

## MATSITI submission to the **Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group**

- 1 Increased cultural diversity of education graduates
- 2 Increased cultural knowledge and skills for all graduates
- 3 Stronger School-University-Indigenous partnerships
- 4 Evidence-based curriculum, pedagogy and cultural responsiveness
- 5 Improved policy advice, co-ordination and accountability.

Professor Peter Buckskin

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June 2014

[www.matsiti.edu.au/temag](http://www.matsiti.edu.au/temag)

Further comments on this submission are welcome.

Please direct feedback to [feedback@matsiti.edu.au](mailto:feedback@matsiti.edu.au)

Cover art from *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: An introduction for the teaching profession*. Edited by Dr Kaye Price. Cambridge University Press

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*Teachers need a broad range of skills and characteristics to maximise the learning of diverse student populations. (TEMAG Issues Paper)*

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## Foreword from the Project Director, MATSITI

In February 2014, the Australian Government established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom.

Using an evidence-based approach, the Group will identify common components regarded as world's best practice in teacher education with a particular focus on:

1. *Pedagogical approaches* – Ways of teaching and learning, including assessing learning related to specific areas and matched to the capabilities of students;
2. *Subject content* - Knowledge and understanding of school subjects in the primary and secondary curriculum, particularly in relation to foreign languages and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects; and
3. *Professional experience* (practicum) - Improved university and in-school professional experience opportunities for pre-service teachers and better support from experienced mentor teachers.

The More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) is a national \$7.5 million, 4-year program to increase the number and professional capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australian schools.


The MATSITI project Indigenous leadership group welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the review of teacher education, with particular emphasis on developing a more culturally diverse teacher workforce, and better preparation of all education graduates to be confident and effective teachers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

This response focuses on practical strategies to close the gap in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and to value Indigenous culture in schools and universities.

MATSITI recommends five inter-related priorities for reform:

- 1 Increased cultural diversity of education graduates;
- 2 Increased cultural knowledge and skills for all graduates;
- 3 Stronger School-University-Indigenous partnerships;
- 4 Evidence-based curriculum, pedagogy and cultural responsiveness; and
- 5 Improved policy advice, co-ordination and accountability.

The MATSITI leadership group looks forward to the opportunity to contribute further to the TEMAG with other stakeholders in the development of a skilled and culturally responsive teacher workforce.



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13 June 2014



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# MATSITI Recommendations

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In response to the TEMAG terms of reference, the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) Indigenous leadership group has identified 5 priorities for reform and 15 associated recommendations:

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## *Priority 1: Increased cultural diversity of education graduates*

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- 1.1. Initial teacher education (ITE) providers expand attraction and student support strategies to increase the cultural diversity of education graduates.
- 1.2. The Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) planning framework to increase the engagement and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student teachers is sustained beyond its current expiry in 2015.
- 1.3. Initial teacher education providers should expand culturally appropriate and flexible pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enter and succeed in teacher education. These pathways should recognise the increasing numbers of Indigenous adults entering tertiary study.

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## *Priority 2: Increased cultural knowledge and skills for all graduates*

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- 2.1. All graduates complete a comprehensive sequence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies during their education degree, delivered by skilled and culturally responsive educators.
- 2.2. Further development, trialling and review of the Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation (RRR) unit outline and digital resources to support ITE providers to address the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Most universities are already engaged with this work to enrich their own program offerings.
- 2.3. All universities review the employment profile of academic staff working in ITE to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

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## *Priority 3: Stronger School-University-Indigenous partnerships*

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- 3.1. A sustainable national partnership between Indigenous educators, ITE providers and schools that builds upon the evidence base and momentum of reforms undertaken to date by MATSITI and ACDE.
- 3.2. Universities enable formalised partnerships between ITE providers and Indigenous higher education units to leverage the collective strengths in education and teaching, Indigenous student support and research.
- 3.3. A national review and forum with key stakeholders to consider the challenges of preparing teachers to work in remote Indigenous communities.

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*Priority 4: Evidence-based curriculum, pedagogy and cultural responsiveness*

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- 4.1. The content of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education studies includes a greater proportion of pedagogical knowledge and skills in addition to general Indigenous cultural information and histories.
- 4.2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses enable students to reflect on their own values, experiences, culture and how beliefs and values influence/impact upon pedagogical choices and student learning.
- 4.3. Further research, development and trialling of anti-racism education and whiteness studies is undertaken in the teacher education sector.

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*Priority 5: Improved policy advice, co-ordination and accountability*

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- 5.1. Greater integration and co-ordination through national partnerships is required to drive recommended reforms to address the first two priorities of this response.
- 5.2. Implementation of robust and visible data collection mechanisms. This will ensure a broader evidence-base to inform future policy and investment that supports greater teacher workforce diversity.
- 5.3. Greater co-ordination between Indigenous Affairs (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) and Education portfolios to ensure that the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) and the relevant National Partnerships Agreements, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and other relevant policy objectives are met.

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*As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society— a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia's Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation's history, present and future.*

**Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young People  
Endorsed by all Education Ministers, December 2008**

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Comments on this MATSITI submission to the TEMAG review are welcome. Please direct feedback to [feedback@matsiti.edu.au](mailto:feedback@matsiti.edu.au).

# Response to TEMAG questions

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## 1 What characteristics should be fostered and developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?

*How can those best suited to the teaching profession be identified?*

*What are the skills and personal characteristics of an effective beginning teacher?*

*How can teacher education courses best develop these?*

## MATSITI Priority 1: Increased cultural diversity of education graduates

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MATSITI recommends five inter-related priorities for action to be considered by the TEMAG review.

The learning needs of a culturally diverse student population will be better served by more diverse education graduates and teaching workforce.

The background and culture of most graduate teachers does not reflect the student population that they will teach.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children rarely see their own people teaching in their school, let alone their classroom.

This response focuses on practical strategies to close the gap in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and to value Indigenous culture in schools and universities.

MATSITI endorses the TEMAG Issues Paper statement: Teachers need a broad range of skills and characteristics to maximise the learning of diverse student populations. (Page 8)

Development of social inclusion characteristics is the foremost contribution that teacher education providers can make to improve the learning outcomes of Indigenous students in our schools.

The commitment to equity principles and Close the Gap targets by all governments must be continued in future reforms for teacher education.

## MATSITI recommendations

**Initial teacher education (ITE) providers expand attraction and student support strategies to increase the cultural diversity of education graduates.**  
*(MATSITI Recommendation 1.1)*

These strategies should build upon current initiatives and best practices.

**the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) planning framework to increase the engagement and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student teachers is sustained beyond its current expiry in 2015.**  
*(MATSITI Recommendation 1.2)*

This model has been developed collaboratively by the ACDE and Indigenous education stakeholders, and has been adopted by most universities in 2014.

Successful Indigenous ITE reforms have included; targeted student scholarships, mentoring, academic support, culturally safe practicum placements, increased employment of Indigenous staff and cultural awareness/competency training for academic staff.

**Initial teacher education providers should expand culturally appropriate and flexible pathways for Indigenous people to enter and succeed in teacher education. These pathways should recognise the increasing numbers of Indigenous adults entering tertiary study. (MATSITI Recommendation 1.3)**

## Evidence

MATSITI has undertaken comprehensive research and case studies to identify effective practice by ITE providers to improve the engagement and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are significantly under-represented in Australian schools – 1.3% of the total teaching workforce compared to 5% of the student population (National Teacher Workforce Dataset, 2014 and Schools, Australia, ABS, 2013).

Enrolment and completion trends in teacher education over the last 5 years demonstrate limited growth in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commencing their teaching career in Australian schools (MATSITI/QUT, 2012).

This under-representation is amplified by low completion rates in ITE courses by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (32% over four years) MATSITI/QUT, 2012.

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## 2 What teaching practices should be developed in graduate teachers through their initial teacher education?

*How can the teaching practices that produce the best student outcomes be identified?*

*How can teacher education programmes encourage teachers to reflect on evidence to support their choice of teaching practice?*

*How does reflection on evidence translate into student outcomes?*

## MATSITI Priority 2: Increased cultural knowledge & skills for all graduates

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Initial teacher education (ITE) providers have an ethical and professional responsibility to prepare education graduates to be confident and effective teachers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

All learners benefit when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and experiences are afforded a respectful place in the classroom.

ITE graduates, 98% of whom are non-Indigenous, require the capabilities to relate to, and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

ITE graduates are also required to teach Indigenous studies with cultural integrity to all school students.

*Australian Curriculum, Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young People* and numerous curriculum and policy statements include Indigenous education as a fundamental goal of schooling.

The quality of teachers, their personal and professional values, and ability to connect with Indigenous students is the single most potent factor for schools to overcome social disadvantage and close the gap in education outcomes.

## MATSITI recommendations

**All graduates complete a comprehensive sequence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies during their education degree, delivered by skilled and culturally responsive educators. (MATSITI Recommendation 2.1)**

Recent initiatives led by ACDE to improve ITE student capability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education have been encouraging.

Indigenous studies should build upon current programs to address the two Indigenous Focus Areas (1.4 and 2.4) within the Graduate Level of the Professional Standards.

**Further development, trialling and review of the *Respect, Relationships, Reconciliation (RRR)* unit outline and digital resources to support ITE providers to address the Professional Standards. Most universities are already engaged with this work to enrich their own programs. (MATSITI Recommendation 2.2)**

This reform will be a practical contribution to the Universities Australia Statement: *All graduates of Australian universities will have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a culturally competent way with Indigenous communities.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be afforded greater visibility and voice in the planning, implementation, review and accreditation of ITE courses.

**All universities review the employment profile of academic staff working in ITE to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics. (MATSITI Recommendation 2.3)**

## Evidence

Despite much policy rhetoric, the current capacity of ITE providers to prepare their education graduates to be effective teachers in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is patchy at best (Moreton-Robinson et al national study, 2012).

MATSITI focus group research for the 'RRR' initiative identified similar findings including; significant variation in exposure to Indigenous education in their studies, and considerable anxiety from education graduates about their capacity to teach about Indigenous cultures.

The provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander core courses is undoubtedly inconsistent. In some institutions, only electives are offered (Moreton-Robinson et al, 2012).

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*All graduates of Australian universities will have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a culturally competent way with Indigenous communities.*

**National Best Practice Framework for Cultural Competency in Australian Universities, Universities Australia.**

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### 3 What level of integration should there be between initial teacher education providers and schools?

*What evidence is there that effective integration achieves good teaching practice? What are the most effective types of integrated experiences in preparing new teachers?*

*What are the cost implications of more integrated professional experience? Are there more effective ways in which professional experience might be funded?*

*What other methods, or combination of these methods, could achieve better outcomes than the current approach to professional experience?*

*How can partnerships between teacher education providers and schools be strengthened to make teacher education more effective?*

*How can teacher education providers and schools best work together to select and train mentor teachers to effectively support pre-service teachers on professional experience?*

*How can consistency of good practice and continuous improvement across teacher education providers and schools be assured?*

## MATSITI Priority 3: Stronger School-University-Indigenous partnerships

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Reforms in teacher education courses, professional experience and early career resilience are key factors to improve the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers.

Strengthening of cross-sectoral partnerships between ITE providers, schools, Indigenous higher education centres and community representatives are essential for effective co-ordination and lasting reform.

### MATSITI Recommendations

**A sustainable national partnership between Indigenous educators, ITE providers and schools that builds upon the evidence base and momentum of reforms undertaken to date by MATSITI and ACDE. (MATSITI Recommendation 3.1)**

These generational reforms to improve cultural responsiveness of teacher education continue beyond the expiry of the current ACDE-MATSITI partnership in 2015.

Use of digital networks and online communities of practice offer increased potential to connect diverse groups and networks in a cost-effective manner.

Closer integration between education faculties and Indigenous higher education units have led to greater cultural awareness by faculty staff and more effective support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Cross-faculty integration is particularly effective when it extends beyond symbolic activities such as NAIDOC anniversary events to a deeper collaboration on teaching practice and cultural responsiveness.

**Universities enable formalised partnerships between ITE providers and Indigenous higher education units to leverage the collective strengths in education and teaching, Indigenous student support and research. (MATSITI Recommendation 3.2)**

Space limitations of this response do not allow for the consideration about the challenging and complex needs of teacher preparation and deployment in remote communities, except to say a radical re-conceptualisation is required.



A national review and forum with key stakeholders to consider the challenges of preparing teachers to work in remote Indigenous communities. (MATSITI Recommendation 3.3)

## Evidence

MATSITI has undertaken much quantitative and qualitative research into teacher education strategies and practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

MATSITI /QUT research in 2012 identified professional experience as a major exit point or 'walking point' for Indigenous students in teacher education courses.

Professional experience can often present barriers due to cultural differences between supervising teachers and Indigenous ITE students.

An example of an effective partnership is the NSW Department of Education and Communities, which is now recruiting over 100 Aboriginal teachers each year. This outcomes has occurred through; effective collaborations with universities, targeted scholarships, outreach into Aboriginal communities and early career placement and support.

The Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle mitigates practicum difficulties by planning culturally safe school placements, and developing explicit skills in student resilience to deal with inappropriate attitudes from school staff, many of whom have had limited or no exposure to Indigenous people.

MATSITI has funded 40 reform projects worth over \$3 million in teaching and teacher education. These action-focused grants were awarded on a competitive basis to ITE providers, school jurisdictions and Indigenous higher education centres.

The outcomes of these projects will be reported upon in 2015, including a cost-benefit analysis of their sustainability.

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## 4 What balance is needed between understanding what is taught and how it is taught?

*What is the desirable interaction between content knowledge and teaching practice for developing teachers? What is the difference for primary and secondary teaching? Why is there a difference?*

*Should there be explicit training in how to teach literacy and numeracy in all teaching courses?*

*How can the balance between the need for subject specialisation and a generalist approach in primary teaching qualifications be addressed?*

*What, if any, changes need to be made to the structure of teacher education courses?*

*Should content be studied before pedagogy (i.e. should 'what' to teach be studied before the 'how' to teach)?*

*What barriers are there to restructuring teacher education courses to ensure they address these concerns, and how may they be overcome?*

*Why does Australia face a shortage of maths, science and language teachers?*

*What can be done to encourage teaching students to develop a specialisation in these areas?*

## MATSITI Priority 4: Evidence-based curriculum, pedagogy and cultural responsiveness

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All teachers require content knowledge, structured professional experiences, and an understanding and skills in student learning.

These characteristics are underpinned by an understanding of cultural values and differences that are crucial to meet the diverse learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our schools.

MATSITI contends that effective learning and teaching strategies for Indigenous education will benefit *all* students in our schools.

Extensive documentation and evidence exists regarding effective pedagogies for Indigenous students and Indigenous studies in schools which could be better utilised in teacher education programs.

Learning and teaching examples include; *Stronger Smarter*, *What Works* and *Dare to Lead*.

### MATSITI recommendations

The content of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education studies includes a greater proportion of pedagogical knowledge and skills in addition to general Indigenous cultural information and histories. (*MATSITI Recommendation 4.1*)

Understanding your own values and beliefs and how they differ from others is an essential pre-requisite to gaining a deep understanding of diverse learning needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies courses further enables students to reflect on their own values, experiences, culture and how beliefs and values influences/impacts upon pedagogical choices and student learning. (*MATSITI Recommendation 4.2*)

The MATSITI/RRR suite of resources includes a pre-requisite module 'Know yourself: Know your world' that provides examples of content, learning activities and assessment tasks to help ITE providers enrich their current courses.

In comparison with other nations, Australia lags in openly addressing the place of race in teaching and learning and anti-racism education.

Further research, development and trialling of anti-racism education and whiteness studies is undertaken in the teacher education sector. (*MATSITI Recommendation 4.3*)

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*Good relationships, trust, flexibility, individual concern, problem-solving, perseverance, thoughtful observation and careful investigation of good teaching strategies and possibilities, and knowledge of students' backgrounds: that is what good teaching is. This is what teachers can do.*

Price and Hughes (2009) *Stepping up: What works in pre-service teacher education*

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## Evidence

In relation to ITE courses with an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander focus, the research literature shows an imbalance between Indigenous content and the transfer of effective teaching skills in pre-service teacher education. Less than 25% of course content cover pedagogy and teaching practice (QUT, 2012).

QUT AND MATSITI research further identified an over-emphasis on Indigenous history with little contemporary studies included in ITE courses.

All ITE students should have the opportunity to gain broad understanding of diversity and cultural differences, and skills to investigate the background and specific needs of the diverse communities in which they will teach.

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## 5 Other comments

*Any other comments in response to the Issues Paper.*

### MATSITI Priority 5: Improved policy advice, co-ordination & accountability

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The More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) is a national \$7.5 million, 4-year program to increase the number and professional capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australian schools.

MATSITI is led and governed by experienced Indigenous educators, administered through the University of South Australia and funded by the Australian Government.

The scope of the MATSITI initiative spans across school student aspirations and attraction strategies, teacher education, professional practice, recruitment and early career support through to school leadership development.

In accordance with the Australian Government restructure of Indigenous Affairs, the MATSITI project delegation was transferred from the former DEEWR to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The MATSITI initiative concludes in December 2015.

There is widespread agreement that this diversity agenda is generational and unfinished business.

The MATSITI leadership group looks forward to the opportunity to contribute further to TEMAG in the development of these recommended priorities for reform.

### MATSITI recommendations

**Greater integration and co-ordination through national partnerships is required to drive recommended reforms to address the first two priorities of this response.**  
*(MATSITI Recommendation 5.1)*

Greater co-ordination will ensure increased visibility of good practice and provide a structure for monitoring and evaluating future progress.

One of the most challenging aspects of the MATSITI initiative is a lack of transparency on Indigenous pre-service training and employment.

Implementation of robust and visible data collection mechanisms is required. This will ensure a broader evidence-base to inform future policy and investment that supports greater teacher workforce diversity. (*MATSITI Recommendation 5.2*)

Greater co-ordination between Indigenous Affairs (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet) and Education portfolios is necessary to ensure that the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) and the relevant National Partnerships Agreements, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and other relevant policy objectives are met. (*MATSITI Recommendation 5.3*)

MATSITI can assist with access to extensive networks of Indigenous education and workforce expertise through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and consultative agencies.

## MATSITI submission research and evidence

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# MATSITI Highlights

Project outcomes as at June 2014



More Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait  
Islander Teachers  
Initiative

[www.matsiti.edu.au](http://www.matsiti.edu.au)

MATSITI is a four year \$7.5 million Australian Government initiative to increase the number and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australian schools.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers comprise 1.3% of the total school workforce with students comprising 4.9% of the total school student population - MATSITI is focused on improving this workforce under-representation for education and economic benefit in school communities.

The Initiative has three outcomes – a robust evidence base to inform policy, sustainable workforce reform partnerships with schools and universities, and promotions for Indigenous people to consider a teaching career.

## Evidence-based workforce policy

- 3100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and 78 principals are teaching and leading in Australian schools. A detailed workforce dataset has been established as a benchmark to measure future growth and close the gap in Indigenous employment in education
- 60% of Indigenous education graduates in the last five years have found employment in schools
- **Reforms are possible** - NSW DEC is now recruiting over 100 Indigenous teachers each year
- Key workforce reform issues are; to improve completion in teacher education, increase recruitment and retention of early career teachers, and provision of career development opportunities to keep skilled teachers in schools

## Schooling and university reform

- MATSITI has formed 40 partnerships with school authorities and universities – from aspirations to teaching, to initial teacher education, through to recruitment and career development
- 25 extra initiatives were supported in 2014 with an additional project value of nearly \$2 million
- A fourth round of funding opportunities for the school sector will be released in June 2014

## Teaching as a career of choice

- 5% of Year 12 Indigenous students have expressed interest in teaching, with adult entry a significant pathway into a teaching career for Indigenous people
- MATSITI and school authorities have increased career attraction strategies through student workshops, recruitment portals and social media resources and campaigns

See MATSITI website posts for more details: [www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/teacher-education](http://www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/teacher-education)  
[www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/career-development](http://www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/career-development)  
[www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/attraction](http://www.matsiti.edu.au/tag/attraction)

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