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AIDA welcomes Government commitment on Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme

The Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) has welcomed public comments from the Minister for Indigenous Affairs indicating an ongoing commitment to the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS).

“Earlier this week AIDA responded with disappointment to media reports that ITAS was to be axed. We are heartened by subsequent comments from the Minister indicating an ongoing commitment to tutorial support activities under the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy,” said Ms Kate Thomann, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AIDA.

“Concerns were initially raised about the discontinuation of the ITAS program by the Innovative Research Universities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network in an article in The Australian. ITAS has made an important contribution to successful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the tertiary sector. Concerns were subsequently raised by our membership about the future support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the tertiary education sector,” said Ms Thomann.

“We are reassured by the Government’s advice that funding remains available for the continuation of tutorial support activities in 2015, as well as opportunities for more holistic and tailored student support moving forward. The intent is to provide broader support to Indigenous Australians to facilitate greater engagement in education and better employment outcomes, to enhance available services and improve health status under the Government’s new Indigenous Advancement Strategy. AIDA looks forward to following – and having input to - the implementation of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy,” said AIDA President Dr Tammy Kimpton.

“AIDA commends the Government for its focus on the important policy issues of getting children to school, adults into work and making communities safer and looks forward to continuing to work collaboratively with Government across the medical education spectrum to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students,” said Ms Thomann.

AIDA is a member based organisation and is the national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students and doctors. At present there are around 204 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and approximately 310 medical students in Australia. To reach population parity (3 per cent of the Australian population) there needs to be 2,895 Indigenous doctors in Australia (another 2,691 Indigenous doctors).

For all AIDA media enquiries, please contact AIDA CEO Ms Kate Thomann on 0411 329 791 | (02) 6273 5013 | katet@aida.org.au | www.aida.org.au