



**NSW TEACHERS FEDERATION**

# Aboriginal Education Policy

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NEW**

*Adopted by Annual Conference 1999*



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Cover painting by Val Saunders, Batemans Bay Public School

The painting "United" tells the story of the sharing of knowledge and the learning process between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, through the medium of schools.

The round circles represent the schools with the very inner circle being the Aboriginal Education Policy, found in every school. The line between the circles/schools are the paths forming connections linking each to the other in their common goal of learning, creating a oneness in their commitment to Aboriginal education.

The ants traversing the paths are the representation of the teachers, students and community (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). This is indicated by the coloured dots around the bodies of the ants. The actual ants are all one colour to depict all people belonging to the family of humans. The ants enter the circles/schools travelling around the schools gaining knowledge and appreciation of the uniqueness of Aboriginal culture, all learning to care and share one another's culture through the medium of the schools. They take the paths from the schools (indicated by the ants travelling in opposite directions) creating a continuous process of gaining knowledge and taking the knowledge back out to the communities represented by the dots in the background.



# Aboriginal Education Policy



## Preface

Federation's 1999 Aboriginal Education Policy is based on the groundbreaking policies of the past. The formation of such policy is vested in an equitable partnership between Aboriginal peoples represented through the NSW AECG and the union of teachers represented by the Federation. The evolution of such policy ensures key developments in social justice and education can be incorporated into a new and dynamic partnership.



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## Message from the General Secretary

The NSW Teachers Federation has been in the forefront of campaigns about Aboriginal education for many years. This policy enhances the work done in the past and will continue to support strategies in public education in this state which provide an opportunity to rectify the errors of the past.

Australian indigenous peoples have a right to demand for their children the best that public education has to offer. The government has a responsibility to ensure that this occurs.

Every Federation member should become familiar with this policy and take the opportunity to work towards its implementation.

The key indigenous issues of education, health, reconciliation and land rights remain unresolved. It is the aim of this policy to help us to understand these issues and work towards their resolution.

Special credit must be paid to the work of the Aboriginal Members Committee, other Aboriginal members, the Officers of the Federation, Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), and Pam Koeneman for their dedication in developing this policy and working towards its implementation.



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## Introduction

### History of Federation's involvement in Aboriginal issues

Federation is proud of its contemporary history with Aboriginal peoples, which is founded on the mutual respect of one another. It has enjoyed active partnership with the NSW AECG for over 20 years. This has carefully guided the direction of the organisation in the critical matters of social justice and human rights as they affect opportunity and outcomes in education and the broader community for Aboriginal peoples both domestically and internationally.

More specifically the Federation was there in 1976 leading the battle for the original affirmative action strategy for the employment of the first group of Aboriginal teachers to graduate in numbers from teacher training.

Federation is proud to have founded, in partnership with the NSW AECG and its Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, the first union policy on Aboriginal issues in this country in 1980. This partnership paved the

way for the ultimate development and support from teachers of the first Department of Education Aboriginal Education Policy, the foundations of which were so ground breaking that it has formed the backbone of the 1997 DET Aboriginal Education Policy.

The fight to demand ongoing growth and access to public education has been the cornerstone of equity for Aboriginal peoples. In times of government destabilisation of the public education system through reduced funding, the most economic and socially disadvantaged have most to lose.

Employment of and protection of the rights of Aboriginal teachers has been paramount in the Federation's policy. This support is responsible for the growth in numbers of Aboriginal teachers and the continuing support is responsible for their active involvement in the union.

Aboriginal Studies was a foundation issue in Federation's first and subsequent policies and will remain the primary curriculum tool for social justice for Aboriginal peoples in our public school/training institutions.

## I. Vision statement

The Federation is totally committed to achieving social justice and human rights for Aboriginal peoples. This means creating a public education learning environment, founded on the active support of both its Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal membership, which fosters the direction of the diverse Aboriginal communities in achieving culturally respectful outcomes that will empower Aboriginal peoples.

### Equity of outcomes

Federation is committed to achieving equitable outcomes for Aboriginal students based on preserving diverse Aboriginal culture and ensuring that programs are culturally appropriate and developed in consultation with the NSW AECG.

### Commitment to public education

Aboriginal education and outcomes are predicated on the continued growth and maintenance of the public education system in this state and nation. Any equity of outcomes for Aboriginal students and community can only be achieved by a strong well resourced and freely available public school system.

### Workers rights

Aboriginal teachers and educators like all other workers must have their industrial rights and interests protected by unions. Such protection must ensure the ongoing maintenance and practice of Australia's unique and diverse Aboriginal culture.

### Aboriginal community

Federation respects the diversity of Aboriginal communities. Federation supports the right of Aboriginal communities to have an active role in the development, planning and implementation of Aboriginal education at all levels of the education and training system.

Teachers are the foundation of education and as such, play the most important role in fostering equitable outcomes, social justice and human rights principles. Federation is committed to ensuring its members are well informed through training and access to knowledge, to guarantee a learning environment in public schools and training institutions that maximises culturally appropriate outcomes for Aboriginal students.



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## 2. Public education for Aboriginal students

### Aboriginal participation in public education

By far the largest provider of education and training in Australia and NSW is the public education and training system. Aboriginal Australians are in the lowest percentiles of almost every socio-economic indicator. They are located in large numbers in the most remote and isolated communities in New South Wales. They are subsequently more dependent on public education and training than any other identifiable group in our community.

### 150 years of public education

Aboriginal Australians sadly could not celebrate the recent 150 years of education in New South Wales. General access for Aboriginal children to the school system has only been achieved, arguably in the past 27 years or since the removal from policy in 1972 of the option for Aboriginal children to be removed from schools on the demand of the non-Aboriginal community. Regrettably, the table indicates that Aboriginal children are still being excluded from schools by different means in the present.

Cultural background	% of student population	Male	Male	Female	Female
Suspension type		Short	Long	Short	Long
ATSI	3%	11.4%	12.2%	13.9%	18.0%
NESB	19%	15.8%	11.7%	14.1%	13.9%
OTHER	78%	72.8%	76.1%	72.0%	68.1%

*"If They Learn Us Right..."*

*Jeannie Herbert, Lynette Anderson,*

*David Price, Clare Stehbens*

*Funded by DETYA, 1998*

Given this history Federation acknowledges that much work needs to be done to ensure the next 150 years ensures Aboriginal equity of access and outcomes for Aboriginal people.

### Public education - hope for the future

The long term future and equity of outcomes for Aborigines is completely dependent on the strength and growth of public education. Any attack on public education and training is an outright attack on Aboriginal education and training access and equity of outcomes. Federation will maintain its most fundamental fight against such attacks and continue to promote a quality public education and training provision in NSW and Australia.

## 3. Early childhood education

Federation recognises that the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children takes place in many settings other than schools. Therefore the transition from home to pre-school to primary schooling must be an ongoing experience which allows for the recognition of a variety of cultural backgrounds, different learning styles and a range of home environments.

Federation further recognises that within the delivery of an educational service there must be a recognition and affirmation on the cultural knowledge, language and values that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children bring to mainstream education.

The Federation acknowledges that schools have a responsibility to promote the intellectual, social and emotional development of young Aboriginal children to the same degree as non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

It is therefore imperative that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of pre-primary school age have access to pre-school services

on a basis comparable to that available to other children of the same age.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should participate in pre-school education for a period similar to all children.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should be provided with adequate preparation through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

#### **Action**

*Federation urges that preference be given to recruiting Aboriginal teachers to the nine DET Aboriginal pre-schools throughout the state. It is most important that Aboriginal pre-schoolers have Aboriginal role models with whom they can identify.*

*Federation urges DET to honour their commitment to funding these pre-schools through State funding not through Commonwealth Aboriginal funding which can be used in other areas of Aboriginal education including employing more Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers.*



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## 4. Alternative education - community backed

### Alternative school options within the public domain

Federation recognises the importance of innovative approaches to redress the lack of past opportunity for access to schools and training institutions by Aboriginal people. Federation supports the concept that to achieve equity of outcomes, all options within the public school and training institutions supported by the Aboriginal community through the NSW AECG must be promoted.

### OTEN

The diverse geographic and cultural spread of Aborigines in New South Wales makes access to Distance Education services such as OTEN/Distance Education an imperative. Federation endorses measures which will Aboriginalise the curriculum options available through OTEN as a matter of priority. Federation further supports an affirmative action strategy that will recruit Aboriginal teachers and educators into key positions within OTEN for improved service delivery to Aboriginal students

### "Aboriginal/Community Schools"

Federation acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal Australians to choose specific Aboriginal only options in terms of particular programs, curriculum etc. within the public education system which are firmly based on the principles of culturally appropriate educational outcomes. Federation supports the need for innovative solutions which could incorporate the options of publicly funded "Aboriginal Community Schools and training institutions".

### New initiative programs

Federation endorses the establishment of a funding resource by Government to encourage innovation in the area of Aboriginal education. Such innovation should be designed in partnership with Aboriginal communities to lead to the establishment of best practice options for incorporation into mainstream programs in schools and training institutions.

### Technologies

Due to geographic, social and cultural isolation of Aborigines in NSW, Federation supports the priority implementation of appropriate technologies within school and training institutions with significant Aboriginal populations. This should not however lead to a reduction in support personnel including Aboriginal Education Resource Teachers and Aboriginal Education Assistants.

### Explore VET options

Federation acknowledges that VET in schools links in education and training have a positive impact on the retention of Aboriginal students in years 11 and 12. However, support systems which would assist successful outcomes for those students retained to years 11 and 12 should be set up and monitored to ensure success of the retention strategies presently in existence.

Federation insists that any pre-vocational skills acquired in VET in schools programs by Aboriginal and other students be given equal status and recognition as in mainstream education.

## 5. Equitable education outcomes

### Student outcomes

Outcomes for Aboriginal students must be culturally sensitive, defined in a collaborative manner with the Aboriginal community and lead to equitable opportunity within the Aboriginal and broader community.

### Equity of opportunities for Aboriginal teachers

Aboriginal teachers and educators must be given equitable opportunities in all aspects of their professional development, career aspirations and teaching functions, in a manner that enhances their cultural perspectives.

This will necessitate the continuation of current affirmative action strategies in appointment, transfer and promotion.

### Outcomes for Aboriginal teachers

Aboriginal teachers and educators must be equitably represented in all aspects of the profession including at all levels of the educational system.

### Action

*The Federation will work with the government to accelerate opportunities for Aboriginal teachers and instigate more enlightened and progressive approaches to affirmative action strategies which will achieve equitable outcomes.*



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## 6. Aboriginal studies

Aboriginal studies perspectives must be mandatory in all school curricula. Aboriginal history is a shared history with Australian history.

Aboriginal studies perspectives involves Aboriginal peoples' viewpoints, histories, cultures, languages and social aspects. Knowledge, experience and understanding of this subject will encourage the development of positive racial attitudes in non-Aboriginal students and teachers. Local Aboriginal people should be encouraged to be involved in the development of Aboriginal studies perspectives, programs and resources.

The term 'Aboriginal studies' which is an important component of Aboriginal education, refers to two distinct processes:

(a) The presentation of Aboriginal perspectives in subject areas must reflect Aboriginal societies, attitudes, values and history past and present;

(b) Units of study which cover a particular Aboriginal issue/topic over a specific length of time;

Federation recognises that Aboriginal studies and Aboriginal perspectives is one of the main curriculum tools for achieving social justice for Aboriginal peoples in our public schools and training institutions.

Federation expects that all members will include Aboriginal perspectives across all subject areas.

Aboriginal Studies courses years 7-10 and preliminary and HSC courses should be offered where possible.

### **Action**

*Federation will establish processes to assist Federation representatives on Board of Studies/DET syllabi workshops writing briefs etc. consult with Federation's Aboriginal Education Co-ordinator/Aboriginal Members Committee so that an Aboriginal perspective content can be included.*

## 7. Reconciliation

### Decision of the 1997 Annual Conference

The New South Wales Teachers Federation shares the vision of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation of "a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all."

In order to achieve this vision we are committed to a process of reconciliation which much be based on the following:

1. Recognising Australian history is a shared history and must incorporate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective.
2. Acknowledging the injustices of the past include invasion, dispossession from land, attacks on indigenous cultures through policies of assimilation and the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families and communities.
3. Understanding that these injustices have contributed to present injustices where Aboriginal people have fewer educational opportunities and poorer educational outcomes, poorer health standards, higher unemployment and higher rates of imprisonment than other Australians.
4. Respecting the diversity and wealth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. In particular understanding the spiritual links with the land and their care and guardianship of the land.

5. Understanding that there is a need for non-indigenous Australians to make changes to laws, government, education, economic and social structures to be inclusive of indigenous cultures in order to achieve a more equitable future for all Australians.

6. Recognising land rights and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It may also involve forms of compensation for past injustice and to allow new and fairer relationships to develop between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

The NSW Teachers Federation formally acknowledges and apologises for the part played by teachers and schools in the removal of indigenous children from their families and communities and their subsequent mistreatment.

The Federation sees reconciliation as an ongoing process which will take time and involve a wide range of strategies.

### **Action**

*The Federation will contribute to the process of Reconciliation by initiating strategies and working with the Aboriginal Members Committee to develop educational materials, training, information, political and industrial campaigns. Federation will continue to work towards providing more inclusive structures and processes.*

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## 8. National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Week

The New South Wales Teachers Federation support and encourage all members to join in the commemoration of these special occasions.

### *Action*

*That the Federation publish journal articles which complement the themes of the special events prior to the celebration dates.*

## 9. Cultural and class awareness of the needs of Aboriginal students

Federation and the AMC promote awareness within DET of their responsibilities to promote reconciliation

Federation demands programs to train teachers and students in conflict resolution and peer mediation which are culturally appropriate and involve where possible aboriginal teachers and Aboriginal Education Assistants. Such programs, if well designed and implemented properly, can teach children non-violent ways to deal with personal interactions and help to counter the negative impact of constant exposure to violent media images, and, for some children, violence in their environment. Research studies indicate that conflict resolution programs can have a positive impact on reducing violence in schools, particularly if children are provided with training at an early age.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the most common characteristics shared by our prison population are failure in school and literacy. Providing the resources necessary to assure that every child succeeds in school would itself reduce the level of violence in society. More funding needs to be made available.

Violence in schools relates to a wider malaise in our social system. Federation members must take into consideration the following implications that have direct impact on Aboriginal students:

- Deaths in the Aboriginal community

- Stolen generation
- Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
- Native title
- Unemployment
- Racism
- Single parent families, eg grandparents being the sole carer
- Low teacher expectation /attitudes cultural stereotypes - teaching deficit model
- Low socio-economic background
- Lack of parents' support (due to their own negative experiences with education)
- Peer pressure (lower self-esteem)
- Negative media
- Domestic violence
- Non-indigenous values/ideas dominate the curriculum and school structure
- Health (mental health, otitis media)

### *Action*

*That Federation urges the DET to encourage schools throughout districts to adopt and implement consistent and effective Student Welfare and Discipline policies. In accordance with the DET's Anti-Racism and Student Welfare Policies.*

*Federation initiate a meeting which includes NSW AECG and the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board to discuss issues to improve education and participation for Aboriginal students in schools.*





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## 10. Protocols for NSW Aboriginal communities

### Research

Aboriginal communities and individuals have the basic right to control the development, design, implementation and outcomes of any research of or about themselves. Federation supports the establishment by the NSW AECG and funded by DET of an all-Aboriginal research ethics and protocol committee for the approval of all research in DET which touches the educational lives of Aborigines. Federation further endorses and actively supports the establishment of state and national Aboriginal research protocol and ethics guidelines.

### Compassionate and bereavement obligations

Federation recognises and fully supports the Aboriginal extended family obligations associated with compassionate and bereavement leave.

### Local, regional and state AECGs

The NSW AECG at local, regional and state levels is formally recognised by Federation as the peak policy body, advising the Minister of DET on Aboriginal education in NSW. Federation will actively promote with its members an active partnership and respect for Aboriginal self-determination principles of the NSW AECG at all levels of the education system.

### Aboriginal communities

When dealing with Aboriginal communities it is important to note that there are certain protocols that should be followed. Local Aboriginal groups can assist with this.

#### Action

*Teachers should contact their school's Aboriginal Education Assistant, their local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group or members of their school's Aboriginal Student Support Parent Awareness (ASSPA) committees for advice.*

## 11. AECG commitment

Federation proudly acknowledges that it has enjoyed and recognised a partnership with the NSW AECG as its peak Aboriginal advisory body over the past two decades. To continue to foster this partnership, Federation will continue to promote liaison and seek policy and procedural advice from the AECG at all levels of education and training.

#### Action

*Federation will investigate, in partnership with the AECG, ways in which this partnership can be further enhanced and supported.*

## 12. Aboriginal languages

Aboriginal languages in NSW have been particularly affected by invasion and colonisation. In the past the impact of bans on the speaking of Aboriginal languages and a general ignorance of their existence by many non Aboriginal people has meant that the health of Aboriginal languages varies significantly across NSW.

Whenever an Aboriginal language program is proposed, extensive efforts must be made to determine what is the right language to be taught in that country, and to identify the Elders who are custodians and owners of that language.

Aboriginal community groups should be regarded as the owners of their language, with all of the exclusive rights that ownership bestows.

#### Action

*That the NSWTF support the teaching of Aboriginal languages within the NSW public education system and demand that the DET provide appropriate resources and in-servicing for teachers with appropriate Aboriginal representation.*



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## 13. Aboriginal English

Aboriginal English can be described as the “home language” for a significant number of school students. It is the language of their home, family and community and it is through their language that many Aboriginal children will learn about most of the more important aspects of life, especially their Aboriginality.

It also includes cultural forms of expression and communication such as pause time, and body language. Aboriginal English is a dialect of English, not a language other than English.

As the home language for most Aboriginal children is a key element of their socio-cultural identity, any rejection of Aboriginal English can be interpreted as rejection of that child’s identity or Aboriginality.

### *Action*

*That Federation calls upon the DET to provide in-service for staff using Aboriginal teachers and community members as appropriate to assist all teachers in understanding, recognising and accepting student use of Aboriginal English/home language in school.*

*That Federation recognises and accepts the NSW Aboriginal Languages Interim Framework Document produced by the Board of Studies as the working document to follow when implementing an Aboriginal language into schools and the protocols that must be adhered to.*

## 14. Recruitment, employment, retention and representation

### EEO and affirmative action

Federation advocates the importance of maintaining and expanding the principles and policies of Equal Employment Opportunity. Specifically this requires continued affirmative action strategies for Aborigines in public education and training institutions.

### Recruitment and selection panels to include Aboriginal representation

Federation endorses the policy that selection panels recruiting for identified Aboriginal positions must have at least 50 per cent Aboriginal representation and include a representative of the NSW AECG.

### *Action*

*Federation is to pursue this demand with the DET and advise members of our policy*

*Federation endorses the policy that selection panels recruiting for positions which include working with significant Aboriginal populations must have at least one member from the NSW AECG*

### Priority schools appointment

Federation endorses the establishment of the identification of priority schools for placement of executive staff, where significant Aboriginal populations are serviced. Specific selection criteria should be developed in consultation with the NSW AECG. The criteria should focus on knowledge, training and experience in working with Aborigines and subsequent selection committees must have at least one member from the NSW AECG.

### Aboriginal teachers

Federation endorses the priority employment of first appointment Aboriginal teachers, to vacancies at schools and training institutions of their choice.

### Career paths and options

Federation supports the establishment of clearly defined career paths for Aboriginal employees. It further demands that professional career development programs be instigated by DET to promote the career options for Aboriginal staff.

### Aboriginal studies teachers

Federation recognises the discipline of Aboriginal studies as an education/teaching category. Priority recruitment of qualified teachers in this discipline needs to be instigated by DET and a career path established in the area of social sciences for these recruits.

### Federation Aboriginal positions

The Federation has adopted an affirmative action strategy for Aboriginal members by establishing an Aboriginal Education Co-ordinator, an Aboriginal Members Committee, an Aboriginal Members Conference and specific Aboriginal positions on Council, Executive and Annual Conference.

Other affirmative action strategies should be adopted by Federation to ensure Aboriginal members of the union are actively encouraged and promoted to all levels of the organisation.

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## **Action**

*Federation will continue to work towards improving the representation of Aboriginal members. Further, Federation supports the concept of Aboriginal self-determination on Aboriginal issues.*

## Aboriginal employment

The Federation supports affirmative action strategies aimed at employing more Aboriginal people within the

Federation and the broader community. The Federation will work with other unions on strategies aimed at improving Aboriginal employment opportunities.

## **Action**

*Federation will consult with the NSW AECG and enter into discussions with the DET to develop career paths for all Aboriginal positions including the Aboriginal Education Co-ordinators in TAFE.*

## 15. Training

### Pre-degree - Aboriginal training

Federation supports mandatory pre-service education of all teachers including a compulsory unit on Aboriginal education to assist in the implementation of the DET NSW Aboriginal Education Policy.

### Post qualifications - career paths

To increase the career options of Aboriginal teachers/educators, Federation supports affirmative action initiatives which will fast track and provide increased opportunity for Aboriginal teachers/educators to gain post-graduate qualifications. Such initiatives must include opportunity to gain qualifications in Aboriginal Studies.

### Professional development

Federation supports affirmative action strategies that will increase opportunities for Aboriginal teachers/educators to gain access to professional/staff development programs.

### Cross cultural training

Federation supports the need for cross cultural training for all staff at all levels to ensure culturally appropriate delivery and access to education. The DET must develop appropriate cross cultural training with the NSW AECG.

## **Action**

*Federation demands that all staff in schools must be provided with a core module of training in cross cultural studies.*

### Empower Aboriginal employees

Aboriginal self-determination is a key platform of Federation's Aboriginal Education Policy. This policy is designed specifically to empower Aboriginal members to take an active role in all aspects of education planning, delivery and management.

## **Action**

*Specific training will continue to be provided for Federations members on the Aboriginal Members Roll,*

*Federation's Aboriginal Councillors, Aboriginal Members Committee, Aboriginal representative on Federation's Executive and Federation's Aboriginal Annual Conference delegates.*

### Percentage of Aboriginal teachers

Federation endorses the principle that Aboriginal teachers/educators must be proportionately represented in all career options and classifications.

### Aboriginal staff and leadership - career and executive development

Self-determination can only be achieved for Aborigines in education if Aboriginal teachers are represented at all levels of the system. Federation endorses the development of specific strategies that will develop the careers and representation of Aborigines at all levels particularly in executive positions.

### Career paths

Aboriginal teachers/educators must be given specific training and support on career path development, including training in the maintenance of cultural integrity throughout the development of such careers.

That Federation supports the expansion of affirmative action programs with opportunities for career paths for Aboriginal teachers.

## **Action**

*That Federation and AECG enter into discussions with the DET to develop career paths for all Aboriginal positions including the Aboriginal Education Co-ordinators.*

### Aboriginal education in-service

Federation recognises the need for all teachers to be given adequate in-service training on the DET's Aboriginal Education Policy.

## **Action**

*NSWTF demands that as an important aspect of the implementation of the DET Aboriginal Education Policy,*





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DET provide the opportunity for all school communities staff and executive be inserviced in the roles of:

- a) Consultant in Aboriginal Education
- b) Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher
- c) Aboriginal Student Liaison Officer
- d) Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer
- e) Aboriginal Education Assistant
- f) Aboriginal teachers
- g) AECG
- h) ASSPA
- i) Local Aboriginal organisations eg Land Council, Medical Service, Legal Service, CDEP, etc. be referred to as a community resource.

## In-service courses and incentive packages for isolated areas

Support for teachers in schools with a significant Aboriginal enrolment must be given through access to in-service courses with direct input from AECGs and the DET Aboriginal Education Unit.

## 16. Social justice - human rights

### Union as advocate for social justice and human rights

The NSWTF has a vital role to play in ensuring the principles of social justice and human rights are promulgated and enforced throughout the school and education/training systems in public education. Child and student rights to culturally inclusive education as set out in UN charters must be protected and guaranteed through Federation's vigilance and resolve.

### Reconciliation

There can be no reconciliation with the Aboriginal peoples of Australia until there is an honest and public acceptance of the true history of this nation. Fundamental to such reconciliation is the formal apology of the Australian Government for the atrocities and impacts of policies inflicted on Aborigines. Central to such an apology is the full recognition of the errors of the past.

### Native title

Federation's understanding of and path to reconciliation is based on the principles of social justice and the inalienable right of indigenous Australians to land rights. We strongly oppose the watering down of the Native Title legislation vis-a-vis the passing of the Ten Point Plan by Federal Government.

"Bringing Them Home" report - [stolen generation]

Federation recognises and acknowledges that under

### Action

That Federation demand government action to reduce high teacher turnover in schools in rural and isolated areas with significant Aboriginal enrolment by adopting appropriate measures aimed at attracting and retaining suitable teachers.

### Networking for Aboriginal teachers

Federation supports the establishment of local, state, national and international networks of Aboriginal teachers which will promote unity and solidarity.

### Interview panels

Aboriginal people are required to participate and represent AECGs on a number of DET selection panels.

### Action

Federation demands that Aboriginal peoples be provided with specialist selection panel training by DET so they can actively and competently participate in selection processes within DET.

Government policies the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families is the underlying factor that has impacted on the physical, mental and emotional health problems and issues suffered by generations of Aboriginal peoples.

The Federation apologises for the catastrophic effects and actions of all policies that forcibly removed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, now commonly known as the 'Stolen Generations'.

### Action

Federation is committed to redressing the social, mental and emotional turmoil associated with policies which were responsible for the 'Stolen Generations'. Federation notes that the negative impact has manifested itself in the educational lives of Aboriginal Australians.

### Aboriginal deaths in custody

Federation endorses the statement, findings and recommendations of the Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

### Action

Federation supports the full implementation of all recommendations dealing specifically and justifiably with equitable access and culturally appropriate outcomes for Aborigines.

### Self-determination and indigenous rights

Federation supports the fundamental right of Aboriginal peoples to determine their own affairs. Federation

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demands that Aboriginal peoples must be consulted as a separate identity on matters involving education. Federation endorses and supports the NSW AECG as the peak advisory body for direction of all Aboriginal education in NSW.

## Commitment to social justice and human rights

The Federation recognises the need to research and develop in consultation with the AECG and other relevant groups recommendations aimed at supporting International Covenants on social justice and human rights.

### *Action*

*Federation, in support of social justice and human rights under international covenants will establish a committee to investigate and make recommendations on issues, policies and practices that are violations of such declarations.*

## DET's Aboriginal Education Policy

Federation recognises and acknowledges that the DET's Aboriginal Education Policy must be implemented in all NSW state schools if schools are to achieve the overall goals for Aboriginal education. The central theme of the policy is to promote educational achievements by Aboriginal students in the context of educating all students about Aboriginal Australia.

Federation also accepts that this policy is mandatory for all students and demands that in-service training in all schools is essential if this policy is to succeed.

### *Action*

*Federation is to monitor the on going implementation of the DET's Aboriginal Education Policy. Further, Federation is to demand appropriate resources and a detailed review at the end of the five year period of implementation.*

# 17. Aboriginal health

On almost any measure Aboriginal Australians would be overly represented in the lowest socio-economic indicators. Such poverty inherently brings complex and dramatic health related illnesses which impinge on the fundamental capacities of Aborigines to access, participate and successfully engage in educational opportunities taken for granted by most Australians. Compounding this problem further is the social, emotional and mental torment incurred through a succession of catastrophic government policies.

The NSWTF recognises that proper health care is essential to the learning process.

## Teachers play a major role in identification and support

Teachers have a fundamental role in early detection, referral and provision of appropriate programs to provide a positive and supportive environment aimed at assisting students' physical, mental and emotional needs. To adequately prepare teachers for such complex and often specialist tasks, pre-service and in-service training must be made available by training institutions and employers.

### *Action*

*Federation is to negotiate with DET to provide adequate resources and training.*

## Role of Aboriginal medical services, community health workers

It is paramount that teachers, schools and colleges develop close and productive working relationships with key Aboriginal agencies. These include the Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Health Workers. This will ensure a co-operative, productive and integrated attack on Aboriginal health issues and to minimise the impact of these on access to and participation in education.

## Otitis media - [glue ear]

The Federation acknowledges the more recent attempts of Government to address perhaps the single most significant health issue facing Aboriginal youth, otitis media (glue ear).

### *Action*

*Federation demands additional resources be made available to obliterate this debilitating medical condition. Further, Federation demands that DET, the Health Commission and Aboriginal Medical Services work in partnership to combat otitis media.*

## Substance abuse issues

Dispossession, cultural genocide, poverty and social dislocation have increased the incidence of mental and emotional health related problems which in



# Aboriginal Education Policy

contemporary Australia manifests itself often in substance abuse amongst a disproportionately high number of Aborigines.

## **Action**

*The Federation urges that an immediate strategy be developed in consultation with the AECG to assist schools, colleges and Corrective Services so that the most appropriate programs for preventive and corrective measures can be implemented.*

## Mental health [stolen generation]

The Federation recognises and acknowledges that much of the physical, mental and emotional health problems suffered by Aborigines is a direct result of disastrous government policy over generations of Aboriginal

descendants. One of the most devastating of these policies was the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, now commonly known as the "Stolen Generation".

## **Action**

*Federation demands the full implementation of recommendation of the "Bringing Them Home" report (1997) by Government and that those recommendations with regard to education and training be implemented immediately.*

Federation accepts responsibility to ensure that such policy and practices, which have had major impact on Aborigines, are clearly articulated through training of its members, and that the education implications are promoted broadly.

## 18. Cultural diversity

### Multicultural policy [Statement of Commitment to a Culturally Diverse Society, NSW DET]

Federation recognises the uniqueness and complex diversity of the Aboriginal community and its position, and supports the "Statement of Commitment to a Culturally Diverse Society".

### Cultural diversity training for all staff

To ensure equity is available for all in our schools and training institutions, Federation endorses the mandatory training of all staff on cultural diversity.

## **Action**

*That Federation's TUT Officer in collaboration with Federation's Aboriginal Members Committee organise a program on Cross Cultural Awareness to be included in a session of the TUT Program for its members.*

### "Culturally Diverse Society", learning styles and teaching strategies

Federation recognises that there are students within our culturally diverse society with different learning styles which require suitable teaching strategies in order to achieve equitable outcomes. Federation also acknowledges that when teaching students, cultural

aspects need to be taken into consideration.

## **Action**

*Federation demands the DET provides resources for the development, use and training of its members in diverse pedagogies appropriate to the learning styles of students that will increase teaching skills and ability to meet the needs of a "Culturally Diverse Society".*

### The need to consult locally

Due to the complexity surrounding the delivery of education and training in a culturally diverse society, Federation urges that its members consult at the local school or training institution level.

## **Action**

*That Federation pursue with the DET the provision of additional resources to support this process.*

### Recognition of individual cultures and appropriate success in developing the whole person within his/her culture and between cultures

Federation supports the development of the individual and their unique cultural background is an essential foundation of their education. However, individuals need also the skills to be able to move effectively within and between cultures.



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## 19. Combating racism in schools/colleges against Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

Article 2, UN Declaration of Human Rights states:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Federation is committed to stamping out racism in the school and community environment through its Anti-Racism policy and Federation’s Anti -Racism Committee.

### **Action**

*Federation further demands that the DET provide adequate in-service training of its entire staff in anti-racism policy procedures and action.*

*That Federation will not support members found guilty of racism.*

*Federation include a component on combating racism in the schools Federation Representative TUT courses.*

*The Federation support other unions and organisations who have anti-racism policies and are campaigning to eliminate racism.*





NSW Teachers Federation



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