

**Does it pay to go to school? The benefits of and participation in
education of Indigenous Australians**

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Contribution

The empirical results and analysis presented in this thesis are an original contribution by the PhD candidate. Where joint research was undertaken during the candidature and used in this thesis, it has been acknowledged as such in the body of the text. The applicable research is listed below, alongside the contribution from the PhD candidate:

- Altman, Biddle and Hunter (2005) – Generated empirical results and contributed to writing of the paper.
- Altman, Buchanan and Biddle (2006) – Generated empirical results and contributed to writing of the paper.
- Biddle and Hunter (2006a) – Roughly equal contribution between the authors in generating the results and writing the paper.
- Biddle and Hunter (2006b) – Roughly equal contribution between the authors in generating the results and writing the paper.
- Biddle and Hunter (2006c) – Roughly equal contribution between the authors in generating the results and writing the paper.
- Biddle, Hunter and Schwab (2004) – Generated most of the empirical results and contributed to writing of the paper.
- Biddle and Webster (2007) – Generated the empirical results and wrote the majority of the paper.
- Taylor and Biddle (2005) – Generated the empirical results.

Signed

Date

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¹ <http://www.iped-editors.org/>

Abstract

Those who have finished high school and/or obtained non-school qualifications experience a range of positive outcomes throughout their lives. Despite these benefits being likely to apply to the Indigenous Australian population, current as well as past participation in education is substantially lower than that of the non-Indigenous population. Some reasons for this relatively low participation may be locational and monetary disadvantage, household overcrowding and a curriculum that is not always relevant. How Indigenous Australians form their expectations about the benefits of education and what these expectations might be (accurate or otherwise) may also influence educational participation.

This thesis looks at the education outcomes of Indigenous Australians. There are two main research questions are examined. The first is what are the relative benefits of education for the Indigenous population? The main outcomes that are focussed on are employment and income; however, there is also analysis of the extent to which those with higher education levels report better health outcomes or more favourable health behaviour.

The second main research question is what factors are associated with the decision to attend high school? That is, does the Indigenous population respond to the economic incentives to undertake education as estimated in this thesis? In addition, other factors at the individual, household and area level are likely to influence the social costs and benefits of education, as well as geographic and financial access. The extent to which these are associated with high school participation is also examined.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEP	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy
AIGC	Australian Indigenous Geographical Classification
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia
ASGC	Australian Standard Geographical Classification
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
CA	Community Areas
CAI	Computer Assisted Interviewing
CD	Collection District
CDEP	Community Development and Employment Projects
CIFs	Community Information Forms
CSOM	Chronic Suppurative Otitis Media
CURF	Confidentialised Unit Record File
CYI	Cape York Institute
ERP	Estimated Resident Population
GSS	General Social Survey
HCM	Human Capital Model
HEP	Higher Expectations Program
IRR	Internal Rate of Return
LSAC	Longitudinal Study of Australian Children
LSIC	Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children
LSAY	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
NATSIS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey
NATSIHS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCA	Non-Community Area
NHS	National Health Survey
NHS(G)	National Health Survey (General)
NHS(I)	National Health Survey (Indigenous)
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
PAPI	Pen and Paper Interviewing
RADL	Remote Access Data Laboratory
SIF	Special Indigenous Form
SLA	Statistical Local Area
SLCD	Statistical Longitudinal Census Dataset
SSD	Statistical Sub-Division
TAFE	Tertiary and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training