1. Overview of participation of Koorie Students at Deakin University, including applications, offers, enrolments, completions and fields of study.

- Deakin University is the largest Victorian and the third largest national university offering higher education courses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- 53% of the Institute's students are drawn from Victoria.

- Deakin University has a policy in place for the admission of mature-age students to the Institute of Koorie Education.

- The Institute currently offers 15 undergraduate and 7 postgraduate courses. These courses are identical to those offered to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This is significantly different from other universities where students are offered a more limited number of courses and narrower fields of study.

- All courses are offered via Community Based Delivery wherein students remain in their home communities and attend the Institute for 1 or 2 week intensive residential study blocks.

- The Institute provides accommodation for students when on campus for intensive study blocks at Kitjarra Student Residences and Study Centre.

- In 2008 the Institute has 162 new and 283 returning students enrolled.

- On average 30 students graduate each year.

- Employment outcomes for graduates are very good and serve to promote both higher education and the Institute.

- It is important to note that the current measure of student success is not appropriate. The number of students completing any individual course is not a true indicator of the number of students ultimately completing a course successfully. This is due to the fact that many students have more than one course attempt or defer their studies.

- This finding is similar to that found for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who also have an apparently lower retention rate using the current measure, but for whom success rates are similar to other students.
2. The range of preferred pathways into higher education for Koorie students.

- The Institute of Koorie Education, through the Higher Education Agreement signed between the University and VAEAI, ensures that pathways are created into higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In particular, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) has partnered with the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) in the implementation of the Wurreker Strategy. Wurreker both informs and responds to National and State strategies that relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander post-compulsory education and training.

- Wurreker's overall vision is that vocational education, training and employment for Koorie communities support:
  - Pathways and employment
  - Koorie community development
  - Individual learner development
  - Self determination

- The Institute of Koorie Education works closely with Wurreker Regional Brokers who are responsible for providing assistance to Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups; to gain support and raise awareness of the regional planning process and change management issues relating to the implementation and future directions of the Wurreker Strategy.

- In 2007 and 2008 the Institute of Koorie Education has worked closely with TAFE providers in Victoria delivering the Diploma of Children's Services to promote a pathway into the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education which commenced in 2007. These links will ensure that Koorie students are made aware of the pathway and will result in the training of many Koorie Early Childhood Educators. The Institute has also worked closely with the Office Children and Early Childhood Development in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to secure scholarships to support students undertaking the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.

- Pathways have been created into the Bachelor of Nursing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander State Registered Nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers. Aboriginal Health Workers are also encouraged to enrol in the Master of Public Health or the Bachelor of Social Work programs. Social Work students are frequently granted advanced standing credit for social welfare or community development diploma level courses. Koorie Land Management facilitators, Catchment Liaison and Cultural Heritage practitioners employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment or Victorian National Parks are provided with a pathway from the graduate Diploma of Natural and Cultural Resource management program.

3. Support mechanisms for Koorie students at Deakin University and how they compare with other institutions.

- All Course Teams have knowledge of individual student's progress and regularly review this.
• Academic and administrative staff visit student’s in their communities, not only for social work and nursing clinical placements and teaching rounds, but also for general academic, computing or other support across all courses.

• Ongoing support is also provided via telephone, teletutorials and email, which is complemented by Information Communication Technology including Deakin Studies Online.

• All students have access to personal academic support via the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme.

4. Any housing, transportation, financial or other support needs specific to Koorie students.

• Deakin University has been very generous in the provision of scholarships for Koorie students which fund the 25% differential in HECS fees. A number of other scholarships are also offered including those from the Pratt Foundation, ANZ and Commonwealth Government.

• As found for a Deakin University study of students deferring their enrolment at the Warrnambool campus, interventions such as scholarships or other financial support are the most likely to increased participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

• The financial support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students needs to be reconsidered at both State and Commonwealth levels. The changes to Abstudy in 1999 had a major impact on the participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education.

5. Local organisations or programs that have been successful in increasing Koorie participation rates in higher education or TAFE study.

• The Institute is seen as a community based program and works closely with local Aboriginal Education Committees and Elders including Aunty Laura Bell down in Heywood, who was a founding member of the Institute. The Institute has also had a close relationship with many Honourable Ancestors.

6. The role and success of any partnerships between schools, universities and other organisations in the region.

• The University has a formal Higher Education Agreement with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI).

• The Institute has number of other partnerships with key stakeholders in health and education which have resulted in new course offerings including the Master of Public Health and the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education.
Recommendations

- That students be offered greater access to scholarship funding and Victorian Government Intrainship programs.

- That there be both State and National strategies to abolish HECS-HELP liability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students until the participation is commensurate with that of other sections of the Australian community. As the full impact of HECS-HELP repayments has been realised, the debt aversion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has impacted on participation rates.

- That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education units and universities not be required to fill the gap in securing scholarships to enable students to participate in higher education. The 1999 cuts to Abstudy have resulted in students financially struggling to participate in higher education.

- That State policies enable Koorie public sector employees to participate in higher education and not require the taking leave without pay or similar arrangements. For example Koorie Educators are not being supported to attend Intensive Study Blocks. There is also an urgent need to backfill the positions held by these students whilst they undertake their studies.

- That funding for the current Wannik State strategy: *Develop a professional learning package in partnership with universities and VAEAI that supports pre-service and in-service training for teachers in the history and contemporary culture of Victoria’s Koorie community* is not derived from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sectoral or specific funding.