



Have Your Say

Remote Indigenous Parents Australia (RIPA) Review of Part 7 of the Education Act 2015 is now open until 15 October 2021.

Dear Vicky and Tash

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I have also attached a RIPA Fact Sheet with some background information.

Unfortunately, we have been heavily committed with our own RIPA review as well as responding to other requests. We hope the comments below are useful and we would welcome the opportunity to be involved in ongoing discussion with the Department.

The RIPA objective is to establish a national network designed to 'facilitate the voice' and create a 'safe space' for parents and families in remote communities to tell their stories and share ideas with each other about what matters and why. RIPA recognises the need to define "community" from an Indigenous perspective with particular cognisance of the transient nature of 'community'. There is also a need to define "education" from an Indigenous perspective and the intended purpose of mainstream education compared with Indigenous education. This is not static and the generational shift in thinking requires regular updating.

Looking at the Discussion Paper, the area of particular interest to RIPA is:

A - Child safety, wellbeing and behaviour management. Cited are four dot points as opportunities:

- Enact Royal Commission (RC) recommendations relating to child safety.
- Put in place explicit provisions for suspension, exclusion and expulsion practice
- Improve information sharing between the sectors to militate against the risk of disengagement.
- Make explicit provision for non-government schools to encourage attendance of students.

In terms of the RC, enacting the various standards 1-10 highlight the importance of relationships [1-3].

Standard 1 is about institutional leadership, governance and culture.

People and organisations working in 'silos' is a major issue of concern. It is often an indicator of hierarchies of power rather than hierarchies of value. Greater attention needs to be given to the disconnect between management and frontline workers as well as agencies and service providers working in 'silos'. Students should be profiled for inclusion rather than screened for exclusion. The focus needs to be on 'duty of care' rather than on 'cultural competency'. It should be more about what is needed rather than what is on offer. The research literature rarely focuses on this disconnect. Why? It seems that one of the most logical answers lies in the assumption that performance has to do solely with workplace practise and that systems and structures are often non-negotiable. Invariably this sets frontline workers up for failure and leads to organisational dysfunction. RIPA is founded on Relational Principles of Engagement (RPE) and we know that unless there is a strong resonance and alignment between how relationships are developed and maintained with staff then how students and their families are engaged will be greatly impacted.

Standard 2 - children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

Issues:



- The right for children to **learn** from their experience is paramount
- The right to have a **voice** is fundamental, particularly in matters that impact them.

Standard 3 - families and communities are informed and involved

Issues:

- This standard treats the families and communities differently to Standard 2
- Surely families and communities should be afforded an opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their children and to be taken seriously?
- Being informed and involved falls a long way short of what is needed – ie. engagement and collaboration means - working ‘with’.

At the top of page 4, there are two references to ‘explicit’, the first mentions putting in place ‘explicit’ provisions for suspension, exclusion and exclusion practices.

Issues:

- Standard 1 talks about leadership, governance and culture - relationships must be at the heart of a healthy culture
- Being ‘explicit’ should therefore not be limited to suspensions [and so on] but on ensuring that the child, family and community have a voice and can participate in the development of an appropriate culture that includes mutual expectations. The concept of ‘non-negotiables’ is problematic. The RIPA response to this is to ensure families, organisations, service providers and communities have an explicit commitment to the Relational Principles of Engagement (RPE) where the central idea is about Fair Process. This needs to be taught in culturally appropriate ways and there needs to be evidence of a RPE plan that delivers the intended outcomes.

These are matters that are fundamental to what RIPA is about.

Note recent commentary on failure: https://7news.com.au/news/education/nt-remote-education-is-failing-students-c-3960480?utm_campaign=share-icons&utm_source=email&utm_medium=email&tid=1631615362591

Kind regards

Bjorn Christie-Johnston
Contact Person
Remote Indigenous Parents Australia (RIPA)
E: admin@ripa.org.au
[REDACTED]