ATSIC Submission

to the Review into

Aboriginal Education

in the Northern Territory
Part 1 – Bilingual Education

Part 1 of ATSIC’s submission will specifically address the first issue in the Terms of Reference which is:

- The views and educational aspirations of Aboriginal parents and community members in relation to their children’s schooling, with particular reference to English literacy and numeracy.

This submission reflects the views of the ATSIC Board in relation to bilingual education. The submission provides anecdotal information about the importance of bilingual education to many Aboriginal parents and communities in the schools in which the program exists. ATSIC would also like to draw your attention to evidence which suggests that bilingual education has the potential to achieve improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

On 1 December 1998, the Northern Territory (NT) Minister for Education, Mr Peter Adamson, announced his decision to progressively phase out bilingual education programs replacing them with English as a Second Language programs (ESL). This announcement has provoked strong opposition at the local, national and international level. ATSIC has been approached by a number of local groups as well as organisations such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Corporation for Languages, a national advisory body, for support to maintain bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory.

ATSIC Board Response

The ATSIC Board holds strong views regarding the importance of bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory (NT). At its February 1999 meeting, the Board discussed the impact of the NT Government decision to phase out bilingual education programs in Aboriginal schools and voted to condemn the decision. The Board expressed extreme concern over the speed of the phasing out process and of the lack of any meaningful consultation with the affected schools and communities regarding the decision.

The ATSIC Board also declared that the decision to remove bilingual education programs is a denial of the right of Aboriginal people to equitable educational services and an attack on Aboriginal cultures. The ATSIC Board called on the new Chief Minister, Mr Dennis Burke, to seek a Cabinet review of the decision, in line with the strong community opposition, with a view to overturning it as soon as possible. It also called on Mr Burke to seek the immediate suspension of any work to implement the phase out while the review is underway as an act of reconciliation between Aboriginal Territorians and the Country Liberal Party Government.

Public Response to NT Government Decision

At the local level remote Aboriginal schools and communities who are directly affected by the NT Government decision have held large rallies to demonstrate their overwhelming support for bilingual education. One such rally was held in Nhulunbuy on 10 December 1998 and was organised by the Nambara Schools Council as a result
of concerns raised by the Yirrkala community and the broader Arnhem region. This rally, which had as its theme “We won’t let them cut off our tongue- language is our life”, was supported by the Milingimbi, Galiwinku, Maningrida, Umbakumba, Gapuwiyak communities and other Aboriginal communities in the NT as well as the Northern Territory Australian Education Union (Piening, 1999). For more detailed information on the action bilingual schools are taking to oppose the NT Government’s decision see Attachment A.

National public support for bilingual education has been demonstrated through petitions and numerous letters sent to the Minister for Education and the NT Government from individuals, academics, linguists, indigenous organisations and educational institutions (see one such letter at Attachment B). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation of Languages (FATSIL) as the peak national advisory body on Indigenous languages has also demonstrated their support for bilingual programs. The Indigenous Education Council NT (IECNT) have endorsed a Charter on Bilingual Language, which is at Attachment C.

International correspondents have expressed their disappointment at the actions of the NT Government and point out that the bilingual programs operating in NT schools had previously been considered the benchmark for education to Indigenous peoples worldwide. Letters of protest have been sent to Ministers from internationally acclaimed organisations, such as Terralingua- an international body involved in maintaining linguistic diversity and language rights and which presented a Submission on *Linguistic Human Rights in Education* to the XVI Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, Geneva (1998).

In addition, Oxfam International recently reported on the importance of education for breaking the poverty cycle. The report criticised the NT Government decision stating that it demonstrated a ‘flagrant disregard for local languages’ and that it ‘represents a clear breach of government’s obligations set out in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* to protect and respect the rights of indigenous people to appropriate education’ (CAA, 1999). A bilingual Homepage has also been established on the Internet where numerous pledges of support have been received both nationally and internationally (1998).

**Recommendation 1**

ATSIC asserts that bilingual education forms an integral component of the educational aspirations of many Aboriginal parents in relation to their children’s schooling. ATSIC recommends that, in line with the local, national and international support for the program, the Aboriginal Education Review Team consider this issue in detail as part of the Review process.

**Lack of Statistical Evidence for NT Government Decision**

The NT Government has based its decision to phase out bilingual education on purported consultations by the Education Review Task Group with Aboriginal communities and the findings of the Multilevel Assessment Program (MAP).
However, ATSIC Commissioners, Regional Councils and Regional offices in the NT maintain that there was no meaningful consultation with the affected schools and communities regarding the decision. ATSIC also suggests that the results of the MAP testing have been reported incorrectly.

The NT Government has claimed that results of the 1998 MAP testing indicate that “on average, children in schools funded with bilingual programs are performing slightly worse in English literacy and in numeracy” (p.c. FATSIL). However, closer scrutiny of the 1998 MAP results reveals that the difference in achievement levels between bilingual schools and monolingual schools is marginal. In fact, it could be argued that where the bilingual program has been properly resourced and managed and has strong community support bilingual schools are actually achieving higher levels of English literacy than most monolingual schools.

There is overwhelming evidence both nationally and internationally that supports the education of children in the vernacular while at the same time providing transmission into the English language (Black 1999; Bubb 1993; DEET 1988; Devlin 1995; Devlin 1997; Harris 1993b; McConvell 1981; Nicholls 1994; Yunupingu 1990; Marika-Mununggiritj, Raymattja, Banbapuy Maymuru, Multhara Mununggurr, Badang’thun Munyarryun, Gandalal Ngurrwuuthun, Yalmay Yunupingu 1990). The bilingual model in the NT provides a basis for Aboriginal students whose first language is an Aboriginal language to gain literacy skills and competency in their own language while at the same time fostering proficiency in English literacy and numeracy.

As suggested by the title of the program, both languages work side by side according to the developmental stage of the student and proven first and second language acquisition methodologies. Bilingual education programs emphasise a gradual transition to English which provides students with continuity in their cognitive growth and lays the foundation for academic success in the second language (White, 1999:6).

ATSIC believes that a more thorough examination should be made of the evidence upon which the NT Government decision is based before any further cuts are made to the bilingual education program.

**Importance of Bilingual Education to Aboriginal Cultural Maintenance and Educational Achievement**

To limit the achievements of bilingual education to purely academic results provides a limited view of the importance of bilingual education programs to Aboriginal students, parents, schools and communities as a whole. Additional benefits of bilingual education programs include:

- enhanced community control, management and involvement in education through the professional development and employment of qualified Aboriginal teachers, literacy workers, teacher linguists and cultural specialists (Batchelor College has produced a number of fully qualified Aboriginal teachers who themselves attended bilingual schools as students and are now returning as teachers);
• the development of appropriate local curriculum and resources through Literacy Production Centres such as the Garma Maths Curriculum at Yirrkala CEC and the archiving of world heritage language and cultural resources;

• providing Aboriginal students with the necessary skills, self-esteem and confidence to be able to participate without disadvantage in both societies;

• the incorporation and recognition of the importance of Aboriginal knowledge, traditions and languages in the education of Aboriginal students;

• thirty four Aboriginal languages and dialects are supported through the twenty schools in the NT accredited with bilingual programs which contributes to cultural and language maintenance;

• increased employment prospects for Aboriginal people in remote Aboriginal communities who are bilingual, for example in education, land councils and as interpreters in the courts, health service and essential services; and

• improved school attendance.

The abolition of bilingual education programs will send a clear message to Aboriginal communities that Aboriginal knowledge, traditions and languages are not valued within the NT education system.

Communities do want improved English literacy and numeracy outcomes but not at the expense of their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Human Rights Implications

The Northern Territory Governments decision to abolish bilingual education programs contravenes a number of United Nations Declarations on Human Rights. These include the:

• Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights
• Convention on the Rights of the Child
• International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights

Recommendation 2

ATSIC recommends that in schools where bilingual education has strong local Aboriginal community support, these communities should have the right to choose bilingual education as the form of education for their children. The right of Aboriginal people and communities to make this decision is enshrined in a number of United Nations Declarations on Human Rights.
**NT Government Agreement with DETYA**

The NT Government is contravening the Indigenous Education Agreement entered into with the Commonwealth (DETYA) for a third triennium from 1997-1999.

Under the NT Indigenous Education Agreement the NT Government has made a commitment to the progressive introduction of indigenous language teaching in more schools over the current triennium (refer to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Operational Plan: Northern Territory Department of Education, 1997: Priority 6*). As part of this contract a specific performance indicator was included which dealt with the need for the NT Government to make indigenous languages accessible within the educational experiences of indigenous children.

After the triennium finishes in 1999, the NT Government will be required to re-negotiate a set of achievable targets with the Commonwealth. The NT Government will be able to identify and plan which priorities to address, including a focus on English literacy rather than including indigenous language education.

**Recommendation 3**

ATSIC recommends that the strategic plans to be developed as a result of the Aboriginal Education Review ensure a strong focus on the introduction and maintenance of indigenous language teaching in NT schools. The form of Indigenous language teaching, for example as bilingual education, implemented in NT schools should have the support of the local community.

**Consultation with Aboriginal Communities**

Prior to the announcement by the NT Government to phase out bilingual education programs and throughout the debate that followed, there has been a marked lack of consultation with the schools and communities who are directly affected by the decision.

**Recommendation 4**

ATSIC recommends that the Aboriginal Education Review Team consult with the schools and communities affected by the decision to remove bilingual education programs. The ATSIC Chairperson, Gatiil Djerrkura and ATSIC Commissioners for the Northern Territory, Josie Crawshaw (NT North) and David Curtis (NT Central) should be incorporated in any consultations. David Curtis is also the ATSIC Portfolio Commissioner for Education.

**Lack of ESL and Cultural Awareness Training for Teachers**

ATSIC notes with concern that the greater majority of teachers and principals who work in schools that have a high Aboriginal population or where the students
vernacular is an Aboriginal language, do not have *English as a Second Language* (ESL) qualifications. ATSIC is also concerned at the lack of pre-teacher training and in-service Aboriginal cultural awareness training provided to teachers and principals. The study, *Desert Schools* (National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia, 1996) emphasised that this lack of specialised training for teachers and principals had a negative effect on Aboriginal children’s acquisition of English literacy skills (Batten, Fringo, Hughes and McNamara, 1998:15).


**Recommendation 5**

ATSIC recommends that *English as a Second Language* (ESL) qualifications be required by all teachers and principals who are based in schools that have a high Aboriginal population or where the vernacular of the students is an Aboriginal language. In-service cultural awareness training for teachers and principals should also be developed to provide greater appreciation of the cultural and linguistic traditions of Aboriginal students.

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**Impact of NT Government Decision on ATSIC**

ATSIC will not be in a position to provide financial support to NT schools for the maintenance of the bilingual education program. Firstly, ATSIC does not have responsibility for providing education services. This is a responsibility of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and the Northern Territory Department of Education. Secondly, ATSIC funding for language and culture activities goes towards community based initiatives. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiatives Program (ATSILIP) is the community based component of the *Language and Literacy Policy*.

ATSILIP currently supports the activities of three language centres in the Northern Territory as well as providing additional support for research to three literature production centres. The majority of these funds were provided to the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs, Papulu Apparr-kari (Tennant Creek) and Diwurrurruru-jaru Aboriginal Corporation (Katherine).

ATSILIP provides a total of $3.4 million nationally for language activities and due to the limited amount of funding available, it will be unable to meet any new demand created by the NT Government decision. In addition, providing small, ad hoc grants to literature production centres - which will be isolated from the school system if this
decision is implemented - will not resolve the longer term issue of language and
cultural maintenance or enable a sound structured approach to language teaching.

Conclusion

Any assessment of Aboriginal education must take into consideration the broader
issues which impact on the academic achievement levels of Aboriginal students
including poverty, racism, low standard of living conditions, lack of access to
essential resources and infrastructure, the history of the relationship between the
education system and Aboriginal people, high rate of teacher turn over, the teacher to
student ratio which is as high as one to fifty five in some remote schools and health
problems, such as otitis media which contributes significantly to hearing loss in
Aboriginal students which in turn impacts negatively on the learning abilities of these
students.

ATSIC considers that the NT Government is unable to justify its decision in terms of
achieving a high level of community support or through a consideration of academic
evidence produced outside of the current controversy. In addition, ATSIC believes
that the NT Government decision overlooks the importance of incorporating parents
and community members in the education system and that it fails to recognise that
Aboriginal values and language should have equal recognition with English. ATSIC
contends that a more thorough examination of community aspirations and the
evidence relating to improved educational outcomes should be required and that the
cuts to bilingual education programs should be put on hold during this time.
Part 2 - ABSTUDY Changes

Part 2 of ATSIC’s submission specifically addresses the second issues in the terms of reference which is:

- The key issues affecting educational outcomes for Aboriginal children.

By any measure Indigenous Australians are significantly disadvantaged. Recent reports such as, the Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (1988), the Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991), and the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (1995) underscore the disadvantage.

Each of these reports have urged that improving educational outcomes is a key strategy to ensure more successful economic outcomes for Indigenous people.

Indicators of this disadvantage, based on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey (NATSIS) 1994 are as follows:

- Nearly half of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over have received no formal education or reached Year 10 level in education;

- For almost three in ten, the Year 10 certificate was the highest educational attainment;

- Only one in six had obtained a post-school qualification;

- The retention rate to year 12 for Indigenous students was 33% compared with 75% for all students; and

- Only 5.5% of the Indigenous school population was participating in the last two years of secondary schooling compared with 12.4% for all students.

There are, however, areas where there has been substantial improvement – for example there are steadily increasing numbers of Indigenous students in higher education and improved retention rates in secondary schools. Both have shown substantial improvement over a thirty year period. For example the access rate of Indigenous people to higher education, at 1.5 percent of commencing students, is now only slightly less than their population share.

More detailed analysis is provided in the attached report, ABSTUDY: An Investment for Tomorrow’s Employment, on the relative educational disadvantage of Indigenous people at different levels in education. The report steps through experience at primary (pp43-46) and secondary (pp46-48) levels, post-secondary education, including technical and further education (pp48-52), and higher education (pp52-55).
The role of ABSTUDY

In general the level of disadvantage has been recognised by the Commonwealth Government. In 1969 the Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme (Abstudy) was introduced to assist Indigenous people improve their employment prospects through post-school training. This assistance has been gradually widened to now include:

- primary school students for those 14 years or over;
- secondary school studies;
- full-time or part-time studies after having left school; and
- Masters or Doctorates study (please see Chapter 3, ABSTUDY: An Investment for Tomorrow’s Employment for further details).

This assistance is now known as the Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme or more widely as ABSTUDY. ABSTUDY helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to stay at school or go on to further studies.

The amount of financial assistance provided depends on:

- the course of study undertaken and whether it is full or part-time;
- the age of the student;
- whether the student is living at home or away from home;
- the status of the student as dependent or independent; and
- the income of the student’s parents/guardian or partner.

The ABSTUDY scheme is administered by Centrelink and the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs.

Impact of ABSTUDY

ABSTUDY has played a major role in improving the education prospects and achievements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 1969, the number of recipients of the equivalent of today’s ABSTUDY was 115. This had increased to approximately 49,000 beneficiaries by 1996. While this change has occurred over a period of 30 years, the size of the change illustrates an interest and commitment to accessing and participating in education. The scheme has also shown some success in encouraging secondary school students to stay at school longer with a small but increasing number reaching senior secondary grades.

While only one factor in promoting improved educational outcomes for Indigenous people, there is evidence that ABSTUDY contributes to improved outcomes.
Evidence supporting the role of ABSTUDY is documented in *ABSTUDY: An Investment for Tomorrow’s Employment*. This review cites examples from Commonwealth reports and from consultations in preparing the review.

The review showed that, for example, in 1994 the Department of Employment Education Training conducted a telephone survey of over 5,000 secondary and tertiary ABSTUDY recipients. The survey found that:

- Approximately half of all tertiary students and more than a third of secondary school students said that they would leave study if ABSTUDY was not available.
- School students were more likely than tertiary students to consider ABSTUDY support to be adequate (from Chapter 7 of *ABSTUDY: An Investment for Tomorrow’s Employment*).

The review also confirmed the currency of these views through consultations conducted for the review. For example the report's authors, writing in 1998, state:

> “Everyone with whom this was discussed considered that ABSTUDY was crucial for Indigenous students to gain an education. Whenever the team raised with interviewees the possible difficulties in establishing this point in the absence of national statistics, those interviewed were surprised that it needed to be established. To them, the benefits were self-evident, based on their experience and knowledge. Most Indigenous interviewees said, in relation to post-secondary ABSTUDY benefits, that ‘I would not have obtained an education if it was not for ABSTUDY’ or words to that effect. These people talked about their improved circumstances in having a job and many spoke of the role model they played for their family and community members some of whom, in turn, had pursued an education. Other people referred to the current Indigenous leadership throughout the country and commented to the effect that ‘most of them owe their success to the initial opportunities provided by ABSTUDY’”(p81).

**Changes to ABSTUDY for 2000**

From January 2000 the Commonwealth Government will introduce changes to ABSTUDY to improve alignment between ABSTUDY and other allowances available to disadvantaged youth such as the Youth Allowance and Newstart.

Changes are set out in the attached tables (*Attachment E*). While such information may enable individuals students to assess the impact of changes on their own specific circumstance, it is difficult to see what impact the changes will have on student access to this benefit in coming years.

ATSIC supports the concept that assistance should be equitable to all students except where additional assistance is need to overcome particular disadvantage. In regard to the ABSTUDY changes, in particular, the standardisation of many rates of assistance raises concerns about whether the net impact of change will actually provide help to overcome the substantial disadvantages faced by many Indigenous students. No figures or analysis from official sources have been made available showing the broad
impact of the changes to ABSTUDY on the ability of, or incentive for, Indigenous people to access education.

ATSIC’s preliminary assessment suggests that there are both winners and losers. However, at this stage ATSIC has not been able to quantify these changes in terms of participation rates.

Other information which would assist in assessing the impact of the changes include:

1. Which students gain or lose, in dollar terms? I.e., of students in different age groups, in different family circumstances and living in different geographic locations (urban and remote) resulting from the changes as announced.

2. What are the numbers of students, currently receiving support from ABSTUDY, who will gain or lose as a result of the changes?

3. What other programs of support for students, either specific to Indigenous people, or available in general, either delivered by the Federal or State?

In seeking answers to these questions, ATSIC’s overriding concern is to ensure that the outcomes for Indigenous education are enhanced rather than eroded by changes to the set of programs and assistance measures provided by governments.

It should be noted that the Commonwealth government announced in the May 11 Budget that there will be an overall increase to Indigenous education by $16 million in 1999/2000.

As a consequence of the ABSTUDY changes to take effect from January 2000 there are a number of changes to the supplementary benefits. One of them is a re-alignment of the Pensioner Education Supplement to the same rate as the Pensioner Education Supplement for non-Indigenous people. This results in a reduction in this benefit for eligible ABSTUDY students. For 1999-2000 there is an increase to the ABSTUDY program, mainly to develop administrative systems at Centrelink to implement the changes.

The Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Programme (IESIP) has been increased by $5.6m in 1999-2000. These additional resources will be available to preschool, school, vocational education and training, adult and community education sectors to improve outcomes in Indigenous learning by enhancing literacy and numeracy and improving school attendance and retention.
The Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme (IEDA) has been increased by $2.0 m to provide direct assistance under the Aboriginal Student Support and parent Awareness (ASSPA) and Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance (ATAS) schemes.

**Recommendation 6**

That the review of education seek information on the effect of changes to ABSTUDY to the participation of Indigenous people in education in the Northern Territory through the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs with a view to assessing the likely impact on education outcomes for Indigenous people.
Part 3 – Other issues

Availability of secondary schooling for Indigenous people in the NT.

Many Indigenous people have raised their concerns with ATSIC about the non-availability of secondary schools near where they live. We have been told that for many Indigenous students, to attend high school, they have to go to Katherine or Darwin and live away from home.

We would like to bring this issue to the attention of the review committee and request that you investigate this problem.

Relevant research projects by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

DETYA has initiated two research projects that could be relevant to the work of this committee. They are:

“Better practice in school attendance – Improving Indigenous students’ school attendance”; and

“Positive self-identity for Indigenous students”.

The review committee may want to contact DETYA in Canberra and exchange information on these projects and the findings of the committee.

Recommendation 7

That the review investigate the issue of non-availability of high schools in many areas in the Northern Territory and suggest ways the NT government can provide secondary schooling closer to home for Indigenous students.
REFERENCES


Recommendation 11 stated:

That relevant education authorities and teacher education institutions ensure that all teachers are prepared by pre-service training to show awareness of, and sensitivity to, students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Further, that more specialised pre-service and in-service training be provided to teachers posted to schools with significant numbers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, whether they speak an indigenous language, a creole or Aboriginal English, to help them appreciate the specific situation and understand the important role of community members within the school (page 116).

Recommendation 12 stated:

That State education authorities ensure that teachers and principals in schools in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities actively support indigenous language and culture programs (where these are supported or desired by the local indigenous community) and the ‘Aboriginalisation’ of decision-making and control (page 118).
Attachment E – The changes to ABSTUDY to be introduced in Jan 2000

This table is based on material provided by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and is available at the following Internet address:

&lt;http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/indigenous_education/abstudy_changes.htm&gt;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CURRENT ABSTUDY ALLOWANCE</th>
<th>ABSTUDY FROM 1 JANUARY 2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living allowance for under 16 year old tertiary students living at home</strong></td>
<td>No change to living allowance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income-tested living allowance, paid fortnightly.</td>
<td>Youth Allowance assets and actual means tests will now apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living allowance for students aged 16-20 years (including those under 16 who meet independent criteria, eg homeless)</strong></td>
<td>Align with the Youth Allowance rate for 16-20 year olds including access to rent assistance, pharmaceutical and remote area allowances, where applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income-tested living allowance, paid fortnightly.</td>
<td>Youth Allowance assets, actual means and personal income tests will now apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living allowance for students aged under 16 years who have to live away from home</strong></td>
<td>Align with the Youth Allowance at-home rate for 16-17 year olds including access to rent assistance, pharmaceutical and remote area allowances, where applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For students who do not have daily access to secondary schooling, an income-tested living allowance is paid to the board provider, generally a boarding school or hostel.</td>
<td>Youth Allowance assets, actual means and personal income tests will now apply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living allowance for students aged 21 years and over</strong></td>
<td>Align with allowances payable under Newstart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income-tested living allowance, paid fortnightly.</td>
<td>Youth Allowance or Austudy payment assets, actual means and personal income tests will now apply but concessional treatment of spouse income will remain unchanged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Masters and Doctorate award</strong></td>
<td>No change to the living allowance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income-tested living allowance for students undertaking higher degrees, aligned with the merit-based (but not income-tested) Australian Postgraduate Award.</td>
<td>These awards will be subject to the means tests consistent with those applying under the Youth Allowance or Austudy payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The ABSTUDY Supplement Loan scheme</strong></td>
<td>Will remain aligned with the corresponding provisions (Student Financial Supplement Scheme) for eligible tertiary students under the Youth Allowance and Austudy payment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ABSTUDY Financial Supplement loans scheme is aligned with the corresponding provisions of the Youth Allowance and Austudy payment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Fares allowance

Travel for secondary and tertiary students who have to live away from home at the beginning and end of term for secondary students and the beginning and end of semester (or study period if a semester or less) for tertiary students approved to live away from home.

- For secondary students, no change.
- For tertiary students, fares allowance to be retained for those students who have to live away from home with ABSTUDY eligibility conditions modified to align with Youth Allowance and Austudy payment conditions for air or sleeping berth travel but otherwise maintained.

### Away-from base

Assistance with travel and accommodation to enable distance education students to attend on-campus residential schools (‘mixed-mode’), field trips or clinical placements. An upper limit of six return trips and 40 days assistance applies for these away-from-base activities.

- Assistance is also available for testing programmes for students to enter tertiary study. An upper limit of two return trips per year applies for testing programmes.
- Away-from-base assistance for residential schools for distance education tertiary students (mixed-mode) transferred to the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP), to be administered by DETYA and paid to institutions as block grants under Indigenous Education Agreements.
- Away-from-base assistance for testing and assessment; some field trips and placements to be retained as per existing benefit, administered by Centrelink.

### Pensioner Education Supplement

Full-time students (including those eligible for a workload concession) in receipt of certain pensions may be eligible for a fortnightly supplement.

- The eligibility criteria and rates of payment of the ABSTUDY Pensioner Education Supplement to be made consistent with those applying to the Pensioner Education Supplement available under the Social Security Act 1991.

### School fees allowance for under 16 year olds living at home

Currently paid to the applicant (generally a parent) to assist with school fees for students under 16 year old students and living at home. It is income-tested.

- Retained as per existing benefit however the applicant can elect for the payment of school fees to be made to the school or reimbursed to applicant on evidence of expenditure.

### Away rate of school fees for students approved to live away from home

Currently paid to the school and not income-tested.

- The income test applying to the boarding allowances under the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) will be applied to ABSTUDY applicants. No change to payment arrangements.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowance Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Under 16 boarding supplement</strong></td>
<td>Currently paid to boarding schools for under 16 year olds in receipt of the ABSTUDY living allowance who have to live away from home to attend school where at least 10% per cent of the boarders are Indigenous students from remote areas.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidentals allowances</strong></td>
<td>To assist with education costs (mature-aged secondary and tertiary students only).</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lawful custody allowance</strong></td>
<td>Payable to institutions on reimbursement of expenditure for essential course costs for Indigenous students.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School term allowance</strong></td>
<td>Income-tested allowance payable for educational costs for at home students under 16 years of age.</td>
<td>No change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>