

Improved public school provision for Aboriginal students needed to break cycle of disadvantage

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Doubling the number of permanent teachers and halving face-to-face teaching time in difficult to staff schools and communities will help close achievement student gaps and improve the prospects of attracting teachers to work in those locations, the Gallop Inquiry has been told.

Speaking on day 1 of the second round of public hearings, Federation Deputy President Henry Rajendra brought sharp focus to the government's failure to meet the learning, health and social needs of Aboriginal young people. In doing so, Mr Rajendra also drew particular attention to the Department of Education's Connected Communities strategy, the need for additional permanent teachers as well as the expansion of preschool education for 3 and 4 year olds.

"Unfortunately for many of these [Connected Communities] schools the additional [Gonski] funding... has not necessarily translated into stability, expansion of teaching and learning programs or more permanent teachers", Mr Rajendra told the expert panel.



"These schools, consistent with Local Schools, Local Decisions, have been left to fend for themselves with a bucket of money. The Government have a real opportunity here to put in place policy reforms that have the potential to break poverty cycles and change people's lives, but rhetoric needs to be matched with action. Failing to implement reform in this area is putting a generation of disadvantaged students at further risk," he said.

Launched by the Department in 2013, the Connected Communities program was intended to address the educational and social aspirations of Aboriginal children and all young people but the success of these intentions is something the union has described as varied and in need of improvement.

Attracting, supporting and retaining additional permanent classroom teachers, executives and principals is particularly necessary for Connected Communities schools and is something the union sees as critical if governments are serious about closing the achievement gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

"This is a test of the government and Department of Education as to whether they are genuinely committed to meeting the needs of Aboriginal students in these schools and across the state."

Mr Rajendra concluded, "We are at a time, again, when significant attention is drawn to Aboriginal deaths in custody and the Black Lives Matter movement, nationally and globally.

As a materially-rich country, there are no further excuses for Australian governments to remain indifferent to the plight of this nation's First Peoples. This country has a poor commitment to the lives of Aboriginal young

people, their families, their communities and their history.
We believe that the realisation of our union's policy objectives aimed at ensuring the highest standard of public education for all students will be our greatest contribution to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples."

[The Gallop Inquiry hearings continue.](#)