Reference No. 133

Summarising: Taylor (2003), *Aboriginal Population Profiles for Development Planning in the Northern East Kimberley*
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.

Title of Research:
Aboriginal Population Profiles for Development Planning in the Northern East Kimberley

Research Publication:
CAEPR Research Monograph No. 23 2003

Name of Researcher(s):
J. Taylor

Time period:
2001

Geographic location:
Northern East Kimberley region (WA), covering the areas surrounding Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham.

Methodology:
A statistical analysis of population, labour force, education and training characteristics and projected trends based upon 2001 Census information and other Commonwealth and State and territory government agency administrative data.

Aims:
The paper aims to develop a social and economic profile of the Northern East Kimberley region of Western Australia as a basis for considering regional development opportunities and factors likely to assist or impede those developments, including education and training implications.

The analysis was designed as input for developing agreements over future development activities in the Argyle Diamond Mine lease area of the East Kimberley.

Selected findings and insights:
As of 2001, the demography of the Indigenous population in the Northern East Kimberley was one of rapid and sustained growth with an increasingly youthful profile, with an estimated growth from about 4,300 in 2001 to some 5,800 by 2016 – an increase of 35% over the period, with major growth in those of post-compulsory schooling and working age.

For youth and those of younger working age, participation in CDEP was higher than in the mainstream employment market. Yet if there was to be an expected growth in mainstream employment from possibly mining expansion, those most likely to be seeking employment would be those aged 15-34 years in 2001 and they would have had no experience of mainstream employment.

There was a high degree of both industry and occupational segregation operating in the North Eastern Kimberley labour market:
• Indigenous workers were much more likely to be in jobs associated with government administration (that is, often CDEP classified jobs), health and community services and personal services and, for males, the pastoral industry;
• Indigenous workers were much more likely to be in labouring and other CDEP type jobs and less likely to be in skilled occupations, with this feature more prominent among Indigenous males.

To achieve employment parity with non-Indigenous people in the region by 2016 would require an additional 1800 jobs which was highly unlikely to be achieved. Taking account of population growth, current employment growth and the possible expansion of mining activity, the additional jobs created by 2016 would only meet the number required to maintain existing levels of employment among Indigenous people in the region.

Even if one ignored the overall low educational levels of the working age population and considered only those of school age and young adults, the results for future employment in the mainstream labour market were not encouraging.

In regard to compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, this study estimates that:
• the overall enrolment rate of Indigenous students of compulsory school age was 73% in 2001
• retention rates to Year 10 were low, averaging 82% in remote community schools and 76% in district high schools between 1998 and 2001; and
• retention rates to Year 12 were averaging only 17% between 1998 and 2001. This means that, on average, only 9 students were enrolled in Year 12 across the region compared to an average of 58 students being enrolled in Year 10 in each of these years.

Possibly due to the low average number of school enrolments, those actually enrolled tended generally to attend school more regularly than Indigenous students statewide. However as this study points out the attendance figures only related to morning attendance and related to the school group as a whole and did not identify whether the same individuals were attending or whether there was irregular attendance among individual students (as has been identified by other studies).

The study also provides benchmark information for Literacy and Numeracy levels for compulsory schooling. • Typically, the proportion of Indigenous students achieving the benchmarks for Years 3, 5 and 7 for each of the competencies was less than 50%, although there were some encouraging signs with the Year 5 cohort which would warrant further investigation.

The low levels of Year 7 students were particularly disturbing, considering that it was this group which was about to enter secondary schooling and expected to complete Year 12 or become sufficiently skilled to enter mainstream employment.

The study also provides detailed information on VET participation and module completion rates. It estimates that there would be a future output from the VET sector of 300 trained persons, mainly at the Certificate I to III levels. This compares favourably to the 130 Indigenous persons who had postsecondary qualifications at the time (although, as the study points out, some of these may have been the same persons).

The study finally provides detailed health statistics for the Indigenous population, indicating that in terms of mortality and morbidity, the region has the worst health status in Western Australia.

Educational implications:
Due to the high need for regional development to address the acutely low employment levels of Indigenous people in the region, improved participation in all sectors of the labour market will be required – tourism, agriculture, retailing and State government services. This will be dependent upon development
of employment opportunities and in turn will require a skilled workforce which is job ready. [regional development]

The challenge for educational authorities at all levels of education and training is to play a prominent role in addressing basic skill deficits such as literacy and numeracy across the student and adult population, increasing skill levels relevant to emerging employment opportunities, both in mainstream private sector and government employment and in business enterprise development. [basic skills] [business enterprise development] [training]

The importance of this CAEPR research to government is that it highlights the need to consider social (e.g. health) factors as well as education and training and job creation when developing strategies for economic development across a region. This therefore emphasises the need for a coordinated effort across government agencies if there is to be an improvement in Indigenous socioeconomic circumstances. [partnerships].

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: The Changing Demography of Indigenous Australia

Introductory Topic: The Health of Indigenous Australians

Domain 5: Pathways to training, employment and higher education

The challenge for Pathways to training, employment and higher education

Access to post-compulsory education, training, employment and higher education

Participation, retention and achievement in post-compulsory schooling, training and higher education

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