



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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Federal Government's practical reconciliation slashes Indigenous education funding, AEU survey says

A survey released today by the Australian Education Union shows that almost \$2 million has been lost in direct Commonwealth Indigenous education funding after changes were implemented late last year.

AEU Federal President, Ms. Pat Byrne said the changes to Commonwealth Indigenous funding were being felt directly by students, parents and school communities across Australia.

"The Federal Government has long been espousing the need for practical reconciliation in this country. But actions speak a lot louder than words; the true effects of these changes are a reduction in funding to schools and the isolation of many Indigenous families from school communities.

"Funding has been slashed across the board, programs cut and jobs lost. Nearly 450 tutors have lost employment, 265 of those Indigenous employees.

"Schools are reporting major difficulties engaging with Indigenous parents who are staying well clear of the new programs. They have little understanding of the changes and are frustrated by the application process often describing it as too difficult," said Ms. Byrne.

In 2004, 78% of schools had an active committee for the Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Program (ASSPA). Only 9% of responding schools now have a committee under its replacement program, the Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI).

"Changes to the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) have also been devastating. Over 2700 Indigenous students no longer have access to tutorial assistance which has affected their literacy and numeracy outcomes as well as their attendance at school," said Ms Byrne.

The AEU calls on the Commonwealth to conduct an urgent and independent assessment of these changes.

561 schools across Australia responded to the survey, which was conducted in July 2005.

For a copy of the summary of the report please contact Meaghan Telford.

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