

**THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP**  
**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Minister for Education; Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations;  
Minister for Social Inclusion.

**SECOND READING SPEECH**

**INDIGENOUS EDUCATION (TARGETED ASSISTANCE) AMENDMENT (2008  
MEASURES NO. 1) BILL 2008**

Yesterday marked a significant moment in Australia's history, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd offering an apology to the Stolen Generations as the first act of business of the 42nd Parliament.

The historic act of saying sorry after decades of division and despair heralds the opportunity for a new beginning for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to reconcile and move forward as one nation.

Saying sorry is an important and symbolic act of recognition of the past hurts and mistreatment suffered by the Stolen Generations, but as the Prime Minister acknowledged yesterday, it is an act that must now be followed through with practical measures to overcome the extreme disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians.

This is an issue that is beyond partisan politics.

Yesterday the Prime Minister reached out to the Leader of the Opposition to form a new partnership across party lines, to form a joint policy commission, to start work on closing the gap in housing, an offer which was accepted in true bipartisan spirit.

We must set practical targets and act on them urgently.

We must close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

The Prime Minister yesterday made a commitment to close the gap in life expectancy, in educational achievement and in employment opportunities.

A commitment to halve the gap in literacy, numeracy and employment outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians within a decade.

A commitment to halve the gap in infant mortality rates and life expectancy within a generation.

Education is the foundation upon which every individual builds his or her participation in society, builds their capacity to work and their ability to lead a healthy and active life.

There is much work to be done to close the gap in education.

Despite the fact that all the evidence shows us that if you finish school you improve your chances of getting a further qualification, getting a job and increasing your lifetime earnings, only four in ten Indigenous students stay at school until Year 12.

This is 35 per cent lower than the 75 per cent of non-Indigenous students who stay at school.

The most recent national literacy and numeracy benchmark data shows that in all areas across Australia, the percentage of Indigenous students meeting the benchmarks is significantly lower than for non-Indigenous students.

Most concerning are the results for Indigenous students in Year 7 numeracy. Less than half, only 48%, of Indigenous students met the benchmark in 2006.

The gap between Indigenous and all students in the 2006 benchmarks ranged from 13 percentage points in Year 3 reading to 32 percentage points in Year 7 numeracy.

We will focus strongly on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for Indigenous children and close these unacceptable gaps between the achievement and opportunities of our Indigenous children and non-Indigenous children.

This Bill is a small, but an important, first step.

There are an estimated 10,000 school aged children in the Indigenous communities that are part of the Northern Territory Emergence Response measures. Of these, best estimates are that only some 8,000 are enrolled at school, leaving up to 2,000 school aged children not enrolled at all. A further

2,500 enrolled students do not attend school regularly enough to benefit from their educational experience.

If we are to encourage these young Indigenous people to come to school, we need to have enough teachers ready to teach them.

The Rudd Labor Government is therefore committed to providing funding for an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory over the next four years.

The Government is determined to play its part with practical measures such as this and to work with Indigenous people and NT education providers to ensure that these young people receive the education they need and deserve.

This Bill amends the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* by appropriating additional funding of \$7.162 million over the 2008 school year for the recruitment of 50 of these 200 additional teachers. Additional funding of \$56.8 million will also be provided through subsequent acts for the remaining 150 teachers over the years 2009-2011.

Funding will be provided to NT education providers to recruit and employ the additional teachers. NT education providers will be responsible for deploying and housing the teachers employed through this initiative.

I am also pleased to announce that I have recently approved funding for a number of complementary measures for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory, including a quality teaching and accelerated literacy package to ensure that students benefit from a high quality teaching workforce, and additional classrooms to ensure that existing infrastructure meets the demands of anticipated enrolment increases.

The Government has also promised to build three new boarding colleges for Indigenous secondary students in the Northern Territory and to expand intensive literacy and numeracy programmes.

While the challenges are daunting, this Bill contains the first of many practical measures this Government will bring forward in a renewed spirit of reconciliation and partnership with Indigenous Australia to begin closing the gap in educational outcomes.

I commend the Bill to the House.

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