



## Afternoon Session A

### Discussion Paper 7

#### *Education and training - What housing models would improve young Aboriginal people's education and training outcomes?*

##### **CHALLENGE OUTLINE:**

1. A combination of individual factors (family homelessness, abuse and neglect, family conflict, family breakdown, drug and alcohol problems) and structural factors (housing costs, labour market, access to welfare support) can place Aboriginal young people at risk of homelessness.
2. More than 50% of Aboriginal people seeking homelessness assistance are under 25.
3. Chamberlain and McKenzie have shown that connection to a supportive learning environment acts as a protective factor for young people at risk of long-term homelessness.
4. While the focus is often on schools as sites of early intervention, other supportive learning environments can play a similar role.
5. Keeping young people in a learning environment while their housing is stabilised is not only critical in terms of their short-term welfare, it is vital for their long-term prospects.
6. Learning sites have a critical role to play in supporting young people to complete their education when family relationships have broken down.
7. This support works best when combined with strong pastoral care and in co-operation with the wider Aboriginal community and with welfare and housing services.
8. If family mediation and reconciliation is possible to keep young people at home or to help them return home this is a good option. The Reconnect Program has been positively evaluated in this regard. Approximately 100 services operate across Australia.
9. Where this is not possible, or not safe, student welfare co-ordinators can work with Centrelink to help students obtain income support to live independently, usually sharing with other young people or with another family connected to school or training or an apprenticeship.
10. As housing has become more expensive and the relative buying power of Commonwealth benefits weaker and weaker, the capacity of school students to live independently has become less realistic, particularly in major cities.
11. In response there is a critical need for alternative housing to support homeless students continue their school education and to reconnect young people who are homeless to learning.
12. Youth education foyers have been created for this purpose.
13. Scholarships to boarding schools for homeless students should also be considered.
14. It is also critical to address the aspirations of young people who are not in school, including through scholarships, traineeships, land management opportunities and more.



Source: Aboriginal Education from Vector.me (by bedpanner)

**POSSIBLE RESPONSES:**

1. Clearly establish that keeping school age young people in school or training is a critical first policy principle for responding to students at risk of homelessness.
2. Build on the Windamara Budj Bim Rangers program - providing land management experience and supported accommodation for young people while they work with more experienced hands on Caring for Country and Working on Country programs.
3. Support family reconciliation where appropriate including through the *Reconnect* model - A community-based early intervention program for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The program uses early intervention strategies to help stabilise the young person's living situation, achieve family reconciliation and improve engagement.
4. Improve access and explore expansion of supported accommodation programs for young people in education such as the *Step Ahead* Program model - a supported accommodation program for 17-21 year old young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, providing temporary accommodation, shared with one other person and support skills to live independently while continuing education.
5. Increase access to income support for homeless Aboriginal young people.
6. Strengthen support for young people in care and in transition from care to continue their preferred education or training path.
7. For the Aboriginal community, kinship care is a vital element but needs to be strongly resourced and supported by Government.