



Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) – William Ross State High School

Program Profile

- Queensland
- Metropolitan, regional and remote locations
- Government
- Years 11 and 12 and mature-aged entry

Program Summary

The Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) is a successful and innovative distance education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people run by the Queensland Department of Education and Training in partnership with TAFE Queensland North and James Cook University. This online education program is offered throughout Queensland, regardless of the location of the student. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participating in the program are supported by a teacher coordinator.

The purpose of RATEP is to increase the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and paraprofessionals in Queensland schools. The program also provides pathways to higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The program emphasises flexibility, local context, developing students' aspirations and self-esteem, and promotes two-way learning and community engagement whilst offering real-world job pathways.

RATEP offers senior secondary students and mature-aged students a variety of options towards a qualification that enables graduates to work in a primary school setting. These options include Certificate III in Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and Certificate IV in Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander), Diploma of Education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander), and Bachelor of Education (Primary) pathways. Importantly, each of the 14 RATEP centres has a teacher coordinator who provides support to participating students.

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'A big part of the role is working as an advocate for the students. There are still a lot of Indigenous people from Year 11, so 16 year olds, right through to mature-aged students, who find it difficult to engage with government institutions, so I'm the interface for that and making sure that students are aware of what their rights and responsibilities are, to keep them engaged in learning.'
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Micheal Beale – 2011 RATEP graduate; RATEP Teacher Coordinator, William Ross State High School
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William Ross State High School has successfully run RATEP on site since 1990. The RATEP students studying at the school undertake the Certificate III in Education (ATSI) as a subject in the timetable; the students study online for the Certificate III for three hours per week. Students from external schools attend William Ross State High School one day a week for the block release vocational education and training (VET). As well as studying online, students participate in vocational education experiences such as teacher observation, small group teaching and classroom teaching. The flexibility of the program allows a broad range of students to access the course despite other competing forces, such as remote location.



William Ross State High School is situated in the Townsville suburb of Annandale.



As part of RATEP, Year 11 and 12 students have the opportunity to undertake a Certificate III in Education (ATSI). This can be completed over two years, with students commencing in Year 11, or completed in one year by Year 12 students who have the capacity to manage the intensity of the workload. Successful completion of the Certificate III in Education (ATSI) provides eight points towards the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE), and enables students to graduate with a skill set for work as a teachers' aide or as an educator within a daycare or early childcare environment. The program also provides opportunities for graduates to work in care programs outside school hours. The number of Certificate III students enrolled across the state has increased each year since the program began. In 2017, there were 53 Certificate III students across the state. The program is periodically reviewed by an external evaluation panel, next due in 2019. The 2015 More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSI) Project Evaluation Panel report recognised that the program has efficiently utilised appropriate technologies and delivered effective support for students studying off site, as evidenced by the low attrition rate.

Outcomes

Graduates of RATEP have gone on to secure employment as principals, heads of departments and in other school leadership roles. There have

been over 100 graduates from the program who now possess a Bachelor of Education. Based on recent figures, approximately 70 per cent of these qualified teachers have remained teaching in Queensland. In addition to the development of teachers and teachers' aides, RATEP supports the upgrading of skills for early childhood teachers.

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'The critical success factor is the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates; currently, we have approximately 120 students enrolled through the TAFE course and there are around 50 students enrolled through James Cook University. Each year, those numbers are increasing, so we must be doing something right.'
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*Gail Mitchell – State Program Coordinator (RATEP),
Queensland Department of Education and Training*
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The program's success can also be attributed to the recognition of cultural context. This is particularly important as some of the students have only recently discovered their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage. All courses include units which consider culture, identity and history both pre-contact and post-contact.



The cultural learning embedded in RATEP ensures students gain a better sense of self-identity.



In 2015, RATEP was evaluated by an external evaluation panel which found:

‘This project owes its success to its owners’ awareness of and responses to difficulties faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in completing their studies, especially those living in remote locations. Responses include a sophisticated use of technology, involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ongoing support to students.’

Source: *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) (2016), Evaluation of MATSITI, Final Report*

A total of 20 students were enrolled at William Ross State High School in 2017:

- six were completing their Certificate III, with five of that cohort completing the course over two years and one student enrolled in the one-year version of the course,
- nine students were working towards a diploma,
- five James Cook University students were working towards a Bachelor of Education at the centre.

The size of RATEP makes it possible to offer individual support to students and help them to change their study pathways if they are experiencing difficulty. All stakeholders attribute a significant part of the success of the program to students being able to learn in their community without moving away from home. A second element contributing to the program’s success is the personalised nature of the program, which delivers the same quality of education to students in remote areas and to students who have access to local institutions such as universities and TAFEs.



Micheal Beale, RATEP graduate and RATEP Teacher Coordinator, supports William Ross State High School students Amy and Christopher.



Letitia Choppy, Certificate III Coordinator, believes flexibility is one of the key factors in the success of the program.

‘RATEP ... is not one size that fits all. We look at all our students. Some of them are coming from very isolated, geographically removed places. Some are coming from towns like Townsville or Cairns. We look at the students and we look at their personal needs, their preferences of what they want to study, we look at their economic background and how we can support in that area.’

Letitia Choppy – Certificate III Coordinator, TAFE Queensland North (Cairns)

Industry Links

The overarching program has strong links with the Queensland Department of Education and Training, TAFE Queensland North and James Cook University through its governance structure and project dissemination. These links are strengthened by the program’s steering group, and by local advisory committees at each RATEP centre that consist of a range of stakeholders including students, VET coordinators, school leaders and community members.

‘RATEP contributes to the Department of Education and Training workforce. By employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, we are actually representing the demographic of our schools.’

Gail Mitchell – State Program Coordinator (RATEP), Queensland Department of Education and Training



Why RATEP Works

Recent research indicates that the following key themes consistently underpin successful delivery of vocational learning and VET, including career education, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- **Context:** ‘Nuanced, contextual factors will influence individual or group learning undertaken by Indigenous young people (Cuervo et al., 2015; Rigney, 2011).’
- **Flexibility:** ‘... recognition that a rigid or singular mode of education, by definition, cannot meet the needs of diverse learners (Anderson, 2009b; Bottrell, Te Riele & Plows, 2014; Te Riele, 2014).’
- **Two-way learning and community engagement:** ‘... happens in the context of an evolving relationship and structured partnership between Indigenous and school communities that supports Indigenous young people to grow their learning aspirations and stay connected to school or training.’
- **Aspiration, self-esteem and belonging:** ‘To “dream big” was seen as an essential component in a young person’s ability to have vocational ambitions and to achieve them (Mission Australia, 2014).’
- **Real-world job pathways:** ‘In assessing what motivates Indigenous young people to study, a direct link to real employment, that is, getting a job, figured much more highly than reasons connected to a plan for career or further study (Fordham & Schwab, 2007).’

Applying these themes to an understanding of the design, delivery and operation of vocational learning and VET provides insight into “what works” and “what doesn’t work” for this cohort of students.

Source: Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), National Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Student Transitions Project report

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Links

The *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* from AITSL outline what teachers should know and be able to do. As part of RATEP teachers are delivering vocational learning, VET or career education that aligns with the following standards:

Know students and how they learn

- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 3.1 Establish challenging learning goals
- 3.7 Engage parents/carers in the educative process
- 4.1 Support student participation

Source: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011), Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Contacts

If you want to know more about this program or think that it might benefit your community, please access the following links:

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