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‘Teachers are deadly’ puts spotlight on Indigenous education

The University of South Australia will bring together the biggest gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educational leaders in Australia’s history next month for the inaugural More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative ‘Teachers are Deadly’ conference.

Conference convenor, UniSA’s Dean of Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research, Professor Peter Buckskin says the inaugural conference aims to plan effective Indigenous teacher workforce strategies within the school sector.

Prof Buckskin says he would like to garner support for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Academy during the conference, which will be held from July 9-11.

“This conference will look at strategies to stem the attrition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and increase their numbers in the teaching profession,” Prof Buckskin says.

“With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students making up around five per cent of the school population, it is now more important than ever to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers beyond the current one per cent of the teaching workforce.

“An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Academy would provide the leadership required to create strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in the education sector that can respond proactively to the development and implementation of national policies and programs.

“The Academy would also provide peer support and mentoring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and education leaders, and would promote the teaching profession as a career option in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”

The conference will feature leading Australian and international Indigenous educators. Keynote speakers are Professor Konai Thaman, UNESCO Chair of Teacher Education and Culture, University of South Pacific, and Dr Chris Sarra, Executive Director of the Stronger Smarter Institute.

Prof Buckskin says it is important to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to the learning of Australian students and the unique qualities they bring to the teaching profession.
“We know good teachers are essential if quality learning outcomes are to be achieved by the child. There is clear evidence that a good quality education provides the keys for a child to pursue their aspirations and realise their full potential,” Prof Buckskin says.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are role models for their students and assist their teaching colleagues to be more culturally competent in the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their classrooms.

“Aboriginal reconciliation will be achieved through a more culturally inclusive schooling sector. Schools are well placed to develop the hearts and minds of young people, and a more culturally diverse teaching profession has more of a chance to influence the learner when they see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers working alongside other teachers.”

For more information on the MATSITI ‘Teachers are Deadly’ conference click
www.matsiti.edu.au/events

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Contact for interview: Prof Peter Buckskin office (08) 8302 9148 mobile 0431 549 580

Media contact: Kelly Stone office 8302 0963 mobile 0417 861 832 email Kelly.stone@unisa.edu.au