

MEDIA RELEASE

Addressing Indigenous educational disadvantage: Time to be heard

10 July 2017: Successfully addressing the complex educational disadvantage of Indigenous Australians requires evidence-based research and evaluation of programs, and the full participation of Indigenous people, from the national level down to the school, according to an Australian Education Review released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

Writing in the Foreword to *The Case for Urgency: Advocating for Indigenous voice in education*, Professor Mark Rose, Executive Director of Indigenous Strategy and Education at La Trobe University, notes that the Indigenous education policy landscape has over the last 50 years become cluttered with concepts and positions challenging the education profession. Over the same period, the Indigenous voice has not changed but is not properly heard.

“Addressing the educational disadvantage of Indigenous Australians requires real consultation, consistent policies, concerted and persistent effort by governments, and a real commitment to funding,” Professor Rose said.

Dr Kevin Gillan, Executive Director of Education Partnerships in the Northern Territory Department of Education and lead author of the review, said the political process and rapid election cycle mean that insufficient time is allocated to policy implementation, and funding is often cut.

“We need to understand that the educational disadvantage of Indigenous Australians is extremely complex, and that Indigenous Australian children carry with them the educational and trauma debts of their parents, grandparents and communities,” Dr Gillan said.

Suzanne Mellor, ACER Senior Research Fellow and co-author of the review, said *The Case for Urgency* reveals we have not successfully addressed the major issues facing Indigenous students in their learning.

“This review shows that schooling practices need to integrate curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and do this with a full understanding of students’ contexts,” Ms Mellor said.

ACER Chief Executive, Professor Geoff Masters AO, said research underpinning policy design and implementation has been consistently lacking.

“Further research into factors inhibiting Indigenous school attendance and learning, for example, is urgently required if we are to design and implement more effective policy,” Professor Masters said.

“This review also shows that fully engaging the Indigenous community is critical to the design and implementation of successful policies.”

The review also identifies five key and immediate challenges and case studies of school programs that seek to address those challenges:

- Deficit and race-based assumptions in Indigenous education.
- Living away from home to study – boarding schools.
- Raising school attendance and engagement levels.
- Providing the best start – early childhood education.
- Engaging Indigenous communities in educational programs.

Australian Education Review number 62, *The Case for Urgency: Advocating for Indigenous voice in education* by Dr Kevin Gillan, Suzanne Mellor and Jacynta Krakouer, is available as a free download from the ACER website at <http://research.acer.edu.au/aer> Suzanne Mellor is Editor of the AER series.

Print copies can be purchased from ACER Press. Contact customer service on 1800 338 402 or sales@acer.org

Professor Mark Rose and Dr Kevin Gillan are available for comment.

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