

# ISSP Post-Implementation Review

July 2018

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## 1 Introduction

The Commonwealth Government wants Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be enrolling, progressing and completing their higher education studies at the same rate or better than other Australians. This is the best way to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are taking up positions in the professions, academia and the broader skilled workforce, all critical to Australia's future prosperity.

The Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) commenced on 1 January 2017 with the objective of supplementing the Commonwealth's \$17 billion per annum investment in higher education to ensure that mainstream and supplementary funding works together to accelerate improvements in the university enrolment, progression and award completions of Indigenous Australians.

In response to stakeholder requests during the development of ISSP, the Government committed to undertake a post-implementation review to ensure the program was operating effectively and as intended. This discussion paper is the first in a series of consultation processes for the post-implementation review, offering stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the first 18 months of the program and to inform improvements that might be implemented from the 2019 academic year. The ISSP post-implementation review has three main purposes, to:

- investigate whether the ISSP's transitional measures have been successful and whether they need to be extended, modified or discontinued;
- determine whether there are any unanticipated consequences resulting from the design of the ISSP that may need to be addressed; and
- provide an opportunity for universities to share best practice and innovative approaches to the use of ISSP funding with other providers.

### 1.1 Program Rationale

In 2012, The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (the Behrendt Review)<sup>1</sup> and subsequent consultation, found that the previous Indigenous Higher Education supplementary funding model limited the capacity of universities to tailor support to meet the ongoing needs of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The model was comprised of the Commonwealth Scholarships Program (CSP), Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) and the Indigenous Support Program (ISP).

The Behrendt Review recommended that the Australian Government reform and simplify the supplementary funding mechanisms to provide universities with greater flexibility to tailor support to student needs and establish outcome-focused accountability for universities to improve enrolments, but also place a greater emphasis on retention and completions of Indigenous students.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (2012) *Review of higher education access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: final report*. <https://www.education.gov.au/review-higher-education-access-and-outcomes-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people>

## 1.2 Development of the ISSP

During 2015 and 2016 the Department consulted widely with stakeholders to develop the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP). ISSP commenced on 1 January 2017 under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*. The program combined the funding (\$68.5 million in 2018) and purpose of three former supplementary funding programs: (CSP, ITAS and ISP). In addition to building on the Behrendt review recommendations, ISSP was expected to result in universities using more of the supplementary funding allocated, ensuring Indigenous students benefited from the \$5.5 million previously returned to consolidated revenue each year.

ISSP funding is provided directly to universities to offer scholarships, tutorial assistance, mentoring, safe cultural spaces and other personal support services. Universities have the flexibility to determine the best mix of support services suited to their students. University ISSP payments are calculated based on a funding formula that utilises the latest published enrolment, unit success rate, completion and regional/remote student enrolment data for each university.

The Department conducted teleconferences with providers in early 2017 to identify any early issues with program implementation and to discuss eligibility criteria. Now that providers have completed their first year of the ISSP and undergone their first reporting process, it is timely for the Department to seek feedback about matters that may not have been anticipated during the development stage of the program.

## 1.3 ISSP Review Process

The 2018 ISSP Review will be a multi-stage approach, and will draw on:

- Responses to this discussion paper
- Teleconferences and meetings with stakeholders
- Email exchanges with providers and students received to date
- ISSP reporting for the 2017 calendar year
- Research papers and publications on supporting Indigenous students through university
- Data from the Higher Education Statistics collections.

### **1 Discussion Question - ISSP Post-Implementation Review Process**

- 1(i) Are there any other processes or methods that the Department should include in the ISSP Review process?

## 2 Transitional Measures

Based on feedback received in 2015 and 2016, the Department included a range of transitional measures within the design of the ISSP to control for possible negative impacts on students and higher education providers through transferring to the new arrangements, including:

- **Preserved Scholarships** for previous CSP recipients to ensure they could continue to receive their scholarship under the same conditions as they were offered before the reforms;
- creating a **funding safety net** to limit the amount of funding a provider could lose or gain from the previous year's funding allocation to provide some certainty on funding levels;
- requiring providers to offer a similar level of **scholarships to remote and regional students** as in the previous year;
- a requirement for Providers to provide **continuity of support services**; and
- a range of **other transitional measures** that specifically relate to the 2017 funding year.

This section seeks feedback from providers on the benefits or disadvantages of these transitional measures and whether they should be extended or discontinued.

### 2.1 Preserved Scholarships

To ensure students who were in receipt of a former Indigenous CSP scholarship prior to 2017 were not disadvantaged by the new ISSP arrangements, these scholarship holders became eligible for an ISSP Preserved Scholarship. These scholarships have two forms:

- a) Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships assist with education costs; and
- b) Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships assist with accommodation costs.

The Preserved scholarship arrangement ensures the Government's reforms don't alter the student's previous scholarship entitlement and are offered on similar conditions to previous CSP scholarships. Payment rates are indexed annually and are published on the Department's website.

Students must maintain eligibility by continuing the arrangements they had under the CSP scholarship. However, if the student chooses to alter the arrangement (for example, through the change of course or provider), then the Department requires the provider to assess a student's eligibility for a scholarship under the new ISSP scholarships. Providers are able to determine an amount and the basis of a new ISSP scholarship for these students. Subject to the provider's considerations, this could replicate the preserved scholarships arrangement.

Preserved scholarships will expire on 30 June 2021 and any unused portion of the scholarship is forfeited by the student after this date. This effectively allows Preserved scholarship holders to defer a full year of study within the eight study periods previously supported under CSP. After this time, providers will need to consider whether a new ISSP Scholarship is offered to students who are continuing their studies.

Funding for the Preserved Scholarships is quarantined from the ISSP funding pool before university funding entitlements are calculated using the funding formula. Universities provide the Department with an estimate of the number of Preserved Scholarships they require each calendar year (the estimate is updated mid-year). Preserved Scholarship amounts are identified in the entitlement letters sent to Vice Chancellors each December for the upcoming academic year.

The Department conducts a mid-year returns process for unused preserved scholarships. Returned preserved scholarships funding is included in the second round of ISSP payments to providers (subject to the funding formula). Some Preserved Scholarships funding will remain unspent each year, as it is not possible to accurately predict whether students will choose to continue their studies, defer, change course or quit their courses.

### **2.1 Discussion Questions – Preserved Scholarships**

- 2.1(i) Should preserved scholarships continue, as planned, until 30 June 2021?
- 2.1(ii) Should the Department require providers to offer a new ISSP scholarship to preserved scholarship holders that change courses or providers?
- 2.1(iii) Are there other improvements that could be made to preserved scholarship arrangements or information?

## 2.2 Funding Safety Net

To support the transition to the new program, the ISSP applied a safety net to the funding formula to ensure that a provider's ISSP funding allocation will not vary by more or less than 15% year to year<sup>2</sup>. This safety net protects against excessive yearly funding fluctuations to provide greater certainty for providers to plan their budgets.

The Funding Safety Net was particularly important in the first year of program operation due to the changed basis for funding calculations. Under the previous supplementary funding programs the following funding arrangements operated:

- The Indigenous Support Program funding was distributed based on 50% for enrolments, 35% for progression and 15% for completion;
- The Commonwealth Scholarships Program was paid based on a set amount of scholarship funding per student;
- Tutorial support was funded through a competitive grants funding round.

The ISSP now equally prioritises enrolment, success rates and completion rates (30% each) and includes a 10% loading for remote and regional student enrolments.

Some providers that were previously ineligible to receive funding under some of the above programs also became eligible for the ISSP funding pool.

The Funding Safety Net upper cap on funding growth ensures that providers that did not previously access all of the former programs grow their funding in a controlled manner and do not rapidly draw on the funding shared by all providers. It also ensured sufficient funding was available to subsidise the cost of the Funding Safety Net floor on funding losses.

### **2.2 Discussion Questions – Funding Safety Net**

- 2.2(i) Has the funding safety net been effective in providing a reasonable level of funding predictability to universities?
- 2.2(ii) Should the funding safety net be maintained, modified or removed? (Where relevant, include suggestions for improvement)

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<sup>2</sup> The safety net only applies to the funding formula component - any preserved scholarships funding or special grants funding are not included in a provider's safety net calculation.

## 2.3 Scholarships for Remote and Regional Students

As a transitional requirement for the 2017 and 2018 academic years, providers are required to demonstrate that the value of ISSP scholarships (both new and preserved scholarships) offered to Indigenous students from remote or regional backgrounds is equivalent to or greater than 95% of the scholarship expenditure on remote and regional students in the previous academic year<sup>3</sup>. The purpose of the arrangement was to ensure that Providers continued to prioritise efforts to improve access to university study for remote and regional students. The Department acknowledged that student numbers from remote and regional areas fluctuate from year to year. The Department also acknowledged that students could choose to accept or reject scholarship offers and that this choice was beyond the influence of universities. This is why the requirement covers the value of offers for the grant year rather than the value of scholarships awarded in the grant year. The value of offers is used to mitigate the risk of a provider offering lower valued scholarships to students from remote/regional areas.

If the 95% scholarship offer requirement is not met, the Minister may require the provider to repay some of the ISSP grant under Part 2-5 of the Act. In this situation, the Department would require the gap between the 95% requirement and the actual value of offers to be repaid. The guidelines allow providers to apply for a waiver of the requirement in extenuating circumstances.

### **2.3 Discussion Questions – Scholarship Offer Requirement for Remote and Regional Students**

- 2.3(i) Is the 95% remote and regional scholarship requirement still needed?
- 2.3(ii) If the scholarship requirement is retained, is the current penalty sufficient to encourage universities to continue making offers to students from remote and regional areas?
- 2.3(iii) Are there alternative mechanisms for ensuring continued support for remote and regional students that could work better?

## 2.4 Requirement for Providers to provide continuity of support services

The Guidelines require Providers to continue to offer the same types of support that they previously offered prior to the commencement of ISSP (section 34). This requirement is aimed at ensuring that services to students continued following the introduction of the ISSP. This specifically means that Providers who previously provided:

- a) tutorial support under supplementary tutorial assistance funding under the IAS must continue to provide tutorial support under the ISSP; and
- b) pastoral care and other support activities funded through the Indigenous Support Program must continue to offer these services under the ISSP.

Providers have the flexibility to modify the services to better fit the needs of their students.

### **2.4 Discussion Question – Continuity of Support Services**

- 2.4(i) Are there any concerns that previously provided support services have been reduced?

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<sup>3</sup> The duration of a scholarship does not impact on the 95% calculations (only the payments made in that calendar year are included in the calculation).

## 2.5 2017 Transitional measures

Other transitional measures were included in the Guidelines that relate specifically to the 2017 grant year. It is proposed that these measures be removed from the next version of the guidelines given that the 2017 funding year is completed and they are no longer applicable. These measures include:

- The determination period for the 2017 grant (section 7(3)). This allowed the 2017 funding allocation to be advised to universities in 2017. In all future years, the allocation will be notified in December of the previous grant year.
- Transition plans were allowed for providers that previously funded the delivery of units of study regarding Indigenous societies and cultures from previous programs (section 15(a)(i-iii)). This measure is no longer required because eligible providers agreed to transition plans during 2017 and no new transition plans should be necessary.
- Ability to use wider CSP definition for counting regional/remote students for the purposes of calculating the 2017 remote/regional scholarships offer requirement (section 21(3)(a)(ii)). The removal of this item will ensure that from 2019 there is consistency in the definition of remote and regional areas for all *Higher Education Support Act 2003* reporting.
- The counting of previous program expenditure as the base for the 2017 ISSP Funding Safety Net (Schedule 1, section 2, column 3, item c).

### 2.5 Discussion Questions – 2017 Transitional Measures

- 2.5(i) Should the transitional measures be removed as discussed at section 2.5 of the discussion paper from the guidelines? (If not, suggest an alternative treatment)
- 2.5(ii) Are there other transitional measures you think should be reviewed? (Please list and suggest a proposed treatment)

## 3 ISSP General Conditions

During the consultations for the development of the ISSP, competing views were offered by providers and peak bodies. One of the key tensions the Government needed to manage in setting the ISSP general conditions was balancing the level of accountability for taxpayer funds and providing the required flexibility for universities to use funding to support their specific students. Following the first 18 months of implementation, we wish to test that these settings are supporting the intended outcomes of the ISSP.

### 3.1 Legislation and Implementation Support

The ISSP is legislated through the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants 2017* which form part of the *Higher Education Support Act (2003)*. The Guidelines provide an overview of how the program operates and details ineligible activities, students and providers. Alternatively, the Department also answers queries where universities want more specific advice around the use of ISSP funds.

### 3.1 Discussion Questions – Legislation and Implementation

- 3.1(i) Is the program easy to access and simple to administer? Why/Why not?
- 3.1(ii) Do the ISSP Guidelines and information on the Department's website provide sufficient information for providers to implement the program? What could be improved?
- 3.1(iii) Have students responded positively to the program?

### 3.2 Provider eligibility

The ISSP requires higher education providers to have an Indigenous Governance Mechanism, Indigenous Workforce Strategy and Indigenous Education Strategy in place (or in process) in order to be eligible for ISSP funding:

- The **Indigenous Governance Mechanism** advises on, reviews, makes recommendations about and monitors the use of ISSP grants. This could be an Indigenous person who is a qualified senior academic or senior executive or a committee constituted by a majority of Indigenous persons.
- The **Indigenous Workforce Strategy** must include Key Performance Indicators, prioritise the number of Indigenous academic employees and their professional development, and set out a plan to increase the number of Indigenous employees at the provider to 3%.
- The **Indigenous Education Strategy** must include Key Performance Indicators; prioritise increasing enrolment, progression and completion rates for Indigenous higher education students; support the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in curricula, graduate attributes, and teaching practices; and, detail strategies to promote cultural competency of students and teachers.

#### 3.2 Discussion Questions – Provider eligibility

- 3.2(i) Are these eligibility criteria resulting in positive changes at the university?
- 3.2(ii) Are these requirements still needed? Should others be added?
- 3.2(iii) Do the requirements need further clarification or improvement?

### 3.3 Student eligibility

The program requires providers to ensure that students who access support using ISSP funding are Indigenous persons. Providers are responsible for determining the Indigenous status of a student for the purpose of providing assistance to those students.

Indigeneity is confirmed if the student is in receipt of an Indigenous-specific payment from Centrelink, for example ABSTUDY.

Alternatively Universities may apply the ABSTUDY policy manual process for evidence of Indigeneity which comprises the following elements:

- a) Evidence of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.
- b) Evidence of self-identification as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- c) Evidence of acceptance as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander by the community.

The ISSP Guidelines also allow universities to support all enabling to postgraduate students with scholarships and tutorial assistance whereas the previous CSP and tutorial assistance programs limited postgraduate assistance. The Department would like to gain an understanding of how universities have adjusted their support mechanisms to assist Higher Degree by Research students and build the academic workforce.

### **3.3 Discussion Questions –Student eligibility**

- 3.3(i) Have providers encountered any difficulties with confirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status? Can anything be improved?
- 3.3(ii) Have students experienced difficulties in accessing the services funded under the ISSP? Why?
- 3.3(iii) Is it appropriate to continue supporting postgraduate students through ISSP?
- 3.3(iv) Is it appropriate to continue supporting Higher Degree by Research students through ISSP?

### 3.4 Eligible and Ineligible activities

Activities that were previously eligible for funding under the Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships Program, Indigenous Support Program and tutorial assistance remain eligible under the ISSP. The Government aims to ensure that ISSP funding is prioritised towards activities that maximise outcomes for the majority of eligible students, rather than to concentrate high levels of support to a few specific individuals.

Activities that should be funded through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (such as teaching and learning) are ineligible for ISSP funding.

### **3.4 Discussion Question – Eligible and Ineligible Activities**

- 3.4(i) Is the mix of eligible and ineligible activities right? (If not, suggest activities that you believe should be revised, added or removed in the guidelines).

### 3.5 New ISSP Scholarships

Under the ISSP, Providers have greater control and flexibility over the scholarships they offer to students than under the previous Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships Program. Universities can now choose:

- to offer ISSP scholarships to enabling, undergraduate and postgraduate students (this widened eligibility to all postgraduate students – CSP scholarships were only available to postgraduate students undertaking graduate diplomas in national priority areas);
- to offer ISSP scholarships to part-time students (CSP scholarships were restricted for part-time students) could receive a CSP scholarship);
- the quantum of funding to allocate to scholarship provision;
- the value and duration of each scholarship offered;
- their own eligibility criteria for assessing scholarship applications; and
- timing for scholarship payments to students.



Section 22 of the Guidelines require providers to prioritise scholarships towards Indigenous students from remote areas or regional areas and Indigenous students who are financially disadvantaged.

Students cannot receive an ISSP Accommodation scholarship at the same time as a Relocation Scholarship administered by the Department of Human Services or the Residential Costs Option under ABSTUDY. Similarly, students cannot receive an ISSP Education Costs scholarship and a Start-up scholarship or Start-up loan at the same time. As such, Providers are required to continue classifying the scholarship type in the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS).

However, scholarships in the nature of the former Indigenous Access Scholarships and the Indigenous Enabling Accommodation Costs Scholarships are now classified under the Accommodation Costs scholarship classification in HEIMS. Similarly, scholarships in the nature of Indigenous Enabling Education Costs Scholarships are classified under general Education Costs Scholarships.

Building on definitions contained in the ABSTUDY Policy Manual, the guidelines provide for a new form of scholarships known as reward scholarships. Reward scholarships respond to stakeholder wishes regarding the flexibility to award scholarships in recognition of meritorious achievement or other categories of scholarship outside supplementary living and education costs support.

A key advantage of ISSP is that where students withdraw part way through a semester, the university can use the unused portion of the scholarship for other activities to improve Indigenous student outcomes or lift Indigenous enrolment numbers in the future. In the past, this funding was returned to consolidated revenue.

### **3.5 Discussion questions – New ISSP Scholarships**

- 3.5(i) Have universities made significant changes to the design and composition of their scholarship offerings from the CSP offering (e.g. total quantum, scholarship amount per student, duration, conditions)?
- 3.5(ii) Is there evidence that the changes have improved outcomes?
- 3.5(iii) Are ISSP Scholarships simple to administer? (If not, please recommend improvements to guidelines or processes).

### **3.6 Tutorial Assistance**

Tutorial assistance funded under the ISSP is supplementary, tailored support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to assist them to progress through their course. It does not fund mainstream tutorial sessions required as part of a provider's course delivery for all students.

Universities can determine the level of funding directed towards this activity and the details of how the activity will be delivered. Support should be prioritised towards students that may be at risk of failing a course or course element or not achieving at the level required to continue in their course.

#### **3.6 Discussion Question – Tutorial Assistance**

- 3.6(i) Have providers made changes to the level and type of tutorial support provided to students?

### 3.7 Indigenous Support Activities

The provider may use ISSP funding for a range of activities designed to support Indigenous people to enter into higher education, transition into a higher education environment and to provide additional cultural and personal support to assist in retaining these students.

Examples of funding uses include:

- to establish and/or maintain a safe cultural space on the premises of the provider for Indigenous students to learn and study;
- to provide counselling, pastoral care and mentoring services; advocacy and advice services supplementary to the student support services that are available to other students; and assist Indigenous students to access and benefit from support services available to the general student body;
- to implement strategies to foster a culturally-safe learning environment for Indigenous students and employees of the provider who are Indigenous persons to encourage other staff and students to improve their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures, traditions and histories; and
- to engage and prepare Indigenous students to enrol in a course of study, including providing orientation activities, strategies for transition to higher education, and ancillary support.

#### **3.7 Discussion Questions – Indigenous Support Activities**

3.7(i) Are universities offering different support services than under the ISP?

3.7(ii) Are different types of students accessing support services than previously?

### 3.8 ISSP funding formula

The ISSP funding formula aims to reward universities for improvements in student outcomes whilst also providing additional financial support to universities that enrol students who require greater levels of support, such as remote and regional students. A provider's ISSP funding allocation for the year is comprised of:

- a) a preserved scholarships component; and
- b) a funding formula component (remainder of the funding) which awards funding of:
  - i. 30% for enrolments,
  - ii. 30% for success rates,
  - iii. 30% for completions and
  - iv. 10% for regional and remote student enrolments<sup>45</sup>.

The change in weighting (see section 2.2) was to ensure that universities do not focus efforts on simply enrolling Indigenous students, but that they also provide these students with the ongoing support they need to succeed in their studies and graduate.

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<sup>4</sup> Comments on the calculation of the preserved scholarships component should be included under Discussion Question 2.1.

<sup>5</sup> The funding formula is also subject to a 15% Funding Safety Net – please provide any comments on this under Discussion Question 2.2.

The Department endeavours to advise Vice Chancellors of their estimated ISSP funding allocation (including Preserved Scholarships component) for the upcoming calendar year before the end of the previous calendar year. Outcomes data for the funding formula is accessed from the most recently published data available on the Higher Education Information Managements System (HEIMS) managed by the Department of Education and Training.

A provider's yearly ISSP funding allocation is paid in two instalments, one in January/February and the remaining funding paid in July each year. The first payment is 50% of the provider's estimated full year allocation. Adjustments to a provider's final allocation for the year will be incorporated in the mid-year payment once preserved scholarships underspends are advised.

### 3.8 Discussion Questions – ISSP Funding Formula

- 3.8(i) Have there been changes in the ways that universities spend or manage Indigenous supplementary funding?
- 3.8(ii) Have there been changes in the ways universities spend or manage mainstream funding for Indigenous students?
- 3.8(iii) Are the weightings appropriate? Have the focus changed more towards outcomes? Why/why not?
- 3.8(iv) Does the ISSP funding formula support university efforts to not only focus on enrolment, but also on student success and graduation as well as investigating strategies to connect with Indigenous students from regional and remote areas? Why/why not?
- 3.8(v) Are there any unintended consequences of the weighting composition?
- 3.8(vi) Are some universities benefiting to a greater degree under the design of the program? Should changes be made?

## 3.9 Reporting

The aim of the new reporting system under the ISSP was aimed at simplifying the process for providers and Government. The ISSP consolidates reporting from 3 programs into one set of reports each year.

There are two types of reports required under the ISSP:

- a) **Financial reporting** is comprised of financial statements and an acquittal. The purpose is to demonstrate that ISSP funding has been used according to the Guidelines and the Act and to estimate other financial support the higher education provider is committing to lift Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student and staff outcomes; and
- b) **Performance reporting** details how the provider's activities have contributed towards improving higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and ensures that providers have fulfilled the eligibility requirements for the ISSP.

The reporting template is attached to the funding advice letter the Vice-Chancellor receives before the start of a grant year containing the entitlement estimate for the year ahead. This means the Provider will have information on the necessary reporting requirements before they start receiving payments. The reports must be submitted to the Department by the last business day of April of the year following the grant year. The April date was set to ensure universities were not distracted from the key task of ensuring students were appropriately prepared and participating at the start of the university year.

ISSP is established under section 51(xxvi) of the Constitution which allows the Commonwealth to make laws in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This power cannot be at odds with the powers of State governments and so ISSP is established as a supplementary funding measure. For this reason, section 10(1)(b) of the guidelines requires a Provider to “demonstrate it has access to funding other than ISSP that it intends to use to:

- a) Assist Indigenous students to undertake higher education; and
- b) Increase the number of Indigenous students enrolling in, progressing in and completing courses leading to a higher education award; and
- c) Increase the number of Indigenous students participating in a higher education environment”.

There may be some ambiguity in the reporting requirements established to assist Providers demonstrate they meet the requirements of section 10(1)(b) of the guidelines. Some stakeholders take the approach of reporting an estimate of all non-ISSP funding that may have assisted an Indigenous students, for example, including a pro-rata allocation of Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) funds based on the number of Indigenous students as a proportion of all eligible CGS students. Other stakeholders interpret the current reporting requirement to mean mainstream funds specifically targeted to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, such non-ISSP contributions to an Indigenous Support Unit or perhaps a post-graduate scholarship paid through a charitable foundation established by the university. Both interpretations appear to meet the requirements of the guidelines, but there is likely to be value in aggregating “other funds” data, which would be problematic without common agreement to the definition.

### **3.9. Discussion Questions - Reporting**

- 3.9(i) Are the ISSP reporting timeframes appropriate?
- 3.9(ii) Is the reporting template simple to complete? Can it be improved?
- 3.9(iii) Does the ISSP reporting duplicate any other reporting the university is required to complete?
- 3.9(iv) Is there any additional information that is being captured in the reporting process? Is there elements in the reporting that should no longer be included?
- 3.9(v) Is the process for reporting simple and efficient?
- 3.9(vi) How should ‘other funds’ be reported in the reporting template?
- 3.9(vii) Are there other aspects of the reporting that are ambiguous? What?

## **4 Best Practice**

Improving higher education outcomes will improve the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their families. The wider community also benefits from Indigenous knowledges; experiencing the viewpoints of Indigenous leaders; and from having an engaged and proficient Indigenous workforce.

The Department is committed to assisting Providers to share best practice in improving the enrolments, progression and completion rates of Indigenous Australians in higher education. The

Department welcomes information and anecdotes on any innovative approaches to using ISSP funding to support achievement of these goals. The Department also welcomes suggestions on how to share this information, for example through newsletters, papers or conferences.

#### **4 Discussion Questions – Best Practice**

- 4(i) Do you have any innovative or best practice examples of ways the ISSP has been used to improve enrolment, retention and completion for Indigenous Australians?
- 4(ii) What is the best method for sharing this information?
- 4(iii) Are universities already collaborating and/or sharing best practice? How?

## 5 Other

This is an opportunity for providers to provide any feedback on areas of the ISSP that have not been addressed in the discussion questions above.

#### **5 Discussion Question - Other**

- 5(i) Is there any other feedback or information the ISSP Review team needs to be aware of?

## 6 Submitting a Response to the Discussion Paper

The Government welcomes feedback on the discussion questions posed in this paper and any other suggestions for the ISSP that will facilitate improved enrolment, retention and completion of Indigenous higher education students. Responses to this discussion paper will not be published, but will inform the Minister's decisions on program amendments.

The Department encourages institutions to consult with their Indigenous Governance Mechanism in the drafting of their response to this discussion paper.

Responses to the discussion paper will be processed in the second half of 2018 and the Government will aim to implement program revisions to the ISSP in time for the 2019 calendar year. Responses to the discussion paper should be submitted by **31 August 2018** and may be submitted:

- a) Via the online response form available via: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/indigenous-student-success-program>; or
- b) By completing the Word response template available at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/indigenous-affairs/education/indigenous-student-success-program> and attaching it in an email addressed to [ISSP@pmc.gov.au](mailto:ISSP@pmc.gov.au) (please do not convert the document to PDF); or
- c) Hardcopy submissions can be addressed to:  
ISSP Review  
Education, Community Safety and Health Division  
Indigenous Affairs Group  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
GPO Box 6500  
CANBERRA ACT 2600