



## Fact sheet 1: Improving post-school transitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

*“All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people achieve their full learning potential, are empowered to shape their own futures, and are supported to embrace their culture and identity as Australia’s First Nations people.”*

*(National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015)*

### The need for action

While there have been gains, the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy* acknowledges much more needs to be done to close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education outcomes, including at key transition points.

The strategy highlights the importance of high-quality vocational learning and vocational education and training (VET) in providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students with pathways to tertiary education and work.

Successful transition to post-school options is critical. It is essential schools prepare students for life beyond school and equip them to make informed study and work choices based on their aspirations and skills.

### What schools can do

This fact sheet, read in conjunction with four related fact sheets, will assist schools to engage with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students, evaluate their courses and identify areas that could be improved.

Your school can also complete the VET self-assessment and career education tools [hyperlinks] which will help teachers plan, implement and review the VET and career education courses they are delivering.

### What research tells us works

The Cultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) undertook independent research into what works in the successful delivery of vocational learning and VET to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students. You can access the full research report [here](#).

CIRCA examined a wide range of Australian and international literature and identified five key themes.

The themes apply to all students but are especially pertinent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may face higher levels of disadvantage, feel less connected to their school and wider communities, and encounter negative views and racial stereotyping.

### Themes underpinning success

A thematic analysis of relevant literature and good practice examples of what is working on the ground is useful in understanding the supports and barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students successfully engaging in vocational learning and VET. CIRCA identified five key themes:

- Context
- Flexibility
- Two way learning and community engagement
- Aspiration, self-esteem and belonging
- Real-life job pathways



## Context

Context is the overarching theme in the successful engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in vocational learning and VET, living in a multiplicity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures across metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

Where a young person lives, socio-economic factors including job opportunities and employment, their connection to family, school and community, can all influence their decisions regarding career and study options and their capacity to achieve their full potential.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are diverse. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples' needs, interests, aptitudes and aspirations will vary from individual to individual. Therefore, a one size fits all approach will not work.

How vocational learning and VET delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students can best meet the individual needs and aspirations of students will depend on the context of the learning environment and the perspectives of everyone involved.

Acknowledgement of Country and cultural identity and providing differentiated learning contexts and opportunities that value and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' language(s), culture, knowledge systems, beliefs and practices is important.

The needs of each young person will differ over time and from place to place. The opportunities and challenges faced by the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in metropolitan and regional locations will often be different to those faced by students in remote locations.

Living in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may add layers of complexity to learning needs and experiences. It also creates opportunities for more creative and coordinated responses and an exploration of options not previously considered or investigated.

## Related fact sheets

The following four related fact sheets include practical information and suggested strategies to assist schools to evaluate and improve the quality of their delivery of vocational learning and VET programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Fact sheet 2: the need for flexibility
- Fact sheet 3: two-way learning and whole of community engagement
- Fact sheet 4: cultivating aspiration, self-esteem and belonging
- Fact sheet 5: real life job pathways

