



Education &
Communities

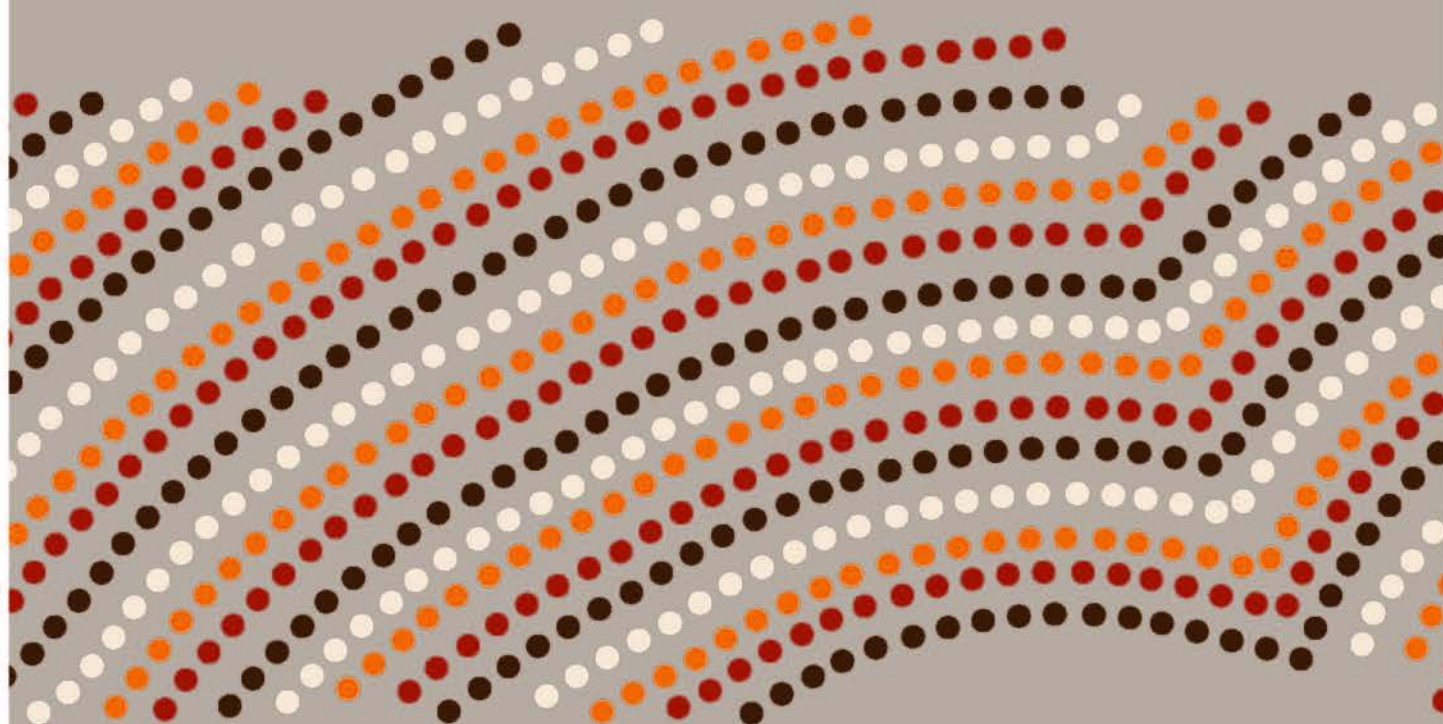
Public Schools NSW

Final report of the Program Evaluation of

NORTA NORTA

INDIVIDUAL SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Executive Summary



Norta Norta
is the
Ngiyampaa
word for
'learning'.

Acknowledgements

The Policy, Planning and Reporting Unit would like to thank the following people for their time and expertise in assisting with the evaluation of the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program*.

Program Evaluation Reference Group (PERG) members guided the evaluation during 2011-2012:

- Bill Tomlin, A/Senior Manager, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) - Chair
- Cathie Burgess, Koori Centre, University of Sydney
- Paul Cole, School Education Director, Western Sydney Region, DEC
- Susan Matthews, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (NSW AECG)
- Natalie Pierson, Regional Consultant, Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate (AETD), DEC
- Gloria Provest, Leader, School Programs, AETD, DEC
- Kylie Provest, *Norta Norta* Program Coordinator, AETD, DEC
- Jascenta Sabatino, Director, AETD, DEC

The evaluation team wishes to thank the principals, staff and students of the following schools for sharing their experiences of implementing the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program*:

- Airds High School
- Batemans Bay High School
- Brisbane Water Secondary College, Woy Woy Campus
- Chifley College, Senior Campus
- Dubbo College, Senior Campus
- Gorokan High School
- Kingscliff High School
- Lightning Ridge Central School
- Manilla Central School
- Matraville Sports High School
- Moree Secondary College, Albert Street Campus
- Peel High School
- Picton High School
- Peak Hill Central School
- South Grafton High School
- Toormina High School
- Ulladulla High School
- Vincentia High School

The evaluation team wishes to thank the principal and staff at Endeavour Sports High School for piloting the student, school staff and tutor surveys.

Evaluation team

Louise Taggart	Senior Evaluation Advisor
Diana Eqbal	Program Evaluation and Planning Officer
Meg Dione	Senior Evaluation Advisor
Barry Laing	Evaluation Consultant

Quality Assurance Team
Policy, Planning and Reporting Unit

© State of New South Wales
September 2013

Table of contents

Summary of key findings and recommendations	1
Evaluation methodology	1
Summary of key findings.....	2
Benefits for students – educational outcomes	3
Benefits for students – student engagement	4
Effectiveness of implementation of <i>Norta Norta</i>	4
Factors influencing participation by schools in <i>Norta Norta</i>	7
Parent awareness of <i>Norta Norta</i>	7
In summary.....	8
Recommendations for <i>Norta Norta</i>	9
1. Recommendations for program level management of <i>Norta Norta</i>	9
2. Recommendations for delivery of quality tuition	10
3. Recommendations for school implementation	11
4. Recommendations for sustainability of the <i>Norta Norta</i> Program	12
Glossary	14
References.....	16

Summary of key findings and recommendations

“Norta Norta is a worthwhile program that is actively closing the education gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. The program empowers students to meet and then exceed their expectations - broadening their horizons and giving them more options [when they] complete school.”

Comment from a member of a school Aboriginal education team

The key objective of the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* is to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal students in Years 11 and 12 through the provision of targeted tuition support. Intended outcomes include improved learning and levels of achievement, more positive attitudes and strengthened engagement with school, improved attendance and increased retention to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent.

The individual sponsorship component of the *Norta Norta Program* is one of two initiatives offered under the *Norta Norta* banner. The other component provides assistance in literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal students performing below the national NAPLAN benchmarks at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The NAPLAN component is not part of this evaluation.

For the purposes of this report, *Norta Norta* will be understood to refer to the Year 11 and 12 *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* only.

The Terms of Reference for the evaluation of the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* required an examination of:

- the extent to which the program has improved the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students
- the impact of the program on student engagement
- the effectiveness of the implementation of the program
- the level of participation in the program by schools
- effective ways for schools to inform parents¹ about tuition support available through the program.

The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the extent to which *Norta Norta* has achieved its objectives. The results will assist in monitoring and reporting on the efficacy of *Norta Norta* and help to assess the contribution the program makes to the realisation of targets in the *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy, 2009-2012* (AETD, 2009). The recommendations will inform planning for the implementation of *Norta Norta* beyond 2013.

The key findings of the two-year evaluation support the conclusion that *Norta Norta* is delivering improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. It has delivered dual benefits for Aboriginal students, impacting positively on both engagement and learning.

Evaluation methodology

Online surveys of school staff, students and tutors were used to gather data around identified issues. Each of the surveys was open to participants in all schools taking part in the program. The evaluation team visited eighteen sample schools across eight school regions to conduct in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, Aboriginal staff, students, tutors and parents and community members.

The methodology was developed in consultation with, and approved by the *Norta Norta Program Evaluation Reference Group* (PERG).

¹ For the purpose of this report the term ‘parent’ refers to both parents and carers.

Analysis of Higher School Certificate (HSC) results between 2005 and 2012² has been conducted in consultation with officers from the High Performance Unit. While data for all Aboriginal students was used, only 80% of Aboriginal students were registered in the program. The sample size is large enough for analysis to be meaningful.

Summary of key findings

Using evidence from all data sources, the evaluation of *Norta Norta* found that educational outcomes for many Aboriginal students participating in tuition have improved. More than 90% of school staff and tutor survey respondents, in both 2011 and 2012, rated the overall program as either highly or moderately effective. This has been confirmed by teachers', parents' and students' impressions of effective learning, and is reflected in analysis of HSC results.

The *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* is the Department's primary strategy to 'halve the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020' (AETD, 2012, p. 3). Teachers, other school staff, tutors, parents and students strongly believe that *Norta Norta* is making a difference for individual students, helping them to stay on at school. As reported in the Department's *Annual Report 2012*, the apparent retention rate for Aboriginal students has increased from 33.1% in 2009 to 43.0% in 2012 (NSW DEC, 2013 p. 28). The retention rate increase corresponds to the implementation period for *Norta Norta* from 2009 to 2012. In the two years from 2010 to 2012 there has been a strong growth in the retention rate, rising from 35.3% in 2010 to 39.2% in 2011 and to 43.0% in 2012.

Participation rates for *Norta Norta* increased substantially from a total of 1,393 registered students in 2009 to a total of 3,053 students in 2012. Over the same period the number of schools almost doubled, rising from 140 to 245 schools.

The introduction of the raised school leaving age to 17 years coincides with the implementation of *Norta Norta* from 2009 to 2012. Although the raised school leaving age may have had an impact on retention rate for Aboriginal students, *Norta Norta* appears to have resulted in substantial improvements in completion of HSC subjects by Aboriginal students. For example, there were increases in HSC completion of 58% for English (standard) and 82% for general mathematics from 2005 to 2012. These increases were much greater than for non-Aboriginal students.

It is difficult to directly attribute improvements in learning, levels of achievement and student engagement to a single program. In most schools *Norta Norta* is implemented in conjunction with a number of other programs. *Low SES National Partnership* and *Schools in Partnership* (SiP) were two significant programs identified by many of the sample schools. Stakeholders acknowledged that these programs were also likely to have contributed to the success of Aboriginal students.

Findings from all data sets are drawn together to address each of the Terms of Reference, related to the benefits for students, the implementation of the program, school participation in the program including issues of sustainability, and parent awareness of *Norta Norta*.

The evaluation report presents two sections detailing benefits for students:

- impacts on educational outcomes
- impacts on student engagement.

² 2005 to 2009 is considered the pre- implementation period and 2010 to 2012 is the post-implementation period for data analysis.

Benefits for students – educational outcomes

The program provided tuition for 2,686³ and 3,053⁴ Year 11 and 12 Aboriginal students in NSW government schools in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The sample of students involved in the evaluation reflected a wide range of achievement and engagement levels.

HSC results

Analysis of HSC results for Aboriginal students and from 2005 to 2012 identifies some improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. These include:

- HSC results in English (standard). Prior to 2010 HSC results in English (standard) were declining for Aboriginal students while remaining stable for non-Aboriginal students. This decline was reversed in 2010 with results for Aboriginal students improving more rapidly than for non-Aboriginal students.
- value-added to HSC score. The gap in value-added⁵ HSC results between Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students decreased after the implementation of *Norta Norta* in English (standard) and general mathematics.

In-school performance

All but a few students emphatically acknowledged the improvement in their educational outcomes attributable to the support they received from the tutors. They highlighted key areas of benefit, including:

- assistance with assessment tasks and exams. Students particularly appreciated having access to extra support “*when needed*” such as prior to assessment deadlines and leading up to exams
- increased understanding of subject-specific content
- improved learning skills, especially writing, study skills, research, numeracy and reading
- higher levels of achievement. Tutors, teachers and parents reported better results gained by students in assessments tasks and exams. Students proudly reported improved marks across a range of tuition subjects.

Students who ‘struggled’ in some subjects particularly appreciated the advantage tutoring provided and celebrated their successes, such as “*receiving the highest possible mark*” and feeling great about themselves.

Principals, school staff and tutors all maintained that *Norta Norta* tutoring was responsible for marked gains in student performance. They consistently reported examples of improved performance in class activities, assessment tasks and exams.

Increases in on-time completion of assessment tasks and a reduction in the number of N-awards⁶ were frequently cited by teachers and tutors as important measures of the impact of the program.

Students frequently reported the motivation provided by tutors and assistance to meet their goals as important sources of satisfaction with *Norta Norta*. Students particularly appreciated the impetus provided by tutors to complete their schooling and make plans for future study.

Stakeholders cited that improved attendance levels, increased retention to Year 12 and a greater number of students intending to pursue further education as other key benefits of *Norta Norta*. School records, however, do not consistently capture such gains.

³ Data provided by Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate in November 2011.

⁴ Data provided by Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate in November 2012.

⁵ Value-added results are derived by comparing HSC scores to School Certificate aggregate scores.

⁶ An N-award is a written warning that a student is at risk of not being eligible for the HSC for a particular course. See glossary.

Benefits for students – student engagement

Interviews with students, their parents, teachers and tutors, together with survey data provided strong evidence for the affective changes in students including:

- improved engagement with study and with schooling in general
- increased self-motivation and self-confidence
- a greater appreciation of the value of schooling
- increased positive attitude to school.

Student-tutor relationships

Students' high level of satisfaction with *Norta Norta* tuition was linked to these reported changes to students' thinking about school and their engagement with school. Many students attributed these changes to the opportunity to establish close student-tutor partnerships.

Throughout the evaluation students indicated that where they had a positive, friendly relationship with their tutor, it contributed to their continued involvement in *Norta Norta* and was likely to increase their attendance and participation in school. Students and other stakeholders emphasised the importance and the centrality of these working relationships to the success of the tutoring program and suggested a flow-on effect to improved student-teacher relationships.

Strong bonds developed between students and tutors with these mentor-like relationships allowing students to feel comfortable in discussing a range of learning and social concerns, including personal, family and other issues. One student articulated the potential benefit of these relationships, stating:

"I'd say it's [Norta Norta] like a best friend, but smarter"

The majority of tutors judged *Norta Norta* to be an effective program, citing improved student self-confidence, improved learning e.g. increases in assessment marks, and more positive attitudes to school, as evidence of the program's efficacy.

Student confidence

Students particularly appreciated tutoring delivered on a one-to-one basis. Many students reported increased levels of self-confidence, some improvement in their willingness to tackle high-order and unfamiliar learning tasks and enhanced views of themselves as independent learners.

Teachers, tutors and parents also reported improvements in student confidence, academic self-concept and small gains in student self-efficacy. Some reported that Aboriginal students were more willing to take up leadership opportunities as an outcome of improved confidence and self-concept linked to a sense of pride in their Aboriginal identity.

Effectiveness of implementation of *Norta Norta*

Effectiveness of implementation relates to the achievement of *Norta Norta* program objectives and the ability of schools to 'close the gap' in educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. The evaluation found that to date, the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* has been largely successful in achieving its objectives.

In the majority of sample schools, stakeholders maintained that their program was either operating more effectively in 2012 or at a similar level to 2011. Schools reported that high levels of commitment and support from staff (including the principal, *Norta Norta* contact, other staff and tutors) contributed to the success of the program at school level.

The few schools where the program was reportedly less successful in 2012 cited the following reasons: changes in school staff responsible for coordination of the program; lack of tutor continuity; and failure to implement flexible and 'workable' models of tuition.

Effective school models

Models for delivery of tuition varied from school to school, with many local adaptations successfully implemented to meet local needs. The evaluation revealed the following factors that influenced the effectiveness of implementation:

- Timing of tuition: schools needed to balance the availability of tutors to fit the study or 'free' periods, and before-school or after-school time of students.
- Designated tutoring location: availability of a designated facility for use in the tuition program was frequently described as contributing to the success of programs.
- Perceptions of eligibility of students to participate: both teachers and students were sometimes unaware that the program was available to all Aboriginal students, irrespective of performance or ability.
- Schedules or timetables of tutoring sessions: the use of schedules or timetabled appointments for tutoring sessions was observed in a limited number of schools. Many students suggested that regular times to work with their tutor would have made tutoring easier to manage.

Other factors contributing to effective school implementation

A range of specific features which contributed to effective implementation of *Norta Norta* emerged from both the survey and interview data. These include student choice in their tuition, communication about the program, community involvement and the ability to gain commitment from students.

Choice

The matching of students to tutors was based on identification of students' needs and where possible, some student choice was provided from a range of qualified tutors. Schools with a pool of available tutors endeavoured to satisfy students' preferences for tutors with specific subject expertise. Competing priorities emerged around matching students to tutors based on tutors' subject expertise, which for many students was the most pressing need, and establishing a strong, relationship with a single tutor that supported the student in general.

Communication

Participants often asserted that communication about, and promotion of the program was essential to the success of *Norta Norta*. Schools reported the use of a range of communication strategies to provide information to the whole school community. The local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) often played an important role in promoting the benefits of the program and dispelling misconceptions about tuition.

Community involvement

Schools reported varying degrees of community involvement in the program, in some cases involving the Aboriginal community in planning, making decisions and reviewing the program.

In some sample schools establishing a designated facility or 'centre' was reported to have made a major difference. The designated facility was viewed as a hub for students, teachers, Aboriginal staff and tutors, providing a comfortable and friendly learning environment and a welcoming space for parents and community members.

Student commitment

The need for student commitment to *Norta Norta* is acknowledged in the guidelines. The guidelines⁷ state that schools are responsible for completing applications for those students who request tuition. Each student is required to sign the application form indicating their understanding of making a 'commitment to having tuition'.

⁷ A link to the *Norta Norta Program Guidelines* is provided in the References section.

Students' commitment to and participation in *Norta Norta* varied within and across schools. A strong commitment to *Norta Norta* together with regular attendance at tutoring sessions, positively influenced students' academic engagement and level of achievement.

Some schools developed and implemented a range of additional innovative strategies that encouraged a sense of identity and pride for Aboriginal students, their families and the community, including:

- learning contracts to strengthen student commitment
- Aboriginal roll call groups
- mentoring programs.

Introduction of Norta Norta in Year 10

Some schools reported that individual sponsorships were introduced in Semester 2 of Year 10 to prepare students for the senior school curriculum. Often there was agreement among school staff and tutors that it was too late to focus on good study habits in Year 11, and that *Norta Norta* tuition needed to be provided for Year 10 students. Program Managers supported the inclusion of Year 10 students.

Employment, qualifications and supervision of tutors

Almost all tutors were qualified teachers, although the support they provided was often not in their specific areas of expertise.

Several findings relate to the role and performance of tutors:

- Employment of tutors generally did not involve a formal process. Many tutors were already employed as teachers in a school, particularly when they were the only available source of subject-specific expertise. Availability of suitable tutors was a significant difficulty in several schools.
- Tutors were generally found to be fulfilling the role as outlined in the program guidelines, providing focused support linked closely to the students' school experiences.
- Careful matching of students and tutors was beneficial, and more likely to occur in schools with a larger pool of tutors and in models providing after-school tuition.
- The relationship between tutors and students provided a model for improved relationships across the school. This was acknowledged by students, teachers, tutors and other school staff.
- Most tutors had access to and participated in relevant professional learning.
- The evaluation found that tutors and teachers collaborated in most cases, although there was a stronger perception of this amongst tutors than Stage 6 teachers.

Student interviews and reports from school staff and tutors confirmed the importance of effective student-tutor relationships. A successful tutor was seen to be skilled in creating quality learning environments, ones that the Quality Teaching Model describes as setting '*high and explicit expectations and develop(ing) positive relationships between teachers and students and among students*' (NSW DET, 2003).

The level of supervision of tutors reflected how schools valued tutoring, and the status of the *Norta Norta* Program in the school. If the program was seen as important within the school, tutors were more likely to be included in whole-of-staff activities.

Some tutors were beginning teachers with little classroom experience. Only in some schools was it seen as important for them to be supported in their professional learning and career development.

Many *Norta Norta* school contacts were members of the school executive. In these cases contacts were better placed to play a role in the supervision and support of tutors and to help raise the profile of the program.

Factors influencing participation of schools in *Norta Norta*

The evaluation findings in this section identify the factors contributing to participation of the school community in *Norta Norta*.

Strong school leadership and whole school engagement in *Norta Norta*

Teachers, other school staff, tutors and parents all reported that the effectiveness of the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* is supported by:

- strong school leadership to drive planning, decision-making and to monitor and review processes
- widespread staff awareness and whole-school support of the program, including:
 - collaboration between teaching staff, support personnel and tutors
 - cultural awareness among the school community, especially teachers
 - school culture that is welcoming to the Aboriginal community
- robust coordination and maintenance of the program.

School staff, tutors, parents and community members consistently reported that effective coordination of *Norta Norta* was critical to the program's success. Factors identified as contributing to effective coordination included clearly defined roles and responsibilities for teachers, tutors, the *Norta Norta* school contact and members of the Aboriginal education team.

Other school support strategies

School staff, tutors and the parent community identified a wide range of factors contributing to the success of the program, including:

- the capacity of schools to engage with families and community
- participation of tutors and teachers in Aboriginal cultural awareness training
- tuition linked to each student's Personalised Learning Plan (PLP).

While it is departmental policy for all Aboriginal students to have a PLP, less than two-thirds of students surveyed reported that they had one. The remainder either indicated that they did not have a PLP or didn't know whether they had one. Making explicit links between tutoring activities and student PLPs would strengthen the benefits of both programs.

Parent awareness of *Norta Norta*

Communication to parents regarding the existence, purpose and details of *Norta Norta* was regarded as effective in some places and ineffective in others.

The common *Norta Norta* name produced considerable confusion among students, parents and the community about the two components of the program. There was limited understanding of the differences in purpose between the NAPLAN (Years 3 to 9) and individual sponsorships (Years 11 and 12) components, leading to uncertainty around senior Aboriginal students' eligibility to participate, or likelihood of benefiting from tutoring.

A range of successful communication strategies were reported across the sample schools, including:

- information letters to parents
- items in school newsletters
- information about *Norta Norta* posted on the school website
- regular school *Norta Norta* reports at local AECG meetings
- updates about *Norta Norta* at P&C or staff meetings.

Parents were highly appreciative of the support provided to Aboriginal students in Years 11 and 12. In schools with high levels of awareness and support for *Norta Norta*, parents and community expressed a strong desire for the program to continue.

A key aim of the program is to provide targeted support for Aboriginal students by involving parents and building meaningful partnerships with the Aboriginal community. Survey data from school staff and tutors however, indicated that they did not consider involvement of parents and community to be a critical factor for the success of the program.

In summary

Interviews with stakeholders confirmed that all participants appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation. Students, teachers, tutors, other school staff, parents and the community valued the discussion of aspects of their program. They appreciated the chance to reflect on their participation in *Norta Norta* and to suggest ways it may be improved.

The following two observations encapsulate the benefit of *Norta Norta* and its ability to positively influence students' attitudes to school and to enhance aspirational goals of Aboriginal students. One Year 11 student summed up the potential of the program, stating:

"In Year 9 I went through the popularity, friends phase ... I wasn't very focused on school. I didn't worry about school because I did all right. In Year 10 it got really bad [difficult] and I needed the extra help. Now I really want to finish school, 'cause you need the HSC to make something of yourself. It's a good contributor to getting on. I'm a lot more mature about it [HSC goal] ... school is not real life, it's a safe boundary. I realise that work [school] is more important than my social life. It's so hard for Aboriginal people because of the stereotypes. My dad dropped out in Year 7 and my mum only finished Year 10. It'll be a big achievement for me to get my HSC and [I'm] the first in my mum's family."

One teacher comment sums up positive feelings about the value of *Norta Norta*:

"Norta Norta has markedly reduced the gap between our Aboriginal students outcomes achieved. It is my belief that without this extra funding to allow us time and resources to level the playing field and address inequity issues that exist, many of my Aboriginal students would be disengaged, not experiencing success in their education and not attending school on a regular basis."

Recommendations for *Norta Norta*

The following issues have been identified by principals, teachers, other school staff, tutors and the parent community as areas of potential improvement of *Norta Norta*. The recommendations are grouped into four areas related to program level management, delivery of quality tuition, directions for managing effective school programs and management and sustainability of the program.

1. Recommendations for program level management of *Norta Norta*

In order to build on the current success of the individual sponsorship component of the *Norta Norta* Program, the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Unit (AECE) should address the following issues:

Name of the program

Confusion about the differences between the two components of the *Norta Norta* Program was seen to reduce willingness of some students to take part in tutoring in Years 11 and 12. Creating a separate identity for the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* would enhance understanding about the role and value of the tutoring program and increase participation by students across the academic spectrum.

Recommendation 1.1: AECE to consider re-naming the program to distinguish the individual sponsorships component from the NAPLAN component of *Norta Norta*.

Expansion of the program

Individual sponsorships in the *Norta Norta* Program currently support students in Years 11 and 12. Schools identified the benefits that may be achieved by engaging students before the commencement of Year 11 courses.

Recommendation 1.2: AECE to consider expanding the program to include Year 10 students.

Implementation – program level

Schools reported success in implementing alternative models to those stipulated in the guidelines, to better meet the needs of their students.

Recommendation 1.3: The program guidelines need to encourage schools to tailor the implementation of *Norta Norta* to meet local needs. The guidelines should include a range of models as examples.

Clear and agreed processes and a timeline for key stages in the annual implementation of the program are required. To expedite funding to schools the student registration and annual school reporting processes need to be streamlined.

Recommendation 1.4: AECE to introduce online registration and reporting processes for *Norta Norta*.

Communication about *Norta Norta* determines the level of parent and community awareness, which in turn influences student participation. Parents, tutors and school staff agreed that a well-informed school community is important for generating commitment and on-going support for the program. A communication strategy, including the production of customisable promotional materials would ensure consistent messages about the purpose and benefits of the program, and might include:

- *Side by Side* articles to publicise the program and showcase success stories
- production by AECE, of 'sample' letters and newsletter articles to inform parents, and presentations to be used with school staff
- school *Norta Norta* reports as standing agenda items at local AECG meetings
- AECE-developed *Norta Norta* promotional materials aimed at parents and the community, with ability for schools to customise materials for their own use
- NSW AECG Inc. dissemination of information to junior AECGs.

Recommendation 1.5: AECE to work in partnership with NSW AECG Inc. to develop a communication strategy for the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program* which includes production of customisable promotional materials.

To be effective school programs require time and commitment by staff for administration. The *Norta Norta Program Guidelines* should outline methods for the allocation of administration funds based on the number of students registered in the program.

Recommendation 1.6: AECE to recommend that schools allocate administration funds at a fixed rate based on the number of students registered in the program.

Resources to support schools

Teachers, tutors and other school staff valued professional learning opportunities, such as sharing information about 'best-practice' strategies. The *Norta Norta Program Guidelines* are updated annually and are viewed as a useful resource.

Recommendation 1.7: AECE to regularly review the program guidelines and other resources to ensure that *Norta Norta* is evidence-based and linked to current research, and promotes strategies found to be successful in the field.

Evaluation

Teachers, students, tutors and other school staff engaged well with the evaluation process, as indicated by the survey response rates and their general willingness to discuss aspects of the program with the evaluation team. They valued the opportunity to reflect on their participation in *Norta Norta*, to report on the impact of the program and suggest improvements.

Recommendation 1.8: AECE to consider further evaluation of *Norta Norta* to determine the long term impacts of the program, especially as new models of support for schools are introduced.

2. Recommendations for delivery of quality tuition

In order to ensure quality tuition and support for tutors, the following issues should be addressed:

Employment of tutors

Employing suitable tutors is critical to the program's success. The availability of tutors with subject-specific qualifications was a significant issue in many schools. A recruitment strategy to assist schools in attracting a wider range of tutors would be beneficial. Strategies may include:

- identification and 'flagging' of teachers awaiting employment and casual teachers, by Staffing Services Directorate for possible employment as tutors
- establishment of a state-wide tutor register (similar to, or in conjunction with Casual.Direct) with a subset of location-based lists of tutors available to schools
- recruitment of retired teachers through the Retired Teachers Association and advertisement in *Education*, the NSW Teachers Federation journal.

Recommendation 2.1: AECE to work with Staffing Services Directorate and other agencies to develop a recruitment strategy for *Norta Norta* tutors.

Positive student-tutor relationships are important to the success of *Norta Norta*, and are reliant on close matching of tutor abilities to student needs. Tutor selection is more likely to be successful when:

- students, parents and members of the Aboriginal community are consulted
- tutors' knowledge and skills are valued and supported
- tutors are matched to students based on the students' needs e.g. request for tuition is based on information in student's Personalised Learning Plan.

In some cases students expressed the need for subject-specific expert help as their highest priority.

Recommendation 2.2: Principals, in conjunction with their Aboriginal education teams, should endeavour to prioritise the needs of students when matching tutors to students.

Induction for tutors

Tutors were generally found to be fulfilling the role as outlined in the guidelines. Tutors frequently stated that they would have appreciated more extensive information early in their appointment. Schools with effective programs reported that good liaison between teachers and tutors assisted delivery of tuition to students.

An induction program for tutors might include:

- definition of roles and responsibilities. The guidelines should outline the different roles that tutors and teachers play
- strategies to promote collaboration between teachers and tutors such as 'informal catch-up time'
- cultural awareness training, as needed
- practical strategies such as timetabling suggestions, proforma for monitoring student progress
- information on ways to approach and engage students e.g. mentor-like role.

Recommendation 2.3: AECE and local-area Aboriginal education teams to assist in developing and delivering induction training to *Norta Norta* tutors. The program guidelines should include an expanded section on tutor roles and responsibilities.

Professional learning for tutors and school staff

Student engagement with school and improved learning outcomes are more likely when:

- students' Aboriginal identity is valued and respected
- students' academic self-concept is enhanced, helping to strengthen the outcomes of *Norta Norta*
- staff, tutors and students have high expectations of student success.

Recommendation 2.4: AECE and local-area Aboriginal education teams should support schools to provide ongoing professional learning for tutors and school staff, Personalised Learning Plans, cultural awareness, literacy and numeracy.

3. Recommendations for school implementation

In order to ensure successful implementation and maintenance of the *Norta Norta* program, principals and school Aboriginal education teams should address the following issues:

School level support for the program

School staff, students and tutors need a common understanding of the role and value of tutoring within the *Norta Norta Individual Sponsorship Program*. Providing clear information about tutoring will help to demystify the program, debunk misconceptions and promote tutoring as a means by which all students can achieve improved academic results.

Recommendation 3.1: Schools to introduce a school-based orientation phase for students, school staff and tutors that explains all aspects of *Norta Norta* and tutoring for senior students.

In many schools a team approach was identified as contributing to the successful implementation of *Norta Norta*. Teams assisted in coordinating, planning and evaluating the school program. Where possible, the team included members of the executive and the school Aboriginal education team.

Recommendation 3.2: Schools should consider adopting a team approach to implementing *Norta Norta*. Where possible, a member of the school leadership team should be appointed as the *Norta Norta* school contact to coordinate this team.

Engaging students and strengthening commitment

Student participation in *Norta Norta* increased when they were offered choice of tuition support, either out-of-school hours or in-school hours (during study periods or as in-class support). Where possible students should not be withdrawn from class.

Recommendation 3.3: Schools should consider options that allow students flexibility in the times they access the program.

Some students demonstrated a lack of consistent commitment to participation in tutoring. Conversely, those students who reported a strong commitment identified successful achievement of outcomes. Many school staff indicated that a '*tuition contract for student's responsibilities and commitments*' would assist in making the program more effective.

Recommendation 3.4: Schools to consider introducing a student contract or agreement detailing the responsibilities of both students and tutors.

Most school staff and tutors ranked '*tuition linked to each student's PLP*' as a critical to success for students. Strategies to encourage the linking of PLPs to tuition might include:

- *Norta Norta* registration form to include a section for each student to indicate they have a PLP
- provision of examples of best practice in linking tuition to PLPs.

Recommendation 3.5: Schools to link each student's tuition to their Personalised Learning Plan. Best practice examples should be provided in the program guidelines and other support materials for tutors.

Many students participating in tutoring were interested in future employment and education opportunities. Tutors can play an important role in supporting students to prepare for university, other further education or employment. In addition to academic and study skills, the range of tuition might include:

- job-related skills
- support for students with school-based traineeships
- assistance for students to gain scholarships and traineeships.

Recommendation 3.6: Schools to ensure that, where possible, tuition includes support for further education and employment-related skills.

4. Recommendations for sustainability of the *Norta Norta* Program

In order to ensure sustainability of the individual sponsorship component of the *Norta Norta* Program, principals and school Aboriginal education teams should address the following issues:

Staff involvement

Teachers and other staff participate in school Aboriginal education teams with some teachers working as tutors. Many school staff identified '*school staff support for the Norta Norta Program*' as a key to the program's success. Schools with effective programs were likely to share responsibilities for program implementation rather than rely on a single *Norta Norta* school contact.

Recommendation 4.1: School Aboriginal education teams should encourage all teachers' involvement in and commitment to the *Norta Norta* Program.

School leadership, planning and professional learning

Long term planning assists schools to maintain the program, promote succession planning and ensure continued effectiveness.

Recommendation 4.2: Participation in the *Norta Norta* Program and associated professional learning should be included in the School Plan, including goals, allocation of resources, monitoring and the focus of professional learning. The annual *Norta Norta* Evaluation Report which schools provide to AECE should include details of how these have been achieved.

Parent and community involvement

Meaningful parent and community involvement in *Norta Norta* helps to deliver appropriate tuition support to students and ensure greater participation and student commitment to the program.

Recommendation 4.3: Schools should adopt various strategies to involve Aboriginal parents and community members, including the local AECG, in the program, particularly in the selection of tutors and decision-making around implementation at the school level.

Recommendation 4.4: AECE, in partnership with NSW AECG Inc. should encourage participation of local AECGs in planning and implementing the program in local schools.

Glossary

TERM	DESCRIPTION
ACLO	Aboriginal community liaison officer
AECG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
AECE	Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Unit, NSW Department of Education and Communities
AEO	Aboriginal education officer
AETD	Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate ⁸ , NSW Department of Education and Communities
AEW	Aboriginal education worker
AIME	The Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME) program provides support to Indigenous high school students to finish school at the same rate as their non-Indigenous peers. Students are paired with mentors from local university partners.
ATAR	The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) is the primary criterion for entry into most undergraduate-entry university programs in Australia.
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
Cultural competence	Cultural competence is: <i>'the ability to think, thrive, work and communicate ethically and effectively in spaces where there is more than one culture in play'</i> (Houston, 2013). <i>'the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes'</i> (Davis, 1997).
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Effective	Producing a desired result
Efficient	Well organised; achieving result with minimal resources, time and effort
EMSAD	Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate ⁹
Engagement	Involvement in schooling, attachment to teachers and other school staff and classmates and application to learning. Student engagement in learning can be identified by on-task behaviours including sustained interest, attentiveness and enthusiasm.
Goals	Specific targets to achieve a defined objective
Inter-rater reliability	The measure of reliability of analysis amongst the evaluation team
ITAS	Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme
MCEECDYA	Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth

⁸ In December 2012, the NSW Government changed the name of the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate to the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Unit. In this document a reference to the Aboriginal Education and Community Engagement Unit may be construed as the Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate.

⁹ In 2013, the NSW Government changed the name of the Educational Measurement and School Accountability Directorate to the High Performance Unit.

	Affairs
NAPLAN	The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is an annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
N-award	An N-award is a written warning that a student is at risk of receiving an ‘N’ determination for a particular course. An ‘N’ determination issued by the Principal indicates non completion of course requirements. Schools must issue at least two written warnings (N-awards) to a student before an ‘N’ determination can be applied. Further information can be obtained from the Board of Studies website – http://ace.bos.nsw.edu.au/ace-4019 .
Parent	Used to refer to parents and carers
PEC	Program Evaluation Committee [of the Public Schools NSW Portfolio]
PERG	Program Evaluation Reference Group
PLP	Personalised Learning Plan
Self-concept	Self-concept may be defined as a set of beliefs about oneself, including academic performance, social self-concept and physical self-concept. Academic self-concept refers to a person’s perceived ability within an academic area i.e. mathematical self-concept refers to a person’s belief about their capacity to perform in Mathematics.
Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy is the measure of one's own ability to organise and complete tasks and reach goals. Academic self-efficacy or ‘stick-at-ability’ refers to a person’s perceived confidence to successfully perform a particular task.
SEPEB	Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, NSW Department of Education and Communities
SES	Socio-economic status
SiP	Schools in Partnership
SLSO	School Learning Support Officer
Strategy	Action to achieve a goal in a particular program
ToR	Term of Reference

References

- Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate (AETD). (2009). *Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy, 2009-2012*. Sydney, NSW: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Aboriginal Education and Training Directorate (AETD). (2012). *Norta Norta Program Guidelines 2012*. Sydney, NSW: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- Davis, K. (1997). *Exploring the intersection between cultural competency and managed behavioral health care policy: Implications for state and county mental health agencies*. Alexandria, VA: National Technical Assistance Center for State Mental Health Planning.
- Houston, S. *Cultural competence and higher education: being the best we can...* (2013). Sydney University.
- NSW Department of Education and Communities (NSW DEC). (2013). *Annual School Report 2012*. NSW Department of Education and Communities.
- NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET). (2003). *Quality teaching in NSW public schools*. Retrieved March 2013, from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/docs/pdf/qt_EPSColor.pdf

© State of New South Wales
September 2013

NSW Department of Education and Communities
Policy, Planning and Reporting Unit
Level 1, 1 Oxford St
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
Australia

www.dec.nsw.gov.au