



***Response to draft Indigenous Education Action Plan
School of Education
James Cook University***

The School of Education at James Cook University sees much of value in the draft Indigenous Education Action Plan. We particularly welcome the early childhood initiatives, the focus on increased presence of Indigenous people in schools and on community partnerships and the valuing of Indigenous professionals and paraprofessionals in education. As providers of teacher education, we strongly support the development of National Teacher Professional Standards which foreground knowledge and understanding of the learning needs of Indigenous students and are confident that our recently renewed preservice teacher education programs adequately addresses these needs through a series of four core subjects, including *English as a second language for Indigenous students*, as well as embedding Indigenous perspectives across the program (Action 27).

In this context, we confine our response to the draft Indigenous Education Action Plan to two main points.

Point 1

Outcomes related to readiness for school, engagement and connection, and leadership, quality teaching and workforce improvement will be facilitated by an increased number of fully qualified Indigenous teachers. This is recognised in Action 27. Fully qualified local Indigenous teachers can provide a stable workforce in hard-to-staff areas as many of the focus schools will be and where the roll out of early childhood programs will increase the requirements for fully qualified educators. Indigenous teachers bring in-depth local knowledge of the students, their families and communities (supports Actions 4, 36) and facilitate school community partnerships (supports Actions 13, 14, 15 and 16) In addition, the presence of Indigenous people in preservice teacher education programs and as part of the teaching workforce actively supports Action 34, and 36. Increasing the pool of Indigenous teachers will also increase the number of people available for the important work of consultation and advice as advocated throughout the draft plan.

The School of Education at James Cook University currently runs a successful teacher education program, RATEP which enables Indigenous people to undertake the Bachelor of Education in primary education in their home communities. The program is based on strong partnership with Queensland Department of Education and Training (DET) and Tropical North Queensland TAFE under the guidance of the RATEP Management Committee which includes member from JCU, DET, TNQTAFE, DEEWR and Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee. A significant feature of the partnership is the provision of RATEP sites within DET schools, shared ICT facilities and services with DET and TAFE and DET employed teachers to provide support for students studying through JCU and TNQTATE. This program is ideally placed to expand into early childhood teacher education, given the track record of RATEP and the availability of the online Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education) at James Cook University. A significant feature of the program is the multiple entry and exit points it offers through TAFE Certificates 3 and 4 and the Diploma of Education providing a pathway into the Bachelor of Education. This particularly supports Action 27.

Based on our expertise in this program we would advise that the Action Plan consider the following:

- recognition that the provision of culturally appropriate, well supported teacher education into rural and remote areas involves considerable financial costs to teacher education;
- promotion of teaching as a worthwhile exciting career path for Indigenous people, especially school leavers and younger people;
- adequate income to support Indigenous people to undertake university education whether in their home community or on campus. This support is especially important for people

whose school education may not have provided them with adequate preparation for university study and so need to limit employment commitments;

- opportunities for Indigenous teachers to undertake post graduate qualifications, with adequate income support, especially research degrees which support the development of Indigenous knowledges in education (also supports Action 33);
- pathways for Indigenous teachers into university-based teacher education.

Point 2

We welcome the focus on evidence-based strategies (Action 18 and 23) and support Action 33. However, we are specifically concerned that the focus goes beyond “what works” to a more comprehensive study of quality teaching in Indigenous contexts. We are particularly keen to ensure that what works in the short term does not lead to detrimental effects in the longer term. This is particularly relevant in the area of literacy and numeracy where a host of research literature suggests that while short term gains can be made as a result of particular programs and strategies, strategies that focus on isolated components of literacy and numeracy may not be productive in developing an understand of and appreciation for the purposes and value of literacy and numeracy in ways that promote sustained engagement. The short time frame of the action plan may promote the collection of short term and therefore inadequate data. Thus, we advise that the action plan consider:

- developing a conceptual framework that supports the assessment of evidence-based information by contextualising it in the longer term;
- making use of university/ school partnerships to promote effective participatory action research that provides resources and time for schools to effectively evaluate what works;
- providing funding that allows for research activity beyond the life the action plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this draft Indigenous Education Action Plan. We look forward to being involved in the implementation of the final plan.

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