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### **CONGRESS CALLS ON THE EDUCATION SYSTEM TO HONOUR AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE**

**Co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Jackie Huggins, will call for school curriculum development to place greater emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cultures as the national heritage.**

**"The teaching of Australian history is focused on the most recent 228 years, since the arrival of the 'First Fleet'. It should be a point of national pride that our country hosts the oldest, continuous civilization on the planet, vastly older Greek, Egyptian or other ancient cultures," she says.**

**Dr Huggins is a keynote speaker today at a seminar organized by the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney on industry partnership.**

**"The teaching of Australian history should begin with evidence like today's reminder of habitation in the Flinders Ranges dating back about 50,000 years, at a time when Australia's megafauna was prominent. Australia can also lay claim to the earliest known use of ochre in our international region and the earliest use anywhere of stone tools – up to 10,000 years earlier than any other known occurrence," she says.**

**"It is time that we recognise our national heritage and honour the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures at the beginning of our continent's human history. There is much to be learned from the rediscovery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in every discipline from ecology, cosmology, science, sport, art, languages, history, philosophy – you name it," Dr Huggins says.**

**"Our education system continues to be ethnocentric and European oriented. Schools and universities have a vitally important role in redefining our identity as a nation, and sharing with the world our long history of experience and achievements in all aspects of human endeavour – including adaptation to climate change," says Dr Huggins.**

**"The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples applauds outreach by cultural institutions, and especially universities, to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and our organizations to rediscover Indigenous knowledges and to place them centrally in the curriculum at all levels.**

**"This should not be looked at exclusively as a historical exercise. First Peoples have much to teach the world about how to deal with current challenges that we all face such as conservation and climate change," she added.**

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