



18 May 2006

Indigenous Telecommunications Section
Regional Communications Policy Branch
Department of communications, Information Technology and the Arts
GPO box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Backing Indigenous Ability Discussion Paper March 2006

Curriculum Corporation commends the Government on the paper and the strategies proposed to address deficiencies in telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Indigenous communities. This submission does not comment specifically on the strategies proposed but rather provides information about the work of Curriculum Corporation and suggests synergies between some of its current programs and the strategies proposed in the paper, in particular the content development element.

Curriculum Corporation is an independent education support organisation owned by all Australian education ministers established to assist education systems in improving student learning outcomes. The Corporation is a major provider and publisher of high quality print and digital curriculum products, delivers assessment and testing services to education systems and provides a model for online curriculum delivery.

One of Curriculum corporation's major projects is The Le@rning Federation (TLF). This project is funded jointly by the Australian, all state and territory and New Zealand governments. TLF, which will enter a new three year phase in July, is designed to develop and publish online curriculum content for all schools in Australia. By the end of the present phase there will be in excess of 4500 items of content available for students, schools and their communities. In the next phase more content will be published. Further information on the project can be found at <http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au/tlf/>.

There have been a number of learning objects developed already that focus on Indigenous people and culture. For example the *Making a difference* series provides opportunities for all students to explore aspects of the lives of Indigenous people from first contact, such as Windardyne and Yagen, through to the present day Michael Long. These learning objects provide a model that could be used by other Indigenous communities to tell their stories and share aspects of their culture. Curriculum Corporation, through TLF, could assist communities to do their own development work through the provision of guidelines, training of community members and by working with teachers and students in schools.

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The content pool already established provides opportunities for Indigenous communities to engage with online content with their children. This has the dual benefits of engaging community members with information and communication technologies along with supporting the educational progress of their children in areas such as literacy, numeracy and science.

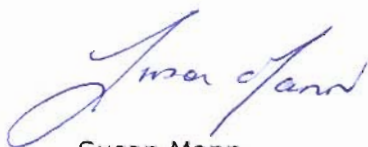
Extensive research has taken place over the past three years into the suitability of this content for students in all areas of Australia and New Zealand. This research, conducted by Professor Peter Freebody, University of Queensland, included case studies describing how teachers in schools incorporated TLF content into classroom programs.

Five of the case study schools had high proportions of Indigenous students. All these schools reported significant benefits gained by their students from interaction with the learning objects. The use of colour, voice support, animation, feedback and the imbedded educational design meant that all students were engaged with the concepts and made significant progress in learning.

The Le@rning Federation, in its Phase Three plan which will be considered by the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) at its meeting on 25 May includes an emphasis on meeting the needs of Indigenous communities including working with communities to develop the capacity for local modification, especially with regard to language and images. It is planned that materials will also be developed that cater for age and culturally appropriate interests whilst accessible for lower English literacy levels. Curriculum Corporation would welcome the opportunity to work with the Department and Indigenous Coordination Centres to facilitate the development and implementation of online content in Indigenous communities through schools.

Curriculum Corporation would be pleased to have the opportunity to explore further the ways in which it can work with the Department to support the Backing Indigenous Ability program. Please contact me or the Chief Operating Officer of the Le@rning Federation, Mr Alan Bevan on 03 9207 9600 to arrange a convenient time.

Yours sincerely



Susan Mann
Chief Executive Officer
May 2006