



# Pastoral Futures Program – Tennant Creek High School

## Program Profile

- Northern Territory
- Outer regional, remote and very remote locations
- Government
- Years 9 to 12

## Program Summary

The Pastoral Futures Program has been implemented in five Northern Territory schools. These include Centralian Senior College, Katherine High School, Taminmin College, Tennant Creek High School and Yirara College. Over 100 students from these five schools participated in the program in 2017. The program emphasises flexibility and local context, and provides students with real-world job pathways.

Each school has a unique context, a targeted set of programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and specific modes of implementation. This case study explores the impact of this program and other forms of vocational learning and support on students from Tennant Creek High School. The school had a total enrolment of approximately 215 students in 2017, with 81 per cent of the cohort identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage.

‘The objective of the IPP [Indigenous Pastoral Program] is to provide benefits to Indigenous people of the Northern Territory (NT) by increasing Indigenous landowners’ participation in the NT pastoral industry. Cattle production is the Northern Territory’s principal land based rural industry.’

Source: Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries (2014), *Indigenous Pastoral Program Strategic Plan 2014-2018*

The Tennant Creek High School Pastoral Futures Program offers participating students the opportunity to undertake a Certificate I in AgriFood Operations, a Certificate II in Rural Operations or a Certificate III in Agriculture, all of which offer vocational pathways into major employing industries in Tennant Creek and surrounding communities.

These flexible vocational pathways provide students with the skills required to work on a modern pastoral property. The program creates pathways for students to enter the pastoral industry through work placements conducted on stations or properties, where they gain experiences such as handling horses and cattle and learning first aid and workplace health and safety.

‘The school needs to be flexible in meeting the needs of all students. Any student can be enrolled in the Pastoral Futures Program from those looking for a vocational pathway to those who are more academically oriented.’

Maisie Floyd – Principal, Tennant Creek High School



Students gain experience in fencing and other aspects of setting up farming facilities.

Credit: Rozenn Hamoniau/Alamy Stock Photo

The Pastoral Futures Program offers students a range of opportunities to showcase their developing skills through local rural shows and events. The flexibility of the program, which provides qualifications at different levels and directed towards a variety of employment outcomes, allows teachers to adjust curriculum components to cater for the broad range of learning abilities encountered each year.

## Outcomes

The program's success is linked by stakeholders to the authentic nature of the components that support employment pathways. The hands-on, outdoors nature of the learning is highly appealing despite its physical demands.

.....  
'The program helps students to be job-ready. They train with cattle, attend cattle shows. They are exposed to employers and vice versa. The learning is tangible and practical.'  
.....

*Tyaan Tuckey – Trainer, Pastoral Futures Program*  
.....

Gaining experience in fencing, setting up cattle yards, managing stock, welding and maintenance of station equipment and facilities ensures students are ready for employment in local industries.

.....  
'I want to use the skills that I'm learning right now, I want to get a job. It's important for me to learn stuff that will help me get a job when I finish school. I grew up hearing stories about my grandfather and how he used to break horses in, working on cattle stations and working with the animals. I'm following in his footsteps and he's the person that I'll always look up to.'  
.....

*Troyston – Pastoral Futures Program student, Tennant Creek High School*

*Source: Northern Territory Department of Trade, Business and Innovation (2017), Business Bulletin – 19 October 2017*  
.....

## Industry Links

The Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) is a partner in the program along with its subsidiary, Australian Indigenous Agribusiness Company (AIA). These organisations have a mandate to acquire land and help fund land management, and to create benefits for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This program is therefore not just about producing Stockmen and Stockwomen, but about ensuring there are multiple routes for students with different needs and abilities who are considering entering the pastoral industry.



*Tennant Creek's challenging climate does not deter students from enjoying the practical nature of the training.  
Credit: Dorling Kindersley Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo*





.....  
'If the program helps students stay at school, to get a good education, then they have a lot of pathways; they might end up on a station, but they might also think about being a vet or a helicopter pilot or a manager somewhere.'

*Tony Freshwater – Manager Agribusiness Support Services,  
Australian Indigenous Agribusiness Company*  
.....

The Pastoral Futures Program will access the Juno Centre in Tennant Creek for components of the course as the centre aims to engage local students in alternative education programs. The centre's alternative education setting will also provide farming facilities including livestock such as cattle and horses. In addition, students have already begun to take on the

challenges of the initial set-up, including building cattle yards and fencing. The aim of the partnership between the Pastoral Futures Program and the centre is for the real-world approach of the facility to re-engage local students who are currently not attending school.

.....  
'Partnering with quality organisations produces quality results. The Pastoral Futures Program has seen terrific engagement in the Barkly region and the Juno Centre will allow that to develop even further.'

*Eva Lawler – Member of the Northern Territory Legislative  
Assembly for Drysdale and Northern Territory Minister  
for Education*

*Source: Northern Territory Government Newsroom (2017),  
Getting job ready – Education options for kids in the bush*  
.....



*The experience students gain in the maintenance of station equipment and facilities ensures they are ready for employment in local industries.  
Credit: Arterra Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo*



## Why the Pastoral Futures Program Works

Recent research indicates that the following key themes consistently underpin successful delivery of vocational learning and vocational education and training (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 the Pastoral Futures Program 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

*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:

### Indigenous Land Corporation – Indigenous Pastoral Program

**P:** 1800 818 490

**W:** [www.ilc.gov.au](http://www.ilc.gov.au)

### My School

**W:** [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

