

Teachers invited to have their say on Aboriginal education policy

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A peak Aboriginal congress is seeking consultation with the education sector to prepare a policy document to present to education ministers at their next Council of Australian Governments meeting.

CEO of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Gary Oliver told Aboriginal Members Conference the organisation wants to hear from members about Aboriginal education so that a policy platform can be presented to COAG's Education Council.

"We've come and talked to people in the education sector about ... having a national workshop, where people can be nominated to attend from regional, local and state sectors," Mr Oliver told conference. "And we hope to be able to do that in June this year, because I want to feed it up to COAG.

"We've got a policy document that we want to go out into the sector and check with you but we want to hear from the sector about the current issues that are happening around schools, not only in an urban sense but in a rural and remote sense.

"The policy focusses on areas such resources, control of curriculum, staffing, cultural maintenance and the development of cultural safety."

Mr Oliver said National Congress, which has 9000 individual members 240 Aboriginal organisations, sought to present the document to the various state and territory ministers for their independent assessment rather than just hearing from the federal ministers, whose "colleagues say language should not be taught in school".

He said National Congress, in conjunction with the Redfern Alliance of peak Aboriginal bodies, had identified other pressing issues for the Aboriginal community that had a strong interconnection with education outcomes.

"When we talk about education we also need to consider what's happening in the child protection space, what's happening in the health space and ... the housing space," Mr Oliver said.

"So with the Redfern Alliance we've had a number of workshops and we want to invite this [education] sector. I think that's going to be an important factor of work because we can see the interconnection of all our sectors and how education is a focus for us.

"One thing that we've recognised is that we have to deal with housing. If we don't get housing right and the



kids can't sleep they can't come to school."

"We're challenging our sectors to come together to look at localised solutions, to bring solutions together and go one step further and look at the impediments to those solutions. What are the impediments? Why aren't we achieving those solutions?"

With the failure to reach the targets of the Close the Gap policy, Mr Oliver said National Congress was calling for reforms to the "refresh" of Close the Gap.

"We're calling for targets in relation to justice, health, housing, family violence, disability, as well as keeping the targets around education that are there," he said, "we're doing that with the Redfern Alliance."

For more information on the education workshop, contact Federation's Aboriginal Coordinator Charline Emzin-Boyd.