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## IMPROVING HOW AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS UNDERSTAND INDIGENOUS ISSUES

**ACDE Forum: Friday, June 17. 1000hrs to 1530hrs. Crowne Plaza Adelaide**

The vital importance of improving how Australian students are taught about Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation in schools is central to a Forum on Indigenous Education in Adelaide tomorrow.

How to teach Indigenous Studies, who should teach it, how to attract and retain more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and racism in universities and schools are some of the challenges being discussed at [Australian Council of Deans of Education \(ACDE\) Forum](#).

This significant meeting comes on the heels of the four-year, \$7.5 million, [More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative \(MATSITI\)](#) project that formally finished last month.

ACDE Board Member and MATSITI Project Leader, Professor Peter Buckskin, and other leaders will discuss how the rich findings of MATSITI show what works in addressing pressing issues like:

- **How to boost teacher numbers** when only 1.2% of teachers, compared to 4.9% of school students, identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.
- **How to lift the retention rates** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education students. Only one-third currently complete their studies.
- **How to raise the competence and confidence of non-Indigenous teachers** to teach Indigenous Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation in schools.
- **How to deal with (often unconscious) racism** in schools.
- **The disproportionately negative impact of proposed limits to teacher education** on disadvantaged groups.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' leaders, together with representatives from 37 Australian universities and institutes that educate future teachers, teacher education students, teachers and other educators are participating in the ACDE Forum.

'A more culturally diverse skilled workforce is essential for a more culturally inclusive Australia,' Professor Buckskin says.

'The Forum is an exciting opportunity to build on the great work achieved over the last four years that will create a sustainable approach to attracting and graduating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers,' Professor Buckskin says.

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices now have an essential place informing the work of the ACDE, which has not always been the case. ACDE has made some major decisions which will ensure our voices will continue to inform its priorities,' Professor Buckskin says.

ACDE President, Professor Tania Aspland, says: 'Diversity in the teaching profession is a must if all children in Australia are to gain access to a quality education.'

**The Australian Council of Deans of Education represents all Australian universities and several private colleges that offer initial teacher education degrees**

'We expect the forum to result in recommendations for how governments and the broader population can build an inclusive and capable teaching force that supports a strong future for this diverse nation,' Professor Aspland says.

## **LAUNCHING THE 3Rs – Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation**

The ACDE Forum will also launch the 3Rs – the first national online resources to provide clear, structured modules on culture, history and contemporary issues for teacher education students and the 450,000 teachers in the workforce.

The [3Rs – Respect, Relationships and Reconciliation](#) – aim to improve the ability of current and future teachers to meet [Professional Teaching Standards 1.4 and 2.4](#).

University of Canberra Chancellor, Dr Tom Calma<sup>1</sup>, whose work helped lay the foundations of the national Close the Gap Initiative, will launch the online resources.

Dr Calma will emphasise the vital importance of all Australians acknowledging and understanding place, culture and history, as part of an integrated, holistic approach to improving conditions – including education, health, employment and housing – for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The 3Rs modules have been developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education experts in partnership with the ACDE. The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership has funded the resources.

### **Potential Interviewees:**

- MATSITI Project Leader and ACDE Board Member, Professor Peter Buckskin
- ACDE President, Professor Tania Aspland
- Professor Tom Calma, Chancellor, University of Canberra
- Chair, Australian Indigenous Lecturers in Initial Teacher Education Association, Dr Peter Anderson.
- Porsche Thrun, Final-year Aboriginal Teacher Education Student, University of South Australia
- Uriel Whipp, Former mature-age teacher education student, now teaching full-time in Adelaide.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION:**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Calma was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission from 2004 to 2010. He also served as Race Discrimination Commissioner from 2004 until 2009.