MEDIA RELEASE

2016 Budget Measures and Indigenous Higher Education Funding reform.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) welcomes the announcement by the Government in the May 2016 Budget outlining its continuing commitment and financial support for securing increased success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in higher education. As the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education, NATSIHEC has valued the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and the Department of Education’s consultation and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and stakeholders and commits to working with government to ensure the implementation of these new measures are effective.

Combining funding for the Commonwealth Scholarships Program, Indigenous Support Program and tutorial assistance into a single flexible program will maximise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes. It is gratifying to note these funds have not been subject to savings measures.

The NATSIHEC fully supports the move by the Commonwealth to ensure universities will have greater capacity to design scholarships, tutorial support and other assistance to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are on the pathway to success. The formula allocation will increase focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student progression and university award completion outcomes while delivering the flexibility to direct and redirect funding to areas of identified need.

Whilst it is disappointing savings measures have been applied to the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP), the NATSIHEC welcomes the opportunity to continue to provide advice to government regarding the best ways to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ needs continue to be met. This will include contributing to the sector wide discussions proposed in the Minister, Senator Simon Birmingham’s discussion paper Driving, Fairness and Excellence in Australian Higher Education.

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