



Independent Education Union of Australia

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Re: Inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Dear House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs

Thank you for the notification that your committee's inquiry into educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has been re-referred for further inquiry.

Both our federal body (IEUA) and our Queensland and Northern Territory branch (IEUA-QNT) made submissions to the inquiry in late 2015 and IEUA-QNT also provided additional data, upon request, following the hearing in Brisbane in February 2016.

Although neither body is preparing a submission to the re-referred inquiry, we would like to take the opportunity to reiterate key elements of our earlier submissions, namely:

- That the principles of quality education are universal and their widespread recognition and enactment is essential if we are to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Access to, participation in and outcomes of pre-schooling are improved when early childhood education is respectful of the language and culture of the child and takes place in settings that facilitate constructive, collaborative relationships between early childhood educators, family and community members and providers of other support services.
- Access to boarding schools does not negate, or compensate for, lack of access to quality education in a student's home community. Unethical practices by some regional and metropolitan boarding schools exacerbate disadvantage and disengagement in rural and remote communities.
- Best practice is a highly situated, locally responsive concept achieved through empowerment of community members and educational professionals.
- Building the relationships that improve outcomes for students takes time and persistence and is, therefore, dependent upon secure, long-term access to funding and resources.
- Comprehensive support services are essential to intergenerational change.

In short, achieving lasting change requires long-term commitment and our membership would welcome the opportunity to engage in further discussion and consultation as the inquiry proceeds.

Yours sincerely

Chris Watt
Federal Secretary
9 November 2016