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NATIONAL BENCHMARKS SHOW INDIGENOUS STUDENTS NEED MORE SUPPORT

The Australian Education Union has criticised Federal Government support for Indigenous education after national literacy, numeracy and writing benchmark results showed Indigenous students are lagging in all areas.

AEU Deputy Federal Secretary Darcel Russell said that changes to the Commonwealth Indigenous Education Funding scheme had made it much harder for Indigenous students.

"The latest national benchmarks on literacy and numeracy show that Indigenous students nationally are falling behind," said Ms. Russell.

"Across Australia, over half of Indigenous Year 7 students did not meet the numeracy benchmark, 36% did not meet the reading benchmark and 28% did not meet the writing benchmark."

"Indigenous students at other year levels also lagged well behind."

"It is simply not good enough that in a developed country over a third of our Indigenous children are unable to read properly when they finish primary school."

"This is clearly a national problem, but changes to Commonwealth funding arrangements have actually made it harder for schools to educate Indigenous students."

"A 2005 survey of over 500 schools by the AEU (the same year as the benchmark results were collected) revealed schools were struggling with new arrangements which make it more difficult for them to access funding."

"This is having a severe impact on Indigenous students."

"For example in 2005 over 2700 Indigenous students had lost access to tutors due to changes to the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, which would have affected their literacy and numeracy outcomes, as well as their attendance at school."

"The Federal Government is continuing cuts to other programs, with funding for the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiative Program projected to decline by over 34 per cent from 2005-06 to 2007-08."

"The Federal Government cannot disown their role in these shocking benchmark results, nor their responsibility to address them."

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