Australian school leaders have accepted the challenge of the Dare to Lead project and are working to make the project’s aims a reality. Data collected from the School Review Survey indicates that Dare to Lead school leaders are increasingly taking practical steps to improve personal contact and interaction with Indigenous students and the Indigenous community; to improve teaching with regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander themes; to formally acknowledge Indigenous people within their schools; and to provide professional development for staff members in Indigenous education.

The data compares principals’ survey responses from 2004 and 2005. Across that period of time there was improvement in almost every element included in the Review, undoubtedly cause for celebration!

For example, 55 per cent of school leaders surveyed in 2005 said that they acknowledged the traditional owners of the land at school assemblies and similar events; in 2004 the figure was 36 per cent. Seventy three per cent of schools engaged Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander guest speakers in 2005, compared to 64 per cent in 2004. Forty per cent of schools held whole school professional development in literacy and/or numeracy strategies for Indigenous students in 2005; in 2004, it was 29 per cent.

The survey results (which will be taken again in 2006) indicate that many schools are taking action to improve outcomes. “Aboriginal education is THE priority, not just one of many”, Robert Somerville AM, Chair of the Senior Officers National Network of Indigenous Education says. “SONNIE thinks Dare to Lead is a critical program and we support it in all our jurisdictions.”

Many Dare to Lead schools have used the School Review pro forma to set targets for action. In the case of schools without Indigenous students, the review process assists in clarifying the steps required to develop a curriculum that provides all students with an understanding and appreciation of traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture and perspectives.

In 2006 Dare to Lead is continuing to make the difference by facilitating collegial activities in Action Areas. The project also continues to form strategic partnerships, with Reconciliation Australia, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, tertiary institutions and other key bodies, all underpinned by the ongoing support of the four peak principals associations. However varied the project’s activities, they are all targeted towards a unified aim: to increase the rate of improvement of educational outcomes for Australia’s Indigenous students, and to work for Reconciliation.

“Aboriginal education is THE priority, not just one of many.”
— Robert Somerville

Contact Andrea Harms  tel: 08 8245 9801  e-mail: andrea@apapdc.edu.au  www.daretolead.edu.au  JUNE 2006
A central part of the *Dare to Lead* project’s strategy is the establishment and nurturing of Action Areas. These are local networks of *Dare to Lead* Coalition schools grouped geographically, each with one or more school leaders who volunteer as Action Area Contacts, and overseen by state and territory Coordinators.

Brian Giles-Browne, National Schools Coordinator, says that by the end of 2006 the full quota of 94 Action Areas will be active across the country. “Action Areas provide a structure for communication and two-way discussion, as well as providing local support for principals, mentoring and just-in-time problem-solving”, Mr Giles-Browne says.

“The Action Areas plan is to take principals who have an enthusiasm for working and making a difference in this area, and turn those good wishes into action. Action Areas are for professional sharing and cooperative learning. It is about providing local support, principals saying to their colleagues, ‘I will help you with this; we will take action together’. It is also about us saying to our colleagues, ‘Get off your backsides, and let’s make something happen.’ If we don’t make the change today, this generation of Aboriginal students is doomed to failure.”

The Principal Contact/s in each Action Area assist the project team plan professional development events, meetings and communications in their local area. This close contact has allowed events to be planned to meet the specific needs of schools, teachers and community. Action Area Contacts have been provided with leadership training plus access to funds and resources to implement strategies.

A list of Action Area Contacts and schools in each defined Action Area can be found at [www.daretolead.edu.au](http://www.daretolead.edu.au).

**Crucial information**

Latest data contained in the National Report to Parliament provides the following important information that all school leaders need to know:

- The Indigenous population is young: 40 per cent of Indigenous people are under the age of 15 years compared with 20 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. The Indigenous population is also growing at twice the annual rate projected for the rest of the population. Demographic forces, coupled with the raising of the school leaving age, mean that Indigenous students represent an increasing proportion of all students, particularly in government schools. There is thus an urgent need to challenge the prevailing view that disparity in the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is ‘normal’ and that incremental gains are acceptable.
- There has been a significant rise in the Indigenous proportion of preschool enrolments in recent years. Nevertheless, approximately half of eligible 4-year-old Indigenous children do not enroll in preschool, although some will be in childcare arrangements where a preschool program is provided. The absence of equitable access means that Indigenous children are less ‘school ready’ and start formal education at a disadvantage.
- Disproportionate numbers of Indigenous students do not meet national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy at Year 3, 5 and 7 — averaging 20 per cent below the national average.
- Indigenous students attend school less than their non-Indigenous peers, particularly in secondary school.
- Three out of ten Indigenous students leave school during Year 10 or Year 11, compared to one out of ten non-Indigenous students.
- The best retention rate yet for Indigenous students has been recorded with 39.1 per cent of Indigenous students progressing to Year 12 in 2003 in comparison with 76.5 per cent of other students.
Taking on the leadership of a remote school in central Australia is an exciting and exacting educational challenge. Lifestyle issues, lack of ready access to support services and the tyranny of distance combine to make a remote school principal’s job multi-faceted — and challenging.

Some of Australia’s most remote schools are located in the massive swathe of land around the intersection of the Western Australian, South Australian and Northern Territory borders. Dare to Lead schools from this zone have been brought together into a grouping called the TriState Remote Schools. While this is not an Action Area in the usual sense, there is obvious benefit in enhancing communication between the leaders of these schools, pooling resources and working to the same broad plan.

Seventy educators from these schools convened in Alice Springs for the first TriState Remotes Conference in March 2006. There was discussion about the ways in which the TriState group might function, the challenges facing TriState educators, and collaborative pathways forward. While Dare to Lead’s targets apply to all schools regardless of context, the strategy for achieving these aims varies markedly. A remote school where the power doesn’t work because the generator is broken is evidently different to an inner-urban school. At the very least, TriState educators felt they were sharing strategies with peers who truly understood their school situations.

Susan Smith, Manager of the Indigenous Education Policy Branch at DEST attended the conference with several colleagues and said, “We believe that the Dare to Lead TriState Conference is a great opportunity to listen to issues from the perspective of those on the ground.”

A full report on the event is available on the website www.daretolead.edu.au

Remote schools ‘Tri’ something new

Student attendance is a major factor in the educational outcomes of Indigenous students. The chart demonstrates the huge impact of absenteeism across 12 years of schooling.

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What does winning an Excellence Award mean?

“It is recognition of the successful partnerships we have formed, and tremendous news for our small community… National recognition like this breaks down geographical barriers.” — Kevin Zielke, principal Dunwich State School, High Achievement award winner 2005

“This is a big tribute to the kids, but also to their caregivers and other community members who take an interest.” — Milton Butcher, Principal Katanning Senior High School, High Achievement award winner 2004

All Dare to Lead schools are encouraged to nominate for the third annual Excellence in Indigenous Education awards, to be presented later this year. An application form with criteria is on the Dare to Lead website. Award-winning schools typically work in a focused and strategic way to achieve excellence in improving Indigenous student outcomes, with strong Indigenous community support, evidence of consultative leadership, and systematic use of data.

**APPLICATIONS CLOSE NOVEMBER 20th, 2006.**
Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer Martin Seelander works as a mentor for this group. He sets them the task of researching and presenting their own story — who they are, where they’re from, their family connections — and believes that for some of the students this is a key step towards establishing their identity. He cautions that it can be a very emotional process, and that extreme care should be exercised — he regards the school’s health team as a safety-net in this regard — but that the benefits make the process worthwhile. He also believes that the act of presenting the information to their peers is good personal development that helps break down the inhibiting notion of ‘shame’. Later in the year Mr Seelander teaches the students Aboriginal history to place their own experiences in a broader context, and takes them bush to strengthen their connections to culture.

The commitment of the leadership at Alberton Primary School to Indigenous education is demonstrated through a range of targeted programs. With almost one-third of the students identifying as Aboriginal, the school appointed an Aboriginal Education Coordinator, a leadership position above formula and funded from general school funds. All Aboriginal students Reception–Year 3 undertake an intensive reading program, the Corker Reading Program, resulting in an average improvement of over 10 reading levels in the first year. A local Aboriginal man works with students Years 3–7 on a project called ‘The Shed’, which has improved engagement for many students, particularly those more at-risk. Governing Council has purchased a bus which operates from school funds. It is a pick-up/drop-off service for children most at risk of non-attendance, with priority seating for Aboriginal students. A new Indigenous Education Centre has been built, accessed by all students when studying LOTE Pitjantjatjara, and providing a meeting place for parents and community members.

There are 22 Aboriginal students in Year 8 at Balga SHS, the first year of secondary schooling in WA. Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer Martin Seelander works as a mentor for this group. He sets them the task of researching and presenting their own story — who they are, where they’re from, their family connections — and believes that for some of the students this is a key step towards establishing their identity. He cautions that it can be a very emotional process, and that extreme care should be exercised — he regards the school’s health team as a safety-net in this regard — but that the benefits make the process worthwhile. He also believes that the act of presenting the information to their peers is good personal development that helps break down the inhibiting notion of ‘shame’. Later in the year Mr Seelander teaches the students Aboriginal history to place their own experiences in a broader context, and takes them bush to strengthen their connections to culture.

The mission statement of this inner-city Catholic primary school dedicates it to ‘Reconciliation though education, and the advocacy of truth in history’. The school achieves this by embedding Indigenous perspectives in all aspects of the curriculum, a welcoming environment (art, artifacts, Reconciliation Garden, bush tucker garden) and the employment of five Indigenous aides. It achieves
this beyond the school walls through visits to other schools where Indigenous culture is showcased. When invited to visit another school, Holy Rosary takes not just its accomplished Indigenous dance troupe, but every child from the school. Shared activities are undertaken, including Holy Rosary students teaching students from the host school traditional Indigenous games. It is not unusual for the host school to have no Indigenous students enrolled, making the contact particularly valuable.

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: Malek Fahd Islamic School (NSW)
Malek Fahd Islamic School is Sydney's largest Moslem school where, at most, a single student identifies as Aboriginal. Despite this, the leadership is working to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are taught in various subject streams throughout the school. There is a specific focus on this with Year 9 & 10 Geography which examines traditional use of the land; Year 10 History which examines topics such as native title, Mabo, contemporary Aboriginal disadvantage, health, Terra Nullius, education; Year 11 Studies of Religion which focuses on the importance of The Dreaming, totems, kinship and art; and English, where Indigenous-themed texts are taught. "Indigenous people are a central part of this country — how could we not learn about them?" says senior geography teacher Pinad El-ahmad. The school has had noted storyteller Boori Monti-Pryor visit to address the students and hopes to continue expanding its teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

COMPLETION:
Wiltja (SA)
The Wiltja Program at Woodville High School serves about 50 Anangu students from the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. The Wiltja program is the urban annex of the secondary programs being offered by remote Anangu schools. Students with potential for further academic development are nominated by their teachers in these communities, and following consultation with parents and family members, travel to Adelaide to participate. The opportunity is provided to access urban secondary schooling and to complete South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) courses. Most of these students board at the Wiltja Residence in Adelaide where they are supported by Residential Program staff in their education, recreation and cultural transition. Students at the hostel participate in an evening tutorial program that is designed to support their school-based program. Since 1998, there have been 28 SACE graduates from the Anangu Lands who have come through the Wiltja program.
Regional action

Australian Capital Territory

2006 so far: A very successful Dare to Lead conference was held at the Calwell Club in April, which tied in with the ACT’s compulsory professional development in cultural awareness. Speakers included Brian Giles-Browne, Billy Williams and Jock Lawson, and there was great feedback from the evaluation report. An ACT Dare to Lead newsletter has been established and distributed. There were three What Works workshops held at the end of May, at Yarralumla, Florey and Isabella Plains Primary schools.

Looking forward: The goal is to contact all schools in the ACT that haven’t yet joined Dare to Lead and encourage them to sign up. Other goals are to strengthen the work in our Action Areas, and to hold more events.

Northern Territory

2006 so far: Dare to Lead had a key involvement with the inaugural TriState Remote Schools Conference in Alice Springs which was a valuable event. Action Areas have been established across the Territory and work is continuing to increase their strength.

Looking forward: The Australian Primary Principals Association conference in Alice Springs in July will be a major event. Its focus is on Indigenous Education issues. Dare to Lead will have a strong presence at this conference, as well as sponsoring cultural tours pre- and post-conference, and organising visits to sites in and around Alice Springs.

Another aim is to organise activities focusing on different resources including Moorditj, The Dreaming and The Bridge during Term 3.

Queensland

2006 so far: Queensland has added 100 new Coalition members this year, bringing the state total to 600. There are 15 Action Areas across the state, and most have participated in Dare to Lead activities during the year, both in cluster events and in individual schools.

Looking forward: With the awareness-raising phase passing (‘What questions could I ask of my own school in relation to Indigenous education?’) the latter part of the year will focus on future planning for schools as they prepare for 2007, as well as providing a complementary learning opportunity for Education Queensland schools (and clusters) as they undertake their cross-cultural training. Boarding schools will receive some focused support from Dare to Lead, acknowledging the unique issues which face these schools as they work with Indigenous students from remote communities.

New South Wales

2006 so far: NSW has 1450 school members divided into 27 Action Areas. Term 1 events included workshops for school teams developing Strategic Plans in Indigenous education, staff meeting discussions, principal gatherings and major conferences. Workshops were held in Quirindi, Penrith, Port Macquarie, Kempsey, Inverell, Arrawarra, Taree, Manly, Dubbo and Sydney City. A major conference in Newcastle was attended by 250 teachers and community members.

Southern Australia

2006 so far: Ten Action Areas have been developed. Action Area Contacts met for planning work on 24 March and 2 June. The Action Area Contacts have been promoting the work of the project through network meetings, district meetings, professional association sessions and school visits, as well as distributing key resources provided through Dare to Lead. All Action Areas were invited to attend the Indigenous Perspectives Conference in early March, a very successful day with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Looking forward: The remainder of the year sees further Action Area events planned for Wagga, Albury, Griffith, Deniliquin, Coff’s Harbour, Grafton, Batemans Bay, Campbeltown, Bathurst, Canterbury, Western Region, Armidale, North Sydney, Parramatta, Bankstown and Granville. Individual school planning sessions are also being supported. Sessions demonstrating cultural resources, teaching strategies, transition and completion programs, community partnership development and engagement activities will be offered across the state.

Coordinator: Peter O’Beirne. Contact: 0431 772 569; peter@apapdc.edu.au

Australian Capital Territory

ACT contacts: Trish Keller and Dennis Flannery. Contact: 02 6205 7077; trishk@narrabundahps.act.edu.au

Northern Territory

Coordinator: Brian Giles-Browne. Contact: 0423 915 552; brian@apapdc.edu.au

Queensland

Coordinator: Marcus Dixon 0401 119 239; marcusj.dixon@latis.net.au and Tony Collins 0428 513 800; tony.collins@latis.net.au

New South Wales

Coordinator: Trish Keller and Dennis Flannery. Contact: 02 6205 7077; trishk@narrabundahps.act.edu.au

Northern Territory

Contact: 0423 915 552; brian@apapdc.edu.au

Southern Australia

Contact: 0431 772 569; peter@apapdc.edu.au
Looking forward: Member schools will receive invitations to workshops on key resources (Moorditj, Images of Reconciliation, The Bridge) and opportunities to share and showcase school strategies and programs, plus specific sessions on areas signaled by member schools (for example, literacy, attendance). Another event similar to the Indigenous Perspectives Conference is planned for November 16th in Adelaide.

Coordinator: Andrea Harms.
Contact: 0403 286 581; andrea@apapdc.edu.au

Tasmania

2006 so far: Five Action Areas have been established: Greater Hobart (contact Graham Speight, Rosetta High School); Eastern Shore, Midlands, New Norfolk (contact Greg Phair, Rokeby Primary School); Huon and Channel (contact Jeff Brown, Margate Primary); North and North East (contact Craig Tyeson, East Launceston Cluster); North West (contact Andrew Starick, West Somerset Primary). Relationships with key educational bodies have been established. A key group is working towards building Indigenous cultural perspectives into the Essential Learnings curriculum.

Looking forward: The key focus for the Action Area contacts in Victoria over the next six months will be engaging principals in strategic planning in partnership with their local Indigenous communities, resulting in a range of activities which support the improvement of the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and an increased understanding by non-Indigenous school communities of Indigenous issues and perspectives.

Coordinator: Ellie Scott.
Contact: 0417 218 966; ellie@apapdc.edu.au

Western Australia

2006 so far: Dare to Lead in the West has experienced a growth spurt in membership with the Coalition now comprising 480 schools out of a possible 1060. There has been an expansion from eight to 18 Action Areas and they will all be operational by the middle of the year. Professional Development opportunities are being offered in all parts of the state and Dare to Lead has been strongly supported by all three education sectors.

Looking forward: Dare to Lead will be establishing Action Areas in Narrogin and Albany in June/July. There will be a variety of Personal and Professional Development options offered by Dare to Lead Action Area Coordinators including pedagogic bus tours of schools, a cultural tour of some remote Goldfields schools, specialised/ focused Indigenous conferences and news on a literacy pilot/trial program in 10 selected metropolitan schools.

Coordinator: Rod Elmer.
Contact: 0427 722 993; wappadtld@iinet.net.au

Dare to Lead Coalition continues to grow!

The Dare to Lead Coalition has expanded to 3668 members, and is on track to achieve its target of 5000 school members. If you know a colleague whose school has not yet signed up, encourage them to do so today!

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The WA Aboriginal Child Health Survey focuses on the educational experiences of Aboriginal children from past decades to the present day. The survey represents a significant milestone in the delivery of data to meet information needs about Aboriginal students. The large scale and scope of the survey allows it to describe the prevalence and distribution of educational disadvantage among Aboriginal students, and identify the factors behind current performance levels.

This volume is essential reading for all with a stake in the education of Aboriginal students, from those who make decisions at a policy and program level to staff in schools.

Copies of each of the three volumes of the survey, plus Summary Booklets of each volume are available from the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research in WA. Further information plus PDF versions of the publications can be downloaded from the website: www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/waachs

Future pathways for Indigenous educators

IEWs, AEsAs, KEs, AEWs, AATs, AIEWs, AIEOss — whatever the local acronym, the universal fact is that many schools rely heavily on the input of their Indigenous Educators (IEs). There are around 2200 IEs employed in Australian schools. The parameters of the role at present, and strategies to strengthen the position in the future, were topics discussed at an Indigenous Educators Forum held in Sydney in April 2006, jointly convened by Dare to Lead and non-profit research organisation Dusseldorp Skills Forum.

The two biggest ‘boosters’ identified by IEs are recognition of the importance of the role through award levels and promotion; and having a supportive principal. The IEs’ two biggest blockers are that expectations of the position far outweigh the role statement; and a lack of cultural knowledge and respect from some staff. Principals at the forum identified uncertainty of long-term funding and staffing as a major hurdle. Principals stressed that the IE role is an important factor in achieving improved Indigenous student outcomes. Participants agreed that further discussion around the IE role is highly desirable.

A full report on the event is available at www.daretolead.edu.au

www.daretolead.edu.au

Recommended resources

The Bridge — Towards Reconciliation is an interactive board game for schools, a learning tool designed to promote Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. While the game targets secondary school students it is also suitable for upper primary levels. The Bridge aims to increase knowledge and understanding of Australian Indigenous peoples and to celebrate the many contributions made by Indigenous people to Australian society. This resource is available through Dare to Lead for $80.

MacquarieNet is an online reference database offering access to a variety of Australian and international information including encyclopaedias, reference titles, dictionaries and online image libraries. A focus on Indigenous content makes this resource a valuable tool for schools. All Dare to Lead Action Area Contacts have a copy of a CD-ROM featuring a MacquarieNet PowerPoint presentation.

Moorditj is a multi-award-winning interactive CD-ROM which celebrates the depth and diversity of the cultural expressions of Indigenous Australian artists. If your school is a member of Dare to Lead and has a Moorditj unlimited site licence, you can now download free curriculum resources in the areas of Mathematics, Society & the Environment, Science, Technology and Enterprise, LOTE, Health & PE, English and The Arts. To purchase a Moorditj site licence, contact www.moorditj.net.au or Dare to Lead for further information.