Executive Director's foreword

Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape: A Senior Schooling Strategy challenges senior schooling issues in this District. It advocates a need to dramatically improve senior schooling outcomes across Torres Strait and Cape York.

The strategy advocates a need to change the approach to senior schooling in our District based on a pro-active change strategy. The purpose of this document is to present schools with understandings upon which to base change in senior schooling.

Our schools face many challenges, exacerbated by issues over which we have no authority, but teaching students is our business. We can however deliver quality education and be held accountable for excellence in our business.

Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape: A Senior Schooling Strategy states the commitment and strategy for dramatically improving senior schooling outcomes across the Torres Strait and Cape District.

This document provides understandings to focus schools into a new culture with unique systems and understanding referred to as a Service Guarantee.

Education is power and for the overwhelming majority of our students it is the key to success. We cannot fail them.

Don Anderson
Executive Director (Schools)
Torres Strait and Cape District

Contents

1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape Senior Schooling: A Senior Schooling Strategy* is to present schools with a series of tools to achieve success in senior schooling. The strategy is underpinned by an expectation of success and a commitment by schools to addressing the poor outcomes in senior schooling across the Torres Strait and Cape District. The Service Guarantee is an aggressive change strategy to reassess the way senior schooling is approached in the District.

2. Background

Four schools in the Torres Strait and Cape District offer education to year 12. These schools are:

- Cooktown State High School,
- Northern Peninsula Area College,
- Thursday Island State High School and
- Western Cape College.

It is the responsibility of our District to ensure that these schools not only provide, but can guarantee the opportunity to receive a quality senior education. The four senior education providers in the District are committed to fulfilling this expectation. The 2005 Year 12 performance indicators published by the Queensland Studies Authority highlight the need for improvement in senior schooling outcomes across the Torres Strait and Cape District. This is a priority for Torres Strait and Cape District and the *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape Senior Schooling: A Senior Schooling Strategy* is the way forward.

3. Policy Framework

The *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape: A Senior Schooling Strategy* is part of a broader reform agenda in education across the state as well as in indigenous education specifically. *Partners for Success Action Plan*, released in 2003, is the Government's key strategy for the ongoing improvement of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. The Government is also working with communities to improve the quality of life of indigenous people through broader strategies such as *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* and *Partnerships Queensland.*

The *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape: A Senior Schooling Strategy* builds on recent education reforms including the *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* and the *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting* framework. The *Bound for Success: Education Strategy for Torres Strait* aims to help schools and communities shape the government's broader educational reforms for Queensland into tailored solutions to support students in the Torres Strait and Cape York to achieve success and the *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape: A Senior Schooling Strategy* helps students achieve success in a senior schooling context.

4. History of Challenges

The Torres Strait and Cape District faces a history of challenges, which often in the past have been used to reduce the accountability of service providers. The communities in Torres Strait and Cape York are geographically isolated and experience symptoms associated with remoteness, such as the absence of viable economies and presence of a welfare economy. Education providers work in a background of alcohol and substance abuse, child abuse, poverty, high incarceration and mortality rates and poor health.

Challenges specific to the school environment are also recognised. 80% of our student population are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, whom historically have experienced dislocation and disassociation. Schools across the District report poor outcomes in terms of attendance, enrolment, retention, completion and achievement. There are limited opportunities for employment and training provision in some communities and mobility to access these opportunities is often difficult. Often inexperienced teachers are employed to teach in an environment encompassing unfamiliar cultures, languages and behaviours.

The most significant and important challenge schools must face is the approach to education in these communities. This involves fighting a history of no expectations or aspiration and a culture of excuses from both service providers and community members. Children in Torres Strait and Cape York deserve access to a quality education, comparable to any other. They deserve a commitment from schools to achieve this, not tainted by a history of challenges.

5. Reculturing: A New Approach to Education

The *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape Senior Schooling* is based on recognition that the culture toward education in the District is not conducive to success. The concept of reculturing the approach to education in the District has been adopted to drive the change required to achieve this success. The vision for this change is to provide schools that are first choice schools for all students. In order for a school to be a first choice school, the reputation of schools in the District needs to be improved by communicating and demonstrating that the school is a provider of quality education. Quality education is determined as well recognised, transferable outcomes.

A schools culture is defined as the underlying norms and values that dictate behaviour and 'the way things are around here'. The Torres Strait and Cape District is using reculturing to change behaviours through changing values, norms and expectations. The reculturing of senior schools in the Torres Strait and Cape District would create a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to continuous learning for both staff and students. The *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape Senior Schooling* is the 'rocket booster for change' this District needs to generate behaviour change and focussed outcomes.

6. Service Guarantee: The Future of Senior Schooling in Torres Strait and Cape York

Quality outcomes will be achieved by implementing a service guarantee for senior schooling with the commitment that **every** student completing senior schooling in the District will achieve an OP, be progressing on a clearly articulated VET pathway or be in paid employment. These are considered the three indicators of success for senior schooling in the District.

The District targets for 2008 are that 100% of students are:

- **To achieve an OP**
- **To complete School-based Apprenticeships or Traineeships or be on clearly articulated VET pathways**
- **To gain paid employment.**

The following targets will be measured by the Queensland Studies Authority's Performance Indicators and individual school data. Individual schools are encouraged to set their own targets according to resources available to achieve 100% success on the three indicators. This may mean a school has a target of: 30% of students achieving an OP, 30% of students on a VET pathway and 40% of students in paid employment.

7. Change Agents: Tools for Success

The following aspects have been highlighted during consultation as key components to achieving success on the three indicators underpinning the service guarantee. Schools are encouraged to assess their position on each of these variables and determine how these variables can contribute to creating a positive culture in their schools and in the District.
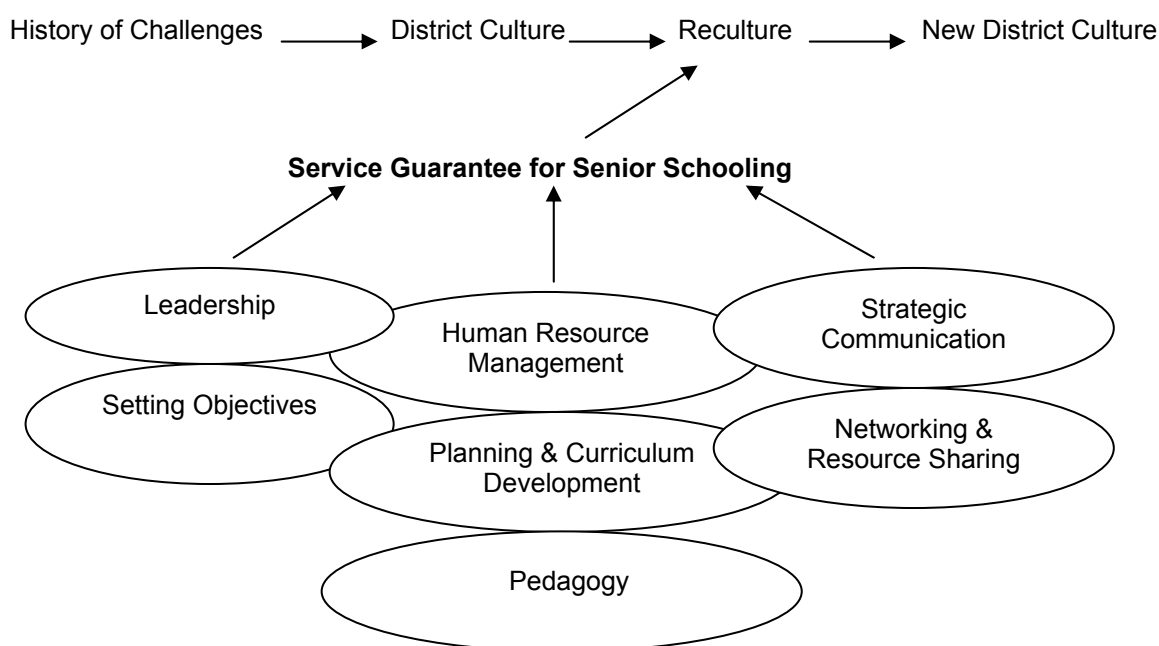
7.1 Leadership

The power of leadership is well established in school effectiveness research. True leadership drives a high performance culture as people are motivated and inspired to achieve a common vision. Good leaders are able to transform their schools by the following:

- Be clear about leadership capacity and style, values, roles and responsibilities;
- Provide processes and guidance in establishing the vision and purpose of the schools and determining its operational values and standards;
- Enable people to see the way forward in terms of directions, outcomes and targets;
- Know the sort of team they need to achieve the learning outcome of students and shape members into the expectations of the school;
- Focus on and lead the teaching and learning agenda of the school;
- Ensure change and reform are sustained over time by monitoring performance and outcomes of both teachers and students;
- Lead strategically but facilitate an easy, reliable and valid collection of data;
- Build the professional capacity of staff and the capacity to develop a culture of learning and deep reflection about their work;
- Ensuring adequate resourcing; and
- Building the professional culture of the school and creating benchmarks for professional practice and standards.

The basis of good leadership involves gaining the trust and confidence of people, having an honourable character and a strong vision. A good leader is respected and must practice effective communication by opening honest two-way dialogue. The ability to have meaningful conversations is important to ensure people understand the reasoning for 'changing things around here'.

7.2 Human Resource Management

A number of human resource issues have developed in the District. The majority of these issues are embedded in the history of challenges education providers face. There is a history of negative attitudes, which is driven from a feeling of disempowerment; which in turn limits personal accountability. High turn-over of staff means sustainability of programs and commitment of teachers to improve circumstances is problematic.

Human resource issues need to be addressed if schools in the District want to improve outcomes, close the gap and achieve success on the service guarantee. Culture change starts with teachers and research suggests that empowering teachers through the development of professional learning communities is the most effective way to promote school change and reform. Professional learning communities promote collaboration, teacher- to- teacher conversations about teaching and learning and shared decision-making, which in turn promotes teacher ownership. School leaders are also encouraged to open professional conversations with staff about performance and together evaluate different strategies to improve outcomes.

7.3 Planning and Curriculum Development

In order for senior students to achieve success, it is necessary that they have access to a cohesive and coherent curriculum from Prep to Year 12. Senior schools have the responsibility to provide programs that offer relevant and transferable skills and qualifications and a standard of education and access to educational pathways that are either equivalent to or better than senior schools in other settings.

All students have the right to develop at school the knowledge, skills and attitudes to function successfully in life beyond school, to access further education and training, and to secure rewarding and worthwhile employment. Strategic planning and curriculum development is necessary to ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to be placed in the best position to achieve employment in their chosen field.

7.3.1 Year 10

Year 10 is approached differently in different contexts with little comparability between schools. Year 10 has been identified as a critical year for disengagement and is poorly represented in student retention. A more cohesive approach needs to be adopted to the development of the Year 10 curriculum.

The development of the Senior Education and Training Plan (SETP) should be the main tool by which students articulate and achieve their chosen pathway. The development of SETPs should identify student goals and map clear and accessible pathways through school and post-school education and training options and employment, both within and beyond the local community. In order for SETPs to be effective, they need to be integrated into a curriculum of career education so students can develop self and career awareness in relation to the plan. Ideally, SETPs should involve a collaborative process and should be stored in a manner so that it can be accessed and used easily. SETPs can be reviewed on a 6 monthly basis, and changes made where necessary.

The remainder of the Year 10 curriculum may allow students to develop some foundation knowledge that is vital to their success in senior subjects. Schools may like to backward map from senior syllabi to provide this opportunity. This would allow students to explore their choices in senior schooling, which they can then review at the completion of Year 10 in reference to their SETPs, avoiding the disruption that otherwise can be created when students change their pathway part way through Year 11 or 12. This approach also avoids the large gap that usually exists between Year 10 and Year 11, which is when a lot of students disengage or drop out of school. Schools may also choose to provide students with the opportunity to commence their VET pathways or School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships earlier. These options increase student awareness and empowerment in relation to their choices in their senior pathways.

7.3.2 Provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Vocational education and training (VET) is one way that schools can meet the heightening challenge of preparing young people for a complex world, including the world of work. Schools experience some difficulties in the delivery of VET, including physical constraints, human resource constraints, barriers in terms of employer's perceptions of course viability and difficulties with integration with work places. Despite these constraints, there has been a consistent push by Education Queensland, which is highlighted in the ETRF reforms and the *Bound for Success* strategy, to increase the level and quantity of VET in schools. Schools can either do this through their own RTO status or in partnership with TAFE or another RTO.

The recommendations for VET are:
- Students should embark on VET certificates that are part of a clearly articulated SETP, rather than being encouraged to study a range of unrelated VET pathways.
- Certificate I courses should only be offered if they are the precursor to a clearly articulated VET pathway.
- Certificates should be offered in entirety and students should be encouraged towards certificate completion, not just participation.
- Where possible, certificates that are offered should respond to local, regional and state skills shortages and be leading towards viable employment.

The advantages of these strategies include students will leave school with clear vocational pathways, which will lead to a higher rate of post-school participation in earning or learning. Employers will see school-based VET training as being more valid and authentic and students will be positioned to fill areas of skills shortages.

7.3.3 OP Pathways

Many students' and communities' aspirations can only be met by students following an OP pathway that will result in a level of achievement that provides them with access to the course of their choice. Students gaining valuable tertiary qualifications are fundamental to capacity building in communities and students and communities attaining the level of autonomy they desire. There have traditionally been some difficulties with achieving this goal, such as limitations to the subject offerings available, pedagogy not supporting learners, and students not sitting the QCS, not choosing the pathway or not completing assessments. These constraints need to be addressed for students' and communities' aspirations to be realised.

To address these difficulties, schools may like to:
- evaluate subjects currently being offered and consider alternatives
- consider timetabling/ staffing alternatives
- evaluate appropriateness of work programs, assessment tasks and pedagogy
- ensure all students that are OP eligible sit for the QCS

- Prepare for the QCS by teaching the Common Curriculum Elements in all subjects and allowing students to practice
- Provide tuition and homework opportunities during lunch times or after school
- Encourage professional conversations amongst staff about pedagogy
- Promote pathways to students

The overall benefits of adopting a multifaceted and cohesive approach to delivering OP pathways includes a higher rate of OP scores with higher levels of achievement.

7.3.4 Employment Pathways

Many students in the Torres Strait and Cape District face barriers to gaining employment as a result of the very few industries or employing bodies that exist in their communities. Despite this, there are a number of strategies that schools can employ to increase the job opportunities for students. One approach is to systematically develop processes that support a school-to-work pathway. This may include curriculum that explores career pathways and addresses work readiness skills. It may include the opportunity for students to participate in work experience that is in line with their SETPs. This may lead to opportunities for structured work placement or school-based apprenticeships or traineeships. All of these opportunities exist, but it is the schools' responsibility to ensure that each stakeholder in the process, including students, teachers and employers, are appropriately supported to encourage success. Research has shown that success of school-to-work pathways is highest where there is a school-based coordinator.

Another approach to employment pathways is for schools to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills, knowledge and ideas in enterprise pathways. This may include learning skills relating to operating small businesses and developing these skills by operating a school-based small business. Students need to learn how to identify opportunities as well as threats, conduct thorough planning and employ operational systems to create a productive enterprise.

7.4 Pedagogy

A specific pedagogy has not been identified for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students and is not advocated. All principles of effective learning and teaching must be applied however. The principles emphasise the need to:
- Understand the learner;
- Understand the learning process;
- Provide a supportive and challenging environment;
- Establish worthwhile learning partnerships;
- Shape and respond to a variety of social and cultural contexts.

7.4.2 English as a Second Language (ESL) Pedagogy

The centrality of skills in literacy in Standard Australian English (SAE) to success in formal education has been consistently confirmed. A high percentage of indigenous students in the Far North are acquiring English as a second language at the same time as they are learning curriculum content in English. Many students are still learning English in their senior schooling years and this has a significant impact on their learning and achievement. For students to become independent learners and achieve well in their chosen vocational or academic pathway, their education must provide them with levels of English language, which are comparable to their English- speaking peers.

In the Far North, schools are the source of English language teaching and learning. Schools therefore need to assess their students' levels of English language acquisition, provide purposeful, explicit language teaching and monitor students' language development.

Recommended strategies include:
- Assessment and on-going tracking of students' English language (eg. ESL Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners).
- Provision of purposeful, explicit language teaching (eg. Targeting students' performance for accessing VET Certificate, Intensive English language courses)
- Language teaching staff (eg. Encourage staff to upskill in English language teaching, hire ESL trained staff eg. with Cambridge Certificate in TESOL)

7.5 Integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

Integration of ICTs is necessary to establish a future perspective in senior schools in the Torres Strait and Cape District. In order to compete in the global market, students are required to possess a range of skills and have access to a range of technologies that are integrated across the curriculum and throughout the school environment. ICTs are the bedrock of 21st century schools, where new technologies spark greater interaction between students, teachers, parents and guardians. Integration of ICTs will assist in addressing some of the constraints of schooling in a remote setting.

In order to be utilised effectively, a whole-school strategy needs to be developed in relation to ICTs. This may incorporate, but may not be limited to:
- Systems initiatives, supporting the management of schools via appropriate software
- School processes, whereby schools are better equipped to plan and manage their ICT infrastructure and usage
- Teacher and students initiatives, which may include strategies to facilitate curriculum integration of ICTs, such as professional development or access to appropriate software and hardware.

7.6 Partnerships

Education Queensland is part of a network of individuals and organisations that contribute to the delivery of coherent and coordinated services that contribute to improved outcomes. It is crucial to establish the basis for local partnerships to be made between various stakeholders that sets targets for improvement in student outcomes and describes the roles and responsibilities of schools and other stakeholders in improving student outcomes. Continuous improvement in educational outcomes for senior students in Cape York and the Torres Strait will result from partnerships between schools and communities that are based on mutual respect, and shared acceptance of reciprocal obligation and mutual responsibilities.

One of the primary aims of establishing partnerships is to increase the employment of and career pathways for senior schooling students in Cape York and the Torres Strait, both during school and post-school. School-based management provides a context for schools to adapt programs and practices to meet the needs of the local community. Initiatives at the school community level should contribute to building the capacity of local communities to identify and remove impediments to improving outcomes.

The failure of partnerships or their pursuit must not however be used as an excuse for reducing our core accountability of excellence in educational delivery.

7.6.1 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

The development of partnerships with TAFE and other RTOs should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Opportunities for partnerships with RTOs are limited on Cape York where the training provision is limited to 3 RTOs- TAFE, CRGT and ACTA (Australian College of Tropical Agriculture).

In some circumstances partnerships will prove to be unviable. For example, another RTO may have little to offer in terms of resources, facilities, teachers and support. Often the cost of accessing the services of other RTOs is prohibitive, although there are instances when partnerships are cost effective. In other cases the partnership may be mutually beneficial, as students may be provided with access to a wider range of VET pathways and RTOs can assist with auditing requirements. In the instances where partnerships are developed, schools should ensure that a clear agreement or memorandum of understanding is in place that states the roles and responsibilities of each organisation in the relationship.

In the cases where partnerships are viable, some of the benefits might include that out-of-school training is seen by some employers to be more valid than school-based training, students may have access to a wider range of VET pathways and training may be delivered in a more authentic context than by schools.

7.6.2 Service Providers

Partnerships with other service providers are integral to ensuring a seamless delivery of services to young people that avoids gaps or duplication. Education Queensland is only one of a network of organisations that are working to support the ETRF agenda. The development of partnerships will require time and effort. However, a lot of the groundwork has been covered in terms of consultation, developing networks, developing a plan and establishing relationships by the District Youth Achievement Plan (DYAP) that has been established under the ETRF reforms. Schools may choose to play a key role in the Local Management Committee meetings of the DYAP.

7.6.3 Industry

Positive partnerships with industries are integral to the success of the *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape York Senior Schooling* as many students choose to remain in their communities to seek employment. The development of partnerships can be constrained in some contexts by the limited number and extent of employing bodies or previous negative experiences that may have impacted on industry's willingness to work with schools. It is therefore necessary that schools make a commitment to developing systems and processes to support partnerships that work. These systems may include ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, employers and agencies are clearly articulated. Schools need to encourage the development of positive industry relationships and a commitment by industry to the education, training and employment of young people.

7.6.4 Parents and Communities

A strong partnership between the school and community will closely support parents and caregivers to jointly progress the standards of education and to be actively involved in the decision-making processes and planning. Partners who have a common understanding about why decisions have been taken and how decisions are to be implemented are more likely to promote changes proposed and accept the accountability requirements involved, including monitoring and reporting. The stronger partnership between the school and parents and caregivers of Indigenous students will be reflected in improvements in the achievements and outcomes of Indigenous students.

8. Networking

Networking is fundamental to teachers keeping up-to-date with current and effective practices and policies. In remote and isolated communities where opportunities for networking may be limited, the schools may be required to generate strategies for encouraging the networking of staff. Networking may involve a range of communication options from individuals to large groups and from face-to-face to telecommunications networks. Networking structures may be formal or informal, and relationships may vary from collaborative to mentoring or sharing of specific expertise. Networking allows staff to enhance their understanding and expertise and to use their time efficiently. Networking empowers staff by making them more aware of the

pedagogical and curriculum options available, rather than feeling they need to constantly innovate. There may be occasions where resource sharing enhances the efficiency of the school's operations. Developing networks also allows teachers to have the opportunity of sharing their successes, increasing their self- efficacy.

9. Strategic Communication

Strategic communication to targeted stakeholders is a tool schools can employ to achieve the senior schooling agenda. All forms of communication are an important component of any strategy as communication shapes the opinions and perceptions of stakeholders. To reculture the approach to education at a school and District level communication methodology should be evaluated. Strategic communication is about sending the right message to the right audience at the right time. It is about developing consistent messages, which are effective and achieve a goal. Currently, the goal of Torres Strait and Cape District is to demonstrate its capacity to deliver quality education, which is comparable and demonstrates results. One of the ways to do this is the service guarantee for senior schooling and communication around this initiative can ultimately change the reputation of schools in the District and the perceptions of stakeholders.

10. Measuring Success: The Importance of Objectives and Targets

Setting objectives and targets at the school level is an important component of District level achievement of the senior schooling service guarantee. Setting objectives and targets is a results orientated approach to strategy success. The purpose is to track strategy progress and measure impact and efficiency. Targets dictate key results that must be achieved to reach the service guarantee of 100%. There are three components of objectives and targets:

- They give focus and direction,
- They provide guidance and motivation and
- They spell out the outcome criteria for evaluation.

Schools need to write targets in observable and measurable terms and then develop strategies to deliver outcomes. These strategies are informed by, but not exclusive to, the change agents outlined in this strategy. It is emphasised that school based target setting to reach service guarantee goals is an essential component to strategy success and should receive the commitment of school leaders.

11. Monitoring and Review

It is recommended that the effectiveness of the *Service Guarantee for Torres Strait and Cape Senior Schooling: A Senior Schooling Strategy* be evaluated and reviewed at 6 monthly intervals by the senior schooling leaders at a meeting. QSA data will indicate annually the impact of the strategy on outcomes. The effectiveness of the strategy will also be demonstrated by school Destination Studies, indicating the level of success of students in post-school pathways.

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