

12.7.2011

EM/11/4



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail UN.Geneva@dfat.gov.au

Chemin des Fins 2, Petit Saconnex, 1211 Geneva 19 Ph +41 22 799 9100 Fax +41 22 799 9175 www.geneva.mission.gov.au

Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Fourth Session

Item 3: Follow-up to thematic studies and advice

Follow up to report on the study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the implementation of the right of Indigenous peoples to education and its Advice No.1 on the rights of Indigenous peoples to education.

Firstly, Australia would like to congratulate the new members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on their appointment. The Australian Government wishes the new members all the best in their roles, and looks forward to engaging with them.

Australia would also like to re-iterate its support for the Expert Mechanism's final report of its study on lessons learned and challenges to achieve the rights of indigenous peoples to education.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of a quality education, and is taking action to improve numeracy and literacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians through both mainstream and Indigenous specific programs. The Australian Government is committed to driving changes that provide good access to quality education for Indigenous people and is working to improve teacher quality and foster better outcomes for Indigenous students. It is taking steps to ensure Indigenous education is provided in ways that respect Indigenous culture.

The Australian Government's Closing the Gap agenda identifies three clear and specific targets relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education in Australia. The first is to ensure access to early childhood pre-school education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities by 2013. I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the available data, we believe this first target will be achieved and I note that there is work underway to obtain improved data for measuring future progress. The target is supported by two National Partnerships with state and territory governments under which infrastructure and additional services are provided. These include 38 Children and Family Centres (16 of which are to be in remote areas) providing child care, early learning and parental support to Indigenous families, and funding to support universal access early childhood education services for all Australian children under which there is a specific focus for actions and reporting on Indigenous children, particularly those in remote communities. The other two longer-term educational targets are to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous children by 2018; and to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020. While there is a challenging job ahead of us, there are positive signs for both sets of targets.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* agreed by the Council of Australian Governments on 23 May 2011 provides impetus for Australia's education providers to accelerate improvements in the educational outcomes of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Action Plan identifies national, systematic and local level action in six strategic priority domains that evidence shows will have the most impact on closing the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and other

Australian students. These domains are: readiness for school; engagement and connections; attendance; literacy and numeracy; leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and pathways to real post-school options.

Implementation of the Action Plan has begun and includes identifying around 900 Focus schools about which Education Ministers will receive a snapshot of on the ground successes, barriers and progress to government efforts to lift the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

As stated in the Expert Mechanism's study and advice, there is a need for ongoing data gathering and monitoring of outcomes.

The first of five annual national reports for the Action Plan will be provided to Australia's Education Ministers at the end of the 2011 year. The annual reports will also be available publically through the internet. Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Bodies will contribute to the Action Plan annual reports, providing their own views and perspective on progress made under the Action Plan. It is important to note that the Action Plan reporting and evaluation mechanisms will contribute towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy beyond 2014. This is a critical element to Australia's long term commitment to Close the Gap between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and young people.

Mr Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to inform the Expert Mechanism further about Australia's commitment to quality education for Indigenous peoples.