An Evaluation of the Aged Care Indigenous Employment Initiatives (IEIs) and Associated Training Programs



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Terms of Reference

The Department of Health contracted Siggins Miller to conduct an evaluation of five aged care Indigenous Employment Initiatives (IEIs) and the two associated training programs that support the employment and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in predominantly rural and remote aged care services.

The five IEIs evaluated were:

- Building an Indigenous Workforce in Community Care (BAIWICC), since 2007;
- Northern Territory Jobs Package (NTJP), since 2007;
- Cape York Jobs Package (CYJP), since 2009 (previously known as the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial);
- National Jobs Creation Package (NJCP), since 2009; and
- Torres Strait Islands Job Package (TSIJP), since 2010.

The two training programs associated with the IEIs evaluated were:

- Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Training Program (NTTP), since 2009;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural and Remote Aged Care Training Project (RRTP), since 2010.

The evaluation comprises two components:

- 1. A desktop financial audit of 104 funded organisations covering the financial years of 2016–2017 and 2017–2018; and
- An in-depth evaluation of a representative sample of 30 funded organisations, being employing organisations funded through one of the five IEIs, and training providers funded through the two training programs.

The scope of this evaluation was to examine the effectiveness, appropriateness and performance of the five IEIs and two associated training programs in achieving their intended outcomes. A representative sample of 30 employment organisations funded by the five IEIs and seven training providers funded through the two training programs were evaluated.

1.2. Overview of the programs

Since July 2007, five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care workforce employment programs, known collectively as the Indigenous Employment Initiatives (IEIs), have been implemented nationally by the Australian Government to create employment opportunities in aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Currently, more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services, predominantly in rural and remote areas, receive funding through the IEIs. The IEIs had an annual budget of \$20.1m in 2016–2017, \$20.4m in 2017–2018, and \$20.7m in 2018–2019.

The training programs deliver culturally appropriate accredited training to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who are employed through the IEIs. This training is delivered onsite by registered training organisations (RTOs) in the communities where IEI funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers are employed, enabling workers to develop job-specific skills and to work towards a certificate of attainment, where appropriate. The training programs may also be offered to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the community, enabling further opportunities for community members to access training that may lead to a career in aged care. The training programs had an annual budget of \$6.3m in 2016–2017, \$6.0m in 2017–2018, and \$6.1m in 2018–2019.

The IEIs and associated training programs have the shared goals of:

- Creating employment opportunities in aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, predominantly in rural and remote areas, as a strategy to reduce disadvantage in employment outcomes;
- Ensuring that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care sector has access to a trained workforce that is trained in the delivery of culturally-appropriate services;
- Building the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services; and
- Assisting with the delivery of culturally-appropriate aged care services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

1.3. Evaluation questions

The evaluation addressed five key questions:

- 1. How effective have the programs been in achieving their intended outcomes?
- 2. Are the programs an appropriate response to identified needs?
- 3. Are the programs value for money to the Commonwealth?
- 4. How could the structure and delivery of the programs be strengthened?
- 5. How could the performance monitoring and reporting arrangements be improved, balanced against reducing reporting 'red tape'?

1.4. Methodology

The key elements of the methodology for the evaluation were:

- Document/desktop review and analysis, including information provided by the Department (e.g. policy and program documents, relevant data) and published literature and policy documents;
- 2. Stakeholder consultation via video-based or telephone interviews or an online written submission;
- 3. Triangulation of data from all sources to answer key evaluation questions and cross-validate qualitative and quantitative data sources to build the contribution story; and
- 4. Analysis of effectiveness, appropriateness and performance of the IEIs and associated training programs in achieving their intended outcomes.

The evaluation report is structured around the five key evaluation questions, set out above, and the detailed program logic developed for the evaluation which describes outputs and intermediate and long-term outcomes of the programs (see **Appendix A**).

1.5. Key findings

1.5.1. Question 1 Findings: Regarding the effectiveness of the IEIs in achieving their intended outcomes, Section 5.1

- The funds are contributing to increased employment opportunities for Indigenous people, largely in rural and remote areas.
- The funds are contributing to a reduction in employment disadvantage through the provision of employment opportunities that would not exist without the funding.

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- There is very little difficulty across funded organisations in recruiting staff that are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- The funding is being used to employ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in a variety of appropriate clinical and non-clinical aged care related roles.
- The IEIs are contributing to ensuring that the Indigenous aged care sector has access to a trained workforce.
- The IEI funded organisations, for the most part, are contributing to ensuring a trained workforce through mandatory training, organising Certificate and Diploma level training for staff (sometimes through their own funding) and focusing on continuous professional development and growth.
- The IEI funded RTOs are ensuring a trained workforce through delivering a large quantity of certificates and competency units to Indigenous staff

- The IEIs are contributing to ensuring that the aged care sector has access to a workforce trained in the culturally appropriate delivery of services by supporting Indigenous employment by aged care service providers who either have mandatory cultural awareness training built into their services or engage RTOs to deliver cultural awareness programs.
- The IEIs are contributing to ensuring that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care sector has access to a workforce that is trained in the delivery of culturally appropriate services by funding Indigenous service providers who either deliver mandatory cultural awareness training internally or receive training though IEI funded RTOs or other accredited training providers.
- The IEI programs are contributing to the delivery of culturally appropriate aged care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote communities.
- The IEI funds are being used to employ Indigenous staff who are culturally competent and have strong ties to the local community, which ensures the delivery of culturally safe care.
- Some organisations are providing their aged care staff with mandatory cultural awareness training, which assists staff in the delivery of culturally appropriate care.
- Some organisations are consulting with local Indigenous Elders and Indigenous staff to obtain feedback on the cultural appropriateness of their services and are using this feedback to improve the delivery of culturally appropriate services.
- The IEI programs allow service providers to employ more local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their aged care services. The employment of staff who are members of the local community contributes to both the capacity and sustainability of aged care services by increasing their attractiveness and acceptability to local people and their families.
- The training provided under the IEIs is contributing to significant increases in efficiency, which, in turn, contributes to increased capacity and sustainability of service delivery.
- The flexibility demonstrated by both service providers and RTOs in response to IEI funded employees' need to meet cultural and extended family obligations from time to time contributes to the capacity and sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care sector and also ensures that the capacity built is not lost by individuals, their families and their communities.

1.5.2. Question 2 Findings: Regarding whether the IEIs are an appropriate response to identified needs at a sector, community and individual level, Section 5.2

- The IEI is an appropriate response to the identified needs at the sector, community and individual levels.
- A greater recognition of the need for foundational English language literacy and numeracy training as a prerequisite to aged care specific competency units and qualifications would enhance the IEI funding's effectiveness in addressing identified needs.
- IEI funds are increasingly being seen by providers and RTOs as the source of funds to address what they report as significant levels of unmet need for aged care services, rather than their intended purpose of creating employment and training opportunities, as well as reducing Indigenous employment disadvantage.

1.5.3. Question 3 Findings: Regarding whether the IEIs are value for money for the Commonwealth, Section 5.3

• There are direct, indirect, intended and unintended positive benefits of the IEI funding, which, when combined with the level of "in kind" contributions made by most providers, suggests that, overall, the IEIs do provide value for money for the Commonwealth.

1.5.4. Question 4 Findings: Regarding how the structure and the delivery of the IEIs could be strengthened, Section 5.4

- A return to a three-year funding cycle would better align with the timeframes required to complete qualifications (18 months and 24 months for Certificate III and IV, respectively) and improve the capacity of both providers and RTOs to attract and retain staff.
- The provision of English language, literacy and numeracy training in remote and very remote communities should be seen as foundational to the successful completion of competency units and qualifications.
- The capacity to provide training in the workplace and for significant blocks of time would result in improved training effect and reduce lengths of time to complete training.
- The IEI programs should give equal weighting and importance to the completion of individual competency units and to the attainment of full qualifications so the varying career aspirations of trainees and the needs of organisations are better addressed.
- Some service providers were unaware of the availability of free training opportunities for IEI funded staff through funded RTOs.
- There is a need to clarify for some IEI funded service providers the difference between the purpose of the IEI funding and the funding for aged care service delivery.
- There is a desire to expand the use of IEI funding to support the attainment of nursing qualifications and delivery of disability services training.

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• There is a need to ensure that funded service providers and RTOs have a mechanism to advise the Department of concerns about their contract or the performance of the IEIs now that grant management (DSS) and policy (Health) responsibilities for the IEIs sit with different Commonwealth Government Departments.

1.5.5. Question 5 Findings: How the performance monitoring and reporting arrangements could be improved and balanced against reducing reporting 'red tape', Section 5.5

- That the Department note that the provision of greater detail and accuracy in reporting procedures by service providers would improve the accountability of outcomes and enable more thorough monitoring and evaluation of the IEIs in future.
- That the Department consider the use of completion of one or more competency units in any one reporting period as a KPI of the IEI's success, in addition to the existing KPI regarding the certificate competition rates.
- That the Department consider reporting arrangements that support the ability to determine value for money via the extent and nature of financial contributions an in-kind contribution made by the IEI funded organisations.
- That the Department consider how the current reporting templates (using salary units) could be modified to support identification of the number of individuals who receive IEI in any reporting reports whilst preserving the confidentiality of employees/trainees.
- That the Department consider how the reporting of training data could be improved to allow determination of how much of the training delivered goes to IEI funded and non-IEI funded staff.
- That the Department consider the cost-free benefit of enabling non-IEI funded staff to participate in the training provided for IEI funded staff.

1.5.6. Question 1 Recommendations: Regarding the effectiveness of the IEIs in achieving their intended outcomes, Section 5.1

- 1. The Department may wish to clarify whether using IEI funds for the support of promotion and advancement aligns with the program's intended objectives or could inform future directions.
- 2. The Department should note that the IEIs are creating employment opportunities in aged care for Indigenous people, predominantly in rural and remote areas, and are reducing disadvantage of employment outcomes for participating individuals.

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- 4. The Department may wish to use the funding agreements with RTOs to emphasise the importance of cultural awareness training to reduce any observed variability to zero.
- 5. The Department could use any refinement of the IEI funding guidelines and service agreements to reduce misunderstandings about where funded organisations can access IEI funded training and from whom.
- 6. The Department should note that the evidence available to this evaluation suggests that the IEI programs are assisting with the delivery of culturally appropriate aged care services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 7. The Department could consider making cultural awareness training a mandatory component of funding agreements in the future.

8. The Department should note that the design of the IEIs and their implementation by both service providers and RTOs appear to be contributing positively to building the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services.

1.5.7. Question 2 Recommendations: Regarding whether the IEIs are an appropriate response to identified needs at a sector, community and individual level, Section 5.2

- 9. The Department should note that there is universal agreement that the IEIs, in both their design and implementation, are an appropriate response to identified need.
- 10. The Department should consider whether the IEIs are positioned as a workforce development strategy, as they are intended, or as an aged care funding strategy.

1.5.8. Question 3 Recommendations: Regarding whether the IEIs are value for money for the Commonwealth, Section 5.3

- 11. The Department should note the considerable and varied ways in which their investment in the IEIs is providing value for money.
- 12. The Department could consider how refinement and improvement of reporting requirements for both service providers and RTOs could improve the quality of both the qualitative and quantitative information necessary to gain a fuller picture of value for money in future monitoring and evaluation of the programs.

1.5.9. Question 4 Recommendations: Regarding how the structure and the delivery of the IEIs could be strengthened, Section 5.4

- 13. Pending the acceptance of the findings of this evaluation, the Department could consider a return to a three-year funding cycle to align better with the length of time taken to complete qualifications.
- 14. The Department could consider a stronger emphasis on English language, literacy and numeracy training as foundational to later successful completion of competency units or qualifications in their contracts with RTOs.
- 15. The Department could consider the inclusion of requirements in contracts for RTOs to deliver training in workplaces rather than off site and that training be delivered in blocks of times that would allow qualifications to be completed in a more timely manner.
- 16. Performance monitoring and KPIs for the IEIs could give appropriate weighting to the completion of competency units and not just focus on the completion of qualifications within reporting periods.
- 17. The Department could consider the appropriateness of IEI funding for nurse education and disability related training
- 18. The Department could strengthen the requirement of RTOs to clearly communicate with all the aged care providers they are contracted to support.
- 19. The Department could clarify the purpose of IEI funding and advise organisations of how best to apply for aged care funding to meet identified unmet local needs.
- 20. The Department could consider convening annual or biannual national meetings of IEI providers and RTOs as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation and sharing of success and innovation.

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21. The Department could consider strengthening the responsibility of the RTOs to better communicate their availability to all their allocated service providers or allow service providers to engage RTOs of their choice.

1.5.10. Question 5 Recommendations: How the performance monitoring and reporting arrangements could be improved and balanced against reducing reporting 'red tape', Section 5.5

- 22. The Department could modify current reporting templates to prompt specific and informative responses for every category to increase the number of complete and detailed responses received. Furthermore, specific questions could be included, with responses being tailored to each reporting period, and service sites could reduce the number of repetitive responses.
- 23. The Department could consider introducing more stringent reporting requirements for the IEI funded organisations to increase reporting accountability. This should assist in improving current reporting standards and ensure that organisations submit their reports in a timely, accurate, comprehensive and complete manner.
- 24. The Department could change the existing Key Performance Indicators for RTOs to focus on both certificate completion rates and competency unit completion rates. It is also recommended that organisations provide qualitative data such as 'success stories' in their reporting.
- 25. The Department could modify the financial reporting to clearly indicate how much money is being spent on salaries per person and the amount of financial and in-kind contributions made by the organisation.
- 26. The Department could require organisations to specifically note in future reports the amount of salary units being spent on each person while preserving individual confidentiality.
- 27. The Department could modify the RTO training and performance reports to include reporting on the certificate completion and competency unit completion rates of IEI funded employees.
- 28. The Department could improve services' reporting templates to include data on financial accountability and 'success stories' for evaluation, as both would help in measuring program effectiveness and efficiency.
- 29. As their role in grants management matures, DSS, in partnership with DoH policy areas, could consider how best to ensure the completeness and accuracy of performance reports and how best to use these on an ongoing basis for program management and improvement.
- 30. In the revision of IEI guidelines for RTOs, the department could consider encouraging them to allow interested local community members (not funded under IEI) to attend training in communities, as opportunities arose, at no extra cost.

AGED CARE INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES (IEIS) AND ASSOCIATED TRAINING PROGRAMS

2. Overview of Programs

2.1. Indigenous Employment Initiatives (IEIs)

Since July 2007, five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care workforce employment programs, known collectively as the Indigenous Employment Initiatives (IEIs), have been implemented nationally by the Australian Government to create employment opportunities in aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These programs are:

- Building an Indigenous Workforce in Community Care (BAIWICC), since 2007;
- Northern Territory Jobs Package (NTJP), since 2007;
- Cape York Jobs Package (CYJP), since 2009 (previously known as the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial);
- National Jobs Creation Package (NJCP), since 2009; and
- Torres Strait Islands Job Package (TSIJP), since 2010.

Currently, more than 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services, predominantly in rural and remote areas, receive funding through the IEIs. Program funding is allocated in 'salary units', in which each salary unit contributes to the wages and on-costs (e.g. superannuation, leave entitlements) for one part-time job. The five employment programs provide more than 750 salary units to the funded aged care services and approximately 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are employed in aged care services as a result of this funding. The types of jobs funded include aged care worker, personal carer, kitchen staff, night staff, social support workers, maintenance workers, drivers and gardeners. The IEIs had an annual budget of \$20.1m in 2016–2017, \$20.4m in 2017–2018, and \$20.7m in 2018–2019.

2.2. Training programs

Associated with the IEIs is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Remote Training Initiative, which is funded by DOH. The training programs under this initiative deliver culturally appropriate accredited training to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers who are employed through the IEIs. The two training programs are:

- Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Training Program (NTTP), since 2009; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural and Remote Aged Care Training Project (RRTP), since 2010.

Training is delivered onsite by registered training organisations (RTOs) in the communities where IEI funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers are employed and enables workers to develop job-specific skills and to work towards a certificate of attainment, where appropriate. The training programs may also be offered to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the community, enabling further opportunities for community members to access training that may lead to a career in aged care. The training programs had an annual budget of \$6.3m in 2016–2017, \$6.0m in 2017–2018, and \$6.1m in 2018–2019.

2.3. Program aims and objectives

The IEIs and associated training programs have the shared aims and objectives of:

• Creating employment opportunities in aged care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, predominantly in rural and remote areas, as a strategy to reduce disadvantage in employment outcomes;

- Ensuring that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care sector has access to a trained workforce that is trained in the delivery of culturally-appropriate services;
- Building the capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care services; and
- Assisting with the delivery of culturally-appropriate aged care services to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

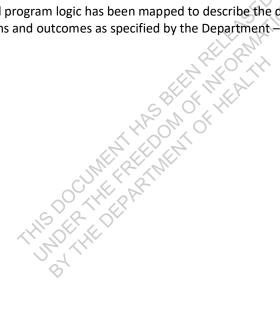
3. Evaluation

3.1. Key evaluation questions

In line with the aims and objectives of the programs and the detailed program logic, the evaluation has gathered and analysed quantitative and qualitative data to answer five key evaluation questions:

- 1. How effective have the programs been in achieving their intended outcomes?
- 2. Are the programs an appropriate response to identified needs?
- 3. Are the programs value for money to the Commonwealth?
- 4. How could the structure and delivery of the programs be strengthened?
- 5. How could the performance monitoring and reporting arrangements be improved, balanced against reducing reporting 'red tape'?

The detailed program logic has been mapped to describe the design of the programs and capture the program aims and outcomes as specified by the Department – refer to **Appendix A**.



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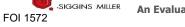
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