



**Deakin University  
Institute of Koorie Education  
Submission to the House of Representatives  
Inquiry into Teacher Education**

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## **Introduction**

The Institute of Koorie Education at Deakin University is pleased to provide this submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education. The submission addresses Terms of Reference 2, 5 and 10. This submission stresses that all Teacher Education should focus on addressing the 21 goals of the AEP, particularly:

- Goal 2: To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistants, home-school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and con-temporary society, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
- Goal 3: To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
- Goal 4: To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as administrators, teachers, researchers and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.
- Goal 9: To ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and to higher education.
- Goal 12: To achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in post-secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of other Australians in those sectors.
- Goal 16: To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.
- Goal 20: To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.
- Goal 21: To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal traditional and contemporary cultures.

## **Terms of Reference**

### **2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.**

In line with the AEP Goals 9 and 12, particular attention needs to be given to ensure that Indigenous students are not disadvantaged by stringent entry requirements. Special entry provisions for Indigenous students should be encouraged and supported to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enter the teaching profession.

To date, no comprehensive study has been undertaken to explain why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers chose not to remain in the teaching profession at the school level. A longitudinal study focusing on those factors which lead to the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers within the school system should be funded by DEST and undertaken by an institution with significant experience in the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. The results of this research would inform how AEP Goal 4 can be achieved

**5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.**

Despite the AEP Goal 21, Indigenous studies are not systematically taught within the majority of Australian teacher education courses<sup>1</sup>. University faculties are under-resourced and university Indigenous Centres/Units are frequently required to produce curriculum rather than dedicate Commonwealth funding to the teaching and learning needs of Indigenous students. It is critical that the Commonwealth provides resources (above and beyond EFTSL or Indigenous Support Funding) to higher education institutions to develop Aboriginal inclusive core curriculum units. This will allow Indigenous Units/Institutions to meet their core business of providing for the educational needs of Indigenous students, and not be burdened with the costs of contributing to the construction of curriculum for teacher student courses.

It is imperative that teachers are provided with the skills to achieve AEP Goal 20 through the establishment of core curriculum within all teacher education courses which values and respects Aboriginal history, cultures and identity and understand teaching styles which will contribute to the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.**

In order to achieve AEP Goals 2 and 4 it is imperative that school communities embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. Dedicated funding should be directed at providing all teachers within the school system with sufficient ongoing professional development to ensure a culture shift occurs within schools resulting in the valuing, respect and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in order to ensure they are retained within the school system.

It is again recommended that a longitudinal study focusing on those factors which lead to the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers within the school system should be funded by DEST and undertaken by an institution with significant experience in the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. This would lead to understanding the culture of school communities so that strategies can be put in place to retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers at the classroom level.

Commitment to AEP Goals 3 and 20 requires provision of professional development within schools which enables all practicing teachers to embrace the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The construction, delivery and ongoing resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers in the workforce focusing on Aboriginal education will enable the implementation of appropriate cultural practices within schools, and have these embedded throughout the school curriculum. Racism can take many forms including teacher expectations, exclusions and institutional racism. Combating racism requires commitment to shifting the school culture. A shift can come about by focusing on the strengths of Aboriginal communities and students, eliminating the deficit model of 'Aboriginal issues', and can be achieved through greater involvement of Aboriginal people within the school community.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian College of Education (2001) found that only 13.7% of teachers have been trained in Indigenous studies.