what they were. They were surrounded by an often alien and sometimes antagonistic group of people. Some of the universities didn't want us to be a part of their system, but for the fact that we funded them, they wouldn't have used their own funding. Every university, the NAEC would have to negotiate mostly around that notion of 1000 Teachers. But all the universities had to be convinced that what we were proposing didn't threaten their standards.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

7.7 The Final NAEC Conference

The last conference and probably the most talked about conference was the 9th NAEC: *Epistemology and Pedagogy held in 1985*. It was held at Wirrina Conference Centre in South Australia under the Chairmanship of Paul Hughes. The conference was attended by more than 200 participants and Paul provided the opening speech: *I made a speech saying if we're going to be in education we may want to talk some of the language - curriculum, epistemology, pedagogy and so on. The skits that were done at the Thursday night dinner were quite marvellous and wonderful. But people got rolling; people got talking about a whole pile of things. So we were building a national movement by people getting together. But they were all different people all the time so it took*

a long while and it just happened that way. Those things were very important, the social bits and pieces and get-togethers. (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The conferences provided a safe space for Aboriginal people to discuss their priorities, values, philosophies and practices. It was also a safe space for learning new knowledges, sharing experiences and articulating new views: *It was the first time that a lot of discussion was held around the notion of pedagogy and epistemology. A lot of people that attended had no idea what that meant, so they were talking about 'patting doggies' and all this type of stuff. We just laughed, it was good laughter. No one was trying to be intellectually superior, but we were just saying that we were doing this stuff in our own way. White fellas talk and call it pedagogy and epistemology. Well that's just another way of talking about the way that we create knowledge. How we do it sitting around a campfire, or we're talking about it in our yarning circles and all that type of stuff. It's the same thing, just a different name. So, we got into those discussions and they were great. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)*

Prior to the conference Paul Hughes (1984) published a paper titled; *A Call for an Aboriginal Pedagogy*. The paper provided a good preamble for the conference, discussing the challenges to date of the education system of not recognising the differences between Aboriginal and Western epistemologies which continued to result in detrimental educational experiences for Aboriginal people:

We reject the common belief that it is our society's fault that we have not succeeded. That thinking is a classic 'deficit hypothesis'...We contend - in academic terms – that the Western systems are based on an epistemology that is not in any significant way an Aboriginal epistemological base and therefore inappropriate for Aborigines. (p. 20)

Hughes (1984) suggested that teachers needed to have a greater understanding of the diverse aspects of Aboriginal communities and traditional pedagogy. Western knowledges needed to be combined with Aboriginal knowledges drawing on the strengths of Aboriginal students, including spatial ways of learning. It was highly recommended that teachers work much more

closely with Aboriginal teacher aides in setting culturally appropriate curriculum and methods of teaching. The paper concluded:

The NAEC strongly urges dialogue and involvement between schools and Aboriginal communities. We envisage an Australia which finds its true heart and soul by a discovery of Australia's Indigenous culture. We urge manifestations of Aboriginality in all Australian schools... Only when educators are able to provide an education system in tune with our culture will we be able to take our place with dignity as the descendants of the original inhabitants of this country. We firmly believe that only when this country accepts and understands Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people, past and present – only then will Australia achieve a true nationhood. The NAEC is more than willing to play its part in achieving that goal. (Hughes, 1984, p. 22)

The conferences were forums that created both an awareness of the NAEC and its priorities among the wider community and a strong network for the NAEC to ensure effective consultation and inclusion. They assisted in building a national movement for Aboriginal education. One of the main challenges of the NAEC conferences was that participants would vary each year so that at times it was difficult to maintain good momentum or consistency in discussion. However, overall they were extremely successful forums that were re-established after the NAEC was disbanded: *To be able to hear what other people were doing but also to have a collective response to particular issues and have an agreed position on particular things; an agreed set of targets that you could then go back to your various institutions and say, 'at the national conference, this is a priority that was set by the Aboriginal people from across the country. This is where we want to go. This is what we want to see'. You had a Commonwealth government that was prepared to put dollars into it and enter into negotiations at a State and Territory level with the particular agencies around implementing targets, priorities and strategies. The national conference was good in that sense. It was also back in those days where there wasn't that many of us around, so the people that were involved in all of those different levels of the education and training journey were fairly thinly dispersed and fighting big battles, doing breakthrough stuff that had never been done before. And so that was pretty hectic, so having an opportunity once a year to get together with your own mob was just so important for us as Indigenous people. To collectively get together and just share stories and recharge your batteries and support each*

other and have a good balance between serious business and fun, singing and dancing. All of those other things that are really important for our survival and have a balance across all of those different aspects of our lives - that was really important to us as well. (Ludwig, interview 26/023/2016)

7.8 Conclusion

The years 1983 to 1985 were a period when, the first time, Aboriginal people were having an influential voice in senior national decision making. Over time, the employment of Aboriginal people in education and other portfolios would see the integration of an Aboriginal voice from within government bureaucracies. The voice of the NAEC as a primary advisor was very strong during this era and it moved Aboriginal people from a consultation role to that of genuine involvement in decision-making, including funding of Aboriginal education programs. Nonetheless, final responsibility for our own affairs was still to be achieved.

This term of the NAEC initiated a number of policy discussions and investigations that would be actioned in the next term of the NAEC. The following chapter highlights these policy statements and developments. The freshwater and saltwater had merged. A healthy and sustainable environment had been achieved. The challenge now would be to keep the environment nourished to ensure it remained healthy and did not stagnate.

Chapter 8

Future Legacy: A Consolidated Policy, 1986-1989

The true essence of Aboriginal education is the right of Aboriginal people to imagine our own “dreaming” and to have access to the skills, knowledge and wisdom to help to not only define this “dreaming” but also to capture it and to make it happen. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2016)

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the transition of the NAEC from a broad advisory committee to status as principal advisor to the Commonwealth Minister for Education. This resulted in the next level of advancement towards the development of policy statements and guidelines that would provide a strong foundation to move Aboriginal education agendas forward.

The following timeline highlights the major events and policy movements presented in this chapter:

1986	April: Appointment of New Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, 4 th Term NAEC <i>Policy Statement on Teacher Education 1986</i> <i>Policy Statement on Tertiary Education 1986</i> Publication of the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pedagogy Project / a joint project of the National Aboriginal Education Committee and the Curriculum Development Centre</i>
1988	July: Submission of the <i>Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce</i>
1989	Publication of NAEC - <i>National Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood</i> <i>Combating racism in tertiary institutions: strategies for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who have encountered racism in tertiary institutions</i> Abolition of the NAEC Launch of the <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy</i>

8.2 The Fourth Term of the NAEC

8.2.1 Chairperson

At the end of 1985 and leading up to the recruitment of the fourth Chairperson, the Commonwealth Minister for Education had floated the idea with the NAEC to appoint a female Chairperson. *Senator Ryan, who was the Minister, didn't want to appoint a male, as there had already been three male Chairs. A subcommittee of the women (NAEC) went to visit Susan Ryan and said, 'No, we just want to find who is the best person for the job; male or female.' That's how Errol won the job.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

Errol West had been the Deputy Chairperson in the previous term of the NAEC:

Errol West was born in Launceston, Tasmania on 20.6.1947. His traditional lineage is Emeratta tribe of Northern Tasmania. His spirit to be was created on the islands of his ancestors who were annihilated and the remaining descendants were dispossessed in the Bass Strait area. Errol received only five years of formal education and that in numerous schools on the islands and mainland of Tasmania. He accompanied his mother and father as they followed the cycle of seasonal work open to Aborigines in the late forties and early fifties. With the support and constant encouragement of his family, he re-entered education and studied to be a primary school teacher. (Williams, 2013, p. 51)

Errol West (2000) introduces himself, in the third person, in his PhD thesis:

The primary storyteller is a late middle-aged male, who spent his formative years living on a government mission, on Cape Barren Island. He went to segregated primary schools and never formally completed education above grade six in the government schooling system, and was never enrolled into secondary schooling, either systematic or non-systematic. Since those days, he has successfully completed a Diploma in Primary Teaching, converted a Bachelor of Education to a Master's degree (by research) and is currently a doctoral candidate, which is how I finally met him. (p. 18)

Aboriginal people of Tasmania were not eradicated as recorded by some early historians, although the cultural genocide that was inflicted onto their people had long term effects as it has for Aboriginal people across the whole of Australia. This is highlighted in Errol's statement above in which he credits the journey of his doctorate as a means to explore or find himself. As a young man

in the early 1970s Errol West wrote a poem, '*The Moon Birds of Big Dog Island*' illuminating the harm as a result of cultural dislocation and identity. Errol has now re-joined the spirit world. I quote his poem as it illustrates how Errol, as an Aboriginal man, through his own identity, was passionate about Aboriginal education and the advancement of Aboriginal people:

There is no-one to teach me the songs that bring the Moon Bird,

The fish or any other things that make me what I am.

No one woman to mend my spirit by preach my culture to me –

No old man with the knowledge to paint my being,

The spectre of the past is what dwells within ---

*I search my memory of early days to try to make my presence real,
significant, whole,*

*I use my childhood memories of places, people and words to re-create
my identity.*

(West, quoted by Scutter, 2001)

After the NAEC, Errol's academic work became nationally and internationally recognised, primarily in the fields of Aboriginal Studies, curriculum development, and Indigenous methodologies and pedagogies. Errol held senior academic appointments at numerous universities including James Cook University, Australian National University and, finally, as Professor of Aboriginal Studies at Southern Cross University. He was often considered the 'intellectual warrior' taking an unwavering passion to ensure social, restorative justice and the recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty.

In conjunction with Errol West being appointed as the fourth Chairperson, the Minister did appoint Lynette Crocker as the first female Deputy Chairperson of the NAEC.



Figure 15: Errol West. Photo supplied to author by Kaye Price.

8.2.2 Other Membership

In addition to the Chairperson, the following members were appointed for this term with some extended for the concluding year.

Name	Position	Years
Lyn Crocker	Deputy Chairperson Chairperson	1986 – 1988 1989
Eleanor Bourke *	Victorian AECG Deputy Chairperson	1988 1989
Bob Morgan *	NSW AECG	1986 – 1988
Eric Law	TAFE	1986 – 1989
Oriel Green	Early Childhood	1986 – 1989
Rex Garlett	WA AECG	1986 – 1988
Ethel Munn	Queensland	1986 – 1989
Ken Wyatt	Primary	1986 – 1989
Les Hegarty	Queensland AECG	1988
Peter Buckskin *	SA AECG	1986 – 1988
John Heath *	NSW AECG	1986 – 1988
Lillian Holt *	Tertiary	1986 – 1988
Davina Tyrell	Curriculum Development	1986 - 1989
William Baird	NT AECG	1986 – 1989
Mary Atkinson	Victoria AECG	1986 – 1988

Trevor Adamson	Traditional	1986 – 1989
Julius Billy		1986 – 1987
Helena Gulash	Primary/Secondary Education	1986
Janis Koolmatrie	SA AECG	1986 – 1989
Wendy Ludwig *	Adult Education	1986
Alma Stackhouse	Tasmanian AECG	1986 – 1988
Kevin Rogers	Primary School	1986 – 1988
Michael Torres	Western Australia AECG	1986 – 1989
Patricia Townsend	Feppi NT AECG	1986 – 1988

* NAEC members interviewed for this study.

8.3 Policy Statement on Teacher Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

The NAEC, when we first did our write-ups in 1986, we wrote about teacher education for one of the policy documents, the other policy document was about higher education and another was about TAFE. So we talked about that whole further education of Aboriginal peoples and part of that was to say, you've got to expand into a whole range of things. (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986a) *Policy Statement on Teacher Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders* (hereafter the Statement) made the point that effective education would require different kinds of thinking and practice that what had hitherto considered 'normal'.

It is the opinion of the National Aboriginal Education Committee that Aboriginal society is very different from non-Aboriginal society and applying normal Western methods does not always work. (p.11)

The variations within Aboriginal societies were categorised in a way that was similar to that in the EEATSIT, namely traditional, rural non-traditional, urban and urban dispersed societies. The Statement suggested that teachers who came from a similar background to the children they taught would ensure relevant and effective teaching methods and content. Having teachers from similar backgrounds was seen to be:

... necessary in order for the teachers to understand the values, lifestyles, languages and cultural methods for the children and their community. Such teachers working with the institutions of western society are invaluable to devising appropriate and effective bicultural education. (p.11)

To attain the objective of training more Aboriginal teachers from across all the Aboriginal community categories outlined by the NAEC, more targeted Aboriginal teacher education programs needed to be established. The Statement utilised successful and proven international examples in Indigenous teacher education as a basis for determining good practice. The international programs provided evidence of success through: special entry programs; specifically designed and delivered Aboriginal courses; allocation of funding to Indigenous education strategies; and an overall commitment and support by Government agencies. Another successful strategy was as the provision of off-campus teacher training where Indigenous students could remain in their own communities. The Statement highlighted the importance of specialised approaches to both on-campus and off-campus teacher training options.

The Statement also extended the initial calculations which stated that to achieve good representation there needed to be an extra 2964 Aboriginal teachers trained on top of the estimated 5518 Aboriginal teachers identified by the NAEC in 1982. This adjustment was due to the increased Indigenous population and a jump in the number of non-Aboriginal teacher graduates. The Statement noted that the original target had not taken into account the necessary distribution of qualified Teachers across early childhood, primary and secondary schooling. The already ambitious target of 1,000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990 required action to increase the access and retention of Aboriginal teaching students in tertiary institutions: *Paul had this clear commitment to increase the numbers of Aboriginal teachers to go into university spaces or Colleges of Advanced Education. Clearly, they were models that other people replicated in other disciplines in a sense. Then those Indigenous student support groups grew into centres, faculties, schools. There was a movement of the model. (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)*

8.3.1 Enclaves

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986a) policy statement on teacher education extended the classification of an enclave stating that there must be a minimum of ten Aboriginal students for it to become effective. Having a group of Aboriginal students studying together was seen as important because:

Enclave students feel far more at ease within the alien and somewhat disturbing environment of a college because they are in the company of other Aborigines. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a, p. 14)

It was also determined that a larger group of Indigenous students would provide peer support and encouragement to each other, bringing with them a range of backgrounds and experiences that would complement the support being offered from the staff of the enclave. Another key feature of the enclave structure highlighted within the Statement was that the students needed to be enrolled in standard teacher education programs that would result in full teaching qualifications. Furthermore, even though an enclave program provided the opportunity to enter tertiary studies via a special entry route, Aboriginal students who entered university through a mainstream competitive entry process would still have access to the enclave (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a).

The Statement revealed that the engagement of Aboriginal students with non-Aboriginal students and staff heightened awareness and interaction about Aboriginal perspectives and experiences. This motivated discussion relating to Aboriginal content in courses, which would have the potential to develop more appropriate curriculum for Aboriginal students, as well as inform Aboriginal Studies courses for non-Aboriginal students. The Statement argued that the enclaves created an important opportunity for the employment of Aboriginal staff who could share their professional perspectives and experiences within the institution (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a): *We brought in the pre-tertiary courses. We wanted the teachers, but we found that the teachers weren't qualified to enter tertiary. So we got the support systems going in the*

universities, or CAEs in those days. We got pre-tertiary courses in there, and that gave them entry to university, to teacher training. Because we wanted these teachers we had to go out on the highways and byways and 'kidnap' people and bring them in, because they just weren't there. They just weren't educated. First of all, we started up the enclaves and then we started up the pre-tertiary courses. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

8.3.2 Off-Campus Programs for Traditional and non-Traditional Communities

The Statement raised concern that there were currently no Aboriginal teachers from traditional Aboriginal communities in schools. Except for Batchelor Institute in the Northern Territory, there were also no training opportunities tailored to the needs of traditional Aboriginal people. The communities themselves had voiced their desires to have teachers trained however they argued that the training needed to happen within their communities. The Statement (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a) quoted a senior member of a traditional community stating the reasons for the provision of off-campus programs in such communities:

We do not want our people going away for study. They become 'broken people', they think like white fellas. Sometimes they do not come back to our community. We want our people to stay here and do their study. They are joined to our people. They are joined to our land. (p. 19)

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986a) identified two approaches to training teachers in traditional communities. Firstly Batchelor College in conjunction with the Darwin Community College in the Northern Territory had developed a three year program where a large component was delivered on-site within communities. The program was known as the Remote Area Teaching Education Program. While it attracted criticism from non-Aboriginal teachers in regards to the quality of outcomes (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016), the NAEC recognised it as an innovative program that had not been attempted in any other State. Wendy Ludwig discussed the motivation behind the development of the program. She had gone to a conference in Melbourne and observed: *To go to Melbourne and go to Swinburne and see this*

whole class of black people sitting together was just mind blowing for us. We went back to Darwin and we were talking to some of the Elders in the community...and telling them about what we saw in Melbourne with this whole group of students. We were talking about the content of the course that they were doing as well and that Koori studies was really important. We were talking about how amazing it would be to have a similar kind of thing happening in Darwin. The purpose of the Koori education program at Swinburne was also about getting people into not only study, but into jobs and things. That was the impetus for us to start up that first course in 1980. (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

The other community-based teacher training program was developed by Independent Aboriginal schools as a type of in-service training for their traditional Aboriginal teachers. At first it was an informal arrangement to assist in up-skilling the teachers. However, after good results were achieved, a full-time teacher was appointed to train and supervise the training of teachers. The schools were attempting to negotiate utilising this program to achieve more formal qualifications through the Darwin Community College.

In the *Education for Aborigines* report, the Aboriginal Consultative Group (1975) had highlighted the issue of untrained teachers being used in Torres Strait Islands schools and recommended training Torres Strait Islander teachers, and of having these schools move under the jurisdiction of the Queensland Department of Education. Since then a program had been established for Torres Strait Islander teachers to travel over to Cairns for intensive courses. However, the move to the Queensland curriculum came with challenges: *I went to Murray Island and we met with community there and we found that people from the Torres Strait were being provided with teacher training. It was really what you would call a 'sandwich' course that they taught there, and then they would go to Cairns to do some weeks of training and then back. But that training only allowed them to teach in the Torres Strait; they couldn't teach anywhere else. We found that they had to follow the Queensland curriculum strictly so that on 7 April, they will be doing this out of Spell Well. It was irrelevant to those kids on Murray Island. It was interesting too what it was actually like for a Torres*

Strait Islander person where the teachers did not recognise that the language they were speaking wasn't a first language. Those kids on Murray Island, they spoke their own language, but they were learning in English out of this Spell Well book. That was new to me and I think new to other people, how irrelevant the curriculum was. I think even though this was my first meeting and talking about it now I think, this is where my interest maybe started in the irrelevance of the curriculum for our kids, Aboriginal kids and Torres Strait kids. There was this prescribed curriculum and that's what they were supposed to teach and that's of course what they were tested on. It seemed to me to be just wrong. (Price, interview 09/01/2012)

The NAEC notes three reasons that teaching programs were ineffective for Aboriginal people, particularly those from traditional communities; cultural/theoretical, functional, and logistical. Firstly, that teaching programs had been based on Western values, philosophies, experiences and models of knowledge, which was not conducive to recognising Aboriginal values, beliefs and knowledges. Secondly, the functional aspects of entry processes and requirements, assessments and teaching methods were again noted as detrimental to traditional Aboriginal people. Thirdly, the full delivery of on-campus programs was not attractive for traditional Aboriginal people requiring them to move away from their communities, as discussed earlier (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a, p. 21).

The NAEC urged the Commonwealth Government and Australian tertiary institutions to consider the development of appropriate programs to train Aboriginal teacher aides and assistants:

Teacher aides and teaching assistants play vital roles, but are restricted to assisting non-Aboriginal teachers and do not have the status or responsibilities of teachers. Consequently, with the exception of Independent Aboriginal Community schools, school planning and implementation are carried out by teachers who are 'outsiders' to each Aboriginal community. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a, p. 20)

The offering of off-campus teacher education options, where Aboriginal aides and assistants could remain connected to their communities and cultural environments while gaining a credential was believed to be a route to increasing

the participation and successful completion of teaching qualifications. The NAEC appealed to tertiary institutions to incorporate content within courses that related to Aboriginal people teaching in non-urban communities:

The Committee believes that for a teacher to be successful in what is a different set of cultural mores and values within Aboriginal society, a teacher must be intimately aware of those mores and values. Aboriginal people are best suited to this situation. Current teacher programs fail to provide teachers with the understanding and skills necessary to teach in these areas. (p. 16)

8.3.3 Consolidated Policy Guidelines

The Statement (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a) concluded with a list of consolidated policy guidelines that recommended action from government agencies as well as tertiary and higher education institutions. The NAEC recommended extending the target of 1,000 Aboriginal teachers by 1990 initiative to 5,000 Aboriginal teachers by the year 2000 and advocated that their community categories be recognised (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a).

To ensure Aboriginal teacher graduates were successful in obtaining positions in the classroom, it was recommended that the State teacher employment authorities provide a guarantee of full-time employment for Aboriginal graduates (up to 4,000 across Australia). Continued development of Aboriginal resource people such as Aboriginal School Counsellors and Liaison Officers was also seen as vital. The NAEC considered that Aboriginal teacher aspirations should be encouraged and that Aboriginal people should strive for senior educational and administrative positions.

Finally, on-campus Enclaves and the delivery of off-campus teaching programs were both strongly advocated for by the NAEC. Additionally, the embedding of Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Education as compulsory components of teaching degrees was seen to be vital. The NAEC believed that all of the above priorities, although focussing on teacher education, would serve as an excellent model for the success of Aboriginal students embarking on, or aspiring to, other

disciplines, such as Law, Social Work and Health (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a).

8.4 Policy Statement on Tertiary Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

In 1986, the introduction of the Policy Statement on Tertiary Education for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (PSTE)(National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b), highlighted that there were 799 Aboriginal students enrolled in programs within universities or CAEs, with the retention of 617 by the end of the year. Of these students, 285 were enrolled in courses other than teaching with the majority being mature aged students. It was indicated there needed to be 3,630 Aboriginal students enrolled to achieve parity with non-Aboriginal students (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b).

At the time of the development of the PSTE it was becoming obvious that Aboriginal teaching graduates were not being retained in the classroom. Table 6 indicates that only 50% of Aboriginal teachers were retained in the classroom. Table 6 further summarises:

The requirements if the target of 1000 Aboriginal teachers in the classroom is to be achieved by 1990. The table incorporates the fact that approximately half the Aboriginal qualified teachers have left classroom teaching and consequently 2000 graduates are required. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b, p. 21)

The PSTE (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b) set these estimates noting a requirement of 476–758 new enrolments each year dependent on the variables displayed in the following table of 50–80% retention.

Table 6: Requirements to reach the target of 1000 Aboriginal Teachers employed by 1990

	% of Aboriginal population	Graduates to end of 1982	Number in training, November 1983	Estimated graduates 1983-85(a)	Estimated total graduates	Target employed (b)	Target graduates (b) (c)	Shortfall of target in 1985	Graduates necessary per year 1986-89	Necessary Annual intake 1984-87 (d)	
										50% retention	80% retention
NSW	22.1	58	87	70	128	221	442	314	79	158	99
Vic.	3.8	27	14	11	38	38	76	38	10	20	13
Qld	28.0	71	105	84	155	280	560	405	101	202	126
SA	6.1	13	36	29	42	61	122	80	20	40	25
WA	19.6	43	44	35	78	196	392	314	78	156	98
Tas.	1.7	1	1	1	2	17	34	32	8	16	10
NT	18.2	3	44(e)	35	38	182	364	326	82	164	103
ACT	0.5	4	1	1	5	5	10	5	1	2	2
Aust.	100	220	332	266	486	1000	2000	1514	379	758	476

- (a) Assumes 80 per cent of number in training, November 1983, will graduate by 1989 (probably an overestimate).
- (b) State targets are based on the percentage of the total Aboriginal population.
- (c) Assumes the current trend of 50 percent of Aboriginal qualified teachers leaving classroom teaching will continue.
- (d) That is, two different assumptions of 50 percent retention and 80 percent retention.
- (e) This includes thirty-nine enrolled in the Associate Diploma in Teaching at Bachelor; above assumes 80 percent of these will complete a Diploma in Teaching by 1989.

Source: National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986b)

Eleanor summed up the mood of the NAEC at the time in relation to their focus on training Aboriginal teachers: *Higher education was such a big focus when the teacher education policy was announced, pushed things into higher education and when the teachers were trained, we did get the 1000 trained, but they didn't end up working in the schools, they ended up getting jobs in government. So there was an impact there from those people being wherever they were, perhaps working in the universities, going into the centres. So it was a different outcome from what was intended.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

The PSTE focused on expanding the discipline of Law and Medicine to Aboriginal students. In 1983, there were only seven Aboriginal graduates in Law and two Aboriginal graduates in Medicine. The Law graduates had come from the University of New South Wales and the medical graduates from the

University of Newcastle. It was determined that under the current environment it would take significant time to realise the impacts of these initiatives in Law and Medicine. The PSTE recommended that in negotiating the increase in enclaves there needed to also be particular attention given to programs supporting Aboriginal enrolments in these two disciplines. In the short term funding was allocated towards specialised Enclaves, one in Eastern Australian and one in Western Australia. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986b) PSTE also explained:

It must be remembered that Aboriginal customary law and traditional medical practices are of at the least equal importance in the lives of many Aboriginal people. There is increasing recognition by non-Aboriginal society of the validity of these forms of traditional learning and any program of special measures for Aborigines in tertiary education must include the facility to provide resources for these forms of learning. (p. 24)

This awareness and recognition was also relevant for those teaching into the programs. *When I was studying Law one lecturer had the audacity to say to the lecture theatre; 'When Australia was settled we brought all the laws from England to Australia'. I interrupted and said, 'I can't believe this, Indigenous people, we had our own laws, our own language and our own culture long before you invaded us'. He was a little bit taken back and said, 'Yes, yes I apologise, Aboriginal people were here'. But it shows that even in tertiary institutions, like the law school and quite an esteemed law school - it's not as if they've got fools there - but they were still teaching this sort of thing.* (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

The NAEC advocated the training of Aboriginal people to be managers and para-professionals in disciplines relevant to working back in their communities or within the public service. The introduction of 'Aboriginalisation' within Government departments had opened opportunities for increasing Aboriginal employment. However, while the previous target of 1852 positions for Aboriginal people had been set for 1985 by the NAEC, in 1983 there were only 242 identified Aboriginal employees in the Commonwealth Public Service (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b).

The number of Aboriginal organisations was rapidly increasing and there was a need for Aboriginal people to have the appropriate managerial skills to ensure these organisations were sustainable and to lead them. Tertiary courses had already commenced that would focus on these areas however they required expansion. The introduction of the first Aboriginal program run by the Darwin Community College, the Certificate in General Studies for Aborigines, was a good example of a course that opened up opportunities for Aboriginal people to embark on tertiary studies in Business and Management: *It was a ground breaking course that a whole heap of people in the community had spent the previous four or five years negotiating with the Community College hierarchy around introducing this course. It was the first ever Indigenous-specific course to be run in that institution. We had to deal with all of the negative kind of comments about apartheid in reverse and 'it's a Mickey Mouse course' and 'it's not going to be anywhere near the equivalent of mainstream courses' and all of that stuff. The course came about as a result of the fact that we had lots and lots of our people sitting in low level positions within the public service, both the NT and Commonwealth public service and the need to increase the amount of Aboriginal people in higher level positions. Also the reality, that it's still very much true today, that not a lot of our people were completing Year 12.* (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

TAFE was still raised as being an attractive pathway option to higher education programs and to gain a practical qualification. However, despite the recommendations made in the TAFE report by the Aboriginal Consultative Group (1976) statistics were still lacking on Aboriginal enrolments in TAFE due to poor data collection. The data that was available continued to show Aboriginal students enrolled in low level courses. The PSTE noted that there had been criticism of the relevant authorities for only encouraging the participation of Aboriginal people in low level courses, resulting in lowered aspirations and academic achievement (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b).

Enclaves were once again highlighted as a key strategy for supporting the access and participation of Aboriginal students in higher education (National

Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986a). However, the PSTE explained that as the awareness of the current enclaves grew there became an influx of applications from prospective Aboriginal students which was already putting a strain on the financial and staffing resources. This needed immediate attention:

A framework must be established which enables institutions to cater adequately for the increased interest in higher education by Aborigines. The current situation is that a new enclave...generates a demand which often cannot be met. People with the ability who were initially not given the opportunity to complete their schooling are forced to wait, perhaps a number of years. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b, p. 27)

The PSTE referred to the access programs offered by tertiary institutions and proposed that institutions allocate additional positions for Aboriginal students over and above their funded quota for priority programs such as Medicine. Additionally, it was argued that there should be consideration of special positions allocated within the funded quota which are selected from entry criteria that responded to the unique environments and experiences of Aboriginal prospective students. Bridging programs were highlighted as a successful means for Aboriginal people to gain access to tertiary institutions. It was deemed that bridging programs were most successful if they were undertaken in the same institution where the student was to carry out their further studies, and with support offered by an enclave. It was, however, the strong view of the NAEC that in the longer term, Aboriginal students should be encouraged to enrol in standard courses (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1986b).

The PSTE indicated that special programs for Aboriginal students needed to be embedded into the central structure of universities and not be sitting as adjunct units. It was advised that Aboriginal people should lead the strategic directions and operations of special programs and enclaves. It was also suggested that tertiary institutions needed to promote the voices of Aboriginal people in the decision making. Increasing the employment of Aboriginal staff was seen as a strategy that would contribute to this result. Setting employment targets for Aboriginal employment against the overall staff population was seen as essential. Another strategy was to appoint Aboriginal people to sit on

governance committees of universities, as well as appointing an Aboriginal advisory community board. These boards would create a link to AECGs and the NAEC.

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986b) criticised the neglect of research and evaluation in Aboriginal education. It was recommended that research centres be established and funded:

There is an increasing need for incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and approaches into various fields but few resources have been provided to 'develop and extend the art' in different fields. These Centres would be Centres of teaching and research in various aspects of Aboriginal Affairs...outside the standard Western curricula. (p. 36)

Led by primarily Aboriginal staff, it was believed that these centres could provide postgraduate opportunities for Aboriginal students in traditional and community based areas.

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1986b) concluded that:

All tertiary institutions should adopt, as policy, special entry requirements; recognise that measures to assist Aborigines operating within their institutions are part of their responsibility for the operation of special programs; and should ensure that Aborigines participate in the general operation of the institutions, especially by employing Aboriginal people and appointing Aborigines to the governing bodies of institutions.

Education institutions should also have a policy of encouraging faculties to improve their courses by incorporating units and material reflecting Aboriginal learning and perspectives; in particular, to include units and materials reflecting Aboriginal values and needs where this will help to prepare teachers who will later teach Aboriginal children. (p. 39)

8.5 The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pedagogy Project

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pedagogy Project was a joint initiative between the NAEC, the Commonwealth Curriculum Development Centre and the State and Territory AECGs. The aim of the project was to review, identify and promote appropriate Aboriginal teaching and learning approaches and establish curriculum materials that would facilitate the learning of Aboriginal

Students at all levels of education (National Aboriginal Education Committee & Curriculum Development Centre, 1986). In determining the aim of appropriate pedagogy for Aboriginal students, the Committee stated:

An appropriate pedagogy should contain all the diverse elements that impact upon the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
(p. 3)

The Committee voiced concerns about the current school environment in providing appropriate teaching and learning outcomes for Aboriginal students:

The learning environment, which includes the school curriculum, its organisation, management and the hidden overt signals about what is acceptable and what is not has been traditionally viewed as foreign to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents and community. (p. 3)

The research for the project included the distribution of discussion papers authored by Helen Watson, Paul Hughes and Robert Andrews. Also, commissioned action research undertaken in each State and Territory as well as a questionnaire distributed as part of the project. Paul discusses the lack of information available to lead these types of projects and initiatives: *Initially it was historical Aboriginal studies, post-colonisation. By the end of the NAEC, people started to get into the business of expanding about Aboriginal knowledges and what people did inside of cultures and so on. Then the gradual movement of Aboriginal studies into Aboriginal perspectives, taking the information and putting it across the curriculum. Those things grew out of the NAEC because we'd always said that there were different forms of Aboriginal studies: one was to know about the study as a whole, and others was to have perspectives about it incorporated across the curriculum. Then the third arm of everything was the whole discussion about what sort of pedagogy do you need. I'm sure we spent a lot more time looking at information coming forward about bits and pieces but nobody had done a whole lot of particular research about the best way to teach Aboriginal studies or the best way to teach Aboriginal kids.* (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

The outcome of the project was the development of an *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Resource* (ATSIR) (National Aboriginal Education Committee & Curriculum Development Centre, 1986) that aimed to contribute to the improvement of teaching practices within schools and other educational institutions. The ATSIR was launched by the Commonwealth Curriculum Corporation in 1991, and included materials on both traditional and contemporary perspectives on Aboriginal Studies, as well as examples and guidelines for the delivery of appropriate pedagogy (National Aboriginal Education Committee & Curriculum Development Centre, 1986).

8.6 National Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood

8.6.1 Priorities and Guidelines for Early Childhood Education

In 1985, the NAEC appointed an Early Childhood Working Party to contribute to the development of early childhood Aboriginal education policy guidelines. The Working Party was chaired by Paul Hughes and consisted of: Oriel Green, the early childhood specialist appointed to the NAEC; three members from the Early Childhood section of various State Department of Education; five further NAEC members; and one member of the NAEC secretariat.

In August 1988, the NAEC Working Party tabled an early childhood education (ECE) policy document to the NAEC. Early in 1989, the document, *National Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood Education* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989), was published. The aim of the document was to provide advice on developing an integrated system that would meet the needs of Aboriginal families and communities. The policy document was developed for the use of early childhood services and other stakeholders involved in the sector.

John Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training at the time stated in the preface to the document was published titled:

The position represented in this document is that Aboriginal ECE services should be delivered within a broader framework that actively promotes the emotional and psychological well-being of young Aboriginal people in Australia. (p. 2)

Errol West, NAEC Chairperson and Lynette Crocker, Deputy Chairperson further elaborated on behalf of the NAEC and the working party:

We hope this document will enable educators and administrators to understand the importance of Early Childhood Education which recognises and utilises the cultural background and knowledge systems of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We believe that such understanding is essential to effect relevant and satisfactory learning and development for our children in the educative process. (p. 3)

To capture the holistic experience of early childhood, including the transition from pre-school to primary school, the Working Party elected to focus the paper on 0 to 8 years of age instead of the usual 0 to 5 years. The Working Party had considered that birth to 8 years was a time when development and attitudes towards education were vitally important. It was seen integral that parents, community and educators work together to ensure that strong skills and attributes were developed linking classroom environments with the children's identity and Aboriginality.

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) considered that ECE was the foundational platform on which future educational success would be built for Aboriginal children. It was clear from evidence collected by the Commonwealth Department of Education that Aboriginal children were not achieving success within the school system:

While the problem of school failure has not yet been solved the NAEC believe this situation can be reversed by the provision of appropriate, quality and culturally relevant Early Childhood Education.

The NAEC believes that positive educational experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in early childhood must build on the strengths and cultural traits they possess. This enables the maintenance and development of their cultural heritage, language and identity. (p. 6)

The Working Party believed that one of the major strategies for achieving better outcomes was having Aboriginal people contribute to decision making within

ECE. This included all levels of the sector from administration, policy development, and especially teaching: *The Indigenous teachers had to be part of the classroom instead of sharpening the pencil and doing other things, odd things. They had to be in the classroom and listening to students read and helping them how to recognise words and especially early childhood is a must. That's where the learning starts and it's very important. Once the teachers get in the classroom they had to be very cluey in their head what they needed to teach. For example, just don't think about, we do English all the time. Most of our Territory kids have English as the second language or third language even. Yeah, so need to make it more easy access material for the students to work off and to see. If you talk about this they wouldn't even think about what it is. It's a picture of some sort of colour. They might say the colour, they know what this is but they have to see visual in front of them not just told or written on the board.* (Uibo, interview 04/11/2014)

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) advised that ECE must promote the holistic needs and well-being of Aboriginal children, physically, emotionally, spiritually and cognitively. It was emphasised that education should ensure Aboriginal children maintain positive self-image and self-concepts related to identity and culture. Children needed to have the opportunity to extend their linguistic skills and be in an environment that involved group, parents, and community development. The teaching of Aboriginal studies and the recognition of diverse Aboriginal cultures was also seen as an important aspect of the ECE experience.

8.6.2 Implementation of Early Childhood Education Guidelines

The implementation strategy defined in the Guidelines (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989) took into consideration: consultation and community involvement; curriculum; the administration of early childhood programs; research; and funding. Each of these is outlined below.

8.6.2.1 Consultation and Community Involvement

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) emphasised the importance of consultation and community involvement, favouring strong communication links with State and Territory AECGs. They warned that building these relationships was not always easy given the negative educational experiences of Aboriginal people however; building trust and respect would result in positive outcomes for the early childhood sector. The NAEC explained that the consequences of the involvement of Aboriginal people would include:

- *Adapting the present educational system to be more responsive and appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs and aspirations.*
- *Fostering more positive educational outcomes than have been achieved to date.* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989, p. 8)

It was pointed out that encouragement of parental and community involvement in all aspects of ECE was deemed crucial. In addition, the NAEC suggested the sector utilise the skills and knowledges that Aboriginal parents and community members. This would include strategies that ensured continued interaction, instead of an ad-hoc approach.

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) stated their concerns about the sectors reliance on a Western epistemology of child raising practices , and the limited recognition of the cultural mores that Aboriginal children are exposed to within their families and communities. Programs developed in collaboration with parents and communities would ensure the appropriate development and implementation of programs to meet the needs of Aboriginal children.

Early Childhood Education should provide positive experiences which will contribute to the child's total development as an Aborigine and Torres Strait Islander. Early Childhood Programs should take into account what is known of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Programs should also provide an environment which is sufficiently familiar to children to be understood by them and sufficiently novel or unique to attract, maintain and further their interest. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989, p. 8)

8.6.2.2 Curriculum

The Working Party concurred with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pedagogy Project* (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989), that curriculum needed to recognise the diverse knowledges of Aboriginal people and not perpetuate a solely Western viewpoint. The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) stipulated that curriculum for early childhood education for Aboriginal children need to align with the three principles described below:

1. Recognition of the Cultural Identity of the Child

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) directed that the diverse cultures in contemporary Aboriginal societies must be recognised when designing curriculum. Aboriginal identity within the current environment is usually determined by the level of connection to: traditional Aboriginal values; exposure and integration into a European lifestyle; and the diversity of community regions. The Working Party emphasised that within ECE the identity of the children needed to be recognised as a strength that would contribute to their success within education:

Through curriculum Early Childhood Educators need to be made aware that they must recognise, foster and respect Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander children's particular view of themselves. Early Childhood Educators must remember that these children need to function in society as themselves. Their identity needs to be securely founded and maintained in their own cultural frame of reference. For it is only when a person's identity is firmly established and stable that they can attempt to cross into other different cultural frames of reference without becoming lost or confused. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989, p. 10)

2. Recognition of Aspects of Cultural Difference which Influence Learning

The document emphasised that the practice of child-rearing is extremely important. It stated that early childhood educators needed to understand the diverse nature of child-rearing practices undertaken within Aboriginal communities. These practices needed to be respected as they developed over thousands of years. The NAEC (National Aboriginal Education Committee,

1989) considered that it would be detrimental to the child to have two totally different expectations placed on them between home and the early childhood environment and that some level of consistency was required.

Collaboration and communication between early childhood providers, parents and communities were primary strategies for achieving positive outcomes.

3. Recognition that the Design and Development of Curriculum and Related Resources and Materials for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Education should involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Educators

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) determined that there needed to be pedagogy developed that was specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It was established that this pedagogy needed to be developed by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander early childhood educators or experts. If this was not possible, then advice needed to be sought from these educators and experts along with the input of Aboriginal parents and communities. The guidelines further outlined the possible range of mental and physical characteristics, learning styles, behaviours and environments of Aboriginal children for consideration when determining appropriate pedagogy.

8.6.2.3 Teacher and Educator Training

The guidelines referred to the importance of achieving the 1000 Aboriginal teachers target especially for ECE:

One of the most important determinants of the success of any Early Childhood Education programme is the quality of the staff responsible for planning and implementing the programme. The NAEC believes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's first experiences in formal education settings will be more successful if staff in the centres shared the same cultural backgrounds as the child. (National Aboriginal Education Committee, 1989, p. 14)

In addition to Aboriginal teachers, the aim was to have Aboriginal people working in all areas of early childhood education. Appropriate courses and

training by TAFE and tertiary institutions were considered vital to achieving this outcome.

Review of Current Training Facilities

The National Aboriginal Education Committee (1989) applauded the progress of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre at Batchelor in the NT for delivering courses that focus on building qualifications of traditional Aboriginal teachers. A further need was identified to introduce vocational Child Care courses aimed at graduating Aboriginal Child Care workers to support EC teachers.

8.7 Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce

In April 1988, the Commonwealth Government's Minister for Employment, Education and Training, The Hon. John Dawkins, and Aboriginal Affairs Minister, The Hon Gerry Hand, appointed an *Aboriginal Education Taskforce*. The Taskforce, chaired by Paul Hughes, a former Chairperson of the NAEC, was given the responsibility to develop a *National Aboriginal Education Policy*. Minister Gerry Hand announced the establishment of the Taskforce stating:

We have had enough enquiries into Aboriginal education... what we need now is action. (Department Employment Education and Training, 1988, p. 2)

As educational policies evolved the Commonwealth Government was drawing distinctions between Commonwealth and national policies. This was articulated in 1987 with the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools*, stating:

There is a necessary distinction between Commonwealth and national policies in education. Commonwealth policies relate specifically to the objectives of the Commonwealth Government, such as those addressed through the Commonwealth's general resources programs and its specific purpose programs. In contrast, a national policy in education addresses matters of concern to the nation as a whole in which a comprehensive approach to policy development and implementation is adopted by school and system authorities across the nation. A national policy, based on principles of collaboration and partnership, necessarily involves commitment and agreement from the various parties responsible for schooling, including Commonwealth, State and Territory governments

and non-government school authorities. (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1987, p.11)

The Commonwealth government determined that a national Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) was needed to lead Aboriginal education into the future. The work of the NAEC, in collaboration with the AECGs, strongly contributed to the work of the Taskforce: *We ended up setting up a framework for a national policy, and the NAEC had a fair bit to do with that.* (Padmore, interview 20/06/2013) The major policy documents that were produced and published in the past two terms by the NAEC proved particularly useful: There was however a bit of disappointment from the NAEC executive about the organisation being overlooked to undertake the work that was allocated to the Taskforce: *Paul, who got invited to Chair a Taskforce included a number of ex-members of the NAEC, like Alana Goulash as the Executive Officer, Bob Morgan and others. At the time, I think Errol and others felt there wasn't due respect paid for the movement and, if anything, those Aboriginal people should have referred that work to the NAEC. I understand, probably we had different types of roles to play, but I'm sure Errol felt, 'No, that was our job'. I thought well the NAEC will have an opportunity to respond to the report and we did. We had opportunity to be interviewed or write our own submissions to the Taskforce. And I don't think the outcome, in terms of establishing the AEP and then whole suite of programs that supported the policy to give it life, would have been different if the NAEC did it themselves. We all came from that shared understanding, because we were such a small cohort of people, and as I said it was green pastures, because there was nothing.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

In addition to Paul Hughes, the membership of the Taskforce comprised many present and past members of the NAEC:

<i>Bob Morgan</i>	<i>Member, NAEC & Former Chairperson, NSW AECG</i>
<i>David Rathman</i>	<i>Head, School Aboriginal Education, SA TAFE</i>
<i>Rex Garlett</i>	<i>Member, NAEC & Chairperson, WA AECG</i>

<i>Alf Bamblett</i>	<i>Exec Officer Victorian Aboriginal Community Service, Executive, Victorian AECG & Former NAEC member</i>
<i>Peg Haven</i>	<i>Head Division, Aboriginal Education, Darwin Institute of Technology</i>
<i>Ursula Raymond</i>	<i>Victorian Koori Students Association</i>
<i>Bakamana Yunupingu</i>	<i>Graduate of Deakin Uni., Batchelor College & Associate Principal Yirrkala Community School</i>
<i>Jeanie Bell</i>	<i>Co-ordinator, Aboriginal Studies Unit, Uni. Queensland (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, pp. 3-4)</i>

The Taskforce Chair Paul Hughes perceived the need to:

Create a consolidated policy on Aboriginal education that the Government can accept, and link it into the Government's budgeting structure. A lot of the policies that have been developed have been written from a philosophical viewpoint. They don't necessarily fit into the bureaucratic funding structure...A lot of the developments in Aboriginal education in this country have been the result of the work of the NAEC and the Aboriginal education consultative network. It has provided a way for people to get involved in the decision making process and it's done a lot to push the cause and open up the debate...One of our problems is that we don't have a negotiated State-Commonwealth agreement in Aboriginal education that allows for confident, long-term budget and program processes. (Department Employment Education and Training, 1988, p. 2)



Figure 17: Paul Hughes (right), Chairperson of National Education Taskforce with Gerry Hand, Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Accessed DEET *Aboriginal News*, June 88.

The formal Terms of Reference for the Taskforce was centred on the provision of recommendations that would guide the development and funding of a future Aboriginal education policy. This included:

- *The Government's stated intention of achieving broad equity in Aboriginal participation and retention rates and educational outcomes by the year 2000;*
- *The commitments already made by the Government through the education and formal training component of the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy (AEDP) and the importance of education and training in raising Aboriginal employment profiles;*
- *The major funding responsibilities of State and Territory Governments for the provision of education and TAFE levels;*
- *The need to ensure that the already available views of relevant Aboriginal advisory bodies and the Aboriginal community are given full consideration;*
- *The Aboriginal education goals and programs of the Commonwealth, the States/Territories and non-government authorities to ensure as far as possible that they are complementary and contribute to the broad equity objectives;*
- *The role of independent Aboriginal institutions;*
- *The need for adequate schooling and post-schooling provisions in rural and remote communities;*
- *The development of appropriate Aboriginal courses and curricula;*
- *The need to improve the quality of teaching in schools;*
- *The need to improve the career counselling capacity for Aboriginal students, particularly in rural and remote areas;*
- *The importance of improving representation of Aboriginal students in the full range of tertiary fields of study. (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, pp. 4-5)*

The Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (1988) reinforced the continued disadvantage of Aboriginal people in education. They explained that although there seemed to have been a significant increase in outcomes over the past twenty years, this is only as a result of such a low starting point. They utilised the table below to present the 1986 education participation rates that demonstrated the continued crisis of Aboriginal education.

Table 7: Education Participation Rates 1986

Age group	Aboriginal people (per cent)	All Australians (per cent)
5-9 years (a)	88.2	99.0 (b)
10-15 years (a)	83.1	98.3
16-17 years	31.6	74.5
18-20 years	7.5	41.4
21-24 years	4.1	20.4
25 years and over	2.7	7.9 (c)

(a) The education participation rates for those aged 5 to 9 include school and pre-school participation; for those aged 10 to 15 years they include school participation only. The rates for all other age groups show participation in schooling, TAFE and higher education.

(b) Estimated

(c) For the age group 25-64 years only.

Source: Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, (1988, p. 9)

The Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (1988) identified, through the previous commissioned reports and the NAEC policy documents, that Aboriginal people placed a high importance on education. However, a number of barriers affecting the participation and success of Aboriginal students in education continued to occur, including:

- *Racial discrimination which serves to exacerbate the educational disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal people;*
- *Social and cultural alienation which is experienced both in local communities and in schooling;*
- *Economic disadvantage and poorer living standards which inhibit Aboriginal participation and impede successful completion of an education;*
- *Geographical isolation which is experienced by one-third of the Aboriginal population who live in Aboriginal townships, homeland communities or other small townships across the nation with less than 1000 inhabitants, and which are not as well provided for educationally as larger centres of population; and*
- *Lack of co-ordination among services at various levels of government which effectively isolates many Aboriginal people from available education programs. (p. 16)*

Five comprehensive objectives were highlighted by the Taskforce that would overarch the recommendations towards a national Aboriginal education policy. The objectives were based on the principles of self-determination and self-management by Aboriginal people in education. The objectives were:

- *To achieve equity in the provision of education to all Aboriginal children, young people and adults by the year 2000;*
- *To assist Aboriginal parents and communities to be fully involved in the planning and provision of education for themselves and their children;*
- *To achieve parity in participation rates by Aboriginal people with those of other Australians in all stages of education;*
- *To achieve positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal people in schooling and tertiary education; and*
- *To improve the provision of education services across the nation at the local level. (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, pp. 16-17)*

The Taskforce was given two months to complete the report and in July, 1988 the report was presented to the Ministers with fifty-nine recommendations. The recommendations set the following priorities: Aboriginal community involvement; increased participation; positive educational outcomes; improving local provisions; strategies for schooling in all sectors of education, including early childhood, primary and secondary, tertiary education and higher education; and governance (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988).

8.8 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Joint Policy Statement

In October 1988, the Minister for Education, Employment and Training announced that, informed by the Taskforce report, the Commonwealth and the States would develop a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Joint Policy Statement. This policy was to guide the progress of Aboriginal education into the future.

A Commonwealth Working Group was established to work towards the development of a Joint Policy Statement. The Working Group was chaired by Mike Gallagher, First Assistant Secretary of Community and Aboriginal

Programs Division of the Department of Employment, Education and Training. To work in collaboration with the Working Group, an Aboriginal reference group was established. This was led by the Lyn Crocker, the final Chairperson of the NAEC and Eleanor Bourke, Deputy Chairperson of the NAEC, with members from all AECGs across Australia. The reference group was to ensure Aboriginal input was maintained throughout the development of the joint policy statement (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1989).

The Draft Joint Policy Statement was distributed to all relevant Commonwealth and State Departments of Education for their comments and endorsement, before being tabled in the Commonwealth government Cabinet of Ministers. Although all Departments provided positive input and endorsement, the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs, did offer the following comments:

While the draft policy paper alludes to the importance of Aboriginal involvement in the processes of educational decision making, there is no clear indication of the strategies to achieve this aspect of the policy objective. The Department is fully aware of the call by Aboriginals throughout Australia for a comprehensive Commonwealth Education Policy... The proposal does no more than outline a policy and strategy for achieving educational outcomes in the Aboriginal community consistent with that available to all other Australians. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1989, p. Attach. C)

The draft policy statement was submitted and passed through Cabinet on 1 August 1989. The Cabinet agreed that:

- a) *There exists a need for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy that is supported by Aboriginal people and State and Territory governments, as well as the Commonwealth, to address the unacceptably low levels of Aboriginal access to, participation in and outcomes from education; and*
- b) *The draft National Policy statement that is based on the principle of a long-term commitment by governments towards the attainment of equity for Aboriginals in access to, participation in, and outcomes from education, be endorsed.* (Commonwealth Department of Education, 1989, p. 1)

A legislated policy was going to be integral to the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of the delivery of outcomes for Aboriginal people in education.

This had been the focus of the NAEC for the past eleven years: *So much has grown out of what we did - and there are a lot of us over the years, when you think of an 18 member committee and what's grown out of that. The AEP was legislated in 1989 - it still is now. It can't be easily changed because it was legislated, but all of that came out of the NAEC.* (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

On 26 October 1989, the Minister launched the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP). The AEP outlined 21 goals defined through four main themes: involvement, access, participation and outcomes (refer to Appendix D for the AEP).

The implementation of the joint policy statement had put a strong emphasis on the involvement of Aboriginal people explaining:

For Aboriginal education purposes the effectiveness of schools, colleges and other educational institutions depends in large part on the degree to which Aboriginal people are involved in the process of educational decision-making. Without parental and community involvement there can be no guarantee that students will attend, that the curriculum will be relevant and that learning outcomes will be achieved. Aboriginal youth are also more likely to stay on and succeed at school when they see and have contact with Aboriginal people in professional roles in school, and are exposed to Aboriginal role models. (Department Employment Education and Training, 1989, p. 10)

The implementation of the plan and its operational stages was detailed in the following diagram:

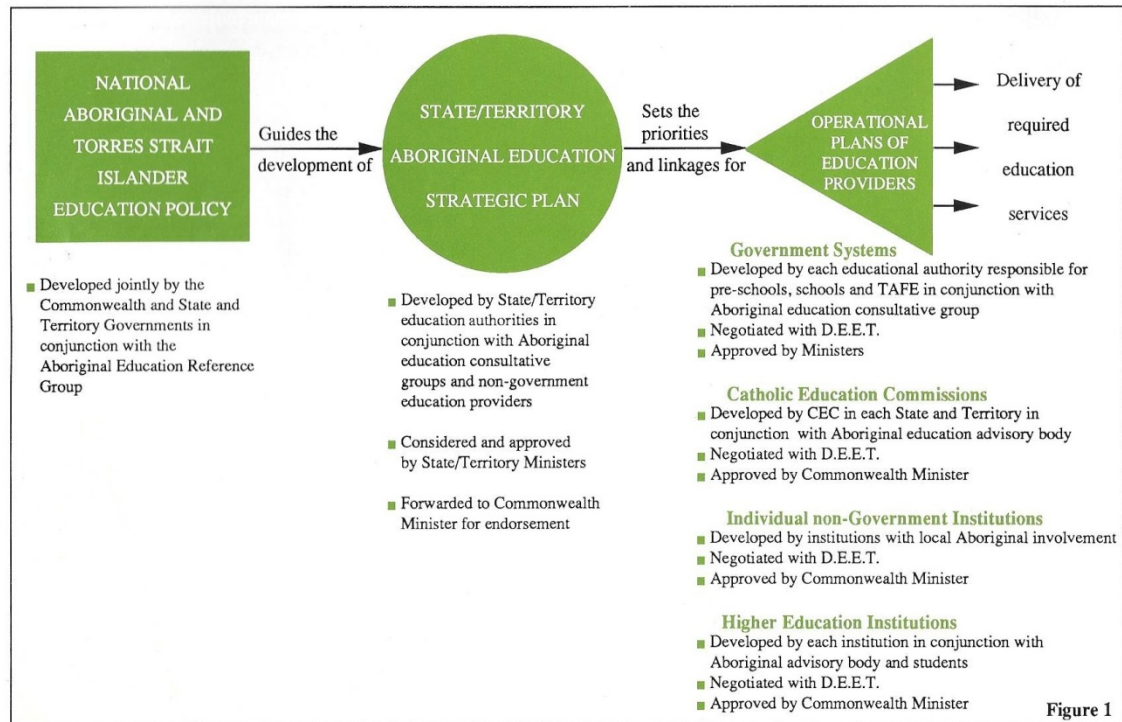


Figure 18: Implementation Strategy for the AEP (Department Employment Education and Training, 1989, p. 4).

8.8.1 Criticism of the AEP

There was a lot of support by Aboriginal communities for a consolidated policy that would hold the Commonwealth and States accountable for the ongoing commitment to Aboriginal education. However, there was also criticism relating to the final Joint Policy Statement that was developed. The original Taskforce report stated that they believed:

Equality for Aborigines in education is essential to the economic, social and cultural development of Aboriginal communities. Perhaps the most challenging issue of all is to ensure education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity... Therefore the Government must commit itself to providing education opportunities to Aboriginal people regardless of where they live, and in a manner that is appropriate to the diverse cultural and social situations in which they live. (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, p. 2)

In contrast, the launch and implementation documents for the AEP had summarised the visions of the Taskforce as:

a concerted effort to achieve broad equity between Aboriginal people and other Australians in access, participation and outcomes in all stages of education. (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, 1988, p. 2)

Bob Morgan, a member of the Taskforce, as well as Dr Coombs, a Labor party policy writer on Aboriginal Affairs, publicly described the policy as assimilationist. Bourke (1991) supported their arguments on the basis of the definition of assimilation and that the plan was not reflective of some of the main points raised by the Taskforce:

The policy has been summarised into twenty one goals. They deal with Aboriginal involvement, access, equity and outcomes. There is little emphasis on curriculum development or on matters Aboriginal. It offers little support for the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal language and Aboriginal students appreciating their history, cultures and identity. The major thrust of the policy is to have Aboriginal students achieve the same as non-Aborigines. (p. 16)

Bob explained his angst regarding the Department's interpretation of the Taskforce report: *The first report that came from the Taskforce was in my opinion very innovative and creative, and again, seminal. It was recommending things that hadn't even been thought of before. We bravely put that report together. The first report wasn't acceptable to the Department, so the Department then decided that it wanted another report. I remember, because I was very vocal about the right of the Taskforce. We were trying to assert our own vision and our own set of recommendations to achieve that vision. So I was ropable about the fact that the Department wanted us to re-write or water down the report. I wanted no part of that and as I said I was very vocal. I remember they had this one guy and another Aboriginal guy, they invited me to lunch. They said, 'Well Bob you seem to be the voice of opposition to everything inside the Department and they're scared of what you're doing. So can we maybe talk about your opposition to them?' And I did. They tried to convince me that it wasn't proper for me as the president of the AECG and as a member of the Task Force to disagree. I said, 'No, I'm not going to agree with that; I think that what you're proposing flies in the face of all the things that I believe in and all the things that the NAEC stands for'. This was around independence and autonomy and the right to self-determination and all that stuff. I then refused to be a part of the official launch because they did proceed to put it together in*

another report and with a series of recommendations which I didn't agree with. So I boycotted the launch. I didn't want to be a part of it. It didn't make any difference - they went ahead and did it - but for me I felt really good about the fact that I stood by my principles.

Some of the other members also had very similar views - I used to have a great rapport with Yunupingu because he was also part of the Taskforce. I think he was a principal at one of the schools. He knew the stuff that I was promoting and objecting to was virtually what they were trying to do in those schools in the Northern Territory. A couple of the other people that were a part of the Taskforce as well, I think they intuitively knew that they were being conned by the Government and the Department. You've got to remember, this is after the NAEC had started to be disestablished so the NAEC didn't exist to be able to fight those battles. So as for the Taskforce, the two reports, they're a bit like chalk and cheese. It was written in a way that made it more acceptable and probably sellable if you want put it that way; that it was acceptable to the Department. Whereas, I thought the whole notion of a Taskforce was to be independent, and to put forward the type of vision that we wanted. We wanted accountability. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

8.9 Combating Racism

One of the last contributions of the NAEC was a paper that dealt with combating racism in tertiary institutions (ref). The increase of Aboriginal people participating in tertiary education was accompanied by increased reports of racism. The NAEC believed that if Aboriginal people were going to move forward within Western educational institutions, attention needed to be given to combatting the racism faced by Aboriginal people. A NAEC Working Party on Racism in Higher Education was established as a response to this serious issue. The paper sought to provide advice on how to combat racism. Paul Hughes pointed out there was not a lot of literature to go on: *There was little research and papers on the best way to deal with racism. All those sorts of things were in their infancy in terms of anybody else making comment about them or researching them in various sorts of ways. So it wasn't just a matter of*

making it up as we went along; we didn't have much to use to make up or to go on. We looked at in general, social science and the activist movement in America, but most particularly - most of our educational thinking pretty much came out of the Canadian experience of [Indigenous] education. (Hughes, 18/06/2016)

The National Aboriginal Education Committee Working Party on Racism in Higher Education (1989) stated that racism manifested itself in racial prejudice, racial discrimination, and institutional racism. The paper clarified the definitions of these different types of racism and provided advice on how to respond to racist actions. The paper gave examples of institutional racism such as:

- *Courses in Australian literature which do not include any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander literature.*
- *Courses in Australian history which exclude Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspectives.*
- *Sociology courses which deny the legitimacy of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family structures. (p. 5)*

The Working Party clearly articulated the institutions' responsibilities for ensuring a racism-free environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities.

8.10 1988 – The final stage of the NAEC

Lynette Crocker, a Kurna woman from South Australia was working in Victoria at the Department of Education when she was appointed to the NAEC. Crocker was Deputy Chairperson under Errol West and then assumed the role as the final Chairperson of the NAEC in 1989. Her role was mainly to finalise the operations of the Committee and ensure an appropriate transition of business to other Departments.

Eleanor Bourke was appointed Deputy Chairperson to assist with the abolishment of the NAEC. Eleanor, a descendant of the Wergaia and Wamba Wamba peoples, was appointed to the NAEC in 1979 for two years and then re-appointed in 1985, continuing through to the conclusion of the Committee as the Deputy Chairperson in the final year. At the time of her first appointment onto

the NAEC Eleanor was working for the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Eleanor was the first woman in Victoria to be appointed onto the NAEC and came from a community perspective: *I didn't have an educational background. I trained as a journalist, so I came from a community perspective. But because of the consultative groups starting in Victoria, I got more engaged in education because I worked for Aboriginal Affairs and got nominated onto the consultative group by Aboriginal Affairs.* (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Eleanor had a successful career in Aboriginal Affairs working in the various roles as: an Aboriginal Advisor to Department; Director of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Service in the, Commonwealth Department of Social Security; and Senior Aboriginal Advisor for the Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime-Minister and Cabinet. Although, her early career was not in education she later held significant positions within higher education, including: Director of the Aboriginal Research Institute; Associate Professor in Aboriginal Education at the University South Australia; and Chair of Aboriginal Indigenous Studies and Director, Aboriginal Programs at Monash University. On her retirement she was appointed an Adjunct Professor role at Monash University. Throughout her time on the Committee and post NAEC she maintained a strong passion for curriculum development in Aboriginal Studies.

The movement to abolish the NAEC can be traced to the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (1988) report which had stipulated:

Whilst recognising that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission will also be involved in education, the Taskforce recommends a separate advisory or consultative structure to the Minister, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and the Department of Employment, Education and Training be established to continue work developed by the National Aboriginal Education Committee and the National Aboriginal Employment and Training Committee. It is essential that a formal voice be available to the Commonwealth if it is to see through the objectives and strategies proposed in this report. (p. 18)

Although the Taskforce had recommended the continued presence of an national Aboriginal advisory committee as an important mechanism for

appropriate consultation, at the conclusion of Errol West's appointment as NAEC Chairperson, the Commonwealth Minister for Education, John Dawkins, announced that in light of the introduction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) the NAEC would be abolished on the 31 December 1988 (West, 1988): *There was no national voice that could challenge anything; I thought the demise of the NAEC was one of the worst things that's ever happened in this country and forever I'll lament the fact that we've not replaced the NAEC with a community based national organisation. We have a number of models but don't come anywhere near what the NAEC was, except the federation of AECG which existed for a little while.* (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

Peter Buckskin reflected that the employment of senior Aboriginal people across all areas within government, had created the impression that there was no longer a need for an Aboriginal committee: *I think by the end of the NAECs influence, the challenge was maintaining its voice when more of us were developing our competencies and our capabilities, and started to win Aboriginal jobs in the bureaucracies. We became the superintendents, we became the directors and suddenly there was this Aboriginal Advisory group there from the Minister and government's perspective. Then the government was saying, 'Well, we've got our own Aboriginal voices in the departments, do you need those other people?' So the challenge was I think to understand people's roles and functions and that you needed both an internal and external voice.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

The NAEC was formally abolished in December 1988, the final month of the bicentenary of Australian White settlement. Minimal appointments were retained to ensure appropriate transitions were finalised in 1989.

8.11 Conclusion

The NAEC had delivered a suite of exceptionally well informed and well developed policies from early childhood through to higher education. These policies had been developed with a high level of consultation from Aboriginal communities and stakeholders nationally. They were further utilised by the

Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce in providing recommendations towards a national Aboriginal Education Policy. The final legislating of the AEP Joint Policy Statement was a landmark in advancing Aboriginal education. However, it was viewed by many as a joint agreement between Commonwealth and State governments and not a compact with the Aboriginal community. It was yet to be seen if the implementation strategy would maintain the same level of inclusion of Aboriginal people in determining the future of Aboriginal education.

Unfortunately, the government no longer saw the need for the continuation of the NAEC and opted for internal bureaucratic structures. However, the NAEC had developed structural mechanisms built on relationships and networks that represented real community input into decision making for Aboriginal education. While the new policy direction would maintain a practical future for Aboriginal education, the question remained about its ability to contribute to the self-empowerment of Aboriginal people and responsibility for our own futures.

Over a short period of time the freshwater had run so fast that it joined with the saltwater with such force that it started to flow out into the ocean. Although, this would result in definite advantages for Aboriginal people, the saltwater in the ocean remains dominant with Aboriginal people remaining as a guest.

Chapter 9

NAEC: Significant Contribution to Aboriginal Education

People started to think seriously about Aboriginal education. People started to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; we had a presence within the education system. We did so much in that 10 years. There was nothing and now look, within that time, what there was and what we've got since. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

9.1 Introduction

The key finding of this study is that the NAEC did make a significant contribution to the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia. This thesis has provided an historical account of the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the advancement of Aboriginal education through the contribution of the NAEC. It has examined the role of the NAEC in creating discussion, debate and cultural empowerment in Aboriginal education that ensured the progression of education for Aboriginal people now and into the future. There had been little prior research that has documented the contribution of Aboriginal people to national educational policy development during the time period the NAEC were active. The thesis demonstrated the NAECs contribution, through Aboriginal voices, for the guidance of future educators and leaders. Without knowing our past we can't truly define our futures.

The NAEC was active from 1977 to 1989, during which time it successfully set the agenda for Aboriginal education policy development in Australia. It is easy to attribute this success to the Commonwealth Government who introduced the 'Self-Determination' policy (Altman et al., 2005) and initiated the appointment of the NAEC; however, the journey had started long before this NAEC was established. Aboriginal people had been actively and publicly advocating and fighting for their right to be recognised as citizens in their own country since the 1920s (Maynard, 1997). With over 150 years of oppression, it was time that justice was served and Aboriginal people were given the right to education and economic development. By the time of the establishment of the NAEC, it was a long struggle that the Australian Commonwealth Government could no longer ignore. The NAEC took up the efforts of their forefathers and mothers and

connected Aboriginal people across the country to commence healing and the building of relationships that would open up a space for Aboriginal people in the Western educational arena. The inclusion of a national voice was the key factor in the NAEC's success. The thesis documents and explores their leadership and legacy.

9.2 Reviewing the Topic and Approach

The research has sought to examine how the NAEC contributed to the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia. This contribution has been documented through the voices of the NAEC members who shared their stories of the Committee during this this iconic period in Aboriginal education. Respect and reciprocity are two important values in our knowledge system. The members who so openly shared their stories became the co-researchers in this endeavour, the thesis providing a space for their voices to be respectfully heard in parallel with myself as the principal author. This approach in presenting evidence of the NAEC contribution was important as it was their journey, their story to tell, and I was the intermediary who brought it all together within a scholarly context. The thesis aimed to connect the voices of the NAEC members with the written voices reflected in the policy documents developed during the lifespan of the NAEC on the basis of the document analysis that informs this research.

Eighteen members of the NAEC were interviewed through the traditional Aboriginal method of yarning (Merriam et al., 2001). The yarning process recorded the stories of member's educational histories, their involvement in the NAEC; their experiences and contributions to the NAEC, and their reflections on environments, relationships and culture of the NAEC. Yarning also elicited memorable moments and insights into the legacy of the NAEC and its contribution to future Aboriginal educators and leaders. The yarning 'interviews' captured the stories of two Chairpersons and members from across all four terms of the NAEC. The additional interview with Susan Ryan, the Commonwealth Minister for Education during the 1980s, who shared her perspectives of the relationships between the government and the NAEC, as well as the progress of Aboriginal education during this timeframe. Additional

data collected through published documents authored by the NAEC expanded this story of the aims, values, vision, philosophies, policy directions, and research agenda of the Committee.

9.3 Research Findings

This section presents seven key findings from this research with a focus on their unique impact and outcomes within Australian educational policy history.

9.3.1 An Empowered Space in Education

What the NAEC did was to expose hundreds of people - hundreds of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people to Aboriginal education. It allowed lots of people to have that experience who wouldn't have had it. It allowed so many people to have an input. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)

This thesis has highlighted how the NAEC created a truly national forum for people to start to think seriously about Aboriginal education. Aboriginal people from across Australia, including small and remote communities, were invited to participate in discussions that would lead to national decisions about the future of Aboriginal education. The NAEC opened up an empowered space for building capacities and capabilities for Aboriginal people that resulted in increased employment, particularly inside government agencies, and this permeated to create greater Aboriginal influence on policy from the inside out. As a result of creating this space, access to education was opened up and attitudes within governments started to change. The NAEC developed clear objectives and guidelines that reflected values and philosophies from an Aboriginal viewpoint. This was a major strength of the NAEC and it led to substantial policy development in the areas of Aboriginal Studies, Aboriginal teacher presence within schools, Aboriginal employment and access and success across all educational sectors from early childhood to higher education. The NAEC members were not inhibited by Western epistemology, in its way of thinking about the education of Aboriginal people. They progressed a unique agenda that no other group had done before. The Committee shared a vision to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities and they did this by genuinely bringing these communities with them on the journey.

9.3.2 Community Involvement in Aboriginal Education Decision Making

The NAEC gave us the opportunity to influence decision making on how we could develop our own models of education and insert our voices into the mix, to moving beyond what I had termed, the 'guest' paradigm. Capacity strengthening which recognises that communities have got inherently a strength that makes them survivors and integral to the development of a future generation that's proud of our identity and our heritage. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

This research revealed that a central focus of the NAEC was to raise the credibility of Aboriginal voices in educational decision making. Throughout the history of Aboriginal education policy, the NAEC had the highest national level of participation from Aboriginal people and involvement in influencing policy development. The development of a committee structure across all States and Territories provided clear lines of consultation with Aboriginal communities nationally. The NAEC empowered these communities to provide culturally appropriate forums that stimulated the creation of future visions for Aboriginal people in education and assisted with the production of numerous evidence-based research papers that informed policy.

The community empowerment that the NAEC instilled, evidenced throughout the thesis, focused on giving people a new sense of purpose and new sense of capacity. There was a need to heal communities from the past atrocities that excluded them from education. A new era was introduced, where Aboriginal people's voices were heard and respected for the knowledge and experiences they contributed towards the advancement of education. The NAEC provided an platform for communities to better appreciate how their voices could contribute to educational decision making and to the development of clear and positive national Aboriginal education direction.

Community consultation through the State and Territory AECGs, conferences, and community visits, generated a trust and respect for the NAEC that provided them with a mandate to advocate for national policy reform. Providing structures, processes and capacities to ensure that community were involved in decision making was crucial to the success of the NAEC. It formed strong

foundations for policies and ensured they were sustainable and didn't stall. The forums also provided an excellent opportunity for mentorship, sharing and personal and professional relationships which all led to the strengthening of capacities within the NAEC, and within communities. The inclusive nature of the NAEC structure created a national buzz and enthusiasm among Aboriginal people. The collaboration between the NAEC and the AECGs resulted in that enthusiasm circulating right through to the grassroots level to parents, students and community members.

The State consultative committees continued post NAEC as peak advisory groups to State and Territory education departments. However, only Victoria and New South Wales AECGs are still operational. The AECG structure was integral to the NAEC in ensuring that the voices of Aboriginal Elders, parents, education professionals, teacher's aides and teachers were heard. The holistic set of responsibilities of the NAEC from early childhood to higher education is currently not evident in the national arena \ and it could be argued that there is a current absence of a consolidated Aboriginal voice to ensure national policy objectives are achieved.

For current AECGs, there is a strong focus on school education and maintaining a close relationship with the State departments of education: *I always thought it was great to have an AECG because you worked together. You just had different roles to play. I think some AECGs have done well - the ones that are still in place because they've mastered that capacity to build confidence in the community and continue to do that, and show the value that they add to the department.* (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)

9.3.3 Participation in Education for Aboriginal people

I really do think that a lot of the strategies that we put in place, the policies and what have you, have led to an amazing increase in Aboriginal graduates, undergraduates, postgraduates; and the increase in Aboriginal teachers around the country. We have such a national approach to music, the arts, our histories. It is an amazing, big community of ours, dynamic yet diverse. So I saw the NAEC being that universal voice. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

As this thesis demonstrated, the NAEC encouraged programs and initiatives that would increase access, participation and success of Aboriginal students from early childhood through to higher education. Both the Yunupingu (1995) review (1995) and the Ministerial Council on Education (2000) report attributed the ongoing increase in Aboriginal education outcomes to the implementation of the AEP, which was largely influenced by the work of the NAEC. In 2016, the AEP continues to guide Aboriginal education strategies, action plans and evaluation in collaboration with Federal and State government education departments, educational institutions and AECGs, where they exist. Research by Malin and Maidment (2003) confirms the strengths of the work of the NAEC and the introduction of the AEP for producing longer term results in the participation of Aboriginal people in education.

Adams (1998) discusses the contribution of the NAEC in the development of the national policy guidelines for Early Childhood (ref) and the subsequent work of the Taskforce towards the introduction of the AEP, highlighting the progressive movement in early childhood during this time and the continued needed to progress early childhood participation.

In the decade following the disbandment of the NAEC, there continued to be a growth in school enrolments with an increasing of 40% between 1991 to 1998 (Ministerial Council on Education, 2000). However, the Ministerial Council on Education (2000) also highlighted that the participation of Aboriginal children at primary school level was 83% in 1996 compared to the participation rate of non-Aboriginal children of 89%, with the secondary schooling rate of Aboriginal students representing a significant challenge with an increase from 54% in 1986 to 60% in 1996 (this compared to 84% for non-Aboriginal students).

As noted in the inquiries undertaken by the ACG (1976) and NAEC (Working Party, 1984) the collection of data for Aboriginal students enrolled in TAFE courses was poor prior to 1985. The Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce (1988) reported that in 1969 there were less than 100 Aboriginal students enrolled in tertiary education which, by 1986 had increased to 4,800 enrolled across TAFE and higher education. The Ministerial Council on Education (2000) report, moreover, detailed that from 1994 to 1998 enrolments in vocational

education nearly doubled (Ministerial Council on Education, 2000). The focus that the NAEC brought to the VET sector was one of its most unique contributions, and one that continues today.

Rigney (2001) credits the NAEC in playing an integral role in the access and participation of Aboriginal people in higher education. The *1000 Aboriginal teachers by 1990* policy initiative opened up universities and CAEs to Aboriginal students and communities. Hughes and Willmot (1979) reported, in their submission to the NITE, that in 1977 there were 72 qualified Aboriginal teachers. The introduction of enclaves and other specific entry programs contributed to the growth in number of qualified Aboriginal teachers to 220 in 1982.

This thesis has shown that the enclave movement in tertiary institutions was encouraged and supported by the NAEC. The Jordan and Howard (1985) report noted that by 1984 there were 14 Aboriginal enclave programs introduced nationally. Prior to the introduction of these enclaves there were only 85 Aboriginal students recorded within these higher education institutions. This increased by more than 500% to 551 after the enclave programs were introduced (Jordan & Howard, 1985). By 1988, there were 42 Aboriginal enclave programs in tertiary institutions across all states and territories (Bin-Sallik, 2003). From 1991 to 1998 there was a 60% increase in higher education enrolments (Ministerial Council on Education, 2000).

Even after the Enclave movement the number of Aboriginal people working within the Enclaves was minimal particularly at senior levels. The Jordan and Howard (1985) report emphasised the need for 'Aboriginalisation' of staff within Enclaves. From the Enclave movement Aboriginal centres have now developed into Aboriginal student, academic and research higher education entities, primarily staffed by Aboriginal people. Colin Bourke and Bob Morgan, drawing on their experience during and post the NAEC, state that the challenges now in also increasing the employment of Aboriginal people outside of the Aboriginal centres. This is considered critical to encouraging a whole of university approach that simultaneously continues to respect the expertise and knowledges of Aboriginal people and the need for continued spaces within

institutions that empowers that expertise and knowledge while broadening the roles of Aboriginal people in universities (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013).

The study has shown how the NAEC opened up the doors to higher education for Aboriginal students, primarily through the *1000 teachers by 1990* initiative. By maintaining the essence of this initiative of providing a culturally inclusive environment that contributes to building the capacity of Aboriginal students and community within higher education, success in tertiary education will continue to grow. In 2013 there were 13,576 Aboriginal enrolments within universities and 1,859 completions in the same year (Department of Education and Training, 2014).

Since the foundational work of the NAEC there has been a continued increase in the participation of Aboriginal people in all areas of education (Department of Education and Training, 2014). Despite this, there are still major disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in education. For example, the Behrendt Report stated in 2012:

Despite significant progress in recent decades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain significantly under-represented in Australian universities. (Behrendt, 2012, p. 4)

Given that we, as Aboriginal people, commenced our educational journey significantly behind the Western educational outcome 'starting line' concerted attention is needed to ensure social justice is achieved for Aboriginal people. As emphasised continually by the NAEC, this requires Aboriginal people to be centrally involved in consultation and decision making.

9.3.4 Aboriginal employment

That is the dilemma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are engaged in positions, one because they can do the job, but just as importantly or sometimes more importantly because they are Aboriginal or they're a Torres Strait Islander. They bring with them a whole range of other experiences and skills and expertise and the dilemma for those people around the expectation as you become more and more senior in the organisation, the Aboriginal Islander connection becomes less important. It's about you toeing the line in terms of the organisation, whether that's government or universities or private business or whatever. How we remain true to our communities and our families. (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

Soon after their inception, the NAEC introduced the concept of 'Aboriginalisation'. The vision was to move Aboriginal people from advisory positions to roles with substantial involvement and responsibility. To achieve this vision it was deemed that Aboriginal people needed to be employed in senior government roles. As shown within this study, the *1000 Aboriginal teachers by 1990* initiative had two outcomes. Firstly, it generated a great increase in the participation of Aboriginal people in tertiary education leading to fully qualified teachers. Secondly, and less anticipated, it provided Aboriginal graduates who were employable within government departments. When assessing whether the strategies of the NAEC contributed to 'Aboriginalisation', whether in schools or in government departments, it was clear there was a positive impact on the employment of Aboriginal people, including those who rose to positions of influence.

By June 1996, the number of Aboriginal staff employed in the Australian Public Service had risen to 3,390 which was 2.63% of the total workforce. The employment of Aboriginal staff peaked in 1999 and then by 2011 had declined to 3,236, calculated as 2.1% of the overall workforce (Larkin, 2013). This decline has been attributed to ongoing racism (Larkin, 2013).

The current study revealed how the NAEC developed clear policy positions that committed the government to employment targets, negotiating employment strategies to meet these targets. Within the decade immediately following the NAEC there was a demonstrated success in 'Aboriginalisation'; however, this appears to have subsequently declined.

9.3.5 Aboriginal Leadership and Mentorship

The NAEC's biggest contribution has been to mentor young people like myself and for us to observe and learn and model on the good work that they were doing. (Buckskin, interview 06/01/2015)

The co-researchers within the study determined that a noteworthy impact of the NAEC was the mentorship provided to other members of the Committee and community people. The collaboration with hundreds of Aboriginal people across the country created hope and aspiration. The members of the NAEC, as demonstrated in their biographies, all continued in leadership roles, in education

or within their communities. They primarily attribute their success to the professional and personal development, networking, and other opportunities experienced during their appointment to the NAEC.

The NAEC created opportunities for access to education which led to employment and self-determination. The leadership displayed by the NAEC demonstrated to Aboriginal people and communities the possibility of achieving professional status as educators and leaders. The provision of role models for the next generation was an important part of the NAECs success. The networks that were established through the NAEC forums, meetings and the establishment of AECGs provided an enduring platform for a collective vision to put those possibilities into action.

The NAEC members were mostly very young and early in their careers. The members were assigned a huge responsibility and unprecedented access to senior government officials in the portfolios of education and Aboriginal affairs. The history of the four terms and knowledge produced by the members had a significant impact on Aboriginal education. Not just the NAEC, but the AECGs and the cross-fertilisation between these bodies, resulted in replication of structures and processes that produced fundamental role models and mentors. Consequently, the mentoring moved beyond the members of the NAEC to the broader national communities empowering future leadership.

9.3.6 Aboriginal Curriculum

The NAEC had to overcome a set of great challenges, especially given the discrimination and barriers already in place at this time that were embedded within educational institutions and society more broadly. To achieve the goal of integrating Aboriginal heritage and history into curriculum, especially higher education was a difficult challenge. The journey of the NAEC shows resilience and determination driven by the passion and dedication of our communities.

The study shows that by working within the Schools Commission, the NAEC was able to forge strong relationships with the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC). This relationship resulted in a position on the CDC Advisory Board. The ongoing connections led to joint projects between the NAEC and the CDC,

which included: an investigation into the inclusion of Aboriginal Studies in the school curriculum; the audit and development of appropriate resources for Aboriginal Studies; and a ground-breaking study on Aboriginal pedagogy (National Aboriginal Education Committee & Curriculum Development Centre, 1986).

Prior to the NAEC, there were very little taught in schools on Aboriginal Studies and many of the textbooks and resources were lacking accuracy and were culturally inappropriate. One of the NAECs first priorities related to Aboriginal Studies where they conducted an audit of resources. The contribution of the NAEC in this area was significant in prompting national action into the appropriate teaching of Aboriginal Studies. The focus on strengthening Aboriginal Studies led to a significant contribution in the production of principles for the provision of culturally appropriate curriculum that is evident in today's national school curriculum.

Furthermore, in most universities Aboriginal Studies is a core requirement of teacher and medical education, and increasingly within other professional degree programs. This progress has been slow and is still confronted by challenges but the legacy of the NAEC endures. The NAEC provided the foundation that resulted in a momentous shift. They produced publications that promoted an understanding of the benefits of Aboriginal Studies based on the principles of a more inclusive society and the need to overcome racial and cultural ignorance.

9.3.7 National Policy Development

In lots of ways it made government look good because, even now, we talk about the high unemployment rates, this that and the other. So education, once it became the focus, fitted well and truly in with what the Federal Government wanted to do. It suited their philosophy and they also were able to say to the States we'll give you more money for the education for Aboriginal people if you do this. Of course, it was a nice position to be in. (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

The current study has mapped the suite of policy statements, policy aim, and guidelines that were brought by the NAEC to the table of government for the first time. The scope and extent of the NAEC's policy agenda is illustrated in the

following list of the key documents developed by the NAEC (or in association with other key groups):

- 1979 *The Education and Employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers report*
- 1980 *Rationale, Aims and Objectives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*
- 1982 *Aboriginal Studies Report*
- 1984 *Funding Priorities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*
- 1984 *Technical and Further Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – Participation and Self-Determination*
- 1985 *Philosophy, Aims and Policy Guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education*
- 1985 NAEC Commissioned report: *Support Systems for Aboriginal Students in Higher Education Institutions*
- 1986 *1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990*
- 1986 *Policy Statement on Teacher Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*
- 1986 *Policy Statement on Tertiary Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*
- 1986 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pedagogy Project*
- 1989 *National Policy Guidelines for Early Childhood*

The NAEC provided a positive direction that would translate into better futures and opportunities for Aboriginal people through education. The Commonwealth Government had made a commitment to advancing the outcomes of Aboriginal

people, and the work of the NAEC enabled them to implement policies with clear visions and outcomes.

The current study demonstrated how the NAEC was highly respected by both sides of government allowing it to play a strong political role in advocating for better educational opportunities for Aboriginal people. This assisted in laying the foundations for the Aboriginal Education Taskforce and subsequent AEP which, as with all the policies tabled by the NAEC, received bilateral support in parliament.

The current study revealed how the introduction of the AEP provided a framework that would guide Aboriginal education into the future. Five years after the implementation of the AEP Joint Policy the Yunupingu (1995) Report reviewed the progress and impact of the AEP. The Report stated that:

The Joint Policy is helping to build an Australian culture in which there is greater recognition of, and respect for, Aboriginality, and a greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, the aspirations and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. (p. 6)

The Report affirmed that the Joint Policy was having an impact in the improvement of Aboriginal outcomes in Aboriginal education. However, its report did criticise the loss of voice to the broader Aboriginal community and remarked that without Aboriginal people in positions of influence their voices are no longer being heard. Furthermore, it noted that the Joint Policy did not include Aboriginal people as a joint partner or signatory. The Review made a recommendation that the Commonwealth Government needed to appoint a new national body to direct Aboriginal education and that the national conferences should be re-instated. The *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Yunupingu, 1995) tabled in September 1994 was the last national review of Aboriginal education led by Aboriginal people and encompassing all educational sectors. Since then there have been individual State reviews or reviews on separate sectors of Aboriginal education but none has provided a consolidated, holistic viewpoint on the national position of Aboriginal education of the kind that was at the core of the NAECs work.

The aims and philosophies that were a key part of the NAEC policy document were not fully reflected or defined in the AEP and were therefore invisible for new educators and leaders. Some of the members of the NAEC believed that the Committee should have positioned itself in a monitoring and evaluation role to ensure the successful integration of the AEP and its related policies. However, this was a role that was instead conferred on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) which was introduced in 1990. ATSIC was a Government body wherein Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be involved in Aboriginal Affairs the decision making. In 2005 ATSIC was disbanded. This removed significant Aboriginal voices from government without a similar structure to replace it.

It could be argued that since the disestablishment of the NAEC there has been a continual decline in genuine consultation between the Commonwealth Government and communities with no mechanism that informs the educational sector from early childhood to higher education. Additionally, although there has been a steady increase in statistical outcomes in some indicators of Aboriginal education, it is evident there has also been a decline in the impacts on educational and employment outcomes that encompass the values, the philosophies and the dreaming of Aboriginal people. For Aboriginal people connectivity and relationality is integral for a continued future of self-determination and maintaining culture. Patsy Cameron's reflection captures the essence of many of the stories shared with me by the co-researchers:

The NAEC actually allowed me to broaden my horizons. It just gave me such an incredible journey that took me out into the rest of this land. I think it just gave me that experience that I could not have gained in any other way to see something across the national spectrum of Aboriginal Australia in terms of education. The collegiality, that closeness and that sheer respect based on integrity, that respect of each other that I can't really explain, but it's something I'll never forget. Each one of them that sat around the table during that period that I was there, I think it was just the springboard of giving me the room to think, to actually then go on and do the things that I've done. It actually is the springboard of thinking, seeing and doing something that's not just for a small

group. It's to look at something across the expanse of it all. The journey has been incredible and it still is. The journey continues. On occasions when I can go through the photos and just reflect on those times, it does bring back those amazing memories. Then to see the next generation and the next generation, two generations of deadly young people coming through and achieving some of those aims that we were only dreaming of then. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)

9.4 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated how the NAEC made a significant contribution to the development of Aboriginal education policy in Australia. As a group, its membership combined academic, professional, cultural, and community knowledge, and this expertise put Aboriginal education on the centre stage. The NAEC developed a corpus of robust educational research and policy publications that had not existed before. The scope and scale of the NAEC contribution was a first within a contemporary Aboriginal education history.

Forty years is a short time in the history of Aboriginal people. Although we have seen significant improvements initiated by the work of the NAEC, there are still challenges. These are no longer the same challenges that Aboriginal people endured prior to the 1970s, but new challenges with some of the old flavours of assimilation, integration and racism. We now witness the continued challenge of maintaining a space and a voice within the Australian education system. Since the era of the NAEC, never has there been an independent body that has had a consolidated viewpoint spanning all levels of education nationally. Not since, has there been the level of collectiveness and shared vision that was created by the NAEC.

The policy framework, network and, mentoring encompassing an Aboriginal viewpoint, set the scene for government to continue to collaborate with Aboriginal people in ensuring a positive future for Aboriginal people through education. Unfortunately, the philosophy of wide ranging Aboriginal inclusion in decision making is lacking in the current times. Some of the structures and

policy directives founded by the NAEC remain; however, they are now fragmented across different government departments and educational sectors.

Acknowledgement needs to be given to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have made a significant contribution to the journey of Aboriginal education over the past 40 years and beyond. The Taskforce believed that 'equality for Aborigines in education is essential to the economic, social and cultural development of Aboriginal communities' (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force & Hughes, 1988, p. 2). This belief continues to guide Aboriginal resilience in leadership and governance now, and into the future.

The merging of the saltwater and the freshwater through the work of the NAEC created a significant platform for the future of education. However, this remains a fragile environment. The NAEC was like the living organisms within the mix that gave it life and allowed for new life to occur and be sustained.

Through the research and the translation of the collected knowledge in this thesis, I have shared the stories and journeys that provide evidence of a strong contribution to the development of Aboriginal education policy by the NAEC and related bodies. Although there has been clear advancement for access to and participation in education for Aboriginal people there is still lots of work to be done and attitudes to be changed. Aboriginal educators and leaders need to maintain their voice and ensure the inclusion of the voices of Aboriginal communities in decision making. We must not be lost within the crevices of a Western education system. Continuing the legacy of the NAEC, we must be seen and respected for the knowledges, experiences and perspectives that we bring to education that will lead to the self-empowerment of Aboriginal people and communities as well as the wider Australian society.

Chapter 10

A Celebration of Leadership and Legacy: Voices on the Rivers Journey

I guess I attribute a lot of the privileges today that we enjoy today to that seminal period in my history. The NAEC did so many great things. We had more power in those days. So as a group of educational leaders, it was quite profound what we were able to do at that time. Keeping in mind that we were all raw and we were all relatively young as well. We quite often didn't know what we were doing. But the good thing about it was that no one else did either. So we could argue whatever we wanted and dress it up as if it was an authority, because it came from us. It was I guess a manifestation of the principle of self-determination, which I've always believed in and it worked. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)

I conclude this thesis with a chapter that allows the voices of the co-researchers to be heard in all their wisdom. This chapter celebrates their leadership and the legacy they would like to pass down to future generations. I was originally going to add this chapter as an appendix. However, a well-respected community knowledge holder advised me that these stories needed to be privileged within their own right. So, I'm proud to be able to share them with you on their behalf.

Stephen (Baamba) Albert

Memorable Moment

Stephen tells the story about his negotiations with Charlie Perkins shortly after he was appointed to Chairperson of the NAEC. They discussed how they were going to work together given there was a bit of a cross over, with the NAEC providing advice to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs on education within their responsibility. It is a good example of how Aboriginal people use humour when negotiating what could otherwise be seen as difficult situations. Stephen said to Charlie, *'Hey bro, you stick with Aboriginal Affairs and leave education to me'. Then we had a deal and that was it. So I got to tell you, next thing he asked us [the Committee] for lunch: 'Let's go to The Hermitage'. That was the best restaurant in town, and of course, everything is \$30-\$40 and so you know, all my members, they all went for the expensive meals, 'I want crayfish mornay' or something like that. He was like 'Where you black fellas come from', 'cause he's got to pay out you see. We said to him, 'It isn't every day we have lunch*

with Charlie Perkins'. He looked at us and gave us a big grin, after that he said 'Hey Baamba, I'm not bringing you mob to me again'. I said, 'Don't worry we'll shout you next time'. But I think the best part is learning the politics within the politics, within the Aboriginal organisations and getting support.

My favourite moment wasn't during the NAEC. I think my favourite moment was when I was away from it and I was at a conference, me and Chubby Hall. I was on a panel and the students had to say who they are and what they do and this girl would come and say 'I'm such and such, I'm doing my studies to become a doctor at UWA'; or another one 'I'm such and such I'm an undergraduate student for Law'. Me and Chubby Hall looked at each and said 'Jiminy cricket bro NAEC' and then we looked at each other and said, 'Did we really do this?' The penny dropped. All of a sudden there were all these people coming in and they were in tertiary education, in all these different disciplines. I think that's when the penny dropped for me I thought, 'WOW!' 'Did I really do that?' and we said, 'Yeah, we super.' 'Cause for everyone, land rights was the issue of the day. The government was always focused on land rights. So when we were putting up policies they were like, 'Yeah you can have that'. It was like robbing Peter to pay Paul. So in some ways I was thankful that land rights was around at the time.

Legacy and Future Advice

Say 30 years from now we can keep on the involvement but if we don't have that involvement it will revert to the 200 years of nothing. We have institutions like this [Wollotuka] but we don't have all the Institutions like this because some of them have forgotten the goal or some of them have gone the other way. If the unit lacks too much and sometime they just want to cut us down you know but nobody can cut us down if we just keep on growing. So that's the message that I want to use, is we been at that game since a long time ago and we've improved so don't despair let's keep on improving. Since 30 years ago a lot of Australians and white people have changed their attitude and because of the change of that attitude that's why we were able to change, we need to continue this. Two hundred years of nothing, Forty years of something really good, and then what the other thirty years going to bring us or what the next two hundred

years going to bring us? And I'll leave that up to somebody else to answer that. But the thing is what I wanted to prove is that the government must have Indigenous involvement that's the thing I want to improve. Without the involvement we wouldn't of got any of this, it's that simple. But the thing is the government keep on changing their policies and they keep on changing and cutting our staff slowly and slowly. (Albert, interview 23/11/2012)

Kaye Price

Memorable Moments

Kaye recalled some funny stories related to the misinterpretation of language or the playing on words: *I remember on Thursday Island Pearl Duncan saying to Bob [Morgan], 'Oh Bob, you're incorrigible', and he said, 'No, I'm not, I'm Church of England' [laughs]....*

Yes and Hazel, when we had the dinner in Cairns. There was a menu. It had after dinner mints and Hazel [McKellar] said to me, 'Why do we have our mince after dinner?' Got to love her. She's like me, naive - never seen after dinner mints before. She thought it was that meat mince [laughs].

She also recollects when the NAEC did an international trip to New Zealand to study alternative Indigenous education practice, Koori red bus style: *In about 1983, we went on a study tour of New Zealand in a red bus. There was me Auntie Olive Mitchell, Bob [Morgan], Paul [Hughes], Eddie [Mabo], John Budby, Maurie Ryan, Eve [Fesl] and me. We drove down to Wellington and we stayed in a Marae, slept on the floor. We met with lots of people and went to lots of things. We looked at what Maori people were doing in the education system. I remember how surprised we were that there were so many Maori Principals and that there were language-based curriculum taught at schools, wherever we go. That they would teach Maori- [as well as] English although there it's not as difficult, because it's the one language. It would be really difficult for us to do that on a national basis. I think we went for about 10 days in a red bus. (Price, interview 09/01/2013)*



Kaye Price, taken by author at the University of Tasmania, 2013.

Patsy Cameron

Memorable Moments

Coming together and bonding over unique experiences, Patsy explains, was important for the collegiality of the Committee in supporting and understanding the challenges experienced in Aboriginal education in different areas. Patsy tells a story of sharing a part of her own culture with the Committee in its early stages: *I'm going to tell you something funny. I think, apart from all of the work that we did with the Committee and sub-committees, I think the most memorable things were those things that made us join together and bond as a very significant group of people with that purpose. One of my most memorable moments is when I took mutton birds to Canberra for a big feed of mutton birds - I think it might have been the second meeting before we came to Hobart. We were having the meeting in the government offices, the same place where they were cooking them. The smell of mutton birds was sort of permeating through all of these buildings. I remember Stephen saying, 'Patsy, what are those birds?' I'd say, 'They're mutton birds, Stephen. They're mutton birds.' He said, 'Do you mean they're birds that go baaaaa?' 'No'. Of course, mutton birds have a distinct smell. They've got a very strong, oily, fishy smell. A few people declined the incredible experience of tasting a mutton bird for the first time. Although, I think having those experiences that bonded us together as a group of people with wide experiences, from different geographic locations, is was added to a very strong committee. They were the good things. Coming to*

Tasmania for the first time and having our meeting that would probably be the most incredible experience for me. To have the group say, 'Yes, we've got to go down there and support Patsy. That is the first thing on our agenda outside of Canberra'. What an amazing thing that was and an amazing response to me when I was saying, 'Well, we're forgotten'. It was just amazing, it was a real response. It was action rather than just words or reaction. Anyway, I think there are many memorable moments actually. When you say the one, it's really difficult to think about just one thing.

Legacy and Future Advice

I think to see some of the workshops, the young ones and the not-so-young ones that have come on, to see the increase in confidence of our young people that have gone through the education system, from early primary now to university, that is incredible. I think that has been something that, especially even in Tasmania, for me working at the university, doing an undergraduate degree myself, and then doing a Masters degree, to witness those programs that have helped - they're in place to help with the young ones as they progress through their studies and through the school systems. I think that's rewarding. But there's a long way to go because I really do think the focus now needs to be on going back to understanding our history and the histories of Australia. I don't think there's enough known within our own community as well as the wider community about the history of this land. I still think there's a lot that can be done in order to address the issues that people like Marcia Langton raise. I think there is still a lot of work to do but we've come a long way, I have no doubt about that. I think a lot of it's because of the groundwork that was done by the NAEC over that period of time and the people that were involved. I still participate in talking to Principals and key educators in the public sector, the Catholic and the private sectors. There's still a lot of work to do in closing the gap of Aboriginal education right across Australia. That's where I think the NAEC notion of having an overarching body of people from around the country with all the expertise; that was what was special about the NAEC. The collective expertise of people right across the sectors of education made it such a powerful committee. That's what's missing, I think. There are committees that

deal with higher education. There are small bodies that deal with other areas of education. I think NAEC and the overarching vision that was able to be discussed at that level, was just something that it's now a great loss. (Cameron, interview 05/03/2013)



Patsy Cameron and me at her home in Tasmania, 2013.

Lillian Holt

Memorable Moment

Although Lillian enjoyed working with the NAEC and making connections with the other members, she found the bureaucracy difficult to deal with, particularly as the Executive Officer. *I've never been a bureaucracy person. I've always been a bit of a heretic and a rebel, so I just hated the way everything was kind of like the spirit was squeezed out of it and you had to adhere to it. It was all about the quantitative ticking off process and that and things. But I could just feel my whole spirit being squashed. I'm not good at structure and bureaucracy. I'm more of a big picture person and an ideas person. I felt fairly discontented and disconcerted by the whole process of working in bureaucracy. On the other side there were some really good times. We used to socialise after work letting off steam. You had to in those days. We had about three or four meetings a year, the full committee. We met in different places, met with different people, different communities and things. I remember leaving Canberra to go to Darwin*

from an NAEC meeting. It was about five degrees in the morning and I think it was August or something. I got to Darwin that afternoon and it was absolutely boiling, something like 32 degrees. I was in my winter clothes and my luggage hadn't come through. I was just absolutely sweating in these cold winter clothes [laughs]. But I'm glad I spent this time. You know, every journey begins with the first step and it was leading on to different things and whatever. I can still see the office where we worked in Canberra, where the NAEC was situated. I think it was on the twelfth floor because I used to walk up these twelve flights and down. In those days I was so slim. I was so young and slim. You know, to walk up and down, that was just part of my exercise.

Legacy and Future Advice

To me education is about the total person and it's about awareness, it's about attitudes, and I think most people are just skilled and qualified. There's a tertiary education report that came out in I think the early-1990s and they talked about the danger of turning out skilled barbarians. You know, people who knew what their job was and didn't have the faintest clue about themselves and others. I think the truly educated person is someone who knows themselves. I've met so many people in society and it's a white fella society, it's a very Western way of looking at things. To me, yeah, they have a lot of head knowledge but I think you've got to have the head and the heart and sometimes the greatest journey is from the head to the heart. (Holt, interview 17/06/2013)

Paul Hughes

Memorable Moment

Most members valued the friendships, collegiality and the learning experiences that the NAEC offered. Paul speaks about how the NAEC contributed to his own development: *My most memorable moment was just being on the NAEC, being with the groups. Because it taught me what I know in terms of things over time. Admittedly, I'd been involved as the Education Officer for Aboriginal Affairs since 1972 here in South Australia. So I'd had five years' experience running budgets and all the stuff here in South Australia, which was the biggest operation in the country at the time. So I had a lot of experience, but getting with*

all the other mob, we just made it up as we went on. But getting together with other people and then trying to determine, well what are we actually on about, was the biggest deal of the whole lot. The times together were quite wonderful. We didn't have any opposition in the sense that it was all pretty much bipartisan. But under Susan Ryan was when it was allowed to grow the fastest and that was in the times of Australia when the whole business about self-determination and people's rights to be involved and do what they want to do, were actually there, which made it a bit easier. So the times were right for whatever we happened to be doing and we accidentally happened to be there.

Legacy and Future Advice

The best advice I can give is to establish an agenda and follow it through. Recognise that all of these things take yonks to happen and that talking them through is a long, slow process, simply because education is societal - it takes societal growth and that's not simple. When having discussions, try and find a way of basing your discussions on evidence and in the end try and develop an actual way of doing something about it. Many of the things you have to do to fix something are really high level stuff. You look at the debates about some of the intervention bits in the Northern Territory and that half the money's got to go to the support of your kids and everything else. People complained, 'How dare you tell our people what to do'. Well kids don't go to school and they don't eat, then what do you do? Many of those things apply in country towns as well. So are you going to be really strong about the actual cold hard realities that you've got to face? That sometimes trying to reflect on things and not recognise that things are what they are, is a real problem. So it's no good deluding yourself that someone's going to fix something or it'll fix itself, because it doesn't happen that way. This whole business of working things through is a long-term sort of thing and we've mucked it up by stopping our growth and development ourselves; government's done that as well. But you would think your own mob of people, like villages in the old days recognised that they had to grow and continue to work out ways of changing things. We didn't do that as a group. When I hear about people arguing about each other on boards I don't think that helps a lot. It's not working as a community. (Hughes, interview 18/06/2013)

Colin Bourke

Memorable Moment

The belief from the majority of NAEC members was that the social connectivity was just as important as the professional aspects. Whether it was letting off steam, relaxing with friends or getting to know each other in an informal setting, these were integral to the productivity and culture of the NAEC: *I've got memorable moments. Probably at the end of every day we would have a party practically. Stephen would sing and play his guitar and he was magic and we all relaxed together. We'd eat together, have a few drinks together, maybe more than a few sometimes - sing, and it was just a good feeling and the friendships were very good. We all did something, we were all together. We didn't have any splinter groups. It was the whole group. Everyone worked very well together and contributed. Some contributed more than others, there's no doubt about that, but that happens in any committee. Some had more experience than others but then everybody contributed in the end and put in what they thought. It was a good atmosphere to work in and things were going quite well at the end of the second year. The guys on two and a half years delayed changing over for whatever reason. I think it was Darwin we put up the membership from memory for the new incoming people. ...*

Legacy and Future Advice

I don't think we at the NAEC saw the proliferation of people studying across all the programs to the extent it has occurred. What we did see, and it hasn't happened, is the need for a stronger emphasis on Indigenous culture and education as an Aborigine. I think that's quite weak even though I don't think we saw the strength that has come out in Aboriginal situations like language. Language is now spoken in nearly every conference. We never envisaged welcomes to the country. I don't think we envisaged Indigenous dancing like it is and the way it's spread. The actual strength of Indigenous culture in the community today is not reflected in the educational institutions. Perhaps we thought if we pushed the education barrier for Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal culture and those things, languages and other things will come from there; but

they haven't, they've come from the community outside of the education system. We saw the education system as a vehicle. It hasn't proved to be. So that's disappointing in a way. I think the lack of formal programs which are Indigenous today and I'm speaking about my experience of Monash, we don't have every teacher in Australia having Aboriginal studies as part of their program. We don't have Aboriginal languages taught in schools. They don't get taught in universities much either now, if at all, but they are taught within community organisations to some degree. I don't know how well it's done or much about it except I know that people I dealt with, they had no language and now have got language. So that's something that's happened outside the education portfolio. It should have been within the education portfolio really. So I mean in one way now to 1977, Aboriginal culture has permeated society more but it hasn't done it in the education system where it needs to happen. (C. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Eleanor Bourke

Memorable Moment

With the NAEC, there was a national network of Aboriginal people sharing and connecting with others from diverse cultural and experiential backgrounds. These connections continued beyond the NAEC. This was seen by NAEC members as an empowering time for the movement of Aboriginal people in education: *Well the network and friendships, I mean where else would you get to meet people from all around Australia? We were with people that were in so-called traditional communities, people with totally different upbringings. I was lucky to work in a national setting as well, but it was complemented by being able to visit communities through the NAEC and make those friendships. Those networks were invaluable really. Always meant you had a contact somewhere you could talk to if you were looking for some information. You could use the network and that's just priceless really. I think that's what's probably most missed, is that network, because it was cyclical, it kept churning people in and out and you couldn't go to the airport without meeting people that were on the national circuit in those days. That was an unbelievable opportunity to be able*

to know that you'd go and you'd know these people. It was just tremendous, so that was the value of the conferences, of the meeting in different places and getting a look at what other people did and how they did it in different places.

Legacy and Future Advice

Every university has a presence now which I think that remains as a testament to what the vision was. What bothers me about that though is there is some sort of expectation from younger people, that there are things in place and they are there for them just to take for granted. We've got a new responsibility. We need to be teaching about what's happened in recent times as part of Aboriginal Studies; the way we've got ourselves into the system and how hard it was, how fragile it is and how important it is to keep that going; not just something that is just there. Young ones need to understand that they have a similar responsibility that's passed on to maintain standards and maintain the position, not to lose it, but to carry it on. There is a real conversation to be had in white Australia, because they're comfortable, they don't want to be disturbed and anything we do sort of ruffles their feathers. So I think that'll always be there. You only have to look where the power rests - white males mainly. The important thing is to be true to yourself and to really understand your people and place. I mean if you're strong on that, nobody can touch you in anything, in my view. If you're strong and proud, doesn't matter what people say. Then you can explain it and talk to others and keep that pride happening. To me that's the most important thing; you can do your research, get information off your families. Sometimes you don't even know what you've got and then it means something later on. I've done this myself, I got a lot of material out of the archives. I had enough information from my grandmother to actually be able to identify family members in the protectorate papers, which sort of showed me where they were being moved and how they were being dealt with. Even though their surnames weren't in it, their first names were there and they were being moved from one place to another. I was able to say, well a lot of the things I've been told are true, the detail mightn't be there, but it made me stronger because what my grandmother said about who we were was right. But what she went through and she didn't give up on her identity, even though she was frustrated

that we didn't seem to have an educational base, but she was still really proud and strong and she influenced a whole lot of her grandchildren in that way. I think that's the biggest thing, people can be proud of themselves by understanding their own culture and place. It's much easier to pass it on and it's easy to stand up to challenges. (E. Bourke, interview 19/06/2013)

Laurie Padmore

Memorable Moment

For NAEC members without previous opportunities to travel to different cities and places, the experience brought them unique encounters. Laurie shares some funny memorable stories: *We went out for tea and I remember Mary Atkinson was there. After our meeting, we all used to go out just for an after work kind of drink. Not a happy hour, but just to have a couple of beers kind of thing. Anyhow we went down to this pub, it was called the Golden Sliprails. It was in Adelaide. We said, 'Oh, there must be country and western kind of thing happening down here. We'll go down here and we'll have a beer and we might listen to some music.'* Anyhow, we went down and Mary went over with one of the women to buy the first round. I said, 'Okay'. So while we're waiting we just sort of stood up kind of thing, and leant up against the wall inside. Next minute what happened was, we see this man dancing with this man - this guy with a cap on, with the chains around, kind of thing - dancing. We're looking too. We all looked at each other and said, 'I don't think this here is country and western'. Everybody went back to the wall had their drink and backed out. It just seemed so funny with the name. We thought there was a country and western thing there - it was really hilarious.

I tell you, one of the funniest incidents I ever seen. When we used to go to meetings in the MLC tower and John Budby he was the Chair, and Vic - he'd always be there. He'd be the comedian always. Anyhow, I was sitting down and we were really serious - we're going through these papers and all of this and that, and old John is explaining something to us. John had a way - he was a hands man - he always used to use his hands, waving them around the place. He said - you know, he was talking about a level - about two or three levels, and as he said it he would move his arms up and down - level one, level two, level

that and this. We're sitting down there and Vic's looking too, but Vic just went over and said to him - he said; 'John - our brother - you're going to take off if you keep doing that - you'll start flying'. What could you do? Everyone just busted out laughing. What could you do? John's looking at him and he's laughing, too. Oh geez, it was so funny, but it was serious - it was really serious - very intense conversation that we were in, and then Vic comes up and he goes and breaks it like that. I suppose took the tension out of it. I don't know, but he always had a way of doing things, Vic. He was really good.

Legacy and Future Advice

Well, don't be afraid to really have a go. You've got to trust the people that you work with, and if you've got no confidence, you'll get it. You'll get it because you learn off each other. I could say I was the most grassroots person that you could ever get. I never had a clue, even though I did work, and though I was working in education. When Aboriginal education started here I was the second officer in the State. I didn't have a clue, I didn't know any Aboriginal families - didn't know any of them. So I joined the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, it was a good organisation, but sort of changed over the years. The thing that I do see is that I do admire some of these people. They're angry people, because they've lost so much. They've got to really understand - they don't have to be really angry to achieve what you want to achieve. I've done this without stirring anything up. You know? I've just utilised the resources. Try to utilise people - get them to believe in the ideas that I believe - common-sense kind of stuff. I used to visit the people around - you visit and you get ideas from parents. What do you reckon should happen? They are the teachers really. I would say the community, the parents, the teachers out there, I'd go and ask them a question; What do you think should be changed? Is there anything that could make it any better for our kids? They'd come up with some ideas - some brilliant ideas. You're always learning, you're never too old to learn, and that's one thing I did learn through the NAEC, I did learn about education. That education, not only universal but in Aboriginal education, you don't have any limits. It's an ongoing process that you have. You don't have levels like say in academia you have levels that you've got to reach. Aboriginal education, you don't have to have

that. You just keep going, and that's what I like about it. There's still a lot of work. (Padmore, interview 20/06/2013)

May O'Brien (and Carol Garlett)

Memorable Moment

NAEC members felt the connections and relationships were empowering in an environment that was quite sterile. The intellect that was brought to the table from the group was exceptional and although there may have been some criticism by non-Aboriginal people, the NAEC met the challenge with a united strength as explained by May and Carol. *I think the memorable part for me is that we were all together with one voice. Even though they may have had a different idea, we tried to meld that into what others wanted to say about the early childhood and all of that. So we had disagreements, not arguments but disagreements. But in the end we all had to say whether we were in agreement with what was passed, or somebody would pass a motion so that at the end we'd all shake hands [laughs]. So that's good. But we wouldn't pass anything if there was a lot of disagreement. Everybody had a chance to give their opinion. People were willing to change their little bits or big bits of it. We had fun doing it, I tell you [laughs]. Good fun. Our biggest challenge was that someone in the education system or the government was willing to let us have a go. Because some of the politicians would think, 'Oh well, you let them have a go for a few months and then we're going to become a big flop'. We had news for them, we weren't going to die. We wanted to fight, and fight we did, with our mouths, vocally. Yeah it was good. Because if somebody is over here arguing about this one, and something over here. I said, 'Hey, come on, if you don't get serious I'm going out of this meeting' [Laughs]. Oh yeah, they would tease me about it and I felt awful afterwards when they said that I'm the little boss there [laughs]. It was all in good fun.*

Legacy and Future Advice

A meeting I was at one day, we wanted the systems and sectors to report on how they were implementing school community partnerships, which was part of the National Aboriginal Education Plan. One of the sectors got up and said how

they'd implemented 15 school community partnerships. The question was asked, 'Who negotiated these on behalf of the Aboriginal communities?' The response was that it was a white fella that had done this. He worked with the school and the community. We were saying, 'Well how can he do that, because we actually needed somebody independent of the schools to do that'. The response then was, 'Oh, this person has been working with Aboriginal people for so long he's almost one of them, an Aboriginal'. One of the members just said, 'A mouse born in a biscuit tin is still a mouse. It isn't a biscuit, it's still a mouse'.

We need to continue to grow our own capacity. We just grew white fellas' capacity. We didn't push hard enough for our jobs and things I think. That's where a lot of white fellas went in, and we liked them being there because they were supporting the cause. But then they were the ones that got all the jobs. Yeah that's a big, big problem now at this stage. Yeah and I think some of that self-doubt and not believing in yourself has got a lot to do with that as well and we need to do a lot of capacity building. The idea that kids won't do things and say, 'It's "shame", that it's okay. That's part of our culture to be shamed'. Well it's not. It's not part of our culture. But our kids have grown up thinking that it's part of who we are. Not allowing the kids to say I'm not confident to that or I'm nervous. I think that's one of our points that we need to deal with, because our kids, sometimes they go, 'Oh no I can't do that and say that'. You can say that, you can do that. A lot of them now, they need a lot of encouragement because a lot of people still think that our kids can't do it. We've got to help them. We've got to let them use their own heads (Carol Garlett and May O'Brien, interview 03/06/2014).



May O'Brien and Carol Garlett, taken by author in Perth.

Rex Japanangka Granites

Memorable Moments

The rich and diverse cultural and community strength that members contributed was vital for the success of the NAEC. Rex shares: *All of us who are in that committee were so into it and we were so strong in looking at our communities, so this is an opportunity we have, now speak out so that they can listen what's good in those areas. All of us members were there with one voice and one talk kind of thing, meant we were on one page. Well I had that experience and understanding to where I was. To be young, to get on the board, I was filled with that. Just for me to give that knowledge to others who did not. But I think we did a very good job both listening from each other and me from my traditional background, giving it to those who were all from a city life, city people. I was out from the bush giving them all the knowledge that I had. I thought we did a very good job, now you can't see it anymore.*

Legacy and Future Advice

[Speaks in Warlpiri language] What I said was, you're listening, you're going to be listening of what I've done in the past of me being in the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee which meant for the education of our people, I was part of that and it got me to where I started talking about the education forever, that can be. But it was through the national Indigenous groups of our people, the Aboriginal people, we're talking about these issues that nowadays the younger people aren't really listening to. All I say, you've got to start listening to the right people when they're trying to teach you in ceremonies or other things, start listening or else you'll never be who you are. You'll be down the streets, be bumped around by so many people that you don't know. I was lucky that I grew in a way that got myself into strife with grog and alcohol, it only took me one week to turn over, not with white programs or the government money or anything like that. I turned away with what knowledge I had from my community and the country and how I connected myself to that. You look at the change that what happened to the people. Now we still getting it, we're going to try and get

back, it was a new page all we've got through with our cultural knowledge and understanding. They can't do it, we can do it. (Granites, interview 07/08/2014)



Rex Japanangka Granites. Taken by author.

Didimain Uibo

Memorable Moment

The national work of the NAEC filtered through States and Territories resulting in positive outcomes. The members of the NAEC could see it happening from all national, State/Territory and local perspectives. Didimain credits the NAEC for this influence: *My most memorable moment is that through the NAEC, the Territory has a Territory Indigenous education committee. So Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, yeah, to talk about education and what's problem, what is good and what's not good and need to be more of this going on and more reading or more maths. Try and get those older students back in the workforce. Gradually doing their part and when they leave school they have to have a job somewhere at the end to get employment in the community. I know there's less employment in the community but that had to happen. If you're qualified you get the job before me, that sort of thing. But they need to take that on-board and it's very important now the young people now, if they can't work they have to put their name down on unemployment until they get a job. They must have a job because they've got kids of their own and parents, grandparents getting old now to look after and it's up to the parents' responsibility of looking after their own*

family. That was the legacy of the NAEC and yeah something that was good to be a part of.

Legacy and Future Advice

Education is the key. Keep doing what you have been taught from your school days and what you have learnt. Continue what you want to learn about. If you are a teacher, the students who you are going to be teaching, you need to give them high quality education so they can be able to use it for their own children. Every school, every kid should go to school. Without that school learning, there will be nothing. (Uibo, interview 04/11/2014)

Bob Morgan

Memorable Moment

Bob explains how there was a real respect and value for the mentorship and collegiality shared amongst the members. This filtered through to each term as different members came in and out, bringing with them different experiences and backgrounds: *I remember the very first meeting that I attended and this probably opened up my eyes too, to a lot of other stuff. That meeting was up in the Torres Strait, we first of all started off in Cairns. That was the meeting where I first met Eric Willmot and Paul and a lot of other members - May O'Brien and others, who've since become legends in Aboriginal education. As I said earlier, I was the baby in arms. We had all these people in this room and Eric Willmot gave a presentation about the 1000 Teachers model. I was completely blown away, because this was a black guy and he was articulating so many great things. As we were growing up you always were made to feel inferior and that the real bastions of knowledge existed in the white world. But all I remember at that time is that all this great mystique and intellect that was emerging. Eric [Willmot] and Colin [Bourke], May [O'Brien], Paul [Hughes] and Eleanor [Bourke], all of these people that I was just blown away with. That's memorable. That was the first time that I guess, intuitively, I always believed that we had the capacity, that we could be as gifted and talented as any race of people. But it was important for us to claim our space and not just try to do what it was that*

white fellas were doing, but doing it in an Aboriginal way. We were creating spaces and knowledge that was authentically Indigenous, authentically Aboriginal. Basically, it was about the principles of self-determination in social and restorative justice, reciprocity and accountability to community, and all that type of stuff. That is perhaps the initial thing that impressed me beyond anything else. The NAEC provided the vehicle to exercise and apply that knowledge and that power and that responsibility. So, that was important.

Apart from meeting a lot of those individuals that I mentioned - that was a highlight of course and they've all become valued friends and colleagues. We didn't always agree on things and I guess I became recognised as a person that always questioned. I thought that it was what we should be doing. I owed it to the people that entrusted me to ask questions. I didn't want to just go along because I was a member of the boys' club. I took my role as President of the AECG and as a New South Wales representative very seriously. So I believed in community accountability and I still do. So the conferences were also one of the highlights, because that's when we took control. It wasn't just a matter of taking control; it was more a matter of exercising the principle of self-determination.

Legacy and Future Advice

One of the messages that I would give to younger emerging scholars and leaders is to never forget their connectedness to country and to community. But they should see their participation in these sorts of endeavours as a privilege, not a right. I despair sometimes when I see some of our people - both some of our academics and some of our students - operating as if this is a right because they don't understand the actions that were fought to create the privilege that they now enjoy. I'm proud of the fact that we're producing so many great thinkers and great leaders that are going to lead the next generation. I would hope though that that generation never forgets the history of the NAEC and some of the stuff that happened before the NAEC as well of course. But you understand that we can never be anything but who we are. So if you want to be an academic, only an academic, well work in the Academy and you can be an

academic. But if you want to be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or Indigenous academic, that's something totally different. People need to understand what that means and then to dedicate their careers to celebrating the uniqueness of that. I would say that some of the people that work in these types of environments, including those that might be seen as being future leaders, is that they better understand that if these places didn't exist and they wanted to take their chance on employment in the Academy, they probably wouldn't even be employed. Not because they're not skilled or they lack merit but because the system doesn't allow for that to happen. If it did there'd be no reason for these places to exist. So my message to you and some of those people that are coming through is to be proud of the fact that you come from one of, if not the, longest surviving and continuing culture on this planet. No one else can claim that. Understand what that means in real terms, not just in historical terms. Be dignified in the way in which you assert your rights and your freedoms to be Aboriginal, be a Torres Strait Islander; be Indigenous. Never settle for just being someone else's guest. Understand that you've got that history, that thousands and thousands and thousands of years of unconventional tradition that we should be utilising today to grow our own. There are some young ones that are here that I am so excited about. I think they will be the next leaders. A true leader is someone that can not only articulate and lead and to add vision but they're also gifted in how they bring people with them. So, it's about being proud, being grounded in your identity and your culture. Not a sort of notion of cultural imperialism where we are superior to everyone else but just to acknowledge that we're different. Not better, not worse but different and how does that manifest in our thinking and in our leadership skills? The fact that we're doing things now by incorporating Elders into the decision making processes. Somewhere the voices of those that have gone before must be acknowledged and celebrated in the way in which we create a vision for the future. That's about honouring, it's about acknowledgment and it's about respect and it's about being grounded in something that essentially makes you who you are. (Morgan, interview 18/03/2015)



Bob Morgan: Photo taken by author.

Pearl Duncan

Memorable Moment

Pearl shares how the interaction with communities, understanding their challenges and sharing in their successes, was educational to the members as much as it was beneficial to the communities. The opportunity to contribute to empowering community voices was memorable for NAEC members: *I enjoyed when we visited the communities and looking at their projects. For me it was sort of a great triumph to see Aboriginal people standing up for themselves and wanting things, demanding their rights and demanding to be educated. So I think that was the thing I think of most. The camaraderie and the fun I had with the rest of them were good too.*

Legacy and Future Advice

You can't evade hard work. There might be shortcuts but in the long run its dedication and hard work. I really don't think anything's handed to you on a plate, on a silver platter. You do get opportunities, there's no doubt about that, and you've got to be awake enough to recognise your opportunities. You don't let a good opportunity slip by. It all boils down to dedication and hard work, and making the right decisions. (Duncan, interview 29/09/2015)

Peter Buckskin

Memorable Moment

Peter expresses that being in an environment where other members understood where you were coming from, your perspectives, your visions, your language and who you were as an Aboriginal person was a stimulating experience, particularly from such a young age: *People like Paul [Hughes] and Auntie May [O'Brien] and people like Kaye [Price], they looked after me and all the older ones like Mrs Munn, old Ethel Munn, and people like Pearl Duncan and Olive Murphy. I loved older people, because I had a really strong relationship with my parents and grandparents, especially my grandparents, and so I knew the importance of Elders and respect. Respectfully, I would make sure the ladies got their cases in the taxis. I went and got the taxis for them. If they wanted something I'd walk them somewhere. I'd be the last one to make sure they were all right. They watched that and thought, 'Peter is a nice boy'. They brought a real sense of family, those elderly women, to the group, and the blokes. Then you got to meet people like Eddie Mabo and hear his story about his island home and I never met Torres Strait Islander people before, until I got into the NAEC. Then with Eddie's big fight for the Townsville Aboriginal Community School, and us supporting that. It was an NAEC movement.*

My most memorable moment was I think meeting Susan Ryan, Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, on one of the top boardrooms of the Woden Tower. She came to see us just prior to the election. Even though I think we had strong support from some Liberal Ministers, with my Labor leanings, I was so impressed to meet Susan Ryan. I had heard about her. Teaching in Broome, I was a member of the Labor Party, I was junior Vice- President. So the then opposition used to have forums for Northern Australia, which is anything over 26th parallel, so they'd bring together the Labor constituents. Seeing a shadow person come ask us what we think the priorities are for a Hawke Government and us influencing that; I think I did cartwheels nearly in my home community, to find out on the night of the election that Labor had won. The next day, Susan became Minister for Education. We were so happy she was going to be Minister, and so we just thought, 'Gee, you know, did we fall on our feet'. Again,

she came straight back to us about the conversations she had whilst she was in opposition, now she's Minister, she kind of made it happen. To meet her in opposition and then to meet her as a government Minister was amazing. The head secretary of the department, Peter Wilenski was all powerful. He would come to the NAEC and map out a relationship that was going to achieve the Minister's agenda. She appointed me to the UNESCO Australia Commission, where I got to meet Gough Whitlam, who was our ambassador in Paris. So, that time was the most awesome time for me when she appointed me to the UNESCO Commission. And to see that work, having the opportunities to get to Paris and of course to even meet the big man, God himself, Gough. But yeah, meeting Susan Ryan and the resulting outcomes of that relationship, not just with me but with the NAEC was very memorable.

Legacy and Future Advice

The NAEC clearly demonstrated the power of Indigenous voices and when you work together as a collective as we did with mutual respect, understanding the boundaries, you can really achieve. I thought the processes that we adopted and the way we wanted to work together in terms of that respect for each other and so even when there was tensions at the end of the day, we dealt with it to make sure whatever is going to happen, happened. So we were all there together, all reflecting on the work of the NAEC. It shows that we can have a voice. And it mentored so many emerging people like myself; I wouldn't probably be here if it wasn't for the NAEC, in this role. I have a lot of the respect for the people that were part of the journey. That's why I hope I give respect for other younger people, because there's got to be the point of transition to a new leadership group. I think that's why I believe NATSIHEC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium) can be so powerful if we operate in that type of framework and context, we will have done our jobs. (Buckskin, interview 06/11/2015)



Peter Buckskin: Photo taken by author.

John Lester

Memorable Moments

The NAEC provided the opportunity to share and see diverse cultures and practices as well as the way children interacted within the educational environments in different communities. John highlights however, the times that you were confronted with the realism of the challenges that our children continued to face in different communities: *We went to Broome, and Stephen Albert was host. We ended up at this school, a primary school in Broome. I think it was a Catholic school, so it had all Aboriginal kids. I remember they said, 'What are we going to do?' I said, 'I'll entertain them'. So I got up and sang them a few songs and got them to do actions and things like that. That was really nice, because I hadn't been to a school that was fully Aboriginal like that. These kids were culturally very different, very diverse. To get up and entertain those kids was just lovely. So that was one of my really fond moments.*

Legacy and Future Advice

The saddest thing I've seen and memorable, I've referred to it in my own thesis, as it never ceases to amaze me that we go into a community as NAEC, or the AECG, and every community would proudly bring out their preschool kids. They'd come and perform in front of you. They'd do an amazing performance.

They would be happy, they would be laughing, and they would be into it. It would be exciting. The kids were beaming. I'll never forget that picture of that little Aboriginal kid that's pointing and dressed up and dancing. The sense of pride in who he was. You'd see that, and then the only thing I could think - and it led me to start thinking about my own PhD - along the way what do schools do to these kids? They've got so much enthusiasm. They love doing cultural stuff, they're right into it. My thesis indicates that they're about five when they arrive at school, and it takes that lifetime again, and they've switched off school. So within five years of being in school all that stuff's knocked out of them; all that enthusiasm. (Lester, interview 09/11/2015)



John Lester: Photo taken by author.

John Heath

Memorable Moment

John tells how the memorable moments were about the lessons learnt, the significance of the members and movement at the time for Aboriginal people: *I think they were all great moments. When I think back on Eddie Mabo's time there, and he was a member when I was a member. What I distinctly remember the most about him was when he didn't turn up to meetings. I remember the conversation about Eddie, that he can't come because he's full on with this native title thing on Murray Island. At that stage I certainly didn't know the significance of that. There were those types of things. Yeah I think it was all good. There were some funny moments, as well as some great moments. I*

think some good Chairs, people that led it well, and I think probably led it in difficult circumstances. As I said earlier it could not have been easy, for one to be a head of basically a community based Aboriginal advisory policy making and funds distribution organisation. To be the head of that and at the same time employed by the Commonwealth Government - like the old saying - don't bite the hand of the one that's feeding you. Which I've learnt to be true, I learnt that the hard way [laughs].

Legacy and Future Advice

The legacy of the NAEC was the programs that some of which still exist today. They are part of the history of Aboriginal education and Aboriginal development in this country, which is an important legacy to understand. The fact that the NAEC established an understanding of the value of Aboriginal community advisory bodies was also important. That's a legacy that people should bear in mind, that whenever you're in an advisory body that's all that you'll be, and your voice can be heeded or ignored. Real delineation in what was being discussed, that there seemed to be a real delineation - in which I think we've lost a bit in that there was Aboriginal education that was focussed to Aboriginal children. But then there was Aboriginal Studies that was for non-Aboriginal - there was a real separation. White educators said to me, 'Well Aboriginal education's for Aboriginal students, it's only for Aboriginal students.' No, that's not what we're talking about. That helped me in my understanding of the need to try to clarify what we were talking about. Unfortunately, we are still having some of these conversations and the same debates. It really shows in some ways where we have failed as educators to educate. Failed where we've got our own people who should be further along in their thinking, reinventing the wheel type of thing. Because they haven't learnt from what we did, or what we said. (Heath, interview 18/01/2016)



John Heath: Photo provided by John Heath.

Victor Tjakamarra Forrest

Memorable Moment

The expertise and scholarship of the members as well as the collegiality and friendships were memorable to Vic as well as the cultural connections: *Maybe it was various different people, Laurie Padmore, Maurie Ryan, Stephen Albert; yes, very memorable people. When I think of Eve Fesl, Dr Eve with a PhD in Linguistics as early as that, for me it was a memorable occasion. Although one of the things that myself, Laurie Ryan and Stephen Albert, were quite concerned about was the education levels and the way education was being presented to traditional kids. As I always argued, and I guess I still do, that you teach an Aboriginal kid who comes from a traditional background whose first language is not English. English might be the second, third or fourth language to them. You teach Western education in English only and the understanding is quite ridiculous and they're bound to fail. It was one of the issues that we kept on bringing up at meetings of NAEC. Another thing I remember; I use the name Tjakamarra, that's my skin name. But for many many years even when I was on the NAEC I only used the name Victor Forrest. It wasn't until I was at an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory when an old fellow said to me where are you from? I told him where I was from, where my family came from between the Ranges and the Western Australian border in Western Australia. He said to me, 'What's your surname?' I said, 'I call myself Tjakamarra when I'm at home. 'Yeah, well why don't you do it now? Why don't you use your Aboriginal name?' He said to me if you don't know who you are, how can you talk to us about Aboriginal education? It's about where you're from.*

Legacy and Future Advice

Sadly the history hasn't been recorded and it's a history that has to be told. It's a story that has to be told. I don't think many Australians, both black and white, realised just what was happening at that stage in terms of education. Today is a very, very different scenario. When I see private schools having scholarships for Aboriginal kids to go into, it was way beyond my wildest dream when I was a child to be granted a scholarship. I think I was encouraged to leave school when I did at the age of 13; it was when I left school. I think they thought well that's another one we don't have to worry about. But these days, when I see the growing numbers in Aboriginal people going to universities, or higher education, this is going to have an impact on the broader community. When you have success breeding success it can only multiply. I guess if I was providing advice to an Aboriginal undergraduate I'd encourage them to not only succeed in what they were doing but also to go beyond just the basic degree and become involved in such a level that whatever their chosen profession is, also make an impact on that. People became aware that Aboriginal people can get into leadership roles and saw Aboriginal people in prominent positions it made an impact. Soon Aboriginal men and women were heading up academic departments which I think has certainly broken down barriers and breaking down the barriers that non-Aboriginal people have put up rather than vice versa. (Forrest, interview 22/01/2016)

Wendy Ludwig

Memorable Moment

Wendy explains how the social, professional, emotional and cultural connections were all important to the individuals and the group: *It's interesting because in those social occurrences. Stephen Albert for example, seeing him play guitar and he was singing songs that eventually reappeared in the musical 'Bran Nue Dae' 25 years later, seriously. I'm thinking I'm sure I remember those songs. So, it was really important - that kind of mix of serious business, cultural business, singing, dancing that made us then be strong. Oh the most memorable moment probably travelling to Panama with Peter Buckskin and Errol West. I think maybe the whole three years was a really memorable and*

important time both in my development as an Aboriginal person being involved in the education game and being able to see how through all the efforts of people in communities all around the country could be brought to national conferences where targets and priorities were agreed upon. From there then see how that was fed up and used to influence national policy direction and funding through the likes of Paul and Errol and Peter and various other people that were in Canberra. It was just a really good learning experience and exposure. For somebody that came from the other end of the country [Northern Territory], not only physically were we removed but politically and mentally removed from a whole range of different ways of thinking and looking at the world. That is a really important part of the conferences as well, just to be with other likeminded people. Unlike now, you were only one or might be only three or four black people in a whole institution and every day is a fight and you're battling, pushing all of these intrusions away. So to be somewhere where you're safe with a whole group of other people that you can relate to about those struggles and all of those kinds of things and just get your power back to go back out into really isolated kind of environments and do the stuff that we needed to do was very important. That whole three years of experiences was a memorable one that obviously sticks with me.

Legacy and Future Advice

To this day I see that the VET environment is the springboard for so many of our people into employment, into further studies or allowing people to gain a whole set of skills and knowledge that allow them to operate as better members of their family and community by being able to go to a shopping centre and read all the signs and in the shops and being able to make sure they're not getting ripped off at the cash register; to have just those really basic fundamental skills for living in other communities and the environments that we live in. Well I think it's really important that people do have access to their history and we continue to say and we've said forever that you can't deal with the present and go into the future without taking the past with you and using that as a foundation to give you the strength to be able to do what needs to be done. I think that people need to immerse themselves in the history of where we've come from and the

intent of people involved in those times and what the legacies are. What our responsibilities and obligations are to that and how in the context of the work that people are going to do, how do they contribute to the wellbeing of Aboriginal people collectively? I think given the nature of the environment that we operate in and the use and reliance on technology to assist and support people studying, it really feeds in and plays into that individualistic kind of way of operating which is something that we have fought against in the education system forever. If you go back and have a look at the old documents coming out of NAEC it's always about our kids in schools - primary schools, high schools, in the VET system, at university having places and having spaces for us to be together to stay strong. That's always been the case. Since the beginning of time when we were all created it was about communal community support and community infrastructure and staying strong and being immersed and connected and all those kinds of things. That's even more important now and we've had to fight really strongly against being busted up and dispersed. (Ludwig, interview 26/02/2016)

10.1 Conclusion

The advice for future Aboriginal educators and leaders articulates the importance of being strong and true to yourself as an Aboriginal person and to your communities. To recognise and respectfully acknowledge our histories and the hard work of those that walked before us. The Aboriginal men and woman responsible for our histories in providing strong foundations in Aboriginal education policy in this now contemporary world have shared their stories. The first line of the thesis commenced with a quote from Stephen Albert, which I will finish on, *'Two hundred years of nothing, forty years of something really good'* (Albert, interview 23/11/2012). They are now ready to hand over the baton to allow for the current and upcoming Aboriginal educators and leaders to take hold of it and make their own stories that forty years from now can inspire and lead the next generation.

The river continues to flow ...

Appendix A



Professor Jenny Gore
Project Supervisor
Faculty Education and Arts, School of Education
University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308
Ph. 02 4921 6864 Fax. 02 4921 6987
Email. Jenny.gore@newcastle.edu.au

Information Statement for the Research Project:

Voices of the National Aboriginal Education Committee

Document Version 1/2012; dated 08/08/2012

Dear (name Potential Participant),

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above, which is being conducted by Leanne Holt, PhD student from the Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Newcastle under the supervision of Professor Jenny Gore, Dr Erica Southgate (School of Education) and Ms Stephanie Gilbert (The Wollotuka Institute).

Why is the research being done?

The aim of the project is to look at three stages in the journey of Aboriginal education utilising the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) as a key cornerstone in the history of Aboriginal education, responsible for laying the foundations in the revelation of self-determination.

Aboriginal Education pre-1975

- To identify the key contributors that led to the development of the NAEC
- To determine what role the NAEC played in the implementation of self-determination in relation to Aboriginal education

NAEC contribution to Aboriginal Education

- To identify successful strategies that contributed to Aboriginal education
- To identify challenges impeding the progress of Aboriginal education
- To identify the major achievements of the NAEC

- To analyse and disseminate the experiences of key members of the NAEC

Future of Aboriginal Education

- To identify, based on past experiences, what are the successful strategies for an effective framework for Aboriginal education over the next 20 years

Who can participate in the research?

In order to fulfil the research requirements I am hoping to interview past members of the National Aboriginal Education Committee that served over three years on the committee as well as other key stakeholders that had a strong relationship with the NAEC.

What would you be asked to do and how much time will it take?

As a participant you will be requested to attend an interview with the researcher on up to two occasions which will be conducted at a negotiated place. It is expected that the initial interview will be two hours in duration and will consist of a Single Question aimed at Inducing Narrative (SQUIN) in order to facilitate open responses whilst addressing the aims of the research outlined above. A follow up interview may be required if more information is deemed necessary. Participants will be asked to share their experiences and perspectives relating to the NAEC and Aboriginal education.

How will the information be collected be used?

The information collected will be utilised by the researcher to respond to the aims of the project within the thesis as well as related papers. If you choose to participate you will be given the opportunity to review, edit and/or erase any tape recordings made during your interview/s. Additionally, you will be provided the chance to examine and edit any transcribed material relating to your interview/s.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

The risk identified to participants is as a result of recalling their past journeys can sometimes result in emotional stress if relating to negative experiences. An opportunity for the participant to debrief and/or referral to appropriate services would be available. The benefit is the opportunity to share and record a journey that will provide mentorship and knowledges to future generations, inspiring the continuation of the enhancement and development of self determination individually and as a community through education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

How will your privacy be protected?

Data collected will be kept in a secured environment within the University of Newcastle for a period of five years. Information will be identifiable, however not disclosed without prior consent and opportunity for review as outlined above. Transcription services may be utilised however only with the prior consent of the participant. All data will be stored electronically on a secure university network, which can only be accessed by the researcher. All paper copies of research data will be stored in a locked room and will be accessible only to the researcher.

What choice do you have?

Your decision to participate in this research is entirely voluntary. Should you choose not to participate your decision will have no effect on any relationship between you and the University of Newcastle. If you do decide to participate, and later decide to withdraw you may do so without giving any reason. If you decide to withdraw from the project you will also be given the opportunity to withdraw all data relating to your participation. This is applicable to all members who have participated in the research project.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please read this information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, or you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the researcher on any of the contact options below. If you are willing to participate in this project, please sign the attached Consent Form and return it to the university in the attached reply paid pre-addressed envelope.

Researcher contact details:

Leanne Holt
Phd Candidate
The University of Newcastle
University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308
Ph. 02 4921 7088 Fax. 02 4921 6985 Mob. 0418 409 795
Email. Leanne.holt@newcastle.edu.au

I will then contact you to arrange a time convenient to you for the interview.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Professor Jenny Gore
Project Supervisor

Leanne Holt
Phd Candidate

Complaints Clause:

This project has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No.: H-2012-0304

The university requires that should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, telephone (02) 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au.

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**Consent Form for the Research Project:
Voices of the National Aboriginal Education Committee
Leanne Holt – PhD Candidate**

Document Version: 1/2012; dated 08/08/2012

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to participating in an interview and having it recorded.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers.

I understand I have the right to review the interview transcripts.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name: _____

Contact Details to arrange interview: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B

NAEC Meetings and Funding Allocations

NAEC Meetings

Date	Location
April 1977	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
June 1977	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
August 1977	Launceston, Tasmania
14 th – 16 th May 1978	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
2 nd – 4 th September 1978	Alice Springs, Northern Territory
12 th – 15 th December 1978	Darwin, Northern Territory
2 nd – 4 th April 1979	Perth, Western Australia
22 nd – 25 th June 1979	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
24 th – 28 th September 1979	Cairns/Thursday Island, Queensland/TSI
3 rd – 7 th December 1979	Brisbane, Queensland (NAEC Conference)
11 th – 14 th February 1980	Adelaide, South Australia
12 th – 16 th May 1980	Melbourne, Victoria
30 th June – 2 nd July 1980	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
13 th – 17 th October 1980	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
2 nd – 6 th February 1981	Flinders Island, Tasmania
11 th – 13 th May 1981	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
20 th – 24 th July 1981	Alice Springs, Northern Territory
12 th – 14 th October 1981	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
15 th – 19 th February 1982	Batchelor, Northern Territory
26 th – 30 th July 1982	Townsville, Queensland
16 th – 19 th November 1982	Broome, Western Australia
20 th – 24 th June 1983	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
3 rd – 6 th September 1983	Goulburn, New South Wales
31 st October – 4 th November 1983	Perth, Western Australia
13 th – 17 th February 1984	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

14 th – 18 th May 1984	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
23 rd – 27 th July 1984	Cairns, Queensland
15 th – 19 th October 1984	Alice Springs, Northern Territory
4 th – 8 th March 1985	Hobart, Tasmania
15 th – 19 th July 1985	Darwin, Northern Territory
4 th – 8 th September 1985	Perth, Western Australia
4 th – 8 th November 1985	Sydney, New South Wales
7 th – 11 th April 1986	Adelaide, South Australia
19 th 23 rd August 1986	Sydney, New South Wales
2 nd – 7 th November 1986	Melbourne, Victoria
4 th – 8 th December 1986	Sydney, New South Wales
7 th – 11 th April 1987	Brisbane, Queensland
13 th – 16 th July 1987	Cairns, Queensland
14 th – 18 th September 1987	Darwin, Northern Territory
23 rd – 25 th November 1987	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
23 rd – 25 th March 1988	Sydney, New South Wales
11 th – 13 th May 1988	Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Executive Meetings

19 th – 20 th January 1978	Alice Springs, NT
9 th – 10 th February 1978	Canberra, ACT
21 st – 22 nd March 1978	Canberra, ACT
25 th – 26 th April 1978	Canberra, ACT
3 rd – 4 th October 1978	Melbourne, VIC
27 th – 28 th October 1978	Canberra, ACT
15 th – 16 th January 1979	Melbourne, VIC
9 th – 10 th May 1979	Canberra, ACT
26 th October 1979	Canberra, ACT
3 rd – 4 th March 1980	Sydney, NSW
11 th August 1980	Canberra, ACT
3 rd – 4 th December 1980	Adelaide, SA
2 nd – 3 rd April 1981	Canberra, ACT

20 th August 1981	Canberra, ACT
9 th – 10 th December 1981	Hobart, TAS
2 nd – 3 rd February 1982	Canberra, ACT
23 rd – 24 th March 1982	Canberra, ACT
7 th – 8 th February 1983	Canberra, ACT
20 th – 21 st April 1983	Canberra, ACT
24 th July 1983	Darwin, NT
13 th – 14 th October 1983	Melbourne, VIC
9 th – 11 th January 1984	Adelaide, SA
10 th – 11 th May 1984	Melbourne, VIC
20 th – 21 st August 1984	Canberra, ACT
29 th – 30 th January 1985	Adelaide, SA
1 st – 3 rd July 1985	Canberra, ACT
6 th – 7 th May 1985	Melbourne, VIC
2 nd – 3 rd October 1985	Canberra, ACT
29 th – 30 th January 1986	Perth, WA
3 rd – 5 th March 1986	Perth, WA
27 th – 28 th May 1986	Canberra, ACT
2 nd – 5 th March 1987	Perth, WA
6 th – 7 th August 1987	Canberra, ACT
20 th – 22 nd October 1987	Canberra, ACT
8 th – 9 th June 1988	Canberra, ACT

Financial Allocations to NAEC for Administration

1978 - 1979	\$187,900
1979 – 1980	\$210,100
1980 – 1981	\$224,629
1981 – 1982	\$252,810
1982 – 1983	\$280,689
1983 – 1984	\$366,065
1984 – 1985	\$415,252
1985 – 1986	\$462,400
1986 – 1987	\$473,300
1987 – 1988	\$508,400

Source: (Parliament of Parliament of Australia, 1986)

Appendix C

NAEC Nomination Form

NOMINATION FOR NAEC MEMBERSHIP

NAME:

ADDRESS:
.....

MARITAL STATUS: SEX:

AGE:

PHONE NUMBER: WORK:
HOME:

OCCUPATION:

1. In the space below give some information of your educational background:

.....
.....
.....

2. If employed describe what you do.

.....
.....
.....

3. a) In which community activities have you been involved?

.....
.....
.....

- b) In which of these are you currently involved?

.....
.....
.....

4. Have you held a position of authority in the above activities.
Yes... No...

a) If yes, what position
.....
.....
.....

b) If no, describe your involvement
.....
.....
.....

5. Comment on why you wish to become a member of the NAEC.
.....
.....
.....

6. a) Do you think education for Aborigines/Islanders can be improved?
Yes... No...

b) If yes, how?
.....
.....
.....

7. Outline the travel you have done -
Either in your State
.....
.....
.....

To another State
.....
.....
.....

Or Overseas
.....
.....
.....

8. Are you a present or past member of a State/Regional Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee or Group? Yes... No...
If yes, which one?

.....
.....
.....

9. What contact, if any, do you have with Aboriginal communities - Rural, Urban, Isolated or Traditional?

.....
.....
.....

10. What contact, if any, do you have with any educational institutions - school, college, Department, church school, etc?

.....
.....
.....

11. Tell us what you think about Aboriginalisation.

.....
.....
.....

12. Tell us what you think about Aboriginal Studies.

.....
.....
.....

13. As a member of the NAEC, you will be involved in:

- (a) 4 Full meetings of four days duration each
- (b) 3 Sub-Committee meetings of two days duration each
- (c) 6 Executive meetings of two days duration each if a selected Executive member

- (d) Occasional attendance at Seminars/Workshops/Conferences - 3-5 days duration, approximately 3-4 per year
If employed, would your employer object to you committing this time to the Committee Yes... No...
- (e) If unemployed, would you have the time to attend all Meetings/Workshops, etc. Yes... No...

REFERENCES Name one or more persons who would be willing to comment on your character and ability to fill the position of Committee member.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE NO.
.....		
.....		
.....		
.....		

DECLARATION BY APPLICANT

I declare that I am an Australian citizen of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander descent, and that the statements made in this application are true.

SIGNATURE OF NOMINEE
SIGNATURE OF NOMINATOR

(N.B. Three signatures are required).

Appendix D

National Aboriginal Education Policy

Involvement of Aboriginal people in educational decision making:

Goal 1 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of pre-school, primary and secondary education service for their children.

Goal 2 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching of Aboriginal culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal languages.

Goal 3 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Goal 4 To increase the number of Aboriginal people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

Goal 5 To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal people to participate in educational decision-making.

Goal 6 To develop arrangements for the provision of independent advice for Aboriginal communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

Equality of access to educational services

Goal 7 To ensure that Aboriginal children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.

Goal 8 To ensure that all Aboriginal children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

Goal 9 To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and higher education.

Equity of educational participation

Goal 10 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for all Australian children.

Goal 11 To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal children in compulsory schooling.

Goal 12 To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory secondary education, in technical and further education.

Equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

Goal 13 To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

Goal 14 To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

Goal 15 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

Goal 16 To enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

Goal 17 To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal languages.

Goal 18 To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal people to develop the skills to manage the development of their communities.

Goal 19 To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal adults with limited or no educational experiences.

Goal 20 To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

Goal 21 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

(Department Employment Education and Training, 1989, pp. 3-6)

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