



## Australians support First Nations cultural educators in every primary school, poll confirms

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **KNOW YOUR COUNTRY COALITION | Immediate release**

**June 17, 2021** - The best way to promote a shared understanding of First Nations culture in Australia is through education, a recent poll has found. Seven in 10 Australians surveyed also agree education is the key to “reducing racism”.

World Vision First Nations Policy Advisor and Wiradjuri man, Dr Scott Winch, said the poll findings supported the **Know Your Country** campaign’s aim to better equip teachers and schools with the tools to embed First Nations knowledges, culture and perspectives across the curriculum.

The poll was commissioned for the national **Know Your Country** campaign that has launched today- a First Nations-led and informed coalition. The campaign calls on political parties at all levels of Government to commit to funding First Nations cultural educators in every primary school as an election promise and a budget priority.

70 per cent of young Australians aged 18-24 -- with most recent education about First Nations history and culture -- still believe there is a knowledge gap that needs to be filled in schools.

“The problem is that schools aren’t funded to employ local First Nations community members to help teachers, students and the school itself,” Dr Winch said.

“A good primary school education featuring regular, positive relationships with people from the local First Nations community will set all Aussie kids up for life-long learning, appreciation and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture,”

“The next step towards Reconciliation starts at school. A shared understanding of our past, including the diversity of Australian culture, will build a stronger Australia,” he said.

“This is about all Australians knowing and becoming better connected to country. This is an important gift to all Australian students. This campaign could transform how Australians understand each other and their relationship to this land and the world’s oldest living culture.”

The nationally representative poll of 1047 people, commissioned by the Know Your Country campaign, also found:

- Almost half agree Governments should fund a First Nations Cultural Educator in every primary school – only 20 per cent disagree
- Young Australians aged 18-24 wished they had been taught more in schools about local First Nations people cultures and histories (54 per cent agreed, 30 per cent undecided) – notably only 16 per cent disagreed with the statement
- 70 per cent of young Australians aged 18-24 -- with most recent education about First Nations history and culture -- still believe there is a gap that needs to be filled in schools
- Six in 10 agree the Government needs to do more to reduce racism in the education system

Dr Winch said Australians clearly agreed that education was a great place to start for Reconciliation to be truly achieved in Australia.

“We’ve been playing at the edges of this for decades – it’s time we made a systemic change for a sustainable result.”

“More than 63 per cent agreed that every kid deserves a better education about our First Nations peoples,” Dr Winch said. “And more than 60 per cent agree this will reduce racism, close the knowledge gap about First Nations history and culture, and play a vital part in achieving a real and enduring Reconciliation between First Nations peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.”

First Nations educator Phyllis Marsh, a cultural educator at West Moreton Anglican College in south-east Queensland, said she had seen amazing shifts in children’s understanding. She focuses on inviting children into each other’s worlds.

“Every child deserves a better education about First Nations culture. I am seeing a transformation in the way the students at our school are connecting to ancient wisdom. I know this approach works. We go on to Country to listen to how the land talks to us,” she said.

“What the members of the *Know Your Country* coalition would love to see is Federal, State and Territory Education ministers agreeing to fund ALL public and private primary schools to employ locally approved First Nations Cultural Educators.”

“If that happened, within years we’d be living in a more peaceful, harmonious, inspiring and beautiful Australia – an Australia which has at its heart a shared understanding by all peoples with different backgrounds a wisdom that could support and inform our way of life.”

Sydney based First Nations Educator Aunty Maxine said this would be a gift to the next generation.

“Everybody deserves to learn about Aboriginal Culture,” she said.

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*Know Your Country* is a national coalition campaign led by a First Nations Advisory Panel and convened by World Vision Australia.

To learn more visit: [www.knowyourcountry.com.au](http://www.knowyourcountry.com.au)