



Utyerre Apanpe National First Nations Educators Network

The following statement was prepared by the Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Education Network Forum, 30 August 2024, Mparntwe.

Akaltye-arle-antheme, akaltyerreke tyipperre anthurre nhenhe (teaching is a really sacred thing)
Akaltye-irrenheke akwete anthurre (constantly learning)
Arintyheke nthankenhe lyete aneme (it is forever ongoing)
Imernehetyeke akwete Alakenhe akwele (keep continuously showing – never stops)

Dr. M.K. Turner OAM

Arrernte Elder, cultural professor, translator, linguist, artist,
author and human rights champion.

We began Utyerre Apanpe six years ago, to share our practice, to come together across Nations, to have First Nations education system recognised and formally supported and embedded across Australia. We come from different Nations. We are strong in and share our lore. We share a common vision and history. We recognise the many First Nations people around Australia who have been working on education and curriculum in communities, organisations, and in government, over many years.

We are connected through our country, kinship, songlines, tjukurpa and knowledge. That is what bring us together here for Utyerre Apanpe. We are educational leaders.

We are the holders of the oldest living cultural education systems in the world. Our education system comes from the land. This is where and how our children and young people grow with their identity and their knowledge. Our languages are vital and connected to the land, our mother. It is important to strengthen and to revive these. We recognise the ability and strength of our children and young people. We recognise the importance of families and communities in educating our children. We recognise our First Nations ways of teaching and education as leading and best practice. We have a deep knowledge and understanding held by our Elders who are the teaching Professors of this country. We understand our responsibilities and the role and authority of our Elders and our Ancestors. We want our First Nations Educators recognised for the cultural teaching that they do. We need support and investment to keep this alive.

Education is healing. It is a place that we want our children to feel valued, loved and safe in their spirit. Where their knowledge will grow. We want quality education provided to all of our children and young people, on their country and homelands, in a way that recognises and protects their culture and identity.

The government education system is failing our children. It is affecting our wellbeing and our spirits. It is keeping us in the cycle of trauma and it continues to keep our children traumatised. Overwhelmingly, it is our children who are suffering, silenced, sad and experiencing harm. Our children are being locked up, taken from our families at record rates and being denied their basic human rights in education.

The Minister for Education Jason Clare has himself recognised the serious problems in the system. In response to the recent NAPLAN results he said, “your chances in life shouldn’t depend on your parents’ pay packet or the colour of your skin, but these results again show that’s still the case. These results show why serious reform is needed.”

We invite all levels of Government to work with us, in collaboration to make changes we know are needed. We can't keep working in silos. We are collective. It has to be a long term commitment.

We call on Australian Governments to implement all of the recommendations of The M.K. Turner Report. Co-designed with over 60 First Nations educators, and supported by strong local and international evidence, and Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration of Rights for Indigenous People (UNDRIP) of which Australia is a signatory. The report offers six recommendations and outcomes to Australian Governments. The key recommendation is for Australian governments to commit to the establishment of a new First Nations education system. This is our roadmap to educational reform and reversal of the detrimental effects of the Assimilation Policies. We know that this is the solution for the future of education for our children.

It is time for accountability. We call on Minister Clare and State and Territory Ministers to listen to us.

Face us.
Hear us.
We have the solutions.
Our ways have worked for over 65,000 years.
Trust in us.
We love and care for our children.
We know our children.
We know what we need to teach our children.
And only our families and First Nations Educators can do this teaching.

Our communities want real educational reform. We are not talking about reform of the mainstream system. We want to re-establish our own systems of Education and for these to be recognised and supported across the country. We want to lead our own system of education - a national First Nations Education system. We recognise the right of each Nation to build and deliver education for their children and families. Our curriculum must be designed and delivered by our communities, by our people. A National First Nations Education system will see each community's ownership and control of their own education as we have always done as Nations. It will take courage and a sustained commitment over a number of decades.

If the Government is committed to cultural safety and cultural curriculum then it is time they gave real control to us and it is time they provided the funding so that we can run, control, deliver and set the curriculum and standards for our children and young men and women's' education. We want to ensure that our intellectual and cultural property rights are secure.

Our knowledge and protocol systems are unique and sophisticated, and our children need to learn these. We want our children and young people to grow up in a system of education that honours their culture and identity, which provides the love, care, respect and support, that they need to succeed. This will give them the foundation for their future. From this foundation global and western knowledge will be taught and be meaningful to our children and young people's future.

We want Government to commit funding to real partnership to make this a reality. We want a percentage of GDP provided to the future education of our children and invested into our systems of education - controlled by our communities and held to account by our First Nations governance systems. A commitment to a relationship which is built on trust, respect and integrity. STOP investing in prisons and invest in the education of our children.

*Ketye nwerne-kenhe ntyarre alkngirreke mparenge-renge ingkweyelile.
Kaltyinthanhe ntyarrele irrkwemele nyimhsme ketye ntyarrenhe mparenge-renge ingweye
nhanhe-ilwe.
Anwernenhe Awaye! (Central Arrernte)
Kulinma Nganananya!(Luritja)
Nwernenhe wulthanaye!*

(Our children are born into a bed of ancient culture. Our educators hold and nurture our children in this ancient system. Listen to us!)