

Media Release 17 June 2016

NEW GOVERNMENT CANNOT WALK AWAY FROM INDIGENOUS EDUCATION INVESTMENT

The Federal Government elected on July 2 'cannot walk away' from investing in attracting and retaining more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, who comprise an estimated 3,700 of the 450,000 strong Australian teacher workforce.

The Evaluation Panel Chair of the four-year, \$8 million *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Initiative* (MATSITI), Peter Johnston, today told an Indigenous Education Forum that: 'It defies belief that a Federal Government cannot find \$2 to \$2.5 million each year over the coming years' to embed strategies to improve Indigenous education in universities and schools.

Forum speakers called on politicians to give education the same focus as they gave Indigenous health because education was key to lifting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' lives.

'We can be like medical schools. We can invest and get a result', MATSITI Project Director, Professor Peter Buckskin, told the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) Forum in Adelaide.

Only one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders currently complete their teacher education studies but the MATSITI project has identified the reasons why, the 'walking points', when students are most likely to leave studies.

There had been a large cultural shift in teacher education, but, Professor Buckskin said, one third of universities still needed to improve their performance.

'We need to get out of the blame game but acknowledge there are real issues that we need to work through together', Professor Buckskin told the audience that included representatives from 37 Teacher Education universities and institutes that educate future teachers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher educators, students and teachers.

The ACDE Deans' Forum also launched the national online platform, the *3Rs – Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation* website, which is the first set of resources developed by Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander teacher education experts. The resources aim to improve the confidence and competence of all future and current teachers to teach Indigenous studies in classrooms.

'The will help to reduce the anxiety of beginning and early career teachers in meeting the professional focus areas which relate to knowing their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and teaching about Country and Place,' 3Rs Curriculum Director, Dr Kaye Price says.

A recent Reconciliation Report found that four in every five Australians thought it was important to know about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures yet less than one third reported having high levels of knowledges about those cultures.

Further information:

Leslie Falkiner-Rose, ACDE Communications.
0418995240. comms@acde.edu.au