

## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release Tuesday 9 August 2011

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### *Closing the gap in school completion rates for Indigenous students*

The Year 12 retention rate for Indigenous students is steadily increasing, according to a presentation to be given at the ACER Research Conference on Tuesday 9 August.

Kate Connors, Senior Adviser to the COAG Reform Council, will present findings showing that between 1995 and 2009 the retention rate to Year 12 increased from 30.7 per cent to 45.4 per cent, an increase of 1.2 per cent each year. The average annual increase was 0.3 per cent for non-Indigenous students. There was exceptional improvement in NT and SA.

“Increasing the attainment of Year 12 or its vocational equivalent plays a vital role in reducing disadvantage amongst Indigenous Australians,” Ms Connors said.

One of the targets of COAG’s National Indigenous Reform Agreement is to halve the gap for Indigenous 20 to 24 year olds in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

ACER examined the Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment of Indigenous students for the COAG Reform Council to help gain an understanding of variations in performance across states, explore the role of contextual factors, and advise on possible good practice.

Only two factors were significant predictors for Year 12 attainment for Indigenous students – achievement and educational intention.

Factors affecting the *intention* to complete Year 12 were: higher achievement; gender (Indigenous females nearly twice as likely to plan to complete Year 12 as Indigenous males); and higher levels of parental education. For non-Indigenous students, socioeconomic status, geo-location and language spoken at home were also significant.

However, Ms Connors said further program evaluation may be required to gain a clearer understanding of which educational approaches are associated with Indigenous Year 12 attainment.

Ms Connors said, “Further research is needed to explore which current programs use innovative reforms or methods of service delivery that are linked to high level outcomes, and could be suitable to be implemented more widely.”

The ACER Research Conference 2011, on the theme *Indigenous Education: Pathways to success*, takes place in Darwin from 7 to 9 August.

Further information is available from <http://www.acer.edu.au/conference/2011>

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