



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

*Ground Floor, 120 Clarendon Street, Southbank, Victoria, 3006
Phone : +61 (0)3 9693 1800 Fax : +61 (0)3 9693 1805
Email : aeu@aeufederal.org.au Website : www.aeufederal.org.au*

May 13, 2003

UNION CONGRATULATES NEW SOUTH WALES AND QUEENSLAND FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES FOR TEACHERS

The Australian Education Union today congratulated the New South Wales and Queensland Governments on the leadership they have shown to Indigenous students and communities by acting to ensure that teachers employed in their States are properly prepared to teach Indigenous students.

“The Union believes that State and Territory Governments have a responsibility, as the employers of teachers in our public education systems, to ensure that all teachers are properly prepared to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their parents and their communities,” said Ms Darcel Moyle, the AEU’s Federal Aboriginal Education Officer. “We have been running an intensive campaign around this issue for the past 12 months, and finally our campaigning is paying off.”

“At the end of last year, the Union wrote to all Ministers for Education asking them to outline their Government’s commitment and activity in this area. Today, we are releasing this information, which shows that the Governments of New South Wales and Queensland are serious about ensuring that their teachers receive adequate training in this area as a minimum requirement for their employment. Both of these Governments have shown exemplary leadership in this area, and we strongly urge their Ministerial counterparts in other States and Territories to take note of their stance and follow their lead,” Ms Moyle said.

“We also urge the Federal Minister for Education, Dr Brendan Nelson, to support the leadership shown by Ministers Refshauge and Bligh, by ensuring that there is sufficient funding available in the Federal Budget to enable Universities and Education Departments to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop and deliver pre-service training programs that are rigorous, relevant and that meet the requirements of communities.”

“Teachers who are working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have indicated to us that pre-service Indigenous studies, whilst not a panacea, has prepared them to better understand the community, communicate with parents, and therefore meet the needs of their students,” Ms Moyle said.

“Ministers Refshauge and Bligh have accepted that they have a responsibility in this area, and are working with a range of stakeholders to get it right. This can only improve the ability of teachers who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and will assist in the attainment of better educational outcomes.”

“Other States and Territories have done some commendable work with Universities,” said Moyle, “but we believe that mandating Indigenous studies as an employment requirement will solve some of the problems experienced by the smaller State and Territory systems. The Northern Territory, for example, has ensured that students studying at the Northern Territory University have Indigenous studies built in to their degree program, but they recruit up to 80% of their workforce from other States and Territories. It is therefore possible that up to 80% of the graduate teaching workforce in the Territory have not had an opportunity to learn about the unique cultures of Indigenous Australia, and some of the educational challenges that confront us.”

“As the two major employer bodies of teachers in Australia, it is significant to us that Queensland and New South Wales have both made these commitments,” said Moyle. “The work of the New South Wales Teachers’ Federation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee and Gandu Jarjum, the Queensland Teachers’ Union Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee must be acknowledged. Both of these Committees have ensured that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and their communities are being heard at a Ministerial level. Other Branches and Associated Bodies of the Union have been lobbying their Ministers, but to date, this voice has fallen on deaf ears. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been demanding this initiative for the last 20 years, and finally some Ministers are taking notice. We await the same leadership from the others.”

Authorised by Pat Byrne, AEU Federal President

For further information, please contact:

Darcel Moyle

Federal Aboriginal Education Officer

Australian Education Union

Phone – 03 9693 1813

Mobile – 0409 833 816