

It is my dream is to see within my own lifetime that everyone is guaranteed a level playing field in life. That each Indigenous and non-Indigenous individual can voice their undeniable rights to social justice. That Indigenous people are guaranteed equality of access and are supported by the community to pursue their life ambitions and inherent talents. While minorities of Indigenous people are achieving their goals and ambitions, the majority of Indigenous people are being left behind. Access to education and employment pathways for Indigenous young people is vital for them successfully achieving their goals and ambitions.

Some key findings from the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2007 Report show;

Years 10 and 12 retention and attainment

- In 2006. 21 percent of 15 year old Indigenous people were not participating in school education. Only 5 percent of non-Indigenous 15 year olds were not participating in school education
- In 2006. Indigenous students were half as likely as non-Indigenous students to continue to year 12
- In 2004-05, a smaller proportion (22.1 percent) of Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people (46.6 percent) had completed year 12.
- The proportion of Indigenous students who achieved a year 12 certificate (after being enrolled in year 11 the previous year) changed little between 2001 and 2005.¹

Post secondary education – participation and attainment

- In 2004-05, non-Indigenous people were more than twice as likely as Indigenous people to have completed a post secondary qualification of certificate level 3 or above.²

Labour force participation

- In 2004-05 Labour force participation rates for Indigenous people were lower than those for non-Indigenous people for both sexes in all age groups.³

Our rights to education and employment are recognised in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Article 13 (S1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that:

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further agree that education

¹ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission.(2007) *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2007 Report*. Commonwealth of Australia. p. 20

² Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission.(2007) *op.cit* p. 30

³ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission.(2007) *op.cit* p. 45

shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 6 of the same Covenant states that:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts, and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.

2. The steps to be taken by a State Party to the present Covenant to achieve the full realization of this right shall include technical and vocational guidance and training programmes, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full and productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.

Protecting Indigenous people's rights to access education and employment can be vital for the well-being of Indigenous communities of Australia. Better protection of these rights is needed in Australia.

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