



Aboriginal Summer School for Excellence in Technology and Science (ASSETS) evaluation case study report

Executive summary

The Aboriginal Summer School for Excellence in Technology and Science (ASSETS) program provides an opportunity for high achieving Year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with an interest in science, to explore study and career options available to them in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

ASSETS comprises a nine-day residential summer school and a leadership and development program supporting alumni. ASSETS is one of six programs that comprise the Indigenous STEM Education Project, which is funded by the BHP Foundation and delivered by CSIRO. The overarching goal of the Indigenous STEM Education Project is to provide supported pathways that improve the participation and achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in STEM subjects.

The evaluation case study report reviews the degree to which the ASSETS program has achieved its intended outcomes:

1. High aspiration for a STEM career (and STEM subject selection)
2. Better understanding of, and confidence in pursuing, STEM career pathways
3. Greater confidence in cultural identity and the relevance of culture for a STEM career
4. Growth in student and professional networks
5. Increased community and parental engagement

The case study methodology included interviews with 37 students, program staff, and program partners (academic staff from other agencies and programs who volunteer their time and expertise, and STEM professionals). To supplement the interview data, and to provide a more complete picture of the progress towards the intended outcomes, the case study also utilised online survey data that had been collected as part of ASSETS program monitoring processes from 2014-2017.

Overall, the evaluation findings show that the program is meeting its intended outcomes, including effectively providing opportunities to high achieving Year 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to explore study and career options in STEM. The impact of ASSETS on many students has been significant, often life-changing, in terms of supporting study and career directions and creating peer networks. Increases in knowledge about preparing for STEM study at university and STEM careers were also observed. The unique combination of components that make up the ASSETS model are critical to the success of the program.

In line with the strengths-based approach of the case study research, several recommendations to build on the achievements of the program have also been suggested including encouraging more community inspired inquiries; providing students with more explicit examples of how culture relates to STEM careers; and continuing to improve personalised support during and after the summer schools.

The Indigenous STEM Education Project is funded
by BHP Foundation and delivered by CSIRO.



For further information

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