

Summary: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners (R011RSa)

2000 PROJECT REPORT

Access and Equity in Online Learning

ISBN 1 920906 15 0

© 2000 Australian National Training Authority

This work has been produced with the assistance of funding provided by the Commonwealth Government through the Australian National Training Authority. Copyright for this document vests in ANTA. ANTA will allow free use of the material so long as ANTA's interest is acknowledged and the use is not for profit.

*An initiative within the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational
Education and Training System 2000-2004*

*Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of the Commonwealth, all States
and Territories in conjunction with ANTA*



Contents

THE PROJECT	4
Access and Equity in Online Learning – Stage 1 Strategy 2000	4
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT LEARNERS	5
Overview of the Report.....	5
Background	5
Planning.....	6
Learner Support.....	6
Content Development and Delivery	7
Curriculum	7
Professional Development	7
* Infrastructure	7
* Marketing	7
Some common issues Design.....	8
* Other issues discussed in the report	8

The Project

Access and Equity in Online Learning – Stage 1 Strategy 2000

The project initiated national discussions in States and Territories with stakeholders in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector on the relevance of cultural, learning style differences to the delivery of learning by information and communication technologies. The full report on this website addresses the background, issues and barriers for the following ANTA targeted equity groups:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners;
- Learners with disabilities; and
- Learners with English literacy needs.

The following few pages briefly summarise the main issues arising from the report.

Readers who are looking for the results of national focus groups should read the full report.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Learners

Overview of the Report

- * **Generic issues** for the three target groups
- + **Specific issues** for Australian Indigenous learners

Background

- + **30.4% of Australian Indigenous** people live in major urban areas.
- + **26% of Australian Indigenous** Vocational Education and Training students live in remote regions
- + **64% of students living in rural areas** are more than 50km from a VET deliverer.
- + **AITAC strongly endorses the findings of a 1997 research Project** by the Western Australian training college, Pundulmurra, documenting the attitudes of Indigenous people towards open learning and flexible delivery models, declaring:
 - it would be erroneous to regard Aboriginal communities as a homogenous group;
 - a general acceptance within Indigenous communities of computer technology;
 - a strong preference among Indigenous people to study in their own communities; and
 - widespread consultation with Aboriginal people and their communities should be undertaken in relation to:
 - ✓ Course content and delivery process;
 - ✓ Planning and preparation of curriculum and course materials
 - ✓ Course materials are likely to be community-specific or tailored locally.
- + **About 90 Indigenous Australian languages** have survived and at least 20 of these are distinct languages and cultures. English is a second language for many Indigenous people. This implies not only a language barrier but probable cultural differences that may also limit participation in education and training.
- + **United Nations' Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.**
- + **Guidelines on best practice** from the Best Practice and Benchmarking report in Community controlled Indigenous Education.

Planning

- + **General acceptance within Australian Indigenous communities** of computer technology.
- + **Population dispersal of Indigenous Australians** favours distance and online learning.
- * **Providing advice at the local level** for access and equity groups needs to feed into state and national planning and be informed by it.
- * **Critical input and advice must be sought from target groups** and specialist officers in the system.
- * **Access and Equity needs to become part** of the online learning culture.

Learner Support

- + **Negotiations for learning and delivery methods** should be negotiated locally.
- + **Indigenous learners in remote communities** need human resources to provide basic and instruction and support when using online learning technologies and resources.
- + **Relationships within Australian Indigenous communities** are important and adapting that need into the online context must be considered.
- * **Indigenous students need skilling in the new manipulative skills** such as typing, mouse clicking, scrolling, drop-down boxes and the specialised way language is applied to technology.
- * **Inadequate English literacy and computer literacy in an isolated learning** environment are barriers to participation by this group.
- * **Negotiation of the learning process** by the teacher with individuals as a genuine partnership to achieve the learning outcomes is critical to success.
- * **Collaboration between institutions and providers and their local community** was seen as crucial to the success of online learning. The collaboration is seen as ameliorating the isolation of the online learner.
- * **Successful delivery of online learning must include technical support** and student services support in cost structures and resource management strategies.

Content Development and Delivery

+ **Australian Indigenous learning preference** is to learn through concrete, visual, oral and aural experiences.

+ **The importance and strength of inclusive design** of a multicultural model of instructional design 'the process of creating products which are usable by people with the widest range of abilities, operating with the widest range of solutions'

* **Good practice in developing appropriate learning materials** and applications to Information and Communication Technology strategies is critical for target groups.

Curriculum

* **Prevocational programs and Certificate 1 are less available** – educational needs of students are not necessarily met in Training packages and this will be an issue for online provision.

Professional Development

+ **Australian Indigenous attitudes** require cross cultural communication skills.

+ **Awareness of factors affecting exclusion from learning** and work, anglo-european world view and the Indigenous view need to be understood.

+ **The diversity of Indigenous Australians must be acknowledged.**

* **Provision of inclusive online flexible learning** resources hinges on the professional development of staff working on these programs.

* **Teachers should be proficient in the use of computers** and in accessing, navigating and otherwise utilising the Internet.

* **Infrastructure**

- Issues around provision of sufficient and effective infrastructure
- Access to ICT equipment and cost

* **Marketing**

- Lack of information to target groups showing what learning opportunities and services they can make use of within the VET sector is a serious issue

Some common issues Design

Layout

- Use large print;
- Audio format is often preferred to print;
- Multimedia documents are often preferred;
- Simple high contrast fonts for optimum readability;
- All graphics should have text alternatives and labels;
- Consistent page layout;
- Navigation bars;
- Site map; and
- Tables of contents.

Design

- Directions broken down to simple steps;
- Avoid jargon;
- White space and bullets help focus the learner;
- Orientation information; and
- Simple language.

*** Other issues discussed in the report**

- Sources of information on copyright.

Explicit guidelines are needed for plagiarism.

Acknowledgements

This report documents information gained from students and practitioners working in online learning areas of a selection of TAFE institutions and VET provider organisations across Australia. Their time and input are very much appreciated, without which this project would not have been possible.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by Mary Miles as the ACT Project Co-ordinator for this project.

Document Status: **Final**

Contact for Enquiries: **Rhonda Daniell**

Document Intent: **Practitioners, Manager and Researchers**

Document Type: **Summary**

For more information contact:

Phone: (07) 3247 5511

Fax: (07) 3237 0419

Email: enquiries@flexiblelearning.net.au

Web: flexiblelearning.net.au