

Enhancing the Indigenous cultural competency of the Australian teaching workforce

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The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has launched a new discussion paper, *Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce*. The paper aims to facilitate a re-imagining of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures, identities and histories are reflected and understood in Australian classrooms. The ultimate goal is to improve how Australian education systems embrace the development of a culturally competent teaching workforce and culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.

"We want to understand how we can better support all schools and school staff to be more sensitive to, and appreciative of, the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and embed Indigenous perspectives in their work. This work is critical to the teaching and learning of Australian students," said Mark Grant, CEO, AITSL.

Educators, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and those interested in this landmark project are encouraged to read and respond to the paper. Submissions can be made through the AITSL website until 30 November 2020.

"At its heart this project aims to improve learning outcomes, strengthen engagement, and recognises that a relationship between learners and teachers, that is built on cultural respect and understanding, can change lives," said Carly Jia, Senior Advisor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, AITSL.

The discussion paper provides an overview of the impacts, needs, and considerations of cultural competency within the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education to stimulate thought and conversation. The responses received from the online submission process, combined with national consultation, will inform key findings and recommendations to be presented and discussed at a National Dialogue in 2021.

"I'd encourage teachers and school leaders across Australia to get involved and share their views on how we can support the cultural competency of the teaching workforce. By doing so, we can help achieve better outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students," said Andrew Pierpoint, President, Australian Secondary Principals' Association.

The paper encourages responses to four broad areas of discussion:

1. What does a culturally competent teaching workforce (including teachers, school leaders and schools) look like?
2. What does a teacher/school leader need to be culturally competent? What will it take?
3. What does cultural safety look like in schools?
4. What might be some of the challenges or barriers we face in developing a culturally competent teaching workforce?