

1 June 2006

## **Minister Bishop would be crazy to implement Menzies report**

If Education Minister Julie Bishop is sincere about improving Aboriginal education she would be crazy to turn a recent Menzies Research Centre report into policy, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) warned today.

The report, recently endorsed by the Minister, calls for Aboriginal children to be not taught their culture in schools and argues for the closure of schools in remote Aboriginal communities if they are not economically viable.

ANTaR National Director Gary Highland said the report contradicted practically all of the expert advice of experienced teachers who run successful Aboriginal education programs.

“Over the past couple of days I’ve spoken to principals, specialist Aboriginal education teachers and community leaders seeking their reaction to the content of the Menzies Report,” Mr Highland said.

“These educators come from a range of backgrounds – remote Indigenous community schools, state and community run schools in the cities as well as Catholic and elite private boarding schools with large numbers of Indigenous students.”

“The general consensus from these experienced educators was that the Menzies report would be laughable if it wasn’t so potentially damaging,” he said.

Mr Highland said the most successful Aboriginal programs taught academic and vocational subjects as well as Indigenous culture.

“Any experienced educator will tell you that learning only takes place when the content is relevant and meaningful to the students. That’s why the best programs integrate Aboriginal culture into subjects like English, science, history, maths, geography and computing.”

“Experts like Dr Chris Sarra and Prof Judy Atkinson stress the importance of building self esteem through pride in culture at the same time as insisting on high standards of academic excellence from Indigenous students,” Mr Highland said.

“If Minister Bishop is sincere about improving Indigenous education she should listen to educators with a proven track record of success like Dr Sarra and Prof Atkinson rather than the ideologues from the Menzies Research Centre.”

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Mr Highland said he would be happy to put the Minister in touch with the principals and teachers he had spoken to so she could see first hand the factors that determined success in Aboriginal education.

He said the Menzies Report displayed a profound misunderstanding of Aboriginal culture.

“The report’s claims that modern Aboriginal culture is pre-literate and has no work ethic are insulting and plain wrong.”

“The ignorance displayed in the report is compelling evidence of why more Aboriginal culture and history should be taught in our schools, not less.”

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