



Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research  
The Australian National University

Education, Training and Indigenous Futures  
CAEPR Policy Research: 1990-2007

## Research Summaries

Adrian M. Fordham and R.G. (Jerry) Schwab

## Reference No. 46

Summarising: Fordham (2007), *The role of education in Shared Responsibility Agreements*

Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990-2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

The MCEETYA report and associated research summaries are available at <[www.anu.edu.au/caepr/education.php](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/education.php)>.

**Title of Research:**

The role of education in Shared Responsibility Agreements

**Research Publication:**

Unpublished work-in-progress (2007)

**Name of Researcher(s):**

A. Fordham

**Time period:**

2007

**Geographic location:**

Australia

**Methodology:**

A preliminary analysis of all Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs) published on the Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) website [www.oipc.gov.au] in terms of State, target group, priority focus, and strategies.

Note that the publicly available schedules only allow a high-level analysis of the SRAs which limits the extent to which target groups and intended outcomes can be accurately determined. Nevertheless sufficient details are provided to give a fairly good indication of expected outcomes, strategies and target groups.

**Aims:**

To provide a preliminary analysis and overview of the SRAs that have been signed between Indigenous communities and the Commonwealth Government, with particular reference to education provision.

**Selected findings and insights:**

At the beginning of 2007, some **244 SRAs** had been signed between Indigenous communities and the Commonwealth Government. Of these:

- 65 SRAs were in WA, 49 in the NT, 46 in NSW, 40 in Queensland, 31 in SA, 8 in Tasmania, 4 in Victoria and 1 in the ACT.

In addition, three Regional Partnership Agreements (RPAs) have been put in place in Western Australia.

The schedules published on the OIPC website did not enable a fine-grained analysis due to the nature of the information provided (for example, inconsistent or potential overlap in use of terms such as young people, youth, youth at risk and young children). Some SRAs were also developed to meet the needs of several target groups and therefore sought to provide a range of benefits. However the schedules did provide insights into the major themes being addressed by the SRAs.

Generally SRAs had either a **broad community focus** or were targeted at **youth**:

- some 50% were developed to be of benefit to the broad community;
- 40% were described as assisting youth, youth at risk or young people;

- slightly more than 10% had a focus on young children, either at school or in the preschool 0-5 years age group; and
- a small number of SRAs directly addressed the needs of women and men.

#### *SRAs for assisting the broad community*

Almost 40% of SRAs with a broad community focus addressed some general aspect of community life such as the provision of community facilities, recreational services and improvement to basic services with the purpose of improving the general **well-being of the community**. About 30% included **health and nutrition** as community priorities and some of these may have also been associated with overall community well-being. In addition, significant numbers of SRAs were developed to:

- assist in the development of business enterprises, especially in arts, tourism and cultural heritage, but did include other avenues such as community stores or the introduction and operation of fuel bowsers;
- help develop employment opportunities and pathways; and
- skill development and capacity building, and strengthening local governance.

#### *SRAs for assisting youth, youth at risk or young people*

There were two major themes for SRAs developed to assist youth. About 40% of the SRAs that included a youth focus were developed to assist young people **avoid alcohol and substance abuse**, and avoid becoming involved in **juvenile criminal activity**. Another quarter of youth focussed SRAs were directed at general youth well-being, as a means of increasing self-esteem, increasing engagement with education, avoiding boredom and antisocial activities and generally helping to maintain community cohesion.

- Improving education outcomes and developing pathways to employment were also prominent in youth-related SRAs.

As might be expected, SRAs for assisting young children had a principal focus upon **education**, early childhood education and provision of child care activities. Improved health and nutrition were also highlighted.

#### *SRAs which included an education and training focus*

Just over 50 SRAs had an educational focus, and overall up to 40% mentioned some aspect of education as of community concern – school attendance, education and training participation and educational outcomes.

SRAs with an **educational focus** strengthened education and training outcomes using a variety of strategies:

- Direct involvement with the school curriculum by developing alternative delivery strategies, including use of art and media, to better cater for the natural interests of Indigenous students or through the provision of additional support such Indigenous Education Workers and Homework Centres;
- Increasing access to education through School of the Air, the construction of facilities or through scholarships;
- Developing pathways through secondary school towards employment opportunities, resulting in increased retention though Years 10 - 12. Such strategies included increased career information, linking schools with employers and VET in schools types of programs and mentoring;
- Developing alternative curriculum activities or other incentives associated with the school to promote school attendance, including 'bush camps', bike maintenance courses, and breakfast and lunch programs;

- Improving sporting and recreational activities for young people in the community, thereby increasing their sense of well-being and motivation to attend to school; and
- Introducing activities or facilities such as community motor transport, a swimming pool, community store or a motor bike track and training course on the condition that students attend school or using school attendance as a performance indicator.

*SRAs which included a business enterprise focus*

SRAs included a wide range of **business enterprise and development** planned outcomes. These included:

- The introduction of fuel bowsers into a community, providing employment as well as facilitating local transport;
- Development of tourism related industries, such as heritage trails, cultural activities and art production;
- Horticulture and food production;
- Community stores
- Land based and management industries such as cattle industry and mud crab industries.

### **Educational implications:**

The wide range of activities developed to encourage continuing school participation under *SRAs* raises several issues for the development of school and community education partnership agreements:

- Schools do not appear to play a significant role in many *SRAs* and there is potential for confusion at the community and even agency level as to the relative purposes of *SRAs* and school and community educational partnership agreements and potential overlap;
- priority is accorded to youth and youth at risk and increased school retention and pathways development in many *SRAs*. There appears little direct emphasis upon curriculum strategies in schools to improve the basic skills of literacy and numeracy for younger students;
- the extent to which schools and their communities have established a governance relationship in educationally related *SRAs* is unclear but, apart from several *SRAs*, this does not appear the case;
- there appears limited focus upon the school as an educational institution and the development of best practice among staff for the education of Indigenous students; and
- in a significant number of *SRAs*, the 'educational' links between the activity and increased school attendance or participation appears tenuous. **[partnerships]**

### **Relevance:**

*Domain 1: Early Childhood Education*

Culturally appropriate provision

*Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships*

Educational partnership agreements and Shared Responsibility Agreements (SRAs)

### **Related papers:**

P. Sullivan, 'Strange Bedfellows: Whole-of-Government Policy, Shared Responsibility Agreements, and Implications for Regional Governance', CAEPR-Reconciliation Australia ICG Project Workshop Report, 2005.

<[http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Projects/Regional\\_Gov\\_PSullivan.pdf](http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/Projects/Regional_Gov_PSullivan.pdf)>.