

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Tackle racism to improve Indigenous student outcomes

#### *Research Conference 2014*

**3 August 2014:** Greater experiences of racism are significantly associated with lower self-perceptions of maths and English abilities and increased feelings of hopelessness at school, Dr Gawaiian Bodkin-Andrews will tell delegates to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference tomorrow.

Dr Bodkin-Andrews from Macquarie University will discuss findings from his studies of the impact of racism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student achievement, engagement and aspirations, and the factors that may limit or negate the effects of racism.

“Racism has a longstanding and negative impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so it is critical not only to prevent it from occurring in the first place, but also to identify agents of resilience to help strengthen people against the negative impact of racism,” Dr Bodkin-Andrews said, speaking ahead of the conference.

*Research Conference 2014*, addressing the theme, *Quality and Equity: What does research tell us?* includes six presentations that focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous learners.

Speaking ahead of his presentation on personalising education for Indigenous learners, ACER Principal Research Fellow Tony Dreise said, “With 40 per cent of the Indigenous Australian population under the age of 17 years, it is vital that they are being prepared – and are preparing themselves – for the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow.

“If Australia wants to see more Indigenous young people complete Year 12 and go on to university, and participate fully in civic life, then complementary action is required both outside and inside the school gates,” Mr Dreise said.

Also at the conference, ACER Principal Research Fellow Dr Petra Lietz will chair a panel discussion based on insights from large-scale assessments into student- and school-level factors related to the performance of Aboriginal students, and students in rural and remote areas when compared with the performances of other students.

Professor Sven Silburn from the Menzies School of Health Research will explore the socio-cultural, geographic and economic contexts of child rearing and school education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in the Northern Territory compared to elsewhere in Australia.

The University of South Australia’s Professor Peter Buckskin, Queensland University of Technology’s Associate Professor Gary Thomas and Monash University’s Dr Zane Ma Rhea in a panel discussion will argue for the need to remobilise the concept of ‘both ways’ educational choice to support greater Indigenous student engagement in higher education.

Associate Professor Mere Berryman from the University of Waikato will report on a program that has dramatically improved the attendance, retention, engagement and achievement of Maōri students in New Zealand secondary schools, and increased the number of Maōri students gaining university entrance by more than 80 per cent over four years.

*Research Conference 2014* takes place in Adelaide from 3 to 5 August. Further information is available from [www.acer.edu.au/rc](http://www.acer.edu.au/rc)

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Media enquiries: Megan Robinson, 03 9277 5582 or 0419 340 058 [communications@acer.edu.au](mailto:communications@acer.edu.au)