



Australian Government

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

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**Submission to MCEECDYA on the
Indigenous Education Action Plan
(Draft) 2010-2014**

February 2010



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Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council

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The Hon Jane Lomax-Smith
Chair - Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs
PO Box 202
CARLTON SOUTH VIC 3053

Dear Ms Lomax-Smith:

**Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council - Submission to MCEECDYA on the
Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010-2014**

Since its inauguration in 2005, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) has provided policy advice to Government on improving outcomes in higher education for Indigenous students and staff relating to their participation, retention and progression both in study and in employment.

The Council, now in its third term, reports to both the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Minister for Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. The Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs' (MCEECDYA's) Indigenous Education Action Plan (IEAP).

IHEAC's submission on the draft IEAP has been developed with consideration to a number of other policy initiatives currently being considered and pursued by the Council, including:

- A range of higher education reforms as detailed in the Government's response to the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education, '*Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*', in particular a review into the effectiveness of measures to improve higher education access and outcomes for Indigenous people;
- the Australian Government's National Indigenous Languages Policy, announced by the Hon Jenny Macklin, Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and The Hon Peter Garrett, Minister for the Environment Heritage and the Arts, on 9 August 2009; and
- the development of a National Indigenous Higher Education Workforce Strategy, initiated by the second IHEAC in consultation with Universities Australia, and currently being progressed by the third IHEAC.

The content of this submission was discussed and endorsed at the second meeting of the third Council, held on 22-23 February 2010 at AIATSIS, Canberra.

Yours sincerely

Professor Steven Larkin
Chair

26 February 2010

Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council Submission to the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs' Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010-2014

GENERAL COMMENTS

- The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) broadly supports the scope, purpose and actions of the draft Indigenous Education Action plan (IEAP), and commits to supporting the plan's implementation. IHEAC recognises that the IEAP will be a necessary foundation on which other higher education and employment reforms will be built, and Council members look forward to providing additional support and advice as the plan is put into practice.
- IHEAC in particular supports the development of a companion document by the Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE) that outlines actions to close the gap in training, university and employment outcomes. This document will help ensure that policy initiatives in secondary and tertiary education are consistent and complementary. IHEAC is keen to assist in the development of MCTEE's companion document, particularly in light of its ongoing review into the effectiveness of measures to improve higher education access and outcomes for Indigenous people. An indication of the timeframe around the development of this document would be welcomed by IHEAC.
- Chapter 2 of the plan ('National Collaboration') outlines a suite of agreed outcomes, targets, performance indicators and actions. This chapter would benefit from clearly outlined roles and responsibilities of all Commonwealth and State stakeholders, including the jurisdictional responsibilities for performance monitoring. IHEAC notes that it may have a role to play in monitoring the higher education sector's performance in relation to both the IEAP and the MCTEE sister document.
- IHEAC supports the plan's use of a needs-based approach that allocates resources to where they are most needed. IHEAC believes the methodology for determining 'focus schools' is an appropriate and objective manner for identifying sites for specific action.

RESPONSE TO KEY IEAP ACTIONS

10. *As part of a National Strategy for Indigenous Languages, a study will be commissioned into the feasibility of a national panel of experts framing the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and considering how out-of-school schemes might work.*

IHEAC welcomes this proposal and notes that the study should examine options for using Indigenous languages as an education tool for all students and examine teacher workforce issues.

IHEAC acknowledges that teaching Indigenous students in their traditional languages will not be practical in all schools. As the draft IEAP makes clear, the majority of Indigenous students attend regional and urban schools where most of their peers are non-Indigenous. However, where Indigenous students represent up to 100 percent of enrolments (in particular in remote and community-based schools), and where a widespread or dominant Indigenous language can be identified, the use of Indigenous languages as a method of instruction should be considered.

IHEAC will provide advice to Government on the implementation of the Government's National Indigenous Languages Policy.

19. *MCEECDYA will initiate work to establish mechanisms for tracking individual students (enrolment and attendance) from at least the first year of compulsory schooling to post-school education and training.*

In light of its planned review into the effectiveness of Indigenous higher education programs, IHEAC has a particular interest in the aspects of the IEAP which assist students to make successful transitions to training, further studies or employment. IHEAC notes that it may have a role to play in monitoring this initiative. Further clarification of the roles and responsibilities of all IEAP stakeholders will help establish how the Council can best support this action.

27. *MCEECDYA will develop a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy to assist education providers to make progress towards an equitable ratio of Indigenous staff to students. The Strategy will support aspiring Indigenous education leaders, include initiatives to attract more Indigenous Australians into the education workforce and bureaucracies and provide pathways through the workforce. The Strategy will also help to recognise and clarify the role of Indigenous education workers and support their professional development and career aspirations.*

IHEAC is currently developing a National Indigenous Higher Education Workforce Strategy. The Council supports the development of MCEECDYA's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy, and commits to working with all stakeholders in the development of complementary initiatives in this space, including

30. *MCEECDYA will consult with the higher education sector to develop and introduce core components on good practice in Indigenous education and the teaching of Indigenous students in all pre-service teacher education courses across Australia.*

33. *MCEECDYA will consult with the higher education sector to establish a coalition of universities, based on the New Zealand model, to provide evidence-based culturally authenticated research that can directly inform classroom pedagogy.*

39. *MCEECDYA will seek advice from Indigenous education consultative bodies, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, Universities Australia and other strategic stakeholders to increase the number of Indigenous students who make a successful transition to university in conjunction with new national reforms to increase Indigenous participation in higher education.*

IHEAC welcomes these proposals to further engage with the higher education sector and will contribute to requests for policy development, information and advice as required. All input from the Council will be informed by its ongoing review into the effectiveness of measures to improve higher education access and outcomes for Indigenous people.

40. *MCEECDYA will request that the Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education and Employment develop a companion document to the Indigenous Education Action Plan that outlines actions to close the gap in training, university and employment outcomes. This companion document would improve links between the school sector and the training, tertiary education and employment services sectors.*

42. *Secondary schools will provide pathways and improved access to school-based*

accredited training, including traineeships and apprenticeships, for Indigenous students in years 10-12.

- 43. Secondary schools will provide case management for Indigenous students undertaking school-based traineeships and link them to employment services.*
- 47. Education providers will strengthen partnerships between schools, VET providers, universities and Indigenous communities to broaden the horizons and post-school options of Indigenous students.*

IHEAC strongly supports the development of employment pathways into the higher education sector. Through the ongoing development of a National Indigenous Higher Education Workforce Strategy, IHEAC is examining a range of measure relating to apprenticeships, work experience placements, academic scholarships, graduate employment placement, traineeships, and cadetships within Australian universities.

IHEAC commits to working with the *Ministerial Council on Tertiary Education*, secondary schools and other relevant stakeholders in the future to develop employment pathways into the higher education sector and closes the gap in training, university and employment outcomes.

CONCLUSION

IHEAC strongly supports MCEECDYA's commitment to establishing strategies and actions that will result in significant improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The findings of IHEAC's review into Indigenous higher education will help inform the development of the IEAP, and Council members look forward to working with MCEECDYA on the implementation of the IEAP and responding to further IEAP-related requests as they arise.