MEDIA RELEASE

National Forum Meets to Accelerate Reform for Indigenous Higher Education

Delegates from universities, industry, Australian Government and Universities Australia attended a national forum in Adelaide last week, convened by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC).

The roundtable forum focused on evidence and practical strategies to achieve an accelerated rate of transition by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into higher education and the professions, requested by the Federal Minister of Education and Training.

The forum heard that although there has been progress in the participation and success of Indigenous people in higher education, much work is yet to be done to achieve parity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student outcomes in our universities.

The Chair of NATSIHEC, Professor Peter Buckskin, said "Higher education officials have advised us that a third of Australian universities have mature strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student success, a third are making some progress, and a third face challenges in improving Indigenous student participation in their institutions."

Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

The forum preceded the passage of legislation through the parliament to reform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university participation and attainment.

“NATSIHEC welcomes the legislation and planned outcomes-based model of funding, enabling universities to have greater capacity to design their scholarships, tutorial support and other assistance to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are on the pathway to success. Consultation and partnerships with our people leads to better decision-making and student outcomes, greater flexibility for universities, and accountability of supplementary expenditure”, said Professor Buckskin.

The forum identified strategies against three priorities – increasing Indigenous academic staff, better STEM outcomes, and whole-of-university approaches to Indigenous higher education.

Details of the Indigenous higher education forum are available at www.natsihec.edu.au/forum.

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