

READING COMPREHENSION TEST

Answer all the following questions about the document in English **in your own words**.

The questions may not follow the order of the text.

N.B.: text copy is marked zero

1. Present the document in ONE sentence. (/1)
2. What does the text deal with? Sum it up in a 3-line paragraph. (/1)
3. Who is Renee Wootton and why is her story interesting? (/3)
4. Compare Indigenous students' representation in Stem courses and in the Australian population. What consequence is this having? (/2)
5. What is Qantas and what is their policy regarding recruitment? (/2)
6. What is CareerTrackers and what are its main activities? (/3)
7. What is the Indigenous Stem education program and what makes it interesting? (/2)
8. Why might Indigenous students want to study science? (/2)
9. What is Melbourne University offering Indigenous students? (/2)
10. What is Indigi Lab and what are they trying to do? (/2)

Inside the push to get more Indigenous students studying science and tech

Renee Wootton didn't set out to smash any stereotypes, she just wanted to find friends when she moved to live with her grandparents in Marlee, a small town in New South Wales. But when she joined the Australian Air Force Cadets as a teen, she discovered a passion for aircraft that led her to a career in aerospace engineering – an unusual choice for a woman, especially one with an Indigenous background. Wootton, now 23, is in the graduate program at Qantas with an honours degree under her belt, thanks to her own hard work and dedication and a number of programs that gave her a helping hand.

Putting to one side the dearth of female engineers (around 14% of enrolments), the number of Indigenous students who enrol in Stem courses (science, technology, engineering and maths) is tiny – fewer than 1%. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represent around 1.4% of all university enrolments. Around 3% of the Australian population is Indigenous. This absence from Stem is locking them out of some of the most rewarding and high-paying jobs. Of fast-growing occupations, 75% require Stem skills.

Once Wootton discovered her love for aircraft engines, she took extra tutoring at school to try to get the marks she needed to get to university. She did not reach the required score but was awarded entry into an alternative pathway for Indigenous students, via a diploma in science, engineering and

technology. After a year, she was able to transfer to the degree course. In Sydney, she joined a mentoring and support service for Indigenous university students, CareerTrackers, which placed her in an internship at Qantas.

Qantas group executive of brand, marketing and corporate affairs, Olivia Wirth, says around 1% (317 people) of the airline's employees are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. Qantas is working towards a target of 1.5% by 2018 and, once it achieves that, will continue to keep increasing the proportion, she says. "We are the national carrier. We believe it is important to play a leadership role – across the issue of diversity, not just Indigenous diversity," she says.

The airline has a number of Indigenous employment programs in place, but last year was one of the first companies to sign a 10-year contract with CareerTrackers. Qantas will provide a minimum of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander internships over 10 years, with 100 Indigenous internships over the first three years.

Michael Combs is the founder of CareerTrackers, now in its seventh year, and says 94% of its interns graduate from university (compared with the 40% of Indigenous students not in the program). Combs says around 200 CareerTrackers students are doing Stem degrees and are being recruited by a wide range of companies which are looking for the "Stem way of thinking".

Last year, the CSIRO and BHP Billiton Foundation launched the \$28.8m Indigenous Stem education program. This ambitious five-year project has the twin aims of encouraging Indigenous students into Stem careers, while integrating traditional Indigenous science into school curricula. The project director of the Indigenous Stem education program, Therese Postma, says integrating Indigenous content into schools' science classes is a way of engaging the interest of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. "There is literature that says Indigenous students are slightly more interested in science than non-Indigenous students," she says. "I think that links back to [the fact] there are still a lot who are working on the land and that links to responsibilities, what their family do, culturally, and cultural practices."

Students are also offered a place in a Melbourne University-run bachelor of science, which is extended an extra year to four years so that young people who may face greater challenges in a tertiary education environment have time to get up to speed.

Aboriginal-owned business, Indigi Lab, promotes Indigenous science, while also encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to take up Stem careers. Co-founder Luke Briscoe, a Kuku Yalanji man from far north Queensland explains Indigenous science has been around for 80,000 years or more. Indigi Lab is also holding a panel discussion with scientist Dr David Suzuki on 28 October on how Indigenous and western sciences and knowledge systems can work together. It's a discussion many can learn from.

Adapted from: Fiona SMITH, "Inside the push to get more Indigenous students studying science and tech," *The Guardian*, Oct. 25, 2016.