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An Evaluation of the Lismore Driver Education Program 'On the Road'

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Abstract
This report provides a program evaluation of the Lismore Driver Education Program, On the Road. On the Road is a comprehensive driver education program that targets Aboriginal people living in the Far North Coast of New South Wales (NSW). It was set up to assist Aboriginal community members obtain a Class C licence, provide support for learner drivers and qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and assist disqualified drivers regain their licence through fine negotiation. The overall goal of the Program is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people living in Far North Coast of NSW in the criminal justice system.

Keywords
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AN EVALUATION OF THE LISMORE DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM

‘ON THE ROAD’

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The George Institute for International Health
and
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCS  Aboriginal Client Service Specialist
ACE  Adult Community Education
AGD  Attorney General’s Department of NSW
AIHW  Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AJAC  Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council
CDEP  Community Development Employment Program
DART  Driving Ability Road Test
DEST  Department of Employment Science and Technology
DKT  Driver Knowledge Test
DQT  Driver Qualification Test
HPT  Hazard Perception Test
IESIP  Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program
RTA  Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW
MAA  Motor Accidents Authority of NSW
MERIT  Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment
NSW  New South Wales
RCIADC  Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SDRO  State Debt Recovery Office

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she is associated (AIHW 2003).

The words ‘Indigenous’, ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ are used interchangeably in this paper.

*On the Road* and the Program in this document refer to the Lismore Driver Education Program (*On the Road*).
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a program evaluation of the Lismore Driver Education Program, *On the Road. On the Road* is a comprehensive driver education program that targets Aboriginal people living in the Far North Coast of New South Wales (NSW). It was set up to assist Aboriginal community members obtain a Class C licence, provide support for learner drivers and qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and assist disqualified drivers regain their licence through fine negotiation. The overall goal of the Program is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people living in Far North Coast of NSW in the criminal justice system.

*On the Road* was established in response to the high levels driving offences and road crashes, experienced by Aboriginal communities in the Far North Coast. The Program was developed by Lismore Adult Community Education (ACE) in collaboration with a number of key partners including Lismore Local Court, the RTA, MAA and the Attorney General’s Department of NSW.

The Program has developed and implemented a number of strategies including:

- Removing the barriers to gaining a licence through:
  - Assistance with fine negotiations with the State Debt Recovery Office.
  - Assistance with obtaining a birth certificate.
- Improving Aboriginal access to the RTA Driver Knowledge Test through the installation of a modified computer programs in more than 30 community organisations.
- Assistance with literacy and computer skills for Aboriginal people attempting to gain or regain their driver’s licence.
- Limited provision of driving lessons.
- A Driver Mentor Program (Rally for Reconciliation).
- Facilitating employment through driving skills and community networking.
- Increasing the number of Aboriginal Justices of the Peace.

The Program targets Aboriginal communities across five Local Government Areas within the North Coast of NSW: Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Byron and Ballina. An important feature of the program is the fostering of close ties with Aboriginal elders and community organisations and those providing services to the Aboriginal community throughout the Far North Coast.

Evaluation Aims

The aim of the evaluation was to assess its effectiveness in terms of six key objectives.

1. To assess whether the program has:
   a) Reduced the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to driving offences and
b) Reduced the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region

2. To assess the viability of the program as a court diversion program.

3. To identify the impact of the Program in terms of:
   a) The increased number of people who access the computer based driver knowledge test in the local Aboriginal organization
   b) The increased number of people gaining/re-gaining and/or attempting to gain/regain a Class C licence.
   c) Improved literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities of participants in the program
   d) The number of Aboriginal people participating in a driver mentor program.

4) To document how the program is implemented by describing its methods for increasing licensed drivers.

5) To assess the effectiveness of the management of the program by identifying:
   a) The processes that guide the operation of the program:
   b) How the program is managed by the auspicing body
   c) The influence of the local community on the management of the program
   d) How the management relates to the funding body.

6) To ascertain any additional objectives of the program identified by community and service providers and to evaluate the:
   a) Potential impact of the objectives identified on the management of the program, and
   b) The feasibility of achieving the stated outcome of the objective.

**Methods**

A combination of qualitative and methods were employed for the evaluation. Key stakeholders were identified and four site visits conducted between March and September 2005. The following types of data were collected and analysed:

- Current literature including:
  - Published academic and ‘grey’ literature
  - *On the Road* Program documentation
- Quantitative data including:
  - Relevant statistics from the ACE enrolment database
  - Data on selected driving offences from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) database
- Qualitative data comprising:
  - Eighteen face-to-face interviews
  - Five phone interviews
  - Five focus groups with fifty-five participants were conducted in four communities
Main Findings
The process evaluation reveals that the Program has been highly successful in accessing North Coast Aboriginal communities across a very broad geographical area, including remote locations with very limited public transport and few licensed drivers. The Program has accessed its audience using a variety of media such as print media, radio, targeting organizations for pamphlet drops, use of community networks, word of mouth, community visits and its website. Interview and focus group data indicate that the program has a high visibility amongst service providers, has strong support from community elders and others, and is well known within most local Aboriginal communities.

An estimated 520 participants, comprising 224 males and 296 females, enrolled in the Driver Education Program between 2000 and 2005 representing a steady growth in the number of Aboriginal participating in the Program, and with steep increase in participation in the Program between 2003 and 2004, particularly by females. For the period over which the program has received funding (2002-2005), there were 381 participants (167 males and 214 females) suggesting a very wide reach of the program to just over 22% of the eligible Aboriginal population.

It is important to note that the figure of 520 represents participants with varying degrees of involvement in the Program and with a range of different objectives. The high number of unrecorded enrolments and problems with computer systems indicates the need for a better mechanism for the collection of ACE Program participation data. The introduction of a new computerized database system should assist ACE in providing data that are more reliable in the future.

Participation is spread evenly across regional centers and more remote locations. However data indicates that being in a larger town and having access to a community-based centre increases the chance of individuals accessing the Program. Interviews with community organizations indicate that there is a great demand for this type of Program throughout the whole region. The high level of female participation in the Program is an important finding, particularly as Aboriginal women make up a significant number of those with driving offences. The Program has had limited but highly successful outcomes in some of the local high schools. Some participants have recommended further expansion of this work. This could involve targeting high school students in school at years 11 and 12 possibly as part of a vocational education focus, which would facilitate their entry to the workforce.

The administration of the Program through ACE provides a stable adult learning environment, which facilitates participants being able to progress to other literacy programs of vocational education or to employment. Much of the administrative work associated with the Program, however, is not covered by current funding arrangements. The under resourcing of the administrative support for the Program needs to be addressed by the ACE and the funding bodies.

The network of local level partnerships and collaborations, which has been carefully fostered by the Program, is impressive. This has enhanced the Program’s standing within the Aboriginal community and facilitated important outcomes in terms of employment and transition to further study.
The strategies developed by *On the Road* Program staff to assist Aboriginal people overcome some of the barriers to gaining or re-gaining a licence have been highly successful. Through their work at Lismore ACE and their outreach work with remote communities, they assist participants with form filling, repayment of debts, obtaining birth certificates and facilitate their accumulating 50 hours driving experience to attain a licence. The underlying philosophy of empowerment and responsiveness to the Aboriginal community needs has demanded a flexible approach to Program implementation, which fits well with the needs of Aboriginal communities. *On the Road* has developed a systematic approach to assisting people to obtain a birth certificate and repaying debts to the State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) as the first steps in the process of becoming a licensed driver. In addition to raising the self-esteem of participants, the ‘hands on’ approach of the ACE staff assists them identify participants with limited literacy and innumeracy skills. The result is that people are more confident and this is just the first step towards greater achievement.

Using these strategies, the Program has made some significant achievements in terms of participant outcomes. Since its implementation in 2000, the program has provided access to the DKT computer program in at least thirty community organizations throughout the North Coast.

- Fifty-nine people have obtained their learner’s licence,
- Twenty-five people have obtained their “P” plate licence,
- Six people have obtained a ‘Light Rigid’ vehicle licence and
- Eighty-nine people have received assistance with fine negotiation through the State Debt Recovery Office.
- Sixteen people were able to find employment directly as a result of having completed the Program.
- A number of Aboriginal people in the region have been assisted to become JPs

Limited resources has resulted in the Lismore and Casino regions receiving more face to face contact with *On the Road* staff than other areas and interviews with community organizations in more remote areas indicate that a greater presence in these areas would be welcome given the strong demand for the services offered by the Program.

One of the areas in which *On the Road* program has had great success is the Reconciliation Rallies. This aspect of the program is clearly transferable as a stand-alone program or as part of a more comprehensive package. The development of valuable tools and processes by ACE would facilitate its being offered in many Aboriginal communities within the State. The role the program has made towards reconciliation should be included, as one of the program, outcomes should be acknowledged as an important indicator of the Program’s success.

The outcomes evaluation of community-based programs poses a number of challenges. Firstly, in the absence of previously established controls and an experimental or quasi-experimental design, it is not possible to establish a causal relationship between this intervention and the stated outcomes. Secondly, the period in which the Program has been operational is relatively short. A much longer period is usually necessary for the emergence of outcomes of community-based programs. With respect to the assessment of the Program outcomes in terms of reductions in
relevant driving offences, data from the BOCSAR database revealed that there has been a recent decline in the offence of driving without a licence for the both Aboriginal populations of the North Coast and for the NSW Aboriginal population. The decline in the number of offences is for the North Coast Aboriginal population, however, was greater than for the rest of NSW. It is difficult to draw clear conclusions as to the significance of these results over the relatively short period. Although the North Coast Aboriginal population were still one and a half times as likely to come before the courts on the charge of driving without a licence than Aboriginal people in the rest of NSW in 2004 but these rates are clearly improvement from prior to 2002.

The third challenge for the outcomes evaluation is availability of routinely collected data. The lack of identification of Aboriginality in RTA road crash or licensing data makes it impossible to measure whether the program has contributed to reducing the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region. With respect to any reduction in the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region, lack of identification of Aboriginality in RTA crash data made it impossible to determine the impact of the Program on road crashes involving Aboriginal drivers. In the absence of RTA statistics, qualitative data indicate that safety education and promotion are an aspect of the current program; however, this aspect of the Program could be greatly enhanced.

One of the evaluation aims was to assess the viability of the Program as a court diversion program. This would present options for court sentencing by offering alternate sanctions, which may avoid imprisonment and lead to outcomes that are more positive for the offender. Such a plan would be consistent with Recommendation 8.13 of the NSW Country Road Safety Summit 2004:

The Government establishes standard and statewide sentencing and diversion options for Aboriginal people charged with driving offences. (RTA 2004a)

Data from stakeholder interviews indicates a high level of support for the further development of a court diversion program based on the existing program and running in parallel with the existing generalist program, which would continue to cater for Aboriginal people who have not had the opportunity to gain a licence. Both types of program would benefit from being delivered within the existing adult education framework offered by ACE Lismore. A pilot court diversion program offered out of Lismore would be able to build on the valuable experience already gained by the Program staff. It would also benefit from the considerable goodwill, which On the Road has built up within the Aboriginal community, including the support of local elders who must play a crucial role in efforts to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

Conclusions
In conclusion, the results of the evaluation reveal that On the Road has been a highly effective Program, which assists a large number of Aboriginal people in the Far North Coast Region to gain or regain their licence.

In summary, the benefits of the On the Road program are as follows:
1. On the Road has led to an increase in the number of Aboriginal men and women in the Far North Coast region who
2. On the Road has led to
   - Improved self-esteem for many participants
   - Improved literacy for many participants

3. In addition to the objectives in (2) On the Road has contributed to improved race relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in the Far North Coast through its
   - Rallies for Reconciliation
   - Dissemination of information on cultural sites and protocols
   - Promotion of respect for Aboriginal culture and local elders

The outcomes in terms of reductions in road crashes and contact with the criminal justice system are easily demonstrated. There are many gaps and limitations on the evidence available to assess the outcomes. Available evidence does not allow us to draw a causal link between the increased number of licensed drivers and either decreased contact with the criminal justice system or decreased road trauma. However, it is highly likely that the upstream effect of having more legal drivers within the Aboriginal community will contribute to improvements in rates of incarceration and improved road safety. It is likely that longer timeframes for evaluation and improved data will reveal whether the Program has made a significant impact on these problems.

It is important to note, however, that the Program conforms to many of the elements of best practice in Aboriginal community interventions. Strategies have been innovative and flexible. Aboriginal elders, community members, service providers and government agencies support them. The impact of the Program on improved literacy, self-esteem, increased Aboriginal employment and further study is unquestionable. The additional work in implementing rallies for reconciliation, improving cultural recognition and respect for Aboriginal communities, increasing the number of Aboriginal Justices of the Peace, and fostering positive community relationships are aspects of the Program, which deserve greater recognition and should be built into the ongoing evaluation of the Program.

To facilitate the further evaluation of Program outcomes, it is recommended that participants in the program be asked to participate in the evaluation. This would involve signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants. To assess other aspects of the Program, particularly the less tangible aspects such as empowerment, capacity building and reconciliation, On the Road staff should be encouraged to develop their own evaluation strategies in collaboration with their community partners and Program participants. In doing so, they could develop meaningful and appropriate performance indicators, which could be developed where direct measurement is not possible. The indicators should reflect the broad range of
Indigenous needs and involve the collection of useful data which could be fed back to participants for example through community workshops and invite further participation of community members in becoming part of the solution. This approach would involve *On the Road* further contributing to community development and capacity building.

**Implications**

The ongoing evaluation of *On the Road* will be important factors in the long-term success of the Program. Evaluation is ideally part of program planning from the outset and should include Aboriginal involvement and assessment of both the intervention and their intended outcome. In relation to evaluation of outcomes, a recommendation has been made for further evaluation using a more rigorous approach from the outset. In addition to this, to assess other aspects of the Program, particularly the less tangible aspects such as empowerment, capacity building and reconciliation, *On the Road* staff should be encouraged to develop their own evaluation strategies in collaboration with their community partners and Program participants.

The Program offers a useful model that could be transferred to other locations in NSW and Australia, particularly those known to have high rates of Aboriginal driving offenses. The following aspects of the Program are just some of the elements that suggest its successful transferability to other areas:

- The process of community engagement provides a model for work in other areas, this includes the close connection with Aboriginal community elders and organizations and the outreach work with Aboriginal community members
- The process and operation of partnerships and networks, in which there is cooperation and mutual benefit, also provides a model of how to be successful with community based projects
- The connections between adult education, licensing, and employment are quite unique to this Program but demonstrate the strength of a holistic and flexible approach
- Considerable work which has gone into producing learning materials, for example the DKT, flowcharts, availability of forms etc
- The website is an invaluable tool, which could serve as an immediate resource for communities wishing to begin work in this area.
- The Rallies for Reconciliation have well established processes and procedures, which could be duplicated in other areas as a stand-alone project or as part of a more comprehensive Driver Education program. There is very good documentation to support this happening in other areas which could greatly benefit from the reconciliation aspects of the event.
- The work within schools is limited but using the *On the Road* approach has great potential for expansion both within the North Coast and in other regions
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The funders continue to fund the Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road.
2. The funders provide funding to employ and train an additional female driving instructor and a part-time administrative assistant.
3. The funders provide funding for the purchase of a second vehicle for training purposes.
4. The funders promote and support the ongoing development of the Driver Project website in an effort to widen the reach of the Program across NSW Aboriginal communities outside of the Far North Coast.
5. ACE develops written training guidelines for instructors, which would assist any new instructors as well as organisations in other areas of NSW wishing to set up similar programs.
6. SDRO be approached to contribute to the ongoing funding of On the Road Program.
7. SDRO promote its services more widely and effectively within the North Coast Aboriginal community including grounds for lifting of suspensions, means of repayment, develop alternative ways to pay, and time to pay for Aboriginal communities.
8. On the Road staff continue to work flexibly within the Aboriginal communities but use available means of communication, such as the website, newsletters, or media, to communicate their work to others in the community.
9. On the Road staff invite the wider Aboriginal community input into the future developments and/or planned changes of the Program.
10. ACE implement improved reporting systems using the current OASIS database to record and report on participant enrollment and participant outcomes within specified timeframes.
11. ACE investigate the possibility of configuring OASIS to incorporate participant outcomes as Units of Study within the Driver Program Course. This should facilitate the reporting of outcomes such as: obtaining a birth certificate; successfully negotiating lifting of suspension of licence through repayment of debts with SDRO; obtaining Red Provisional licence; obtaining Green Provisional licence; employment outcome; becoming a JP.
12. ACE explore the option to offer incentives to improve the recording of participant outcomes.
13. ACE, in collaboration with the Aboriginal communities and community partners, develop a set of broader indicators of success for the Program.
14. RTA investigate a system of accreditation for people to supervise the DKT test in remote locations.
15. RTA improves the current driving licence software test by making it culturally appropriate with extra visual resources.
16. RTA coordinate effective research into Aboriginal transport and road safety issues, including identification of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status in all data collections in RTA road crash data, licensing and registration, and allow cross agency sharing of information.
17. That the road safety aspect of the Program be strengthened by increasing knowledge of road safety issues in the communities by including safety teaching in all aspects of driver training, improving road safety information on the website (e.g. through relevant web links) and by disseminating relevant road safety material though ACE Lismore

18. Further evaluation of the program be undertaken involving participants signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants.

19. ACE instigate an ongoing formative evaluation process to assist with quality assurance for the Program involving the ongoing collection of qualitative data on the less tangible program outcomes and outcomes which are meaningful to the Aboriginal community and could be fed back to the community through, for example, community workshops on a regular basis.

20. ACE formally approach the RTA to receive authorization for the use of the DKT program in community localities

21. ACE Lismore investigate the feasibility of extending their work within schools by building partnerships and offering the program to students within local schools through out the region.

22. AGD undertake further consultation with local groups in regard to setting up a pilot court diversion program in Lismore.

23. The court diversion program be developed with an adult education framework.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BRIEF

In 2002, the Lismore Driver Education Program ‘On the Road’ was jointly funded by the NSW Attorney General’s Department (AGD) the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW (MAA) to assist Aboriginal people in the Far North Coast of NSW obtain or regain their driving licence. The Program was developed in response to the need in response to the observed high levels of road crashes, driving offences and driving penalties experienced by Aboriginal communities in the Northern Rivers. Its overall goal is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people living in the Coast of NSW in the criminal justice system. The Program was auspiced and coordinated by Lismore Adult Community Education (ACE).

The Attorney General’s Department of NSW engaged The George Institute and Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies to undertake an evaluation for the Lismore Driver Education Program ‘On the Road’ to assess its effectiveness in terms of a number of key objectives. The present report describes this evaluation and discusses its results.

1.2 EVALUATION AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the evaluation of the Lismore Driver Education Program ‘On the Road’ is to assess its effectiveness in terms of the following key objectives:

1) To assess whether the program has:
   a) Reduced the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the 7 driving offences
   b) Reduced the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region.

2) To assess the viability of the program as a court diversion program (in terms of the 7 driving offences)

3) To identify the impact of the program in terms of:
   a) The increased number of people who access the computer based driver knowledge test in the local Aboriginal organization
   b) The increased number of people gaining/re-gaining and/or attempting to gain/regain a Class C licence.
   c) Improved literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities of participants in the program
   d) The number of Aboriginal people participating in a driver mentor program.

4) To document how the program is implemented by: describing its methods for increasing licensed drivers

5) To assess the effectiveness of the management of the program by identifying:
a) The processes that guide the operation of the program:
b) How the program is managed by the auspicing body
c) The influence of the local community on the management of the program
d) How the management relates to the funding body

6) To ascertain any additional objectives of the program identified by community and service providers and to evaluate the:
a) Potential impact of the objectives identified on the management of the program, and
b) The feasibility of achieving the stated outcome of the objective.

1.3 KEY DELIVERABLES
The major deliverable will be a comprehensive report, which will:
- Assess the effectiveness of the program in terms of reducing the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the seven driving offences.
- Documents how the program is implemented and the ways by which it increases licensed drivers.
- Describe and appraise the operation of the program.
- Identify and assess the impacts of various components of the program.
- Assess the viability of the program as a court diversion program.
- Include a survey instrument developed to gain information from participants.
- Evaluate the environment in which the program operates.

1.4 PROJECT TEAM
The George Institute for International Health and Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health, the University of Sydney worked collaboratively to undertake the evaluation of the On the Road program.

The project team comprised four academics with considerable individual experience and achievement in their respective areas of expertise. Together the team combine strengths in Aboriginal health, Aboriginal community development, and community based evaluations, quantitative data collection and analysis and road safety.

The George Institute was established in 1999 as a not-for-profit organisation concerned with the prevention and management of common serious health problems worldwide. The Institute is a legally independent institution affiliated with the University of Sydney Faculty of Medicine and the Central Sydney Area Health Service. The George Institute’s mission is to find solutions for major global public health problems through research, policy development and training.

The Institute is made up of several Divisions and Programs, which oversee numerous large-scale international and national projects spanning heart and vascular disease, injury prevention and trauma care, policy and practice, mental health, epidemiology and biostatistics, and education and training. The George Institute’s Injury Prevention and Trauma Care Division has developed a comprehensive research and training program focusing on three areas of significant priority - road traffic injuries, musculoskeletal conditions and trauma management.
Yooroong Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies was established as a School of the Faculty of Health Sciences the University of Sydney in 1999. Yooroong Garang provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with education, support and training in the Health Sciences as well as engaging in a range of research and consultancy activities.

1.5 REPORT STRUCTURE

This report comprises five main sections. Following the Introduction in Section 1, the Background (Section 2) examines the literature on the two issues that form the rationale for the establishment of the Lismore Driver Education Program: Aboriginal people and driving offences and Aboriginal road safety. Section 3 (Methodology) provides a detailed description of the methodology used to evaluate the Program. The main body of the report is found in Section 4 (Findings), which assesses each of the key objectives in terms of Program Implementation; Program Management; The Impact of the Program; Program Outcomes; and the Viability of the Program as a Court Diversion Program; Section 5 presents the a Discussion and Conclusion and includes a summary list of Key Recommendations.
2. BACKGROUND

This section provides the background information that has informed the evaluation on the On the Road Program. The first part of the section, which is based on the findings and recommendations of recent literature on Aboriginal incarceration and Aboriginal road safety, examines the link between Aboriginal licensing offences, contact with the criminal justice system and road trauma. It also briefly describes the steps to obtaining a driver’s licence in NSW highlighting some of the challenges this system poses for Aboriginal people. The second part provides some background to the establishment and operation of the Lismore Driver Education Program, including its aims and objectives, population targets, resources and the collaborations and partnerships that support and sustain the Program.

2.1 ABORIGINAL LICENSING OFFENSES, INCARCERATION AND ROAD SAFETY

Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system


The pattern of Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system is clearly related to a number of underlying determinants including low levels of education, reduced opportunity for employment and the poor status of the Aboriginal community in Australian society to name a few. Moreover, the literature describes Aboriginal prisoners as being part of a cycle of repeat offending, surveillance by police, and heavier punishment by the courts (Walker and McDonald 1995, 1). This cycle that often begins in childhood (Gale et al 1990 cited in Walker and McDonald 1995, 2). While it is well known that measures to address over-representation in custody must address social and economic disadvantage (Walker and McDonald 1995, Hunter 2001), just how to address these apparently entrenched problems has been less apparent. Recent work by Baker, Thomas Weatherburn and others, however, which examines the progression of Aboriginal people through the criminal justice system and focuses on particular offences, offer some possible solutions.

Baker (2001) argues that the over representation of Aboriginal persons in the criminal justice system stems initially from their higher rate of appearance at court and is then amplified at the point of sentencing; Aboriginal persons are sentenced to imprisonment at almost twice the rate at which they enter the court system. She argues that reducing the rate at which Aboriginal people appear in court would reduce over representation. Such an approach would involve diverting Aboriginal defendants away from court by using alternatives to arrest and reducing the rate at which offending or re-offending occurs. Weatherburn et al (2003, 9) argue that efforts to
reduce the rate of Aboriginal court appearance and imprisonment should focus on property and violent crime and serious road and traffic offending, in addition addressing the factors that lie behind Aboriginal offending, including alcohol abuse, poor school performance and unemployment.

**Aboriginal road safety**

To date there have been few serious research studies of road safety issues involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and few culturally specific road safety interventions. The limited literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander which is comprised largely of government commissioned reports in addition to some peer reviewed literature, identifies Aboriginal people, particularly those living in rural and remote areas of Australia, as being ‘at risk’ of or ‘vulnerable’ to road crashes (Australian Government Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2004, Brice 2000, Edmonston et al 2002, 20, Cercarelli and Cooper, 2000, Cerarcelli et al 2000, Cercarelli and Knuiman, 2002, Harrison et al 2001, National Road Safety Strategy 2001-2010). This literature identifies three key issues as requiring urgent national attention: inconsistent and incomplete statistical data on Aboriginal fatality and injury rates; low levels of licensed driving; and the need to involve local communities when development countermeasure program.

In relation to the issue of data, research based on the three Australian jurisdictions with adequate data (Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory) shows that Aboriginal people are over-represented in road injury mortality and hospitalizations (McFadden et al 2000). Based on this data, the national Aboriginal road fatality rate is estimated to be around three times the national rate for the non-aboriginal population (Australian Government Australian Transport Safety Bureau 2004, 4). It is difficult to measure the magnitude of road related injury to Aboriginal people in NSW, as the RTA does not record Aboriginality in road traffic crash data. Available evidence for Aboriginal road injury including NSW injury surveillance studies (Mid North Coast Aboriginal Health Partnership. 2001, Royal and Westley-Wise 2001), however, suggest Aboriginal people in NSW are 3 to 4 times more likely than non-aboriginal people to be killed from a transport related incident and 2 to 3 times as likely to be injured. Moreover, NSW Health acknowledges that the real burden of injury to Aboriginal people in NSW is likely to be much greater than these rates suggest due to both substantial under-reporting of Aboriginal status in data collections that record morbidity in NSW hospitals (NSW Health 2004) and under-reporting of injury by Aboriginal people.

Rates of injury related death and trauma to Aboriginal people need to be seen in the context of relative social and economic disadvantage. In general, people in rural and remote areas of Australia experience higher numbers of road crashes. Some of the factors that put Aboriginal Australians at much greater risk of death and injury as a result of a car crash include: rural or remote environments; longer distances; older and less well maintained cars; poorer access to emergency services; consumption of alcohol; non-wearing of seatbelts; and overloading of vehicles. Compared to non-Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been found to be more likely to be involved in single vehicle crashes (Treacy et al 2002) and those involving pedestrians (Cercarelli 1999).
In relation to the second issue, low levels of licensed driving, a national review of Aboriginal road safety conducted by Brice in 2000, which examined primary transport needs and characteristics of road crashes in which Aboriginal people were involved, identified unlicensed driving as a major social problem as well as a significant factor in contributing toward the over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

A number of recent studies (Brice 2000; Cercarelli et al 2000; Moller and Cantwell 1999 quoted in Edmonston et al 2002, 35) have recommended targeted and culturally appropriate programs, to address the third issue, the need to involve local communities in countermeasures. Key recommendations from Brice’s Review (cited in Edmonston 2002, p. 35) include the following: tailored education and community engagement strategies; extensive Aboriginal involvement in the development and implementation of all initiatives; accessible and culturally-appropriate licensing systems for offenders and remote Aboriginal populations; and empowerment through road safety knowledge and training (including increased representation in road safety and transport-related professions). Driver education and training has been identified as a key factor in preventing further Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system (Edmonston 2004, Macaulay et al 2003).

It is important to note that these studies emphasise the importance of appropriate timeframes for the development and evaluation of these programs. Brice (2000, 60) uses the term ‘community-based, community-paced’ to describe appropriate interventions for Aboriginal communities. According to Brice, the success of road safety communication in rural and remote Aboriginal communities is intrinsically linked to community-based participation and education. Brice underscores the importance of recognizing that time and patience is needed for community-based interventions to take effect. Moller et al (2004) also argue that we should take a long-term view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander injury prevention and safety promotion, and develop interventions that build capacity and deal proactively with the underlying alienation and disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Moller et al 2004, 3).

### Aboriginal licensing offenses

The evidence from the literature discussed above suggests that unlicensed driving is a significant road safety, health and social problem for Aboriginal people and one of the issues which contributes to their over representation in the NSW criminal justice system. Further, a study conducted by the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC) in 2003 revealed that, during 2001, driving licence offences were the third highest offence category for convictions of Aboriginal people after assault and disorderly conduct offences (Thomas 2003a). The study examined convictions for a number of driving licence offences in NSW between the years 1997 and 2001, patterns of offending, gender, age, location and length of sentencing. The specific driving offences examined by the report were:

- possession of licence obtained by dishonest means, a S 22 (1)(b) Road Transport (Driver Licensing) Act 1998
- driving without being licensed for that purpose, s25(1)(a)
- permit non licensed person to drive vehicle, s25 (1)(b)
Between 1997 and 2001 there was a 106% increase in the number of Aboriginal people convicted for all driver licence offences, with a particularly sharp rise in the number of Aboriginal convictions between 1998 and 1999, coinciding with the implementation of legislative changes to driver licensing. The report found five of the seven specific driving offences to be particularly significant for Aboriginal communities:

- driving while disqualified,
- drive while suspended,
- driving without a licence,
- driving while licence is refused, and
- Driving by those never licensed.

More than one third of all convictions for the offences examined were for driving while disqualified and a quarter of the offences examined were for driving without a licence. In terms of penalties imposed by courts, Aboriginal people were more likely to be imprisoned if convicted of driving while disqualified, which accounted for 86% of all Aboriginal people sentenced to imprisonment for driver licence offences during 2001. The report also uncovered the important problem of re offending in relation to driving offences, particularly for those convicted for driving whilst disqualified, but also more generally for traffic offences. This supports the argument that there is a strong connection between Aboriginal convictions for driving licence offences and their ongoing contact with the criminal justice system.

In terms of the age and gender profile of Aboriginal defendants, the report found that although males were more likely to be convicted for a driving licence offence (78.7%) than women (22.3%), the fact that almost a quarter of defendants were women suggests that Aboriginal women should be targeted in any initiatives. The most significant age category for both male and female Aboriginal defendants was 30-39 years.

In terms of geographical location, Lismore was one of five local government areas, which recorded the highest number of driving licence convictions. The others were Walgett, Moree Plains, Kempsey and Dubbo.

**Aboriginal licensing programs**

The review of literature presented above highlight the considerable gaps in the current research on Aboriginal driving offences, road safety and incarceration. Despite road trauma being acknowledged, as being a major health issue facing Aboriginal people there are relatively few targeted interventions to address this problem. This section briefly describes some current State and Territory based initiatives in this area.

Within NSW, the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) is responsible for the safety or road users. In an effort to counteract the rising number of Aboriginal persons involved
in road crashes, licensing and motor vehicle offences, the RTA has developed the Aboriginal Action Plan 2001-2006 (AAP). The AAP lists a number of initiatives including licensing and education programs, which target unlicensed drivers; the RTA has contributed to the funding of the Lismore Driver Education Program.

A range of similar programs have been developed and implemented in a number of States and Territories. Programs addressing licensing are one of eight categories of ‘promising initiatives’ identified by in a recent national scoping study of Aboriginal road safety (Macaulay et al., 2003). Other strategies include general road safety; community development programs; alcohol programs; restraint wearing; pedestrian safety; vehicle purchasing and condition of vehicles programs; and legislation.

The four licensing programs are identified by the national scoping study are:

- **Queensland Police - Remote, isolated and Aboriginal area driver licensing programs.** This licensing testing program consists of practical and verbal testing. Verbal tests are in language and speech that is understood, and practical testing is conducted in the local environment. The program has been a success and formal monitoring of the program and its results, in terms of crashes and impacts on the judicial system and court processes, is proposed.

- **Queensland Transport Northern Region – Flexible licensing for prison inmates.** This program is currently being trialed through Stuart Prison, where inmates are trained for an oral (sic) test and are issued with a learner’s permit when they leave prison.

- **Queensland Transport Northern Region – Western Cape all age driver education.** Programs are offered to traffic offenders and the public. The knowledge component of the test is oral and tailored for the individual, catering for those with low literacy skills. The practical component of the program requires driver training in a dual control vehicle with an Aboriginal police officer or using a simulated CD-ROM test of the Cairns driving environment.

- **Northern Territory University – Remote Areas Driver Training Program.** The main goal of the program is to deliver and facilitate driver training in rural and remote communities in Northern Territory, who have not had access to driver training in the past, through isolation, cultural and/or financial constraints.

While they represent a state level approach to motor vehicle driving offence reduction, and according to Edmonston (2003) they lack coordination and fail to address cultural, access and operational barriers shown to influence Aboriginal licensing. The provision of accessible licensing systems for offenders and remote communities is recommended by these studies as one of nine areas for future research and priority.

**Obtaining a driver’s licence in NSW**

This section provides some background to the steps involved in obtaining a driver’s licence in NSW. It highlights the point that the processes, which are set up by
Government to administer an area under its jurisdiction, can pose significant barriers to the most disadvantaged parts of the population.

New South Wales has a graduated licensing scheme. Under this scheme, individuals need to complete three licensing stages: Learner licence, Provisional P1 licence, and Provisional P2 licence. Although the steps to obtaining a licence, for most Australians, appear straightforward and relatively inexpensive, they represent hurdles and costs, which are difficult for many Aboriginal people to overcome. Some of these challenges are discussed below. Further details on the scheme are available from the RTA website (http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/licensing/gettingallicence/index.html).

To obtain a Learner licence a person must be 16 years of age or older, attend an RTA motor registry office, prove their identity and pass a Driver Knowledge Test (DKT). The Road Users’ Handbook, the Guide for New Drivers and the on-line practice test are available to assist learners with the DKT. For those who have access to the internet, both handbooks are available on the RTA website, if not, the costs of the handbooks is $10 each. Aboriginal people have much poor educational outcomes compared to the rest of the Australian population and the Aboriginal population includes many adults with literacy problems. Passing the DKT and subsequent RTA tests involves both a reasonable level of literacy and a large degree of self-confidence.

To attempt the DKT a person needs to attend a motor registry office, which in the North Coast region, are located in the larger towns of Ballina, Casino and Lismore, and may involve considerable travel for those in remote locations such as Rio or Mul Mul. Moreover, for many Aboriginal people the RTA motor registry office is an intimidating and unwelcoming place. Each attempt to pass the DKT costs $33.

Proof of identity, for the purpose of obtaining a Learner’s licence, involves providing the RTA with a Primary ID, which can be a birth certificate, passport or photo licence or two other documents, and a Secondary ID, which can be a Medicare care, key card etc. One of the identity documents has to show a signature and a NSW residential address. While this is relatively straightforward for most Australians, for Aboriginal people issues such as the lack of a birth certificate (which costs $36 to obtain), different names on different documents, not having a fixed residential address, or not having original documents at hand because of change of residence, are some of the problems encountered. There are also costs involved, which are costly for those on a limited income. The Learner licence costs $17 and all learners must complete 50 hours minimum driving practice under the supervision of a licensed driver and complete a logbook, which cost the learner driver $20. For Aboriginal people, particularly those living in remote and rural communities, the lack of licensed drivers in the communities makes the accumulation of 50 hours far more challenging than for many others.

After logging at least 50 hours driving time and holding a Learner licence for at least six months, a person 17 years of age or older, is eligible to attempt the Driving Ability Road Test (DART). A booklet A Guide to DART is available to prepare learners for the Driver Ability Road Test. This guide is available online at the RTA website or from the motor registry at a cost of $10. The guide includes information about the test, advice on safe driving, driving skills, decision making and awareness of other road users. Each attempt at the Driving Test cost $41 (inc. GST). Successfully passing the
Driving Ability Road Test (DART) with enable progression to a Provisional Licence - stage 1 (P1 licence). A P1 licence, (also known as a red P plate) is issued for 18 months and costs $40.

After holding a P1 licence for a minimum of 12 month, the driver is eligible to attempt the computer based Hazard Perception Test. The HPT is a computer-based touch-screen test that uses responses to film clips of real traffic situations to measure the ability to recognise potentially dangerous situations on the road and respond appropriately. Applicants prepare for the HPT by using the Hazard Perception Handbook and online practice modules. Each attempt to pass the Hazard Perception Test costs $33. If the applicant is successful in the Hazard Perception Test they may progress to a Provisional Licence - stage 2 (P2 licence), also known as a green P plate. A P2 licence is issued for 30 months and costs $65.

In order to progress from a P2 licence to a full licence a person must hold a P2 licence for a total of 24 months and pass the computer based Driver Qualification Test (DQT). The DQT is a combination of an advanced hazard perception test and a test of knowledge on road rules and safe driving. The DQT - Driver Qualification is practiced through a Handbook and by online practice modules.

The above section highlights some of the difficulties encountered by Aboriginal people living in rural and remote areas in their attempt to obtain a driver’s licence. The financial costs add up to at least $295 for a person who is successful at their first attempt at each of the tests, and substantially more for a person who requires two or more attempts to pass any one of the tests. Added to these costs are the costs of repayment of fines, which may have resulted in licence suspension or disqualification. For many Aboriginal people the solution is to drive unlicensed, or drive while suspended or disqualified. It is the combined effect of these issues has led to the over-representation of Aboriginal people coming before the courts on driving offences. As noted earlier, the Far North Coast has been identified as recording one of the highest number of driving licence convictions. The following section describes the background and operation of the Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road, established to address these problems.

2.2 The Lismore Driver Education Program

Establishment of the Program

On the Road is a comprehensive driver education program that targets Aboriginal people living in the Far North Coast of NSW. The program was set up to assist Aboriginal community members obtain a Class C licence, provide support for learner drivers and support qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and disqualified drivers regain their licence through fine negotiation. The Program was developed in response to the observed high levels of road crashes, driving offences and driving penalties experienced by Aboriginal communities in the Northern Rivers. Its overall goal is to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal people living in Coast of NSW in the criminal justice system. On the Road grew out of a local driver education program for the Aboriginal community, which had been operating on a volunteer basis since March 2000 with the support of Lismore Adult Community Education (ACE).
The need to target the unacceptable levels of incarceration was initially identified by the Aboriginal Client Service Specialist (ACSS) at the Lismore Local Court. After documenting the reasons for court appearance by Aboriginal people over a period of months, the ACSS became concerned at the number of Aboriginal people receiving custodial sentences for driving offences. At that time volunteer-run driver education program, targeting Aboriginal people was being run out our ACE Lismore. Subsequently, a submission was made to the NSW Attorney-Generals Department to fund the ACE program as a driver education program for Aboriginal people in the Far North Coast. The further development of the project as a funded project was the result of the collaborative efforts of the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General’s Department (AGD), the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) and the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW (MAA), which agreed to fund the project beginning in 2002. The program was auspiced and coordinated by Lismore Adult Community Education (ACE). Appendix 8 contains further background information on these key organisations.

**Aims and objectives of the Program**

The Lismore Driver Education Program was funded to achieve the following aims and objectives:

- Reduce the number of Aboriginal people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, with a resulting reduction in the number of Aboriginal people appearing in court, due to offences related to unlicensed and unsafe driving practices.
- Reduce the number of road accidents in the Far North Coast Region.
- Increase the number of Aboriginal people obtaining their Class C Driver Licence.
- Increase the literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities of participants.
- Provide members of the Aboriginal community with the opportunity to access the learner drive software at local community organisations through an outreach service before they attempt to obtain their licence at the RTA.
- Increase the number of Aboriginal people who regain their licence through liaising with the State Debt Recovery Office to organize re-payment of outstanding fines through fine negotiation.
- Maintain and keep the number of Aboriginal people in the licensing system as licensed drivers and responsible road users.

The key components of the program, which are discussed in detail in Section 4, are as follows:

- The computer-based driver knowledge test (DKT) in local Aboriginal community organisations,
- Licence testing support in land councils and other community sites,
- Licensing information including the Graduated Licensing Scheme and the Helping Learner Drivers become Safer Driver workshop
- Driving lessons for licensed participants
- Various training courses including first aid, literacy and numeracy, drug and alcohol work and road user legal requirements;
- A community driver mentor program; and
- Assistance with negotiating fine payment with the State Debt Recovery Office.
Funding arrangements
Since 2002, the Program has been funded primarily through a grant from the AGD, RTA and MAA, which covered expenses such as staffing, training costs, motor vehicle expenses, computer purchase and maintenance, and operations costs. The purchase of a dual control instructor vehicle and the employment of the part time Coordinator are the basic project costs. The Program funding also covered the costs of an Aboriginal trainee to become licensed Driving Instructor.

In addition to this direct funding, ACE Lismore receives funding from DEST through the Aboriginal Education Support Initiative Program (IESIP) based on the equivalent full time (EFT) student enrollment for all Aboriginal people formally enrolled in the Program. ACE in turn provides the Program with an office space in the Lismore CBD (Lismore ACE building), administrative services (student coordination services, student enrollment, monitoring of data, on-going contact), use of telephone, fax and office space, student computer and internet use. The Program also received $26,000 in in-kind support from ACE.

Current levels of funding covers only part of the actual costs of running the program. Much of the ACE administrative and operations staff contributions towards running the program, aspects of the program such as website development, and some administration costs are not covered by current levels of funding.

Target population
The Australian Indigenous Population
The Australian Indigenous population was estimated to be 483,992 people at 30 June 2004 (based on the 2001 Census of Population and Housing (ABS 2004). This represents of around 2.4% the total Australian population at 30 June 2002. (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet). The majority of Indigenous Australians live in NSW (141,533) followed by Queensland (134,013), WA (69,665), and the NT (59,508). The highest proportion of Indigenous people among its population is NT (29.8%) and lowest is Victoria (0.6%). An important characteristic of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population are that they are a highly urbanized population. The majority of Aboriginal and Islanders live in urban areas in all States/Territories except the NT, which still has the majority of its Aboriginal population living outside major towns.

Indigenous people are also much younger than the total Australian population. This is reflected in the relatively high mortality and high fertility rates of the Indigenous population. Based on information collected in the 2001 Australian census, about 40 out of 100 Indigenous people are aged less than 15 years, compared with 20 out of 100 non-Indigenous people. About 3 out of 100 Indigenous people are aged 65 years or over, compared with 10 out of 100 non-indigenous people (Indigenous Health InfoNet). This youthfulness of the population is significant given the greater risk of road trauma and offence rates among this group.

Far North Coast Aboriginal Population
According to ABS estimates, the total Aboriginal population over 16 years in 2001 was 69,008. Based on these estimates Table 2 (below) presents estimates of the
Aboriginal population of the Far North Coast for each of the target communities broken down by age (pre- and post-drivers’ licence eligibility age), sex and Indigenous status.
Table 1: Far North Coast Aboriginal Population over 16 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Area</th>
<th>Indigenous population over 16 years</th>
<th>Total population over 16 years</th>
<th>Percentage of Indigenous population over 16 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>506</td>
<td>29,036</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>22,405</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>6,725</td>
<td>3.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>31,865</td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Valley</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>15,253</td>
<td>3.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2343</td>
<td>105,284</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Resources
ACE North Coast, located at Lismore, is the main regional office. It manages the Program funding and employs Program staff.

Staffing and Staff Development
The two Program staff members currently employed on a part-time basis manage the day-to-day activities of the Program. Mr Steve Fitzgerald is employed for 28 hours per week as the Program Coordinator. Steve, a non-Aboriginal man, is a qualified driving instructor with close ties to the local Aboriginal communities. Steve works from the Lismore ACE office but spends considerable time in outreach work in the target communities. Mr Maurice (‘Bucky’) Robinson who became the first qualified Aboriginal Driving Instructor in NSW in July 2004 is employed for 24 hours per week and works primarily from Casino ACE. Like Steve, Bucky spends the majority of his working time in outreach work.

Although not employed by the Program a number of other ACE personnel have an ongoing involvement in the Program. Mr Jesse Wone, the Aboriginal Programs Coordinator Lismore ACE, is responsible for the overall coordination of Aboriginal adult students enrolled in courses offered by ACE Lismore. Jesse has a good working relationship with the Program Coordinator and Driving Instructor and is supportive of their work. Mr Jim Nichols, the Principal Lismore ACE, has overall responsibility for all courses offered by ACE Lismore. A number of administrative assistants within ACE Lismore are responsible for face to face and phone contact with students enrolled in ACE courses, giving course information, and data entry.

Vehicles
The Program currently utilizes two vehicles for its practical driver education. One vehicle was purchased from funding, converted to a dual operated automatic vehicle, and used from the Lismore office. A second vehicle used by the program is the Driving Instructor’s privately owned vehicle.
Website
A comprehensive and well-maintained website, developed by the Program Coordinator, is an important and valuable component of the Program. The site is designed to provide user-friendly information to Aboriginal people, on steps to getting a licence, re-payment of debts, obtaining a birth certificate and steps to becoming a Justice of the Peace as well as updated forms and information. It provides links to the Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages, the State Debt Recovery Office and the RTA.

Computers
ACE Lismore provide free access to computers for Aboriginal people enrolled in the Driver Program. In addition, numerous computers in local organizations have been installed with the DKT software (Discussed in more detail in Section 4). Six computers donated to the project by the Dept of Juvenile Justice have been loaded with appropriate software and distributed into local communities.

Collaborations and partnerships
Successful collaborations and partnerships are among the key criteria for successful community based programs, particularly those that address complex social issues such as incarceration, employment and education and training. The establishment and maintenance of broader links and networks has numerous benefits for the organizations and personnel involved. On the Road has developed a very broad range of community partnerships with local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. The Program is well known to well-known Aboriginal service providers, elders and community members throughout the Far North Coast region. Its endorsement by key Aboriginal elders enhances its ability to service Aboriginal communities. Community trust in the Program is a result of staff working at the community over many years and offering a service, which is practical and meets the immediate and future needs of communities.

Some of the local partnership organisations include:

- Bunjalung Elders Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Aboriginal Court Client Services – Lismore Court
- Aboriginal Health Organisations
- Shared Vision Aboriginal Corporation Inc
- Rekindling the Spirit
- National Parks and Wildlife - Byron Bay and Casino
- Southern Cross University / Cultural tours
- Police Community Youth Centre (PCYC)
- Lismore Council - Road Safety Officer
- RTA Road Safety Project in Kyogle
- Lismore Probation and Parole
- Northern Rivers Community Transport
- Aboriginal Lands Councils
- Community Development Employment Programs (CDEPS)
- Department of Juvenile Justice
The nature of the partnerships and links between the *On the Road* program and these organizations varies according to the services offered by each organization. Over time, *On the Road* has built up relationships many of which are mutually beneficial to the Program and the local organization.

Some organizations refer their own clients to the ACE Program, adding value to their own service. The Lismore PCYC *Go Cart Project*, for example caters for unemployed youth in the Lismore Area. Being able to refer Aboriginal unemployed youth on to *On the Road* added another dimension to their own program by providing participants with practical skills, which enhances their employment prospects.

*On the Road* has also fostered links with a number of organizations that employ Aboriginal trainees. Three examples are the Road Safety Officer of Lismore Council, the Community Development Office of Richmond Valley, and National Parks and Wildlife in Byron Bay and Casino. These partnerships improve the career development of trainees by ensuring that they achieve an essential job requirement, that is, a current driver’s licence. Shared Vision is another local example of a program, which regards *On the Road* as an opportunity to improve skill development for their clients.

Other organization such as the Kyogle and Casino Youth Centres are regularly utilized for communication and publicity of the Program’s activities. News about the program is distributed through the Wula Wula Nga Shared Vision Newsletter as well as local radio and newspapers including the Koori Mail.

Numerous other local government and non-government organisations, such as Lismore Neighborhood Centre, Richmond Valley Council and Kyogle Council have provided support for the organization and operation of the Rallies for Reconciliation (See Section 4 for more detail). Examples of some of the partnerships, which have developed between *On the Road* and various local organizations, are described below.

**Local Community Partnerships**

*Bundjalung Elders Council Aboriginal Corporation*

The area defined as the Far North Coast is the ancestral land of the Bundjalung Nation. The Bundjalung territory encompasses the area extending from the Logan River in Queensland to as far south as the Clarence River in northern NSW and west to the Great Dividing Range. The Bundjalung tribe can be further divided into extended family groups, each with its own home territory (*djagun*). The main group in the Lismore area is the Wiyabal, whose territory roughly co-insides with the present day boundaries of Lismore Local Government Area. The lives and religion of the Bundjalung people are strongly linked to the land with its numerous sacred sites.

*The Bundjalung Elders Council Aboriginal Corporation, the first Elders Council formed in Australia, supports On the Road.* It was formed in 1989 in response to the Elders concern about leadership on cultural and traditional values for the Bundjalung Nation. Currently there are 35 elected and participating Elders. Currently the Bundjalung Elders Council Aboriginal Corporation consists of elected representatives from 17 communities based in Northern Rivers NSW. Lismore, Baryulgil, Tabulam,
Yamba, Casino, Cabbage Tree Island, Byron Bay, Tweed Head, Nimbin, Coraki, Ballina, Evans Head, Kyogle, Maclean, Grafton, Box Ridge. The Bundjalung Elders Council has ongoing consultations and meetings with organisations and community groups throughout the Bundjalung Nation to better relationships with Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal Community Organisations

On the Road has also formed alliances with a large number of local Aboriginal community organisations throughout the large and small towns of the Northern Rivers region. Some of these include

- Ngullingah Local Aboriginal Lands Council (LALC)
- Gugin Guddabah LALC
- Boolangle LALC
- Jubullum LALC
- Bogal LALC
- Community Development Employment Program (CDEP)
- Aboriginal Medical Service Casino
- Aboriginal Community Transport

The involvement of these organizations in the Program includes providing promotion and publicity for the Program and rallies; assistance with recruitment of participants; provision of computers and computer sites; offering employment opportunities.

Shared Vision Aboriginal Corporation Inc

Shared Vision Aboriginal Corporation Inc was set up to promote the equitable provision of services from government and non-government agencies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the Richmond Valley. Located in Lismore, it operates as an Information and Access Centre, which develops partnerships with government service providers to improve the access to services. On the Road benefits from being able to utilise Shared Vision facilities to circulate information and promote the Program to a wide range of service providers and Aboriginal clients in the Lismore area. The organization’s computers, which are generally available to Aboriginal clients for education and employment seeking purposes, have been installed with On the Road’s DKT software. Shared Vision in turn is able to refer Aboriginal clients who could benefit from having a driver’s licence to the On the Road Program.

Rekindling the Spirit

Rekindling the Spirit program is a holistic approach to working with families, individuals and communities. It addresses the healing process and issues that have affect spiritual, emotional, physical and mental wellbeing. The Goori Men’s Group works towards changing abusive behaviors and addressing the underlying issues that cause the problems of violence and family dysfunction. Rekindling the Spirit, which has many clients from backgrounds of abuse and disadvantage, has found that their links with On the Road has enabled them to foster practical skills for these people.

National Parks and Wildlife - Byron Bay and Casino

The link between National Parks and Wildlife (Byron Bay and Casino) and On the Road has been an important in terms of the Service providing employment for a
number of Aboriginal people who have acquired their licence through the *On the Road* Program.

**Southern Cross University**  
Individual members of Southern Cross University have participated as mentors in the driver mentor program. University staff has also participated in setting up cultural tours and routes, which have been used in the Rallies for Reconciliation.

**Police Community Youth Centre (PCYC)**  
Through its Youth worker and the Police Community Liaison Officer, Lismore PCYC refers young Aboriginal people to the Program and is using it to give some practical skills training for youth who have been identified as being ‘at risk’.

**Northern Rivers Community Transport**  
The Program works closely with Northern Rivers Community Transport in training learner drivers, project support and meeting the transport needs of Aboriginal community members.

**Government Organisations**  
In addition to the local community organizations mentioned above, the Program staff also interact on a regular basis with key State government organizations.

**Aboriginal Court Client Services – Lismore Court**  
More than any other collaboration, the link between the Lismore Court and the *On the Road* Program, addresses the key issue of Aboriginal overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. The Aboriginal Court Client Service Specialist (ACCS) at Lismore Court has played a central role in promoting the Program as a Driver Education program and supporting its further development as an alternative sentencing program.

**The State Debt Recovery office**  
The State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) is a division of the Office of State Revenue (OSR). It administers the NSW fine enforcement system and is responsible for the receipt and collection of outstanding fines and penalties. SDRO provides fine enforcement services primarily to State and Local Government agencies. If a person believes that information supplied to the SDRO from an issuing authority is incorrect, a magistrate at a local court is required to determine whether that person has to pay the fine. Although *On the Road* does not deal directly with the SDRO, Program staff assist Aboriginal clients whose licences have been suspended due to non-payment of debts in their communications with the SDRO.

**The RTA**  
The RTA has local offices in Lismore, Casino and Ballina. In addition, RTA officers conduct some testing in rural communities such as Woodenbong, on a monthly basis. On the whole then, *On the Road* clients must attend a local RTA office in one of the larger regional centres to undertake the tests which form part of the graduated licensing scheme discussed in Section 2.1. *On the Road* coordinators regularly liaise with RTA officials on behalf of clients and accompany clients to the offices for testing.
NSW Police Department
The Richmond area command has supported the Rallies for Reconciliation and local elders have been involved in giving cautions to young offenders

Lismore Probation and Parole
The relationship between Probation and Parole and On the Road has been principally around developing opportunities with the Department for people to work off fines to State Debt Recovery Office by doing “payback” community service.
3. Methodology

A combination of qualitative and methods were used to undertake the evaluation of the On the Road Program. This section provides an overview of the context in which data collection occurred, the sources of data collected, data limitations and methods of analysis.

3.1 Consultation

Identification of stakeholders

An initial step in the evaluation was the identification of key stakeholders. The following groups and organizations were identified and consulted with in the preparation of this report:

- The Project Monitoring group, including representatives from ADG, MAA, RTA and ACE Lismore.
- ACE Lismore staff
- Outreach service providers involved in the management of the program in the community
- Service providers that provide access to the program including Local Aboriginal Land Councils and community organizations
- Local police
- Local court staff in towns where the project runs
- Program participants
- Aboriginal elders
- Members of local Aboriginal communities in the Far North Coast

Site visits

Further consultation with stakeholders and formal data collection took place during four site visits to the Far North Coast on 23-24 March 3-4 May and 17-18 May, and 2 September 2005. Two members of the project team visited the following sites: Lismore, Casino, Tabulum, Rio, Bonalbo, Woodenbong, Mulli Mulli, Kyogle. The site visits provided an important opportunity for the Project Team to gain a first hand understanding of the context in which the program operates and an appreciation of the geographical distances between communities, the relative isolation of some communities and the poor public transport access. The site visits also enabled the project team to make judgments about the effectiveness of the management approach based on face-to-face contact with stakeholders and participants, and to assess the effectiveness of the program in terms of available opportunities for participants.

3.2 Data Collection

Types of data collected

The evaluation report brings together qualitative and quantative data collected from a number of different sources in order to address the very broad set of evaluation objectives. The following types of data were gathered to address these objectives:

1. Current Literature:
An internet search of relevant databases and academic literature was undertaken to identify key articles and reports relevant to the evaluation using the following keywords: Aboriginal incarceration, Aboriginality and licensing; Aboriginal road safety; Aboriginal community based projects, and evaluation of community based projects.

2. Relevant statistics as outlined below.
3. Analysis of On the Road Program documentation including progress reports, website postings, photos, flyers, promotional material and newspaper reports.
4. A series of face to face and phone interviews and focus groups as outlined below.

Quantitative data
The evaluation team collected and analysed quantitative data from the following sources:

Population and Crime Statistics
The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) provides online publications for Indigenous population data and crime and justice statistics on the number of Indigenous people in custody in Australia. The 2001 Census of Population and Housing (Indigenous Profiles) was accessed for the five Local Government Areas [LGAs] of Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Balina and, Byron Bay and for NSW.

Crime Statistics and Offence Data
ABS Corrective Services Australia (cat. no. 4512.0) quarterly publications reporting on monthly statistics about Australian prisoners were accessed for the number of Indigenous people in custody.

Data on the number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons appearing before courts for driving offences was obtained from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) database for the period 1998-2004 for the whole of NSW and for the five Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Balina and, Byron Bay. The data collected and analyzed for this report was for the following five offence categories reported as being particularly significant for NSW Aboriginal communities (Thomas 2003a).

- driving while disqualified,
- drive while suspended,
- driving without a licence,
- driving while licence is refused, and
- Driving by those never licensed.

Course Enrollment Data
Data on Program participation and outcomes were obtained from the Lismore ACE’s ESCHED enrollment database and the records of the Course and Program Coordinators in order to ascertain or estimate:

- The number of Aboriginal people accessing the On the Road program.
- The number of Aboriginal people gaining/re-gaining and/or attempting to gain/regain a Class C licence.
- The number of Aboriginal people accessing the learner driver software.
- The number of Aboriginal people accessing the driver mentor program.
Qualitative data

Qualitative data is most useful in understanding the experiences of individuals and communities, interactions between individuals, and within social settings, and for eliciting contextual data (NHMRC). A number of the objectives of On the Road address important outcomes, for example improved self-esteem and improved literacy, which are difficult to quantify or lie outside the scope of the present study, yet which the literature identifies as crucial factors underpinning improved Aboriginal health and social wellbeing, leading to improved socio-economic status. Qualitative data was particularly important in the evaluation of these objectives as well as for assessing some of the additional Program objectives such as improved reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In addition to these purposes, qualitative data was collected to either replace or complement other sources of data. For example, where the available quantitative measures not available, as in the case of identified crash data, participants were asked about their perceptions of safety. In the case of Aboriginal, contact with the criminal justice system, where identified data is available, qualitative data on their experience of being an unlicensed drivers or encounters with the police, complemented quantitative sources, providing a fuller understanding of the nature of the problem from the perspective of those most affected.

The main sources of qualitative data employed in the evaluation were:

- Formal focus group discussions
- Face to face and telephone interviews with participants and stakeholders
- Observation conducted during site visits

Focus group discussions

Five focus groups comprising a total of fifty-five consenting participants were conducted in four communities (Lismore, Casino, Rio, Wodenbong). Focus groups were conducted in the ACE office, a local high school and various Aboriginal community organization. Of the 5 groups held, one group consisted of Aboriginal women only, one group consisted of Aboriginal male and female youth, two groups included Aboriginal males and females who were past and current participants in the program, one group were (principally non Aboriginal) mentors. All focus group discussions were audio taped, with participant oral and/or written consent. These tapes were then transcribed and used for further analysis.

Face-to-face Interviews

An open-ended interview schedule (see Appendix 2) was developed to facilitate the implementation and analysis of focus group discussions. Questions were formulated to facilitate the implementation and analysis of improved literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities of participants in the program. Eighteen face-to-face interviews were conducted. Those interviewed included key stakeholders, local service providers, Aboriginal workers in Government and Aboriginal community controlled organizations.

Phone interviews

A small number of telephone interviews (5 in total) were carried out with stakeholders who were unable to be contacted directly during site visits. These include those
employed in local government and local organisations rather than participants in the program.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the interviews and focus group transcripts found in the Findings section of this report is based on a broad thematic analysis of the information derived from interviews, drawing the key concepts or themes from informant statements. An attempt has been made to remain as close as possible to the views and forms of expression of informants. For this reason, the Findings section makes extensive use of the direct quotes from the interviews and focus groups. Further analysis of this combined data is presented in the Discussion and Conclusion.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations on the available data sources, which are detailed below:

Literature

Routine literature searches reveal relatively little about the key issues being addressed by this report. Issues such as Aboriginal driver education, licensing, incarceration, Aboriginal injury and safety, and community based programs targeting the Aboriginal community are relatively new topics in the academic literature and therefore one finds few published reports. Information is more likely to be found in the ‘grey literature’ – ‘that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers’ (New York Academy of Medicine, 2002b).

ACE data

The number of participants in the On the Road program and their outcomes are presented in section 4.3 of this report. Although efforts are currently being made to improve the collection of enrollment and outcome data, there are still missing data for the period being evaluated.

Road crash data

To date there have been few serious research studies of road safety issues involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in NSW. Due to incomplete and inconsistent data, an accurate picture of the extent of Aboriginal deaths and injury on the roads are hard to report. There are a number of problems related to the collection of data on Aboriginality in NSW. Most importantly, Aboriginality not recorded in road crash data.

The number of fatalities and injuries from road traffic crashes for the five local government areas and information about the involvement of an un-licensed controller, was obtained from the RTA Road and Traffic Accident Database for the five LGAs’ for the period 1998-2004. However, given the absence of the identification of Aboriginality in this data no useful conclusions could be made in terms of the Program outcomes and a reduction in road crashes. This data was not used in this report.
**Court data**
Data was obtained from the Attorney General’s Department, Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) database on the number of Aboriginal people who came in contact with the criminal justice system for selected driving offences between 2000 and 2004 for the five LGAs of Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Ballina and Byron.

**ABS data**

**SDRO data**
It was not possible to access data on the number of reinstatement of licenses following repayment of fines or the initiation of a repayment plan with the State Debt Recovery Office as the SDRO data collection system not include identification by Aboriginality.

**3.4 Ethics**
Ethical approval was sought and obtained through the University of Sydney Human Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations for the evaluation included:

- The confidentiality of all research participants.
- All research participants provided with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form.
- Research participant consent to the audio taping of interviews.
- Participants’ right to withdraw from the interviews and focus groups at any time.
- Storage of collected data in a secure location for a minimum period of 7 years.
- Research participants informed in regard to making complaints.
4. FINDINGS

Using the methodology outlined in Section 3, this section presents the key findings of the Program Evaluation. It comprises an assessment of each of the key objectives of the evaluation in terms of the Implementation (4.1), Management (4.2), Impact (4.3) and Outcomes (4.4) of the Program, as well as a discussion of the viability of the Program as a court diversion program (4.5).

4.1 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Objective 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document how the program is implemented by describing its methods for increasing licensed drivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Target communities**

*On the Road* was funded in 2002 to assist Aboriginal people in the Far North Coast region obtain a Class C licence, provide support for learner drivers and support qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and disqualified drivers regain their licence through fine negotiation. The Program’s target population is Aboriginal people living in the broad geographical area of the Far North Coast. This area encompasses the five local government areas of Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Ballina and Byron, and incorporates the three major regional centers of Lismore, Casino and Kyogle and the rural and remote communities of Box Ridge (Coraki), Gundarimbah (Lismore), Jali (Cabbage Tree Island), Rio (Tabulum) and Muli Muli (Wodenbong). In addition to the target locations, the Program has also established some contact with organizations in a number of other towns in nearby regions, after receiving requests for assistance. Present resources have not enabled the program to operate in these areas.

**Table 2: Target Communities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Aboriginal Community</th>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gundarimbah / Lismore</td>
<td>Lismore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>Kyogle / Richmond Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Ridge / Coraki</td>
<td>Richmond Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jali / Cabbage Tree Island</td>
<td>Ballina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio / Tabulum / Bonalbo</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muli Muli / Wodenbong</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>Byron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: ACE Lismore
Woodenbong School and Muli Muli

Bonalbo Aboriginal Corporation & Bonalbo School

Guggin Guddubah LALC, Kyogle Youth Action

Casino, ACE, Oaks Centre, Boolangle LALC

Coraki, Box Ridge, Bogal LALC, Kurrachee Co op, Yabur Yelgun CDEP

Rio, Tabulam CDEP

Nimbin School & CTC

Lismore ACE, Ngullingah LALC, Shared Vision, Rekindling the Spirit, ACE

Cabbage Tree Island

Tweed

Arakwal/NPWS Byron Bay

Grafton

Driver Education Project already operating in these areas.
Assistance requested.
Map 1 (above) illustrates the geographical spread of the program. The solid box indicates the locations in which the Driver Education Program currently operates and the names of community organizations through which ACE has collaborated to run the Program. An interrupted line indicates the locations that have requested assistance.

While the map above demonstrates the reach of the Program in geographical terms, the web resources mentioned in Section 2.2, extend its reach far beyond its current or future geographical limits. The Program coordinator reports, for example, that Aboriginal people in communities such as Coffs Harbour, Kempsey, Shoalhaven, Yamba and Maclean are currently accessing the website. Further promotion of this resource could significantly widen the possible impact of the Program on NSW Aboriginal communities.

**Participation in the Driver Education Program**

Data provided by ACE Lismore indicate 520 participants, comprising 224 males and 296 females, enrolled in the Driver Education Program between 2000 and 2005. These figures represent an estimate of total enrollments over the period in which the Program has been operating. For the period over which the program has received funding (2002-2005), there were 381 participants (167 males and 214 females). Except for a few instances of individuals who re-enrolled in the program in more than one year, figures in Table 3 (below) represent access by single individuals. According to ACE Lismore, the figures represent under enumeration of participation, due to some participants using program facilities without formally enrolling in the program. A computer malfunction in 2002 also contributed to under enumeration of the participant figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: Lismore ACE ESCHED System, 2005

Given that the total eligible population for the five Local Government Areas was 2,343 in 2001 (based on ABS data) and that the total estimated participation in the program was 520 by 2005, suggests a very wide reach of the program to just over 22% of the eligible Aboriginal population. It is important to note that the figure of 520 represents participants with varying degrees of involvement in the Program and with a range of different objectives.

The table illustrates a growth in participation over the period 2000-2005 with a steep increase in participation in the Program between 2003 and 2004, particularly by females. The high level of female participation in the program is important,
particularly as Aboriginal women make up a significant number of those with driving offences (Thomas 2003a).

Table 4: Participants in Driver Education Program by Community 2000-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Community</th>
<th>Number of Participants enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage Tree Island</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coraki / Box Ridge</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muli Muli / Woodenbong</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio /Tabulam</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Bonalbo, MacLean, Nimbin, Byron Bay, Malabugilmah, Maclean, Yaegle)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrecorded (Includes walk ins)</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: ACE Lismore

Table 4 shows the number of Program participants by community. The data shows participation spread evenly across regional centers and more remote locations, with more than 50 participants recorded for larger towns of Lismore and Casino as well as for more remote communities such as Rio/Tabulum and Cabbage Tree Island.

The high number of unrecorded enrolments and problems with computer systems indicates the need for a better mechanism for the collection of ACE Program participation data. A new database system (OCHRE), recently installed by ACE, should help to alleviate some problems associated with the previous ESCHED system. It should also be noted that, in addition to the enrollment data, the Program Coordinator keeps a separate record on participant progress and outcomes. This is discussed further section 4.3 on Participant outcomes. The following section provides a fuller discussion of the administrative framework, which supports the running of the Program and makes some suggestions for improvements.

Administration of the Program within ACE

On the Road is administered by ACE (Lismore). In addition to the specific Program funding, ACE also receives an Indigenous support allocation from the IESIP Program (Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program) through the Department of Employment Science and Technology (DEST). This funding provides additional support to educational institutions for Indigenous students undertaking accredited courses in recognition of the extent of educational disadvantage among the Indigenous population and the costs of providing additional educational support. IESIP funding is based on the number of full-time Indigenous student enrollments.
Aboriginal people who wish to participate in the On the Road Program enroll as part-time students into ACE’s Driver Education course. The Driver Education course is part of an accredited training package. Enrollment in the Program is free to students, but students who enroll in the driving program do not qualify for any direct financial assistance, such as that offered through ABSTUDY, due to the part time status of the program.

The method of course enrollment is either through students enrolling in person at the Lismore ACE offices or, for those in remote locations, by having their details recorded by the Program staff who complete their enrollment on their behalf on their return to the ACE Lismore offices. If contact is made directly with ACE, participants are asked to register with the administrative officers of the organization, where their particulars are registered in the computer-based program.

Administrative support offered by ACE staff includes taking and responding to phone or over the counter enquiries about the Program, responding to participant enquiries, formalizing enrollments and entering enrollment data in the ACE computers. In On the Road funding, however, does not extend to the level of administrative assistance required to undertake this work. Much of this administrative work associated with the Program, therefore, is not covered by current funding arrangements nor claimed by ACE administrative staff who regard work supporting On the Road as work done in addition to their other tasks they have to perform in the busy ACE office. It is important to take into consideration that Aboriginal people who are unaccustomed to an educational environment and have a low level of literacy may Front desk administrative staff also have the task of dealing with misunderstandings which may arise. The under resourcing of the administrative support for the Program has created a level of stress from time to time for both Program and ACE administrative staff.

The Program staff have identified the need for a better ‘fixed base’ so that Aboriginal community members seeking assistance in accessing information and filling in forms know they can contact a trained person at a particular place at fixed and reasonably convenient times. These problems could be ameliorated by the presence of a dedicated administrative assistant working the ACE office in Lismore on a part-time basis to assist with advertising, promotion, maintaining the enrollment and outcome database, organizing bookings and other administrative duties.

**Participant recruitment and course promotion**

The Program recruits participants and promote the course through a variety of means, including:

- Print and other media and advertising
- ACE courses, course information and website
- Word of mouth
- Partnerships

*Media*

Program publicity is through local North Coast newspapers, radio, newsletters and flyers. Local newspapers carry ads for the rallies and occasionally a news story about participants (See Appendix 6). Newsletters from numerous community centers carry
advertising for the program and invite participants to join. Flyers are circulated around various government and non-government organisations about the program and the rally.

**ACE Newsletters**

Another means of course promotion and participant recruitment is through ACE course administration and newsletter. ACE offers the Driver Education course as an elective to Aboriginal people already enrolled in ACE courses. This is ACE course information, and internet information with flyers, which can be downloaded and put on the notice boards of local services. Various organisations regularly sent out notices to their various networks (e.g. health service, community services). Newsletters from some community centers carry advertising for the program and flyers sent to various government and non-government organisations about the program and the rallies.

**Working with partners**

The extensive range of *On the Road’s* community partnerships and networks is described in Section 2.2 of this report. Referrals through partnerships have been an invaluable source of recruits and are a way in which *On the Road* makes a valuable contribution to the services able to be offered to the clients of other organizations, as illustrated in the following comment,

> I’ve had Aboriginal kids in here, twice I think, in that loop ...If I get a kid in here, he’s 16, and in a bit of strife, in my caution process, I use Steve as a referral, or Bucky. ‘Do you want your licence?’ They don’t know about it. That’s something I can use; ‘They’ll help you get your 50 hours’. I think that’s a big thing. The 50 hours, the initial exam, which they help the kids with too; and the payment of debt.

Local police officer

**Word of Mouth**

Although the above marketing and promotion strategy has been useful in attracting some clients, from the point of view of both instructors and community participants, the most appropriate and successful means of recruitment of participants and promotion of the course is through word of mouth. This is achieved by the Program coordinator and driving instructor being visible and available within communities to help people when they require help.

> Well with regard to Aboriginal community, one only needs to find out and it spreads like wildfire, what we call ‘Blackfella’s telegraph.’

Program participant

People just see one bloke coming and ‘what are you doing?’ He says he’s here doing the licence thing. And he goes from one house to another and somebody comes from different communities and he might there one day and all get together in a group, and they say what happens here?’” And they say it’s the licence thing, and that block takes it back to that community, and spread it. That’s how it is amongst Aboriginal people. It just spreads, like we will speak.

Program participant
Steve approached me – a lot of my brothers and cousins had got licence – Steve came up and introduced himself. He’s really likeable – makes you feel really comfortable – patient down to earth nature Steve did lessons - I would never have done it without him.

Program participant

Focus group participants also reported that they had heard about the Program through family members who had obtained their licence, through community members and through church groups.

Aboriginal people I know and work with know the program and respect Steve. Community organisations I work with know about the program

Local service provider

**Importance of key personnel**

The methods of course promotion discussed above depend on having personnel who are acceptable to and trusted by the Aboriginal community. All Aboriginal community members who participated in focus groups considered the manner and approach of both the Aboriginal driver instructor and the non-Aboriginal Program coordinator culturally appropriate.

The following comments by focus group participants indicate both the importance of having a Program to promote licensing in Aboriginal communities, and the importance of having Program staff who are well known and acceptable to the communities:

Q: If you didn’t have Bucky and Steven here, do you think, you two especially, that you would go for your driving licence?
A. No.

Q. Because of what?
A. Well no one even went for their licence until they started the program with RTA.

Q. Nobody knew much about it really.
A. Because it was difficult, or because nobody knew...

Q Did people drive?
A. Yes

Q Everyone drove?
A Yes without their licences.

Q How many people got fined?
A Everyone.

Interview with program participant

There was a very strong expression of support from focus group participants for the methods and approach used by the two driving instructors. As one participant described:
Steve worked hard to give Aboriginal people an opportunity to answer all the questions – even before they got their Ls most of the kids would know the answer before – they have to learn them – can’t just go onto internet every night – has made a way of doing that – he has made a way of getting people’s debt paid – practical problem solving – RTA should have had all of this in hand – instead of putting it all back on the person he has made it easy for people to achieve things – even for non-aboriginal people – he has removed a lot of the barriers to making it more achievable – I think he lives and breathes the program

Focus group participant

The elder status of one of the staff is clearly an important factor is the respect, which participants expressed towards the Program,

Bucky is really good with young Aboriginal people...he is considered an Elder, and young people that I have trouble with turn around and treat him with respect, and he earns that respect, and he expects that respect..

Program participant

**Program strategies**

As previously discussed, the RTA introduced the Graduated Licensing Scheme in July 2000 in order to improve driving skills and standards for novice drivers (See Section 2.1 for details). The Scheme extended the novice driver period to a minimum of three years and six months during which individuals would pass through a series of steps before progressing to an unrestricted licence. It is necessary, under this scheme, to pass four tests: the computer-based Driver Knowledge Test, the Driving Ability Road Test, the Hazard Perception test, and the Driver Qualification Test. Under the new rules learner licence holders need to again extensive driving experience, recorded in a logbook, signed off by the learner’s supervisor, who must hold an unrestricted licence. Learners were required to accumulate 50 hours of on-road driving experience. Section 2.1 introduced some of challenges Aboriginal people can face in meeting these requirements.

*On the Road* Program staff have developed and implemented a number of strategies to assist Aboriginal people overcome some of these barriers. Through their work at Lismore ACE and their outreach work with remote communities, they assist participants with form filling, repayment of debts, obtaining birth certificates and facilitate their accumulating 50 hours driving experience to attain a licence. In addition to these core strategies, the Program has focused some attention on helping Aboriginal people become Justices of the Peace. This section illustrates how the Program is implemented by briefly describing the key Program strategies. The impact of these strategies on the key Program objectives is discussed in further detail in section 4.3.

**Removing the barriers to obtaining or re-gaining a licence**

The main objective of the Program is to provide support for Aboriginal drivers to gain or regain a Class C driver’s licence. This includes support for learner drivers as well
as qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and disqualified drivers. Strategies for learner drivers include assisting with literacy support and test practice support prior to attempting the RTA learner driver test and providing driving practice at various sites in the Far North Coast regions. Drivers whose licence has been disqualified, however, must serve out their disqualification period before regaining a licence.

Assistance with obtaining a birth certificate
For a large number of Aboriginal participants the first barrier to being able to sit for the Learner’s test with RTA is the lack of a birth certificate. For some this is a matter of ‘shame’. Recognizing this barrier, On the Road has developed a systematic approach to assisting people to obtain a birth certificate as the first step in the process of being a licensed driver.

A lot of our people from our area, they’ve been booked before this program even started and they had fines from then on, and that’s what I’m doing most of the time now, is filling out the stat decks and trying to get their birth certificates: some of them, their names might be Robinson, yet, when you go to get a birth certificate, they find out their name is Mrs. Williams, so then you’ve got to turn around and fix that all up, get their birth certificate in the right order. We had a bloke … he wanted to go for his licence, and we asked for his birth certificate he didn’t even have a name, he only had a number, because he was one of the ones who had been taken away from home... so he had to go and find out where he’d come from.

Program staff

In these cases, arrangements are made for an application to be filled out and submitted to the Birth and Death Office to obtain their Birth Certificate.

Assistance with negotiating the payment of debts
One of the major barriers to legal driving for many Aboriginal people is the existence of unpaid debts.

... a lot of them, before we started they even got caught with their driving and so they got fined already, even our kids that’s riding bikes with no helmets or skateboard downtown, police pull them up, book them, they get fined, when they get around to sixteen, they’ve already got a state debt, so when they go for their licence, first thing they do is go to the computer and check it, sorry no, you’ve already got a fine, until you pay your state debt up, then you can apply for your licence. Because any fines that you’ve got it automatically goes to your state debt. Either cancels your licence or cancels your registration of your vehicle; if you’ve got two vehicles they cancel your two registrations smack bang, so it’s rotten from the start.

Program staff

They hit the age where they can start to get tickets, fourteen and up, or it might be a bit older now with the Young Offenders Act, when they start getting these tickets, but they get so many fines, as you know, the
fines accumulate. Driving an unregistered car when you are unlicensed is the best part of $1600 to $2000. If you start with that, and then that person reaches an age where that person says, “I want to go and get a licence”, the RTA will say, “Well you pay your fines”. Where’s that young person going to get the money?

For drivers with unpaid fines, the main support offered by the On the Road Program is liaison with State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) to organize re-payment schedules for unpaid fines.

According to SDRO officials interviewed, the Office does not have the ability to waiver debts, however it is able to exercise some flexibility. Its options to reinstate licenses that have been lost due to non-payment of fines are subject to the following criteria: extreme financial hardship; remote location; employment conditions and medical grounds. The SDRO criteria do not particularly target Aboriginal people; they review each case individually. Also, according to the SDRO, recent legislative change enables it to reinstate the licence of those who owe a fine and are unable to repay at once and have had a licence suspended, to have time to pay arrangements. Once they meet the first six fortnightly installments, the SDRO is able to reinstate a licence.

Aboriginal community members regularly seek out On the Road Program staff when they make field visits to assist in their communications with the SDRO and support their completion of the necessary paperwork to repay fines over time. The experience On the Road Program staff dealing with the SDRO on behalf of clients, however, has been less than positive. On the Road staff attempt to bridge a gap between the SDRO and the numerous Aboriginal clients with outstanding debts by installing forms to initiate the re-payment of fines on the ACE web, providing detailed instructions on identifying and completing the necessary paperwork and assisting participants negotiate the re-payment of their fines with the SDRO. Through these processes, it attempts to facilitate the repayment of debts through installments of an agreed amount over a period. However, negotiating the repayment of fines through the State Debt Recovery Office (SDRO) is not a straightforward matter. One challenging issue is the inconsistent advice and replies from the SDRO, as evident in the following example

An Aboriginal woman living in a small community discovered she had fines. She phoned the SDRO and was told if she paid by 4:30 would get fines lifted. She did this and then phoned again. She was then told it would take 7 days.

Another problem encountered by the Program staff is the perceived inconsistent decisions made by the SDRO. For example,

It was reported that Aboriginal people were told to pay some hundreds of dollars up front before the suspension is lifted while in other cases, people just began paying fines.
It is likely that better progress could be achieved through more direct contact between *On the Road* and the SDRO. The SDRO does provide information to the public including information targeting Aboriginal people about the procedure for re-payment of debts and time to pay options through brochures and information sessions. However, it appears that this information is not as well disseminated as it could be. Staff training and a greater awareness of the particular issues facing the Aboriginal population could assist in improving the services offered by SDRO.

**Assistance with the Driver Knowledge Test**

Having overcome the hurdles of obtaining a birth certificate and paying fines, participants in the Program need to fulfill the requirements set out by the RTA to obtain a Learner’s Licence, that is, payment of a fee and successful completion of the Driver Knowledge Test (DKT). In order to pass the DKT learners must study RTA road user and safety material, which is available in print form and may practice the computer-based test on-line from the RTA website. The lack of access to internet, particularly in remote areas, means that practice on the RTA website is often impossible.

One of the major achievements of *On the Road* is the development of a ‘clone’ program, which has been amended to be more users friendly, and culturally appropriate and installed on computers in numerous community based organizations throughout the target region to which Aboriginal people will have easy access. ‘In-built’ assistance is offered by the program making the formal non-threatening, for example in the use of brown-faced ‘smiley’ icons instead of a tick to indicate a successful answer, Program staff are currently working on adapting voice recognition software for students with reading difficulties.

The program staff approach driver education by treating each person as an individual with their own needs working with them to achieve what they need. This often involves intensive work with participants to assist them in understanding how to use and interpret the DKT material. The intensity of this approach is illustrated by the following quotes from interviews with the Program staff:

*I get them one by one, and get them in a room by themselves and go through it...and they come to a questions where they don’t know what the meaning of it is, I’ve got to explain to them what it means. I always tell them to look at the picture, the answer’s always in the picture. Look at the picture read the questions two or three times, something like that.*

Program staff

*I have a few who can’t read at all, so I read the questions, read the answers and then if you’re happy about it, could you read it again, I read it and explain the first answer the second answer and all that.*

Program staff

From the point of view of participants in the program, this approach appears to work very well. There was a very strong expression of support from focus group participants for the assistance offered by the two Program staff. Participants commented on their importance in the learning process, facilitating repayment of
fines, assistance with the computer test and helping with the accumulating the necessary 50 hours of driving experience for learners.

**Assisting with practical road experience**

The second stage of Program is in-car training for the L-driver. Resources do not permit the Program to provide the 50 hours of supervised driving experience, which learner drivers must accumulate prior to undertaking the Driving Ability Road Test. While some learners have been able to access a small amount of additional funding from other sources to pay for professional driving lessons, most learners also need to find additional support from family or community licensed drivers to assist them in their effort.

The accumulation of 50 hours of on-road supervised driving experience is another hurdle for Aboriginal peoples particularly those living in more isolated areas of the Far North Coast where there are few licensed drivers in local communities.

*You can ask your family if they’ve got cars, but it’s hard because they’ve always got their own things to do. Might be worried about their cars, and what’s going to happen. You can pay for the driving lessons, but that’s $40 an hour, and you don’t have that kind of money.*

Program participant.

**Driving Instruction**

*On the Road* has two main strategies to assist Aboriginal people to learn to drive a vehicle and accumulate the logged 50 hours required by the RTA. The first strategy is through driving instruction with one of the two qualified instructors, although limited due to lack of resources.

*Steve got me into another program, when I was close to doing my hours, when I finished my year with my Ls, and that program helped me, and I didn’t even know about it; Steve rang up and organized everything for me and they paid for driving lessons, however many, I think I had four, and then for the hire of the car for my test, and I wouldn’t have been able to get a car or anything if it wasn’t for Steve.*

Program participant.

*I was able to go on to private lessons and get my parking and everything fixed up, and we used the car for the test too. Also when I was there doing my test I know that Steve lent his car out to use for the test just to help you.*

Program participant.

The possibility of a female instructor, in addition to the two male instructors, was raised in a number of the focus group and interviews. In all cases participants considered an additional female instructor as a good idea and advantageous to the Program particularly in regard to young female learners. As one put it in:

*It would probably be just like another comfort zone for people to sit in, like a male or a woman doctor you’re comfortable with someone and...*
The driver mentor program

The second strategy for assisting with practical road experience is a driver mentor strategy, which has become known as the ‘Rally for Reconciliation’. The ‘Rally for Reconciliation’ involves local community members contributing their motor vehicle and time to assist learners to gain 50 hours driving experience. The program has the support of the Police who have given permission for the Rally publicity to use their logo when advertising for drivers. Rallies provide an opportunity for Aboriginal unlicensed drivers to accumulate the 50-logged hours of driving necessary for them to achieve a Provisional Drivers Licence. They also offer another opportunity for participants to learn from experienced drivers,

most of the people on the rallies are going out with Steve or Bucky, or most of the other volunteers who are full time drivers, and they are involved in the transport industry for a living, so it is not just as though they are going out with ordinary mums and dads. So in comparison to other young people who may just go to mum and dad, they are going out with fully trained people. Most people just go out with family until they are competent, and they don’t have lessons.

Driver mentor

There are a number of processes involved in the successful running of the event. Each rally is advertised through the various community networks, the ACE website as well as the local media and by word of mouth. Recently a local group known as the Lismore People for Reconciliation has assisted with publicity of the rallies. Mentors are recruited from across the community. Interested mentors register with ACE, their licence and their cars are checked, and they are matched with the participants.

You just come and put your name down, and people volunteer different cars, and then you go with a different person from one town to another. Every town you get to, you either stay with the car you started with, or you can swap for a different car, so throughout the day, if we have five stops, you meet five different persons, and drive five different cars and at the end of the day you might……you drive for seven hours through the day, in a circle.

Driver mentor

An ACE report on one of the rallies, for example, noted the following mix of mentors,

There has been a real mix of volunteer drivers - a SCU lecturer, an off duty Police officer, ACE tutors, citizens from Lismore, Kyogle and Casino, a driver for Northern Rivers Community Transport, students and a representative of Richmond River Council. There have been expressions of interest from Lismore Court staff, INTRA (D and A counseling) and the local worker for the Premier’s Dept on transport issues in taking part in the next rally.
A considerable effort is put into working out routes to ensure variety, careful estimation of times, appropriate stops near places of cultural interest, recruitment of good support staff in many community and government organizations who participate enthusiastically in the event. There are safety stops on the way for break and refreshments. The impact of the driver mentor program on the Aboriginal and non-aboriginal participants and the community is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.

**Increasing the number of Aboriginal JPs**

An additional strategy of the Program is assisting more Aboriginal people become Justices of the Peace who are able to witness signatures on documentation related to confidential and sensitive issues such as clearing debts, legal and Centrelink matters. The following quotes from interviews and focus groups illustrate the importance of this strategy for the local community:

> I think Aboriginal people don’t understand what a JP does, or what they can do. On the other hand, Aboriginal people probably won’t approach non-Aboriginal people, they don’t know who a JP is or where to find one, or are too shy to ask someone “are you a JP, can you do this?” Most JPs that I know of want to know the person that they are signing something for, in my experience. Whereas in our community, Aboriginal people, we know Aboriginal people. If we don’t, we can ask “Who’s your mother?” and everybody knows somebody, so that’s a good thing because we keep that close knit thing going

> When I first there [to get a document signed by a JP] the bloke...said...’you cold be Tom Jones for I know. Have you got ID? I didn’t have my licence at that time, one thing I did have was my medical card, but he didn’t accept that”

Aboriginal service provider  

Program participant

A number of Aboriginal people in the region have become JPs with the assistance of the Program.
**Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

1. The funders continue to fund the Lismore Driver Education Program *On the Road*.
2. The funders provide funding to employ and train an additional female driving instructor and a part time administrative assistant.
3. The funders provide funding for the purchase of a second vehicle for training purposes.
4. The funders promote and support the ongoing development of the Driver Project website in an effort to widen the reach of the Program across NSW Aboriginal communities outside of the Far North Coast.
5. ACE develops written training guidelines for instructors, which would assist any new instructors as well as organisations in other areas of NSW wishing to set up similar programs.
6. SDRO be approached to contribute to the ongoing funding of *On the Road Program*
7. SDRO promote its services more widely and effectively within the North Coast Aboriginal community, including grounds for lifting of suspensions, means of repayment, develop alternative ways to pay, and time to pay for Aboriginal communities.
4.2 PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**Key Objective 5**

Assess the effectiveness of the management of the program by identifying:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a)</td>
<td>The processes that guide the operation of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>How the program is managed by the auspicing body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>The influence of the local community on the management of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>How the management relates to the funding body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Processes that guide the operation of the program**

Adult Community Education, Lismore, provides an educational context for the operation of the program. As discussed in Section 4.1 (above) Program, participants are also enrolled students in a registered training package and as such the Program is structured by the administrative and reporting arrangements required an education course.

The On the Road Program Coordinator, working in close collaboration with the Aboriginal driving instructor, manages the day-to-day operations of the Programs. These two key staff work as a small team and consult regularly with the ACE Aboriginal Programs Coordinator and the College Principal on matters related to the management of the Program. Program staff also receive advice from a local advisory committee, which includes key Aboriginal community members and professional and service representatives, as well as informal advice through its many partnerships and collaborations with outside organizations, including Aboriginal elders, through a process of ongoing consultation and feedback.

A key feature of the Program is its flexibility and responsiveness to community need. Flexibility in the management of the program is crucial, as the success of the program is its culturally acceptability and responsiveness to participants’ demands. For example, the Program schedule enables the staff to spend time in the rural communities to help people with whatever assistance they need at the time,

> When we have the day out there, is for helping people fill out their forms, unpaid fines and that, so they can get their licence and any assistance that they need with getting their licence.

Program staff

Staff consult with the Aboriginal organizations where they recruit participants as to when and where the next stage of the Program will be conducted. Constant monitoring of activities e.g. brief analysis of rallies, newsletters, requests for feedback e.g. on website – looking for ways to improve not just expand on the operation.

**Program management**

The initial agreement about where the Program operates was made by the Steering Committee comprised of the funding bodies. There is ongoing decision making on a regular basis in regard to communities visited based on community need and feedback and availability of resources.
ACE Lismore has a particular interest in and commitment to Aboriginal education and youth education, with its involvement in the former for more than 10 years. ACE management described the organization’s involvement with the Aboriginal community as a long process of trust building. The management role of ACE, in regard to Aboriginal education, is to find people who will go the extra mile, to auspice programs, and to provide support from morale building to professional support.

We all have a commitment to adult education being for all people, not just the middle class. It is a very hard road to maintain, especially the reporting and regulation. When you get to the nitty gritty you have to go along with the disadvantage. Aboriginal people have had a really bad deal at school, at court with government. We have to work on percentages. We know not everyone is not going to succeed— you have to allow that to happen

ACE staff

Influence of the local community
A number of mechanisms including community partnerships ensure the influence of the community over the program management and advice taken from Elders Groups, through a process of constantly checking the acceptability of the Program’s initiatives, another way in which the community exercises an influence on the management of the Program is through the key personnel. One of the Program staff is an Aboriginal elder who is well known and highly respected throughout the region. Feedback from focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews was supportive of the way in which the community currently exerted an influence on the Program, as indicated by the following quote:

Being ‘in tune’ with the Indigenous community, has been a fundamental reason for the success of the On the Road program. Steve Fitzgerald works particularly hard to ensure this connectedness, and Bucky Robinson, being recognized an Indigenous elder, ensures this close connection with community.

Local service provider

Relationship with the funding body
A Steering Committee consisting of representatives from AGD, RTA, MAA and ACE forms the main formal mechanism for communication between the Program and the funding body. Over the past 3 years, the Committee has met on a basis to receive progress reports, advise and recommend any changes.
Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. *On the Road* staff continue to work flexibly within the Aboriginal communities but use available means of communication, such as the website, newsletters, or media, to communicate their work to others in the community.

2. *On the Road* staff invite the wider Aboriginal community input into the future developments and/or planned changes of the Program.
4.3 The Impact of the Program

Key Objective 3
Identify the impact of the program in terms of:

a) The increased number of people who access the computer based driver knowledge test in the local Aboriginal organization

b) The increased number of people gaining/re-gaining and/or attempting to gain/regain a Class C licence.

c) Improved literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities of participants in the program

d) The number of Aboriginal people participating in a driver mentor program.

This Section assesses the impact of the On the Road Program in terms of the Program’s stated objectives. It is informed by both quantitative data on Program participation obtained from ACE Lismore and the qualitative data collected through stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions.

It is important to take into consideration that one of the objectives of the Program is to empower individuals and encourage them to look after their own needs. To this end, this Section, in addition to outcomes data provided by ACE, presents information on outcomes from the perspective of Program participants by using direct quotes from focus groups. Recognizing the difficulty of assessing outcomes for complex community based interventions careful consideration needs to be given to the framework in which On the Road o might be evaluated in the future.

**Participant outcomes**

Table 5 shows the recorded outcomes of the On the Road program from 2000 to 2005.

**Table 5: Participant Outcomes 2000-2005**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Community</th>
<th>Debt Repayment</th>
<th>Learners Licence</th>
<th>Light Rigid Licence</th>
<th>P Plate Licence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage Tree Island</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muli Muli/Woodenbong</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coraki/Box Ridge</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio/Tabulam</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others* includes: Bonalbo, Nimbin, Malabugilmah, Maclean, Yaegle</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: ACE Lismore
According to this data, since the program commenced in 2000, it has achieved important outcomes. Fifty-nine people have obtained their learner’s licence, twenty-five people have obtained their “P” plate licence, six have obtained a ‘Light Rigid’ vehicle licence and eighty-nine persons have received assistance with fine negotiation through the State Debt Recovery Office.

A number of limitations, which need to be taken into account in the interpretation of the data presented in Table 5. Firstly, information on participant outcomes is based primarily on information provided to ACE by participants on an ad hoc basis. To date information on outcomes has not been systematically recorded by ACE. It is quite possible that the figures represent an under-reporting as people who have been enrolled in the Program and have continued to progress through the stages of obtaining a P2 or full licence, or have become employed as a result of having their licence, but do not report or contact ACE to inform them about their success. Secondly, for practical reasons data has not been collected at all on the number of people accessing computers. Here it is necessary to rely on qualitative information provided by Program participants and other stakeholders about the success of strategies. The most reliable and accurate of the data presented is the numbers who have repaid fines through the SDRO. Due to the formality involved in making an application to repay their debt to the State Debt Recovery Office, Program staff are able to monitor those numbers more carefully.

Thirdly, apart from the difficulties of following up participant outcomes, there are also a number of inconsistencies in the recording of data, which are related to the nature of the Program. The community based character of On the Road, its broad geographical spread, its responsiveness to Aboriginal community needs and the flexible approach to the timeframes for course completion. These factors make it difficult to capture all participation, including casual participation and to follow up on participant progression towards obtaining a full licence. A more consistent approach to data collection using a computerized database system and a more precise definition of active participant in the future could provide more reliable estimate of meaningful participation in the Program within a defined timeframe.

Recognizing the importance of better data collection on participant outcomes, ACE has begun discussion around improving data collection and the suggestion of offering a small monetary payment (e.g. $30) for participants who report outcomes following their completion of the course has been made. It is important that this improved data collection occur without an overly rigid framework for reporting which would impose an onerous administrative burden on Program staff and the auspicing organization, jeopardizing the integrity of the program.

**Accessing the Driver Knowledge Test**

As mentioned above, it is difficult to quantify the number of people who access the computer based driver knowledge test in the local Aboriginal organizations. Although users have to use a password to gain access to the program and try the test, at the present time none of the entries are recorded or tallied and the tasking of doing so would stretch current resources.

The most relevant quantitative information on the success of DKT comes from the total number of participants in the course, which is recorded in Tables 3 and 4
(Section 4.1) which indicates the number of male and female participants and those recorded for each community, and Table 6 (below), which indicates the extensive reach of the Program and the Driver Knowledge Test in thirty community locations.

Table 6: Driver Knowledge Test Outreach Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Postcode</th>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>DKT Outreach Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>2480</td>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>Lismore ACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ngullingah LALC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rekindling the Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Magpie Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lismore PCYC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gundarimbah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>2470</td>
<td>Kyogle / Richmond Valley</td>
<td>Casino ACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Oaks Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boolangle LALC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>2472</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>Kyogle Youth Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kyogle CTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guggin Guddubah LALC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nimbin CTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box Ridge (Coraki)</td>
<td>2471</td>
<td>Richmond Valley</td>
<td>Bogal LALC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kurraqchee Coop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yaegel Yelgun CDEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jali (Cabbage Tree Island)</td>
<td>2477</td>
<td>Ballina</td>
<td>Bunjum Co op</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jali Health Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio (Tabulum) Bonalbo</td>
<td>2469</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>Rio/Tabulum CDEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bonalbo Aboriginal Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bonalbo School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muli Multi Woodenbong</td>
<td>2476</td>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>Woodenbong School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muli Multi LALC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>2481</td>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>Arawal NPWS Depot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nimbin School, Youth Flats, Nimbin Community Centre /CTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yamba / McLean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Baryugil / Mulabugulum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Minyamai (Evans Head)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: ACE Lismore

Qualitative data obtained from focus group discussions and stakeholder interviews indicate that Aboriginal community members in most community locations regularly access the DKT computers. Most of the locations involve easy walk in access to computers and are non-threatening. Premises are open during office hours and in
many cases, participants use the computer without prior bookings. There are no charges for accessing the computer test in these locations. Some interviewees from remote communities such as Jali and Muli Muli suggested that although they were aware of the Program, they would like the Program to be more active in their areas and to see the Program staff more often given the demand for their services.

Increasing the number of Aboriginal licensed drivers

Lack of licences in rural Aboriginal communities

Having a driving licence, although taken for granted in urban settings, it is still a luxury for many Aboriginal people living in rural areas. Individuals are encouraged to engage in a variety of diversions to avoid being caught and fined through lack of access to obtaining a licence. One of the service providers explains the dilemma in which these communities have to face in times of need and emergency.

Up in our area, an isolated area, we have a lot of problems with our people. There’s two, three drivers in our little community of about a hundred and fifty. They’ve either got to go to Grafton or they go to Ballina to the doctors, or Casino. Drivers out of town, and there’s no ambulance or anything, they take their car there and get their kids to the hospital; if they go to Ballina, they’ve got to go through Tuggerah to get to Ballina there’s a police station there, either go the back road or hope that he’s in Tuggerah or out in Casino, or out of town somewhere, to get to the hospital and back. Same as they go from here to Grafton, they’ve got to try and get into Grafton and get into the hospital...they’ve got to go to Tenterfield or Casino shopping...no matter which way they go they’ve got to go past the police station.

Aboriginal community leader

The consequences of an unlawful but necessary act, in desperate times, leave its mark on the individuals as well as the community. Here is how one of the interviewees explained the situation:

Tabulam is a good example; how is that person then going to get a licence? What’s happened is that person gets stuck; they will drive anyway, eventually they will get caught again, to the point that they don’t care; drink driving, disqualification period, then it will come before the magistrate, one, two, three, four disqualifications, three of those disqualifications were where they were driving under the influence, six months jail. It might be purely on traffic related matters. So the reason I am particularly interested in this program is because it is a grassroots program. With the young people, you can target the age group where they are given the opportunity to get their licence to stop them getting in this cycle; so if they live at Tabulam, they might not have a car, but they might have a licence, so if and when they get some sort of employment, or they move away and they get a job and they can afford a car, they have got the licence to go with it.

Aboriginal community leader
Those who work in and with the Aboriginal communities consider access to driving licence as an issue of equity and access. Having On the Road operating in these communities means giving a chance to the community members to go a long way in becoming an active member of their community.

I think a lot of families are disadvantaged; it is not only in the Aboriginal communities, it is throughout all our community, but if they can’t get their licence, if Mum and Dad haven’t got a car, a registered car, if Mum and Dad haven’t got a licence, who is going to teach them?

Non-Aboriginal service provider

The importance of a licence to participants

There are many advantages in having a driver licence stressed by individual participants in focus groups. The importance of being mobile varied from individual to individual, but included accessing activities most Australians take for granted. Participants described the experience of having a driver’s licence in the following way:

- To get away from home…
- to go where the excitements are
- To find a job because you have to go where the job is…
- Have it on you CV…
- It is liberation…
- It is less frustration when driving…
- Can use it do outgoing activities…
- To use it to drive to the church”…
- Use for school holidays…
- Chance to get away form the family…
- A vehicle to move up the driving skills/licence level…
- A lot of work opportunities now, in my life…
- Becoming independent

In some cases having a driving licence meant ability to conduct daily life activities, socializing and attending cultural and social events. According to one of the participants in the focus groups:

...from my experience, because I’m a single parent, and having no assistance form the children’s father, it’s hard not having a licence, not being able to take them to school and events. And because I grew up here, but I’m originally from [a town in north NSW] and if I need to travel home for funerals, I’m unable to [without the driving licence].

Focus group participant

For many individuals the driver’s licence meant becoming independent for the first time:
Before I had my licence, I felt trapped, I couldn’t go anywhere, and with a licence, my wife, it’s really frustrating, because she’d say ‘do I have to go now’” and now I have my licence, I feel independent

Program Participant

**Importance of drivers licence for ID**

Having a drivers licence, has had an important impact in providing an important document for proving one’s identity. There are many instances in which Aboriginal people have to prove their identity for example to government agencies, banks, or service providers, even thought they are well known and established in their own community. For many Aboriginal people facing government bureaucracy is a daunting task. In the absence of any identification card, a driver’s licence is and accepted source of identity by almost all of the government organization as an identity card. Without one, individuals have a hard time establishing who they are. Even having one’s document and signature authenticated by Justice of the Peace becomes a difficult task to master.

**Impact on literacy skills and self-esteem**

As mentioned previously in Section 2.2 poorer education outcomes for Aboriginal people and the large number of adults with literacy problems means that literacy can be a major barrier for Aboriginal people wishing to drive a vehicle legally. For some participants, the RTA knowledge test is beyond current literacy levels. The approach of the On the Road Program staff is to assist participants with the reading and comprehension of the questions and to refer some participants on to specific literacy programs.

The evidence from the focus group and individual interviews indicates that participants place a high value on having access to and using RTA tests at their own pace. Participants commented on their importance in the learning process, facilitating repayment of fines and assistance with the DKT

*He [Steve/Bucky] explains the questions but you have to do the work for yourself...he tells you if it is wrong. It comes up on the computer*

Program participant

*...young people have a connection with someone who has got those programs now, be it a youth worker or a community centre or a neighborhood centre, but wherever they feel comfortable to go and see, they will, whereas there is no way you will get a lot of young people to go into the RTA; they don’t do that, that’s a scary environment.*

Local service provider

Most program participants have had little experience with using computers. The assistance providers by Program staff illustrated in the quote below, exemplifies the intensive nature of the assistance often required by Aboriginal adult learners particularly when dealing with a new technology:
The computer program that I do, I do one on one, and sometimes you get two and three, but when that happens the ones at the back they all laugh, playing up, telling the person, yes, that puts his hands up and it gets him confused. So I get them one by one...I've got to explain to them what it means. I always tell them look at the picture, the answer's always in the picture. Look at the picture read the question two or three times, something like that. I've got a few who can't read at all, so I read the questions, read the answer and then if you're happy about it, could you read it again... Then I ask them the question, which one do you think?

Program staff

When you actually go into the community and you are there, and they know that there's going to be people to help them fill forms out, and give them that support....if you were to set something up, in an office or something and say “Come in”, I don't think you would get them there....Hands on, they know they are going to get that help. You give them a form and say “Fill that out”, they've got no idea; whereas I know myself, I don't even ask people if they can read or write; I just say “Here's the form here; do you want me to fill it out for you, or are you going to fill it out or what?” You don't even ask, and if they can't read or write, you just go and read the questions out and you can fill it out.

Program staff

Information obtained from stakeholder interviews and focus group discussion indicates that the program has had an impact on increasing the literacy skills and self-esteem of people participating in the course:

It is amazing what the difference of having a licence does to self-esteem. And job prospects, and not being in jail - prospects- that's a pretty big deal. Constantly we are struggling with issues around jail for Aboriginal people.

Local service provider

The impact in terms of self-esteem is assessed according to participant comments. For example, respondents commented that the program had the effect of counterbalancing the negative feelings and discomfort they usually experienced when normally accessing the RTA office. Factors influencing increased self esteem include greater confidence when accessing RTA driver knowledge test, greater confidence as a result of participation in driver mentor program, pride in gaining or regaining a licence, ability to contribute positively to family and community life. The following quote is from one of the driver mentors,

I found the self esteem that kids have had has been increased a hell of a lot, particularly if you are getting the same ones for the various Rallies that we have had and you can obviously see the excitement and
satisfaction when they actually do go and get their licence, and I think it is a brilliant system.

Driver mentor

In addition to raising the self-esteem of participants, the ‘hands on’ approach of the ACE staff assists them identify participants with limited literacy and innumeracy skills. These participants are encouraged to attend literacy classes at either ACE or other relevant organisations. Finally, these tests are useful to help the Aboriginal people to familiarize themselves with the way the RTA conducts and administers tests. This opportunity to practice reduces the intimidation, real or perceived, Aboriginal people experience when they attend the RTA to sit the Driver Knowledge Test.

The end result in many cases reported in focus groups, is that people are more confident and this is just the first step towards greater achievement,

It is also showing people to be more responsible; to pay their fines, and go out and get a licence, and that is working. And you see them saving up to get a loan to buy a car.

Local service provider

Facilitating the transition to further education

The delivery of the On the Road Program through an adult education facility offers many opportunities for the Aboriginal participants in the program, including the ability to easily progress to another vocational course or to obtain more intensive literacy support. Completion of the driver education course has opened the doors to a number of students to enroll in other courses, such as literacy programs, arts and craft or vocational courses, or in some cases apply to become a Justice of the Peace. Conversely, Aboriginal students who enroll in ACE literacy or other courses are encouraged to go on to enroll in the Driver Education Program. At this stage, no formal data is collected on the numbers of participants who may have progressed to further education.

Increasing employment opportunities

The implications of having a driving licence in terms of employment can be lifelong. It is difficult, therefore to identify the longer-term outcomes of the On the Road in terms of finding or retaining a job. The following job outcome data, provided by ACE, can be correlated to participants receiving a driving licence since 2000. The data was checked against data provided by the Program Coordinator and found to be correct. The following job outcome data can be directly correlated with the Program.
Table 7: Employment obtained as a result of the Program 2000-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage Tree Island</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muli Muli/Woodenbong</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coraki/Box Ridge</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio/Tabulam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Bay</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others* includes: Bonalbo, Nimbin, Malabugilmah, Maclean, Yaegle</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: ACE Lismore

People represented by the figures are employed in variety of positions. Some work for National Parks and Wildlife, in administrative and government offices, driving buses or coaches for government and private organization, in Aboriginal Health setting, with the local Land Councils. Cooperatives, as well as in CDEP schemes.

A driver’s licence particularly in rural and regional areas is essential for finding and maintaining employment. Due to unavailability of proper public transports, associated cost with these services, long distances between places of residency and employment, having a driving licence is the first priority on people’ list of needs. This has been evident from the focus group discussions held in various areas. Beyond job prospect, having a licence meant opening opportunities to do more than traveling back and forth between where one lives and work. Here is a situation where the participants explain how having a driving licence improve one’s quality of life:

Having your licence is one way to get any job. It opens up a lot of opportunities, you can travel to and from work, travel distances to work, and it’s good to have just to say this my referral

Program participant

In some cases beyond having, a driver licence is the opportunity to move on and strive for better job opportunities.

I had done tour guiding with Steve – he assessed me for Certificate 2 in tour guide – Awakal is going to have its own cultural centre – and I will be able to get employed as tour guide – all parks and wildlife vehicles are manual – I had been driving my own vehicle. Now I have a manual licence. I will be able to work as a tour guide at the new cultural centre.

Program participant
CASE STUDY
Mr B is a trainee land management officer with National Parks and Wildlife and a current participant in the On the Road Program. He has been in court twice for the same offence and told by the magistrate that he could go to jail next time. Steve helped him to sort out State Debt Recovery issues so he could get his learners licence. He has now done the driver knowledge test and is now completing his 50 hours driving requirement. He is keen to join the next rally. He believes getting to RTA and sitting for the test is “nerve breaking” and had a chance of failing. It is a problem for many people to have to front up at RTA. Some people don’t even have a birth certificate. According to Mr T. people like Steve are easy to approach. He thinks that a program like this need to have someone that community trusts. Mr T. told us that he knows other people in the CDEP are going to court for driving without a licence. He has the driving test exercise on his computer in his office. Other people come and use it as well. People find out about the test by words of mouth. Mr T. believes his licence is his job. If he does not have one, as it is now, he has to wait until some one get his to where he needs to be. Or he has to drive without a licence. He is has offence and now is getting his driving licence back through this Program.

Participation in the driver mentor program
Since 2000 there have been 10 Rallies for Reconciliation. More than thirty Aboriginal participants have attended these rallies, often on multiple occasions. Participation levels vary from rally to rally. Low levels of participation in any one Rally is not seen as an indicator of a lack of success, but rather an opportunity for more intensive learning. In addition to increasing Aboriginal community knowledge about the Program, this aspect of On the Road, has increased public support for the Program from the non-aboriginal community of the Far North Coast.

The rallies have been an extremely positive and successful aspect of the Program. As the name suggests, reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-aboriginal community members is a key objective of the rallies. For many Aboriginal participants the Rally was their first experience of being in a car with a non-Aboriginal person and the feedback from focus groups indicate that this was a positive experience for them. Similarly, the experience was very worthwhile for the mentor drivers:

The thing I find really amazing about the program is that it is really practical, it does address the issue, the real issue and so I guess there are all sorts of benefits for the Indigenous people; but then the Rallies, for themselves, they go around the country so it is an education in itself, so people are starting to get another appreciation for country, so it is an education for the white driver as well. It works on a number of levels; and then there’s the stuff that Steve is always teaching people about these issues and why they are important, so it is also an education about the privileges about being white….so it might advantage them. It really has so many things.

Driver mentor

From the point of view of reconciliation then, the rallies have clearly been a success story for the program, and indeed for the Far North Coast community. Clearly, the
non-aboriginal mentor drivers viewed the rally as an opportunity to break down barriers and for them to get firsthand experience of being with an Aboriginal person. For some people it was the first time they had an opportunity to talk to an Aboriginal person. Feedback from mentors indicated that rallies have improved non-aboriginal people’s attitude and perception towards Aboriginal people.

*Just having someone who hasn’t been able to have a licence because they couldn’t pay the fines or whatever, sitting in the car with him, it has changed a lot of attitudes. And for the young persons as well, it’s understandable why they would be anti-establishment, but he is good.*

Driver mentor

*I have been interested in the way such a project, looking at it not from an Indigenous perspective, but from a non-indigenous perspective; this quite rare opportunity to get Indigenous people, to actually meet an Indigenous person, to spend a day as two people in the car; and one of the things that my work has revealed is the lack of contact.*

Driver mentor

*a lot of the time people think... I’d really like to meet Aboriginal people, but how do I do it?” Something like this is a way to do it.*

Driver mentor

This aspect of the program provides the Program managers with a well-deserved sense of achievement and knowledge that their efforts are contributing to a larger civic good,

*Steve loves rallies for reconciliation not just because he thinks they will get their licence, but because he sees white people learn about Aboriginal culture.*

Driver mentor

After each Rally, the Program Coordinator issues certificates of thanks to partners and participants and undertakes an evaluation. Reports produced by the Coordinator indicate that learners were keen on the experience, and felt they had grown in skill and confidence (and self-esteem) during the day.

Indeed the rallies provide a service for the whole community

*...a lot of white people come along and tell me they can’t afford to pay the downtown driving guys. If I have the spare time, I take them; a lot of white people they’re just as bad as us; we’re not all rich, I don’t care who they are, if I’ve got time to do it, I help them out.*

Program staff
Recommendations

It is recommended that

1. ACE implement improved reporting systems using the current OASIS database to record and report on participant enrollment and participant outcomes within specified timeframes.

2. ACE investigate the possibility of configuring OASIS to incorporate participant outcomes as Units of Study within the Driver Program Course. This should facilitate the reporting of outcomes such as: obtaining a birth certificate; successfully negotiating lifting of suspension of licence through repayment of debs with SDRO; obtaining Red Provisional licence; obtaining Green Provisional licence; employment outcome; becoming a JP.

3. ACE explore the option to offer incentives to improve the recording of participant outcomes.

4. ACE, in collaboration with the Aboriginal communities and community partners, develop a set of broader indicators of success for the Program.

5. RTA investigate a system of accreditation for people to supervise the DKT test in remote locations.

6. RTA improve the current driving licence software test by making it culturally appropriate with extra visual resources.
4.4 PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Key Objective One

Assess whether the program has:

a) Reduced the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the 7 driving offences
b) Reduced the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region.

The outcomes evaluation of community-based programs poses a number of challenges. The first is the challenge of establishing a direct causal link between the initiative and outcomes. In the absence of previously established controls and an experimental or quasi-experimental design, it is not possible to establish a causal relationship between this intervention and the stated outcomes. It is difficult for this Program therefore, to separate the effects of the intervention from other policies and programs, which may be operating in the region.

Secondly, the period in which the Program has been operational is relatively short. A much longer period is usually necessary for the emergence of outcomes of community-based programs.

The third challenge for the outcomes evaluation is availability of routinely collected data. The lack of identification of Aboriginality in RTA road crash or licensing data makes it impossible to measure whether the program has contributed to reducing the number of road traffic crashes in the Far North Coast Region. There is a strong case to be made for including the identification of Aboriginality in licensing or road crash data. Additionally, as the Program impacts on only a small number of people compared to the population in the region as a whole, it is unlikely that a change in traffic crashes, if it existed, would be detectable.

The major focus of this section, therefore, is on assessing whether the Program has contributed to a reduction in the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to selected driving offences.

**Aboriginal contact with the criminal justice system**

Two main sources of data were used to assess whether the program has reduced the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the driving offences:

- Quantitative data on the number of Aboriginal people who came in contact with the criminal justice system for selected driving offences between 2000 and 2004 for the five LGAs of Lismore, Kyogle, Richmond Valley, Ballina and Byron, was obtained from the Attorney General’s Department, Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) database. The complete data is presented in Appendix 7.
- Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups
Table 8 presents data on the number of people who have come before the courts for driving without a licence (Section 25 (2) Never licensed person drive vehicle on road), one of the 5 offences identified as particularly significant for NSW Aboriginal communities (Thomas 2003a).

Data was obtained from the BOCSAR database on the number of offences by Aboriginal people throughout NSW and the number of Aboriginal people in the five target LGAs. Rates were calculated for Aboriginal people in NSW and Aboriginal people in the Far North Coast for the same years using population data derived from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2001) Census of Population and Housing in which NSW Indigenous profiles are available. Using this source, the eligible Aboriginal population above 16 years old for all of NSW is estimated to be 69,008, while the eligible Aboriginal population over 16 years old for the five target LGAs of the North Coast is estimated to be 2,343. Offence rates were calculated per 10,000 populations. Note also, that the data used in this calculation is for law part 35017 only where complete data is available for the years 2000 to 2004. Data available under other law parts listed under this Section (51407 and 51408 are only available from 2003 and 2004.

There were 644 NSW Aboriginal and 35 North Coast Aboriginal offences for driving without a licence between 2000 and 2004. The North Coast Aboriginal population had higher rates of offending for this category than the NSW Aboriginal population (as a whole) in each year except 2003 when the rate was slightly lower. The largest differential between the North Coast Aboriginal offenders and the whole of NSW Aboriginal is for the years 2000 and 2001.
As evident from Figure 1 there has been a recent decline in the offence of driving without a licence for the Aboriginal populations of both NSW and the North Coast populations. Importantly, the decline in the number of offences is considerably greater for the North Coast Aboriginal population than for the rest of NSW. Although the North Coast Aboriginal population was one and a half times as likely to come before the courts on the charge of driving without a licence as Aboriginal people in the rest of NSW, this represents a significant improvement from prior to 2002.

It should be noted that, although this improvement coincides with the introduction of the funded *On the Road Program*, it is not possible to directly attribute the decline in offence rates to this Program. Ongoing evaluation of the Program is required to confirm whether the program is associated with this decrease in offences.
Table 9: Selected Driving Offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast</th>
<th>Rate Ratio#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Offences</td>
<td>Offence Rate*</td>
<td>Number of Offences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td>176.5</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>200.7</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1362</td>
<td>197.37</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>189.25</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1127</td>
<td>163.31</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8488</td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SOURCE: BOCSAR Database
# Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs. NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population

Table 9 presents data on the number of people who have come before the courts for the following four of the five offences identified as particularly significant for NSW Aboriginal communities (Thomas 2003a):

- Section 25 (1)(a) Unlicensed for Class [Drive without being licensed for that purpose]
- Section 25A (1)(a) Drive while disqualified from holding a licence NSW and North Coast Aboriginal 2000-2004
- Section 25 A(2)(a) Drive on road while suspended
- Section 25 A(3)(a) Drive while licence refused

There were 8488 NSW Aboriginal and 393 North Coast Aboriginal offences for driving without a licence between 2000 and 2004. The North Coast Aboriginal population had higher rates of offending for the selected driving offences than the NSW Aboriginal population in each year except 2004 when the rate was slightly lower. The largest differential, between the North Coast Aboriginal offences and the NSW Aboriginal population is for the year 2003 when North Coast Aboriginal people had nearly twice the likelihood of being brought before the courts on one of the selected driving charges than Aboriginal people in the rest of NSW.
Figure 2 shows a recent decline in the offence of driving without a licence for the Aboriginal populations of NSW. North Coast Aboriginal offence rates remain higher than for the rest of NSW, but the rate here indicates a decline between 2003 and 2004.

Participants' and Stakeholders' Views
The extent of the problem in the Far North Coast is illustrated by the following quote from a stakeholder interview:

Constantly we are struggling with issues around jail for Aboriginal people, in my work. Recently there was some funding granted for an agency that could train Aboriginal people up as security officers. The benefits of training them include employment and the respect that comes with that, and also the cultural stuff around that they can handle much better crimes committed by Aboriginal people like especially petty crime. There is a lot of petty crime in (name of town) committed by people under 14; police officers can’t handle it because the kids are under 14. We had money to train up young men 18-25 to deal with young people, but we could not find a single young man who did not have a criminal record.

Police officer
From the perspective of participants, not having a driver’s licence has a huge implication for their contact with the local police:

> *The police come around here and book you, and then they get the fine, and they can’t pay the fine, next thing, they drive without the licence, and they get booked, but this time they go to goal.*

Aboriginal service provider

The implication of having a licence is enormous:

> *If they have a licence, their first contact with the police won’t be unlicenced, unregistered, uninsured, so they don’t get into that cycle; it stops it before it starts.*

Aboriginal service provider

In answer to the question: Do you think *On the Road* has contributed to a reduction in the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system, participants gave the following responses:

...I would expect that it could – get young people licensed and a sense of achievement – they’ve got a better future. There has got to be a heightened respect in the community…Once you get a licence and a pay packet – if you get to that stage you start to value those pieces of paper because they get you things that you didn’t have before.

Local service provider

It would have to; the kids I’ve seen on the program….it’d just have to. With traffic related things, it will at least stop that; and wherever you are in the world, once a young person gets their licence, and gets a bit of freedom, especially with employment now, tell me anywhere you can get a job, especially in a rural area without a licence. One thing leads to another; if they get a licence, they go from here from getting a job, to up here. If they haven’t got a job, what do they do? They’re not going to school, not going to TAFE, again you go back to the licence; how do they get to school, to TAFE? Public transport up here, probably not as good as it could be.

Local government officer

To facilitate the further evaluation of the program, it is recommended that participants in the program be asked to participate in the evaluation. This would involve signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants.

**Impact on road traffic crashes**

In May 2004, key road safety stakeholders met at NSW Country Road Safety Summit and made the following recommendation (RTA 2004a, RTA 2004b):
The RTA coordinate effective research into Aboriginal transport and road safety issues, including identification of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status is all data collections in RTA road crash data, licensing and registration, and allow cross agency sharing of information. (Recommendation 8.15)

As previously mentioned, a major limitation on the RTA data, for the purpose of the evaluation of strategies targeted at the Aboriginal population is that Aboriginality is not identified in the RTA road crash data. Given the lack of detailed data on road crashes involving Aboriginal drivers, and the relatively small size of the On the Road program, it is unlikely that clear outcomes will emerge.

In the absence of RTA statistics, qualitative data gathered from the interviews with the key stakeholders and focus groups provides some insights on the safety aspects of the Program. Interviews and focus groups indicate that safety education and promotion, talks about safety issues and safety checks are an aspect of the current program; however, this aspect of the Program could be greatly enhanced.

There are a number of ways in which the program can be said to promote safe driving practices, such as emphasizing wearing of seatbelts, overcrowding of vehicles, etc.

The program also offers an opportunity for professional driver instructors teaching driving skills. This helps to resolve the common problem of family members become driving instructors for their children and family members.

A lot of the family are not really up to date with the new driving, the rules and stuff.

Program participant

When asked about the emphasis they placed on safety in their driver instruction On the Road instructors said:

Steve and I, we get people trying for their Ls, young people that you’ve really got to teach….to keep their hands on the steering wheel all the time…they drive one hand all the time, and you’ve got to keep reminding them to keep their hands on the steering wheel.

Program staff

Drivers being able to drive free of fear of police also enhance safety

...if more young blokes had their licences then the local police are less likely to have police chases, running away from the police. Yes, the fear. Yes, that danger. Crashing...If they see the police coming, they speed up to try to get away from the police, and they’re not watching the road, they’re watching the mirror to see where the police are. But if they had a licence, they wouldn’t have to speed up. This training in process is going to stop a lot of P-platers dying on the road, because they will be trained in what’s right and what’s wrong, and that’s going to prevent a lot of accidents.

Program staff
Because of *On the Road* Program, a change in the attitude of the local young Aboriginal people has occurred, in particular the safety roles. This was evident from the interview held with one of the stakeholders in the program,

> If they’re licenced – even if they’re 15 or 16 and stealing cars – they can see that you can do this legally and you’re not going to be put away – and they become valuable people in the community. For example there are 2 trainees (here)– one not licensed – she knows she has to be. We have really frank discussions. She says ‘I won’t do that any more’. [she] has driven without a licence before or driven under the influence – won’t do that now – wants to get a good job.

Local government officer

*On the Road* has the potential to greatly increase road safety knowledge and reduce injuries. This is currently incorporated into the driver education program, and it is assumed that once an Aboriginal person achieves a licence it will be valued and therefore the driver will act in a more responsible and safe manner. However, to date, the primary focus of the program has been is on teaching participants to drive and achieving a legal driving status. The safety aspect of the program could be further enhanced by expanding the road safety education component, such as website, links, and outreach activities.
Additional objectives and implications

Key Objective 6
Ascertain any additional objectives of the program identified by community and service providers, and to evaluate the:

a) Potential impact of the objectives identified on the management of the program, and
b) The feasibility of achieving the stated outcome of the objective.

The following additional themes emerged during stakeholder interviews and focus groups.

A Holistic Approach
The holistic approach of the Program, with its emphasis on personal and community empowerment and its flexibility and responsiveness to emerging needs, is strongly supported by Adult Education philosophy, and confirms the views of many of those with experience in Aboriginal adult education.

_This particular project should be part of a paradigm shift about how government thinks about Indigenous education. We’re pushing people into courses but unless you have a driving licence ... It’s such an opening into employment and education. Having a drivers licence is fundamental._

ACE staff

The paradigm shift mentioned above refers as much to the training provided, as to the ways in which it is provided, to ways of communicating that work for people, flexibility and a holistic approach, which entails genuine concern, empathy and support for where people are in their lives, which philosophically is not separated from their learning needs.

There is also widespread acknowledgement by service providers that change is a slow process given the enormity of the problems being addressed by the Program, and there is a need to support the work that is currently being done,

_I think they have looked at the problem, and the problem is incarceration, and the most direct thing they could find to stop that is by getting people to get their licenses, and that is what they have done. I really haven’t thought about how they could extend their program because I think it is good how it runs now; I find again, outsiders, I haven’t been here from the start, so there might be reasons some things haven’t been done. I think it is a slow process, they have to work out what works._

Aboriginal service provider

Recognizing the difficulty of assessing outcomes for complex community based interventions careful consideration needs to be given to the framework in which On the Road might be evaluated in the future. A set of broad ‘holistic’ outcomes be developed as well as more narrow focused ones, which are easier to measure and
more readily attributable to particular interventions and that indicators be developed where direct measurement is not possible.

Some of the most valuable aspects of On the Road are difficult to measure. To this end, it is recommended that ACE instigates a formative evaluation process to assist with quality assurance for the Program. Rather than being an onerous administrative burden this could entail the ongoing collection of qualitative data on the less tangible program outcomes and outcomes, which are meaningful to the Aboriginal community. This could be done, for example, by collecting stories, which show improved self-esteem and literacy, the impact of the program on other family members and the value of rallies for reconciliation for improving race relations. This could be done on an annual basis or through a quarterly newsletter and could be reported to the funders as program performance indicators. Outcomes could be fed back to the community through, for example, community workshops on a regular basis.

Value of schools based Program
The Program has had limited but highly successful outcomes in some of the local high schools. Some participants have recommended further expansion of this work. This could involve targeting high school students in school at years 11 and 12 possibly as part of a vocational education focus, which would facilitate their entry to the workforce.

Transferability of the Program to other areas
The following aspects of the Program are just some of the elements that would enhance its transferability to other areas:
- The process of community engagement provides a model for work in other areas, this includes the close connection with Aboriginal community elders and organizations and the outreach work with Aboriginal community members
- The process and operation of partnerships and networks, in which there is co-operation and mutual benefit, also provides a model of how to be successful with community based projects
- The connections between adult education, licensing, and employment are quite unique to this Program but demonstrate the strength of a holistic and flexible approach
- Considerable work which has gone into producing learning materials, for example the DKT, flowcharts, availability of forms etc
- The website is an invaluable tool, which could serve as an immediate resource for communities wishing to begin work in this area.
- The Rallies for Reconciliation have well established processes and procedures, which could be duplicated in other areas as a stand-alone project or as part of a more comprehensive Driver Education program. There is very good documentation to support this happening in other areas which could greatly benefit from the reconciliation aspects of the event.
- The work within schools is limited but using the On the Road approach has great potential for expansion both within the North Coast and in other regions.
**Recommendations**

It is recommended that

1. RTA coordinate effective research into Aboriginal transport and road safety issues, including identification of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status in all data collections in RTA road crash data, licensing and registration, and allow cross agency sharing of information.

2. That the road safety aspect of the Program be strengthened by increasing knowledge of road safety issues in the communities by including safety teaching in all aspects of driver training, improving road safety information on the website (e.g. through relevant web links) and by disseminating relevant road safety material though ACE Lismore.

3. Further evaluation of the program be undertaken involving participants signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants.

4. ACE instigate an ongoing formative evaluation process to assist with quality assurance for the Program involving the ongoing collection of qualitative data on the less tangible program outcomes and outcomes which are meaningful to the Aboriginal community and could be fed back to the community through, for example, community workshops on a regular basis.

5. ACE formally approach the RTA to receive authorization for the use of the DKT program in community localities

6. ACE Lismore investigate the feasibility of extending their work within schools by building partnerships and offering the program to students within local schools through out the region.
4.5 Viability of the Program as a Court Diversion Program

Key Objective 2
Assess the viability of the program as a court diversion program (in terms of the seven driving offences)

Developing a court diversion program
Since 2002 On the Road has focused primarily on meeting the needs of Aboriginal unlicensed drivers in gaining a licence and assisting those Aboriginal drivers whose licence has been suspended by RTA due to non-payment of debts to regain their class licence.

As seen from the discussion in Section 2.1 a large group of Aboriginal people have been disqualified from driving. Disqualification may be imposed on licensed drivers or on unlicensed drivers. These people must serve out what is sometimes a long period of disqualification before gaining or regaining a licence. To date, disqualification has been the only option for courts. The suggestion that On the Road be offered as a court diversion program would present options for court sentencing by offering alternate sanctions, which may avoid imprisonment and lead to outcomes that are more positive for the offender. Such a plan would be consistent with Recommendation 8.13 of the NSW Country Road Safety Summit 2004:

*The Government establishes standard and statewide sentencing and diversion options for Aboriginal people charged with driving offences.* (RTA 2004a)

Considerations and risks

Implications of re-offending
One consideration in offering a driver education court diversion program is the implication for offenders who re-offend. Persistent offenders remain a problem and having been mandated to a program could go against them.

Importance of addressing underlying values
Interviews and focus groups revealed that many Aboriginal community members have become resigned to not having a driver’s licence; the barriers to becoming a legal driver are too difficult to overcome. When asked if people worry about driving without a licence, respondents said,

>No, because I’ve nephews up there that are disqualified up to 2023, and one until 2034, disqualified not to drive, but he still drives, so what’s the use\*

Focus group participant

Any diversion program needs to consider underlying values and address attitudes to licensing. There is need for diversion programs to engage people in driving scheme
and to achieve a change of attitudes and behaviors, for example, safe driving and licensed driving.

**Structure of the Program is important**
From the point of view of the courts, it is important that any court diversion program be a well-structured course that certain rules are followed and that Probation and Parole supervise the program.

**Professional education**
The possible need to provide education and awareness programs for magistrates, police, legal and court staff needs to be considered.

**Successful diversion programs**
Non-traditional diversion programs came out of the 1990s Drug Crime Diversion Program (Cannabis Court). A number of existing models of court diversion or alternative sentencing options can be taken into account when considering the viability of the On the Road Program as a court diversion program.

Existing programs are positioned differently within the criminal justice system. There are two types of referrals for diversion programs: community self-referral and court referral.

- At the time of arrest there is a possibility of a caution (don’t do it again)
- Beyond the arrest, there is the pre-court period. (For example the Merit Scheme). The advantage of this approach is that it keeps people away from the court system.
- Most of the current schemes are post conviction, that is, if a person is found guilty there is a pre-sentencing option. In the general community these types of options have operated particularly in relation to drink driving or speeding offences. Those found guilty of such offences are given the opportunity to attend interventions, for example a six week course two hours a week to learn driving skills and safer driving. The person returns to the court, shows what they have done and that is taken into account in sentencing. Studies of this process indicates that going through this program have some benefits. Zaffran showed a 25% less chance of re offending again in the next 2 years (pers. corr. B.Flaherty).
- In the Aboriginal community, sentencing schemes include conferencing and circle sentencing, which recognizes that harm has been done.

Some current programs are described below:

**Traffic Offender Program**
Traffic Offender Programs (TOCS) is a non-traditional justice intervention for traffic offenders with no previous offences, found guilty of offences such as drink drivers. It involves police meeting with social workers and others to deal with underlying social justice issues following a charge being made. The intervention involves adult education classes for a period of 6-8 weeks (2 hours a night). The program provides the opportunity of being viewed by the magistrate as rehabilitation between being found guilty and sentencing, and can lead to having the charge wiped from a person’s
criminal record. Groups such as Probation and Parole, local councils and non-government organizations such as Rotary have been involved in the education program. TOCS has operated in a few sites in NSW (Blacktown and Sutherland), but has not been evaluated to date. Some problems have been identified with Traffic Offender Programs, for example the potential for corruption and the ad hoc way in that they operate and the need for a standardized curriculum.

**Merit**
MERIT (Magistrates Early Referral Into Treatment) is a Local Court based diversion program that targets adult defendants with illicit drug use problems who are motivated to undertake drug treatment.

**Probation and parole drivers’ program**
This program is currently operation in Lismore / Tweed Heads/ Coffs Harbour.

**The Sober Driver Program**
The Sober Driver Program for repeat drink driving offences, introduced in NSW in July 2003, is a nine-week program that aims to reduce offending by participants by helping them understand the effects of drink driving on themselves and the community. The program is jointly funded by the RTA and the MAA, and is delivered by the Probation and Parole Service of the Department of Corrective Services (RTA 2004)

**Circle Sentencing**
Circle sentencing is an alternative model of sentencing, which actively involves the Aboriginal community in the sentencing process. It applies in situations where Aboriginal people have been found guilty of a crime. It involves taking the sentencing court to a community setting where Aboriginal community members and Magistrate sit in a circle, discuss the offence, and offender, and develop an appropriate sentence and outcome plan (AJAC News, No 42, and February 2003)

Circle sentencing was introduced on a trial basis in Nowra in February 2002 in response to the problem of over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system in order to find a better way of dealing with the sentencing of Aboriginal offenders. The scheme was recently evaluated (Potas et al 2003) and has now been expanded to Dubbo, Brewarrina and Walgett. In NSW the Circle Sentencing Regulation under the Crimes Legislation (Crime Justice Interventions) Act 2002 established circle sentencing as a formal process.

The evaluation of circle sentencing was shown to (amongst other things):
- Reduce barriers between the courts and Aboriginal people
- Improves levels of supports for Aboriginal offenders
- Promotes empowerment of Aboriginal people in the community
- Introduces more relevant and meaningful sentencing options for Aboriginal offenders
- Helps break the cycle of recidivism.
How a driver education court diversion might work

Types of offences
In the first instance a court diversion program might be set up which targets persons appearing before the court licensing offences such as,

- driving without a licence,
- Driving by those never licensed.

Interviews with key stakeholders indicated that there would be support for a diversion program that could begin as a pilot program in Lismore and focus initially on people who have never had a licence and where it could be argued that they have never had the opportunity to obtain a licence. People would need to be willing to make the commitment and not be habitual offenders. Using the Program for more offences such as driving while disqualified may be outside the scope of a pilot project. The impact on the disqualification period would need to be considered.

Court referral
Participants would enter the program with a magistrate’s referral. The magistrate would order the defendant to attend On the Road for a defined period in order to gain their licence. The mandated program would be overseen by Probation and Parole. Attendance of 80-90% of classes would be required. If the program were not successfully completed, the participant would have to appear back before magistrate.

Duration
The diversion program would need to operate within a stricter timeframe than currently operating for On the Road, which is open, ended in regard to participant involvement. It was suggested that a 3-month period might be suitable. This would include attendance at classes on fixed days, which would need to be worked out with Centrelink. The course would involve First Aid Training, car motor maintenance information about buying a car, attitude and behavior, and compulsory attendance to practice on computer. The three-month period should be sufficient for a getting a learners permit and doing course work.

Aboriginal only?
Interviews with the Program Coordinator and the Aboriginal Client Service Specialist at Lismore Court indicate that in order to be viewed by the community as fair and just, the court diversion program would need to operate for both Aboriginal and non-aboriginal offenders. On the Road would remain as an Aboriginal only program.

The need to engage other agencies
In addition to agreement from the Chief Magistrate, further consultation would need to be undertaken with local groups including:

Local Magistrates
The support of local magistrates would be important.
Police
Local police would play an important role in the operation of the diversion program in coming before magistrate with suggestion that the defendant be offered the Program as an alternative sentencing option. Some education may be necessary to explain the rationale of the program for the police, but it is suggested that for people without prior offences, it was suggested (by both the Program Coordinator and the local police) that the Richmond area command would support the idea. The police would also have a role in the operation of the diversion program in participating in the safety education aspect of the courses, and explaining offences to participants.

Probation and Parole
The setting up of a court diversion program would involve negotiation with Probation and Parole (Department of Corrective Services) which would have to supervise Program. Probation and Parole may also make a financial contribution.

Cost of Program
There are important cost considerations in the development of any court diversion program if participants are not going to be ‘set up to fail’. The program would need to be properly resourced. If defendants are to be mandated to update the program and to obtain a licence, proper consideration needs to be given to the costs involved in obtaining the licence, including accumulation of 50 hours road experience. A fully funded program would be very expensive for any program or government department. Proper costing would need to be worked out if the program is to be replicated in other areas.

Lismore ACE
Lismore is a promising site for as a pilot diversion program giving its experience with the Driver Education Program. Its success would need to be monitored over a period. The possibility would then be for the program being rolled out to the other 16 sites, where there are Aboriginal Client Service Specialists (ACSS).

One option for offering the Program as a court diversion program would be for ACE Lismore to expand its current operation and to become a service provider for the courts. The diversion program could initially be set up as a small pilot program, separate to On the Road, but coordinated through the ACE Lismore. On the Road would remain as a blanket driver education program to serve members of the Aboriginal community who have not committed driving offences; countering the possible perception, that one has to commit a crime to be on the Program.

The advantage of using ACE as the venue for the court diversion program is that ACE is a non-criminal justice service, which is involved in developing educational programs and initiatives. It is expected therefore that ACE would have the capacity to meet the broader educational and training needs of people who come in contact with the criminal justice system, in addition to meeting their specific needs in regards to the court mandate. Some improvement of the Program’s structure for receiving advice from a range of community and professional perspectives, would strengthen the position of ACE as a venue for the court diversion program.
ACE currently provides the Driver Education Program with stability and recognition as a community based program with educational overlay. It has important capacity building aspects and should be strongly considered as the venue for a court diversion program in other areas.

Organizational and staffing implications
From the perspective of ACE, offering the Program as a Court Diversion Program would require additional planning and changes in the way the program currently operates. An additional instructor would be required to assist with the operation of the Program. There is a strong preference both from ACE and from the Aboriginal community for an additional female instructor.

Recommendations
It is recommended that:
1. AGD undertake further consultation with local groups in regard to setting up a pilot court diversion program in Lismore.
2. The court diversion program be developed with an adult education framework.
5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The examination of the recent literature on Aboriginal incarceration, in the Background section of this report, identified unlicensed driving as one of the key factors contributing to the over representation of Aboriginal persons in the NSW criminal justice system. It is argued that this in turn stems initially from their higher rate of appearance at court, and that interventions that divert Aboriginal defendants away from court, reduce arrest rates and use alternatives to arrest, may lead to a reversal of these trends.

Similarly, the examination of the literature on Aboriginal road safety identifies Aboriginal people, particularly those living in rural and remote areas of Australia as ‘at risk’ or ‘vulnerable’ populations for road crashes. In addition to factors such as consumption of alcohol, non-wearing of seatbelts, and overloading of vehicles, Aboriginal people are at greater risk of death and injury as a result of a car crash than non-Aboriginal Australians due to the rural and remote environments in which they live, longer distances, less well maintained cars and poorer access to emergency services.

The Lismore Driver Education Program (On the Road) was established to effect changes in these two important areas of Aboriginal road safety and social justice. The evaluation of the On the Road Program has focused on measuring the success of the program against its stated objectives using quantitative and qualitative measures in order to make judgments about program effort, effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy. The process evaluation focused on how the Program was implemented and managed in the Far North Coast community since program funding commenced.

Program Outcomes

The evaluation of the Program outcomes in terms of both road crashes and contact with the criminal justice system presented a number of challenges including: establishing a direct causal link between the initiative and outcomes; the relatively short time frame for assessment of what are long term goals; and the availability of data.

Lack of identification of Aboriginality in RTA crash data make it impossible to determine the impact of the Program on road crashes involving Aboriginal drivers. Qualitative data from focus groups and interviews conducted locally, shows participants belief that having a driving licence and going through the process of obtaining one will improve the driving behaviors leading to less accidents and casualties.

The assessment of the outcomes of the Program in terms of reductions in relevant driving offences revealed that there has been a recent decline in the offence of driving without a licence for the both Aboriginal populations of the North Coast and for the NSW Aboriginal population. The decline in the number of offences for the North Coast Aboriginal population, however, was greater than for the rest of NSW.
It is difficult to draw clear conclusions as to the significance of these results over the relatively short period. In particular, it should be noted that although this improvement coincides with the introduction of the funded On the Road Program, it is not possible to directly attribute the decline in offence rates to this Program. Further evaluation is required to confirm whether the Program is associated with this decrease in offences. Although the North Coast Aboriginal population were still one and a half times as likely to come before the courts on the charge of driving without a licence than Aboriginal people in the rest of NSW in 2004 but these rates are clearly improvement from prior to 2002.

To facilitate the further evaluation of the program outcomes, it is recommended that participants in the program be asked to participate in the evaluation. This would involve signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants.

Evaluation of Processes
The process evaluation of the On the Road shows that the Program has reached a significant part of the North Coast Aboriginal population across a very broad geographical area, which includes a number of remote locations with very limited public transport and few licensed drivers. The program has accessed its audience using a variety of media such as print media, radio, targeting organizations for pamphlet drops, use of community networks, word of mouth, community visits and its website. The extent of reach was not measured by any quantitative measures however, interview and focus group data indicate that the program has a high visibility amongst service providers and is well known in many Aboriginal communities. Interviews with community organizations indicate that a greater presence in these areas would be welcome and there is most definitely a need for the services offered. The program has provided access to the DKT computer program in at least 30 community organizations throughout the North Coast. The actual usage by Aboriginal people is not known, as this data is not collected, however, interview data indicates that the computer program is well known, accessible and provides a useful service to the community.

The Impact of the Program
The impact evaluation of the Program assessed its immediate effect and the extent to which it is meeting its objectives. Participation in the On the Road program is spread evenly across the region with greater participation in the larger centres. Lismore, followed by Casino has the highest number of people who access the ACE office to use the computer or participate in the program. The data indicates that being in a larger town and having access to a community-based centre increases the chance of individuals accessing computer program or enroll in the program.

Between 2000-2004 a total 520 people participated in the program. Many of the computers with the Drivers Test Knowledge are located in accessible centers, hence a better chance of people to access and use them. Residing in big towns like Lismore and Casino, in addition to having better access to computer program and enrolling in the program, also has shown to bring about a better outcome of the program than
other smaller towns. Lismore and Casino for example, has more people repaying their
debt, gaining Learner Permit and P plate and even gaining an employment.

The data indicates that more than eighteen participants have been able to gain some
kind of employment because of obtaining their licence. The purpose of the program is
to empower the individuals to utilize the skills they learn to follow up the stages on
their own and gain their licence. On the Road has improved participants literacy and
self-esteem. It provides them confidence in taking the final test with RTA computer
and provide them with opportunity to help their family and community when having a
driving licence. It provides them with a means to be independent and mobility. It
further reduces their stress and anxiety, as they do not have to confront the law
enforcement agencies and organisations. There would be much value in expanding the
Program to incorporate more high school students.

Interview data shows that the program has a high approval rate with the Aboriginal
communites it services and is supported by local elders and Aboriginal community
groups. This is due to a number of factors: Firstly, the team of Aboriginal and non-
Aboriginal Program staff adds strength to the program; secondly the Program has had
a direct impact on increasing the number of Aboriginal people in employment in the
Far North Coast regions; and thirdly, the program has played an important role in
reconciliation.

Recognizing the difficulty of assessing outcomes for complex community based
interventions careful consideration needs to be given to the framework in which On
the Road might be evaluated in the future. In addition to more focused outcomes, a set
of broader ‘holistic’ outcomes could be developed which are easier to measure and
more readily attributable to the Program.

One of the areas in which On the Road Program has had great success is the
Reconciliation Rallies. This aspect of the program is clearly transferable as a stand-
alone program or as part of a more comprehensive package. The development of
valuable tools and processes by ACE would facilitate its being offered in many
Aboriginal communities within the State. The role the Program has made towards
reconciliation should be included, as one of the program outcomes, which, while
difficult should be documented as part of an ongoing evaluation.

The final evaluation objective was to assess the viability of the Program as a court
diversion program. On the Road in its current format officers a much needed service
to the Far North Coast, Aboriginal communities by focusing primarily on meeting the
assisting Aboriginal unlicensed drivers in gaining a licence. It further helps those
Aboriginal drivers whose licence has been suspended by SDRO due to non-payment
of debts to regain their class licence. Its location within ACE provides stability for the
Program and being an adult education institution facilitates the progression of
participants to further education and employment.

Data from stakeholder interviews indicates a high level of support for the further
development of a court diversion program based on the existing program and running
in parallel with the existing generalist program. A court diversion program would
require involvement of a broader range of stakeholders such as police, Probation and
Parole etc and a more formal structure for operation and reporting of outcomes than is
currently in place. The development of a court diversion program would involve a courts mandating participation. Participants would enroll in an ACE Course to attending a certain number of classes, which would incorporate literacy, driver education, buying and maintaining a vehicle, an attitudinal program, first aid and computer use.

Maintaining the existing adult education framework for the offering both types of program would enable a pilot program to build on the valuable experience of ACE and the Program staff as well as benefiting from the considerable goodwill, which the Program has built up within the Aboriginal community. Support of local elders in efforts to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system is paramount for the success of the Program.

**Ongoing evaluation**

The ongoing evaluation of *On the Road* will be important factors in the long-term success of the Program. Evaluation is ideally undertaken as part of program planning from the outset and should include Aboriginal involvement and assessment of both the intervention and their intended outcome. In relation to evaluation of outcomes, a recommendation has been made for further evaluation using a more rigorous approach.

To assess other aspects of the Program, particularly the less tangible aspects such as empowerment, capacity building and reconciliation, *On the Road* staff should be encouraged to develop their own evaluation strategies in collaboration with their community partners and Program participants. In doing so, they could develop meaningful and appropriate performance indicators, which could be developed where direct measurement is not possible. The indicators should reflect the broad range of Aboriginal needs and involve the collection of useful data which could be fed back to participants for example through community workshops and invite further participation of community members in becoming part of the solution. This approach would involve *On the Road* staff developing a flexible and holistic model of evaluation, which can contribute to community development and capacity building.
5.1 LIST OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

24. The funders continue to fund the Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road.
25. The funders provide funding to employ and train an additional female driving instructor and a part time administrative assistant.
26. The funders provide funding for the purchase of a second vehicle for training purposes.
27. The funders promote and support the ongoing development of the Driver Project website in an effort to widen the reach of the Program across NSW Aboriginal communities outside of the Far North Coast.
28. ACE develops written training guidelines for instructors, which would assist any new instructors as well as organisations in other areas of NSW wishing to set up similar programs.
29. SDRO be approached to contribute to the ongoing funding of On the Road Program
30. SDRO promote its services more widely and effectively within the North Coast Aboriginal community including grounds for lifting of suspensions, means of repayment, develop alternative ways to pay, and time to pay for Aboriginal communities.
31. On the Road staff continue to work flexibly within the Aboriginal communities but use available means of communication, such as the website, newsletters, or media, to communicate their work to others in the community.
32. On the Road staff invite the wider Aboriginal community input into the future developments and/or planned changes of the Program.
33. ACE implement improved reporting systems using the current OASIS database to record and report on participant enrollment and participant outcomes within specified timeframes.
34. ACE investigate the possibility of configuring OASIS to incorporate participant outcomes as Units of Study within the Driver Program Course. This should facilitate the reporting of outcomes such as: obtaining a birth certificate; successfully negotiating lifting of suspension of licence through repayment of debs with SDRO; obtaining Red Provisional licence; obtaining Green Provisional licence; employment outcome; becoming a JP.
35. ACE explore the option to offer incentives to improve the recording of participant outcomes.
36. ACE, in collaboration with the Aboriginal communities and community partners, develop a set of broader indicators of success for the Program.
37. RTA investigate a system of accreditation for people to supervise the DKT test in remote locations.
38. RTA improves the current driving licence software test by making it culturally appropriate with extra visual resources.
39. RTA coordinate effective research into Aboriginal transport and road safety issues, including identification of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status in all data collections in RTA road crash data, licensing and registration, and allow cross agency sharing of information.
40. That the road safety aspect of the Program be strengthened by increasing knowledge of road safety issues in the communities by including safety
teaching in all aspects of driver training, improving road safety information on the website (e.g. through relevant web links) and by disseminating relevant road safety material though ACE Lismore

41. Further evaluation of the program be undertaken involving participants signing a consent form to allow their licensing and offence records to be monitored in the years following their participation in the program to help determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the required aims for the program participants.

42. ACE instigate an ongoing formative evaluation process to assist with quality assurance for the Program involving the ongoing collection of qualitative data on the less tangible program outcomes and outcomes which are meaningful to the Aboriginal community and could be fed back to the community through, for example, community workshops on a regular basis.

43. ACE formally approach the RTA to receive authorization for the use of the DKT program in community localities

44. ACE Lismore investigate the feasibility of extending their work within schools by building partnerships and offering the program to students within local schools through out the region.

45. AGD undertake further consultation with local groups in regard to setting up a pilot court diversion program in Lismore.

46. The court diversion program be developed with an adult education framework.
REFERENCES


Roads and Traffic Authority. Road Safety 2010: A Framework for Saving 2,000 Lives by the year 2010 in NSW


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – MAPS OF THE TARGET AREA

Local Council Boundaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballina Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byron Shire Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyogle Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lismore City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Valley Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweed Shire Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: NSW Department of Local Government Website:
APPENDIX 2 - PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT
For
Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road Evaluation
For Aboriginal communities in Lismore and the Far North Coast of NSW.
You are invited to take part in an evaluation of the Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road. The program is being evaluated by

- Dr Kathleen Clapham, Dr Rebecca Ivers and Professor Mark Stevenson, The George Institute for International Health, The University of Sydney, and
- Dr Freidoon Khavarpour, Yooroang Garang: School of Indigenous Health Studies, The University of Sydney

Lismore Adult and Community Education (ACE) has been running On the Road in the Far North Coast Aboriginal communities since March 2000. The program aims to reduce the number of traffic offences, reduce the number of road accidents in the Far North Coast Region, assist (and increase the number of) community members in gaining a Class C licence, provide support for learner drivers and assist qualified drivers who have unpaid fines and disqualified drivers to regain their licence through fine negotiation and increase the literacy, self-esteem and employment opportunities for people participating in the program (build capacity).

Aim
The purpose of the project is to conduct an evaluation of the On the Road program, to measure its effectiveness. The project is led by an Indigenous researcher and will involve Indigenous people in all stages of the evaluation.

Your participation
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview or focus group. The interview and focus groups will take approximately one hour and will be conducted at a time and date most convenient to you. Location for the focus group and/or interview would be one most convenient to you, (for example local Aboriginal community organization, medical service, or relevant outreach service provider).

If you agree, the focus group discussion and/or interview, will be audio taped. All aspects of the evaluation, including results, will be strictly confidential. Any information that is obtained that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. A report of the evaluation will be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.
Participation in this evaluation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate in this evaluation. If you do participate you can withdraw at any time. Whatever your decision, it will not affect your relationship with the researchers.

When you have read this information, the project manager will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Dr Kathleen Clapham, Chief Investigator.

For further information please contact:

Dr Kathleen Clapham  
The George Institute for International Health  
PO Box M201  
Missenden Road  
Sydney NSW 2050  
Phone (02) 99934535  

Thank you for your interest.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

For Lismore Driver Education Program On the Road for Aboriginal communities in Lismore and the Far North Coast of NSW.

The University of Sydney Ethics Committee has approved this project. Any complaints may be directed to:  
Manager for Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on (02) 9351 4811.
APPENDIX 3 - STAKEHOLDER AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions asked during face-to-face interviews with:

Aboriginal Community Education Program Manager

- How is the program organised, managed and services delivered?
- Who is involved?
- What are the relationships with other stakeholders
- What are their responsibilities / role do they play
- What involvement if any do participants have in the running of the program
- What arrangements are in place to manage the program – funding/staff/resources/training and staff development
- Who makes decisions about where the program is offered/who is involved/how long program runs
- What policies are in place, including occupational health and safety
- In your view, how is the program being managed?
- Who funds the program
- What reporting is required
- How many Aboriginal people have:
  - Accessed the program 2000-2004
  - Gained/re-gained and/or attempted to gain/regain a Class C licence.
- Participated in a driver mentor program. How many people have participated in a driver mentor program? Tell us about the program – how it worked. Give examples of success. Any barriers.
- Accessed computer based driver knowledge test in the local Aboriginal organizations from 2000-2004. Where is the learner driver software located (which local Aboriginal organization)
- What methods did you use to increase the number of licensed drivers?
- Describe the way the program runs in the community.
- In your view, has the On the Road Program contributed to a reduction in the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the seven driving offences? How did you form this view (what evidence, observation, experience)?

To what extent does the program prioritize - improved literacy, self-esteem and providing employment opportunities for participants?
- What strategies do you use?
- What has been the impact of the program on literacy, self-esteem and providing employment opportunities? Give examples
- In what ways is the local community involved in the running of the program
- Does the local community have any influence in the way the program is managed? Give some examples.
- What is the main purpose of the On the Road Program? Is it doing enough? What else should or could the On the Road Program be doing to achieve its aims? What are the barriers to doing this?

Other Stakeholders

- In your view what is the principle purpose of the On the Road Program run by Adult Community Education (Lismore).
- How does *On the Road* Program go about trying to increase the number of Aboriginal licensed drivers in the community?
- What are the positive aspects of this approach?
- Any negative aspects?
- In your view, has the *On the Road* Program contributed to a reduction in the number of Aboriginal people who come into contact with the criminal justice system in relation to the seven driving offences? How did you form this view (what evidence, observation, experience)?
- In your view, has the *On the Road* Program contributed to reducing the number of road crashes in the Far North Coast region? How did you form this view (what evidence, observation, experience)?
- Is the local community involved in the program? How?
- Does the local community have any influence over the management of the program? How?
- How well do you think the program is being managed?

**Funding bodies**

- What contractual arrangement exists between ACE and the funding body?
- How would you describe the relationship between ACE and the funding body?
- In your view what is the principle purpose of the *On the Road* Program?
- What is your view of the way the program is organised and managed (e.g. policies and procedures in place/use of funds/ staffing/resources/ training and staff development)?
- Who makes decisions about where the program is offered/ who is involved / how long program runs?
- What reporting is required and has this reporting been adequate?
Focus Group Questions
Questions used as a guide for the focus group facilitator.

- When did you participate in the *On the Road* Program?
- How long were you involved?
- Why did you become involved?
- Did the program help you with reading or writing?
- Has the program helped you feel better about yourself? Give some examples?
- Has the program provided any employment opportunities for you? How?
- Were there any other outcomes for you?
- Have you participated in a driver mentor (Rally for Reconciliation) program? Tell us about your experience. Was it successful? Were there any negatives?
- What are your views of the *On the Road* Program methods?
- Is the local Aboriginal community involved in the running of the program? How?
- In your view what is the main purpose of the *On the Road* Program? Should the Program be doing anything else? What?
Steps to Getting a Learner’s Permit…..

Are you disqualified? Has a Magistrate said that you are banned from driving? YES NO

Do you have fines? YES NO

Fill out the Application to pay a Court Imposed Fine (if within 28 days), Form 1, or State Debt Recovery Office Application for Time to Pay, Form 2 You will need a JP to witness your signature.

Do you need your license while you are paying off your fines? YES NO

Send your completed and witnessed Application for Time to Pay form and letters of support to-
State Debt Recovery Office
PO Box A2571
Sydney South, 1235
OR contact your local Aboriginal Client Service Specialist at the Court House.

Do you need your license because of work, or medical reasons, and/or your remote location? YES

You need at least one letter of support to send with your application. Forms 3, 4, and 5 are samples.

PROBLEMS? In the Birth Certificates folder are forms to register your own (or your child’s) birth, Form 7, and a form to change your name if your Birth Certificate and your other ID don’t agree, Form 8.

Do you have a Birth Certificate? YES NO

Fill in and send off an Application for a NSW Birth Certificate, Form 6. A NSW Birth Certificate costs $36.00.

# more information in the Checklist.
APPENDIX 6 – GRADUATE OF THE PROGRAM

Jacinta fulfills a driving ambition

By ZOE SATHERLEY

JACINTA KING has had a driving ambition for the past two years. The Goonellabah teenager wanted to be the first person in her family to get a driver’s licence.

And recently, thanks to Rally for Reconciliation, an innovative ACE Aboriginal driver training program, she finally made it.

“I feel fantastic. This is a dream come true for me,” the 17-year-old Year 12 Lismore High School student said.

“I borrowed a friend’s car the other day and drove everyone down to the beach.

“It was the best feeling ever. I’m over the moon and mum is so proud of me.

“And now I’ll be able to drive her to get the shopping and to doctor’s appointments — when I can afford to get a car.

“That’s my next ambition, as well as completing my school-based traineeship with Lismore Court House and getting through the HSC.”

Jacinta was supported in getting her 50 mandatory hours of driver training by the Rally for Reconciliation program.

The program matches volunteer white drivers with Aboriginal people who need to get driving experience. Regular rallies are held over a set route and at the end of the day, everyone gets together for a barbecue and a good time.

Jacinta went on five rallies over 10 months. Program co-ordinator Steve Fitzgerald said the rallies encouraged reconciliation between white people and Aborigines.

“The Lismore Court House locks up about three Aboriginal people every week for unlicensed driving. We’re trying to help them gain identification, assist them to pay off fines and help them to get their provisional licence,” he said.

“There has been a great response by non-Aboriginal people willing to give up their time and their car for driving lessons. They’re stepping out of their comfort zone, but feel good about it. It’s fantastic for reconciliation.”

If you’d like to volunteer, or just to find out more about the program go to: www.dri

THE NORTHERN STAR, MONDAY, APRIL 4, 2005. 3.
APPENDIX 7 - OFFENCE DATA

Table 1: Section 25 (1)(a) Unlicensed for Class [Drive without being licensed for that purpose]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Rate Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>48.25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>89.66</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>33.62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51.21</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>30.43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.87</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>27.38</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51.25</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>28.83</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.08</td>
<td>0.59</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1163</td>
<td>168.51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>239.07</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population

Table 2: Section 25 (2) Never licensed person drive vehicle on road

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Rate Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.62</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>24.34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>26.95</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51.24</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>27.53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.35</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>87.67</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>89.67</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>177.79</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>230.58</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population

Table 3: Section 25A (1)(a) Drive while disqualified from holding a licence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Rate Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>77.38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>149.44</td>
<td>1.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>105.35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>179.33</td>
<td>1.7</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>108.83</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>217.62</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>109.56</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>264.73</td>
<td>2.42</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>767</td>
<td>111.15</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>179.33</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>3535</td>
<td>512.27</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>990.45</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population

Table 4: Section 25A (2)(a) Drive on road while suspended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Rate Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>19.42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.62</td>
<td>1.32</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>36.23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.87</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>30.14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>46.97</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>24.63</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.16</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>23.91</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>76.86</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>134.33</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>213.48</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population
Table 5: Section 25 A(3)(a) Drive while licence refused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Rate Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>16.51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>18.82</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population

Table 6: Selected Driving Offences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Aboriginal NSW Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate*</th>
<th>Aboriginal North Coast Number of Offences</th>
<th>Offence Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1218</td>
<td>176.5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>294.61</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>1385</td>
<td>200.7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>303.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1362</td>
<td>197.37</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>345.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>189.25</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>371.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>3217</td>
<td>466.18</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>362.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>8488</td>
<td>1230</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>1678.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rate ratio: North Coast Aboriginal driving offences vs NSW Aboriginal driving offences
* Offence rate (unstandardised unless otherwise stated) per 10,000 population
APPENDIX 8 - ROLES OF THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS

On the Road is auspiced by Lismore Adult and Community Education (ACE), and funded by the NSW Attorney General’s Department (AGD) Roads and Traffic Authority NSW (RTA) and the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW (MAA). The project is supported by a Steering Committee, which includes the RTA, MAA, and AGD.

Adult Community Education (Lismore)
ACE (Adult Community Education) is a major provider of adult education, which is part of a network of community colleges throughout NSW, which are overseen by the Board of Adult Community Education in Sydney. ACE offers a range of accredited and non-accredited courses across vocational and non-vocational areas including workplace training, leisure entertainment, self-development, art, craft, outdoors, business and computing courses in various locations in NSW. ACE (North Coast) runs programs out of its offices at Lismore, Tweed Heads, Casino, Kyogle, Woodenbong and Bonalbo.

ACE (Lismore) is located in the centre of Lismore’s commercial district. It has a particular commitment to youth and adult education and social justice and offers affordable adult education. Over the past ten years, ACE has demonstrated a commitment to supporting Aboriginal adult learners by supporting a number of Aboriginal education initiatives, including courses offered by volunteer instructors, and providing an auspice for a number of community-based programs. The current Principal Jim Nichols described this process as a long process of trust building with Indigenous communities. Given the complexities of Aboriginal disadvantage, ACE recognizes that not all Aboriginal people who enter programs are going to succeed but providing access to all is important.

Attorney General’s Department
The Attorney General’s Department assists the NSW Government, Judiciary, Parliament and the community to promote social harmony through programs that protect human rights and community standards, and reduce crime (http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au). Two key AG departmental agencies are the Crime Prevention Division, responsible for providing advice and implementing programs that relate to the prevention of crime in NSW, and the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC), a council of Aboriginal people, which provides advice to the NSW Government on law and justice issues effecting Aboriginal people in the state.

Road and Traffic Authority of NSW
The RTA is the State Government agency responsible for all aspects of road safety, including improving road user behavior, and safer vehicles and roads to save lives and reduce injuries. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are acknowledged by the RTA as being a vulnerable road user group, that is ‘possessing intrinsic characteristics which place a person at substantial elevated crash risk, injury risk or both’ (Corben, B 2002 quoted in RTA 2004).

Licensing and Road Safety are two of the key areas of the RTA’s Aboriginal Action Plan (AAP) 2001-2006. Strategies listed under the Licensing key area, which are relevant to the present evaluation, include:
- Assist the State Debt Recovery Office (SDR0) to develop options to recover motor vehicle related fines in consultation with Centrelink and CDEP,
- Develop a plan to implement Community Based Knowledge Testing (CBKT) in an additional six sites to a total of fourteen sites,
- Provide appropriate hardware/software support to APCs and others involved with CBKT and other licensing programs, including those operating within the justice system, and
- Develop and promote culturally appropriate programs and distribute material to Aboriginal people to increase access to licensing processes.

Road safety strategies relevant to the evaluation of *On the Road* include:
- Develop options for funding and resourcing Aboriginal Road Safety Programs in partnership with Councils, Police, the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW, the Department of Education and Training, NRMA and the Ambulance Service
- Develop strategies with Council Road Safety Officers for vulnerable road users.

*Motor Accidents Authority of NSW*

The Motor Accidents Authority of NSW is a statutory corporation that regulates the NSW Motor Accidents Scheme. As the regulator of the compulsory third party insurance scheme for NSW, the MAA has a role in contributing to the reduction of the incidence and impact of road trauma and supporting safety education. The MAA's road safety activity focuses on decreasing serious injuries.