

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *Indigenous students struggling in literacy assessments*

The results from the 2003 cycle of testing in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), released today, show large differences in the mathematical, reading and scientific literacy and problem-solving skills demonstrated by Indigenous Australian students compared to non-Indigenous students.

PISA 2003 assessed 15-year-old students from 41 countries in mathematical, reading and scientific literacy as well as in problem solving.

The Australian component of the international study involving 12500 15-year-old Australian students, including 815 Indigenous students, was conducted for the OECD by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

There were some promising results for Indigenous students. Thirty per cent of Indigenous students demonstrated mathematical literacy skills at Proficiency Level 3 or above while one per cent showed skills at the very highest proficiency level. However on average, Indigenous students scored below the OECD average and around one proficiency level lower than non-Indigenous Australians in mathematical literacy.

According to ACER chief executive Professor Geoff Masters, "In mathematical literacy Indigenous students were over represented in the lowest categories of proficiency and under-represented in the highest," he said. "There were also large differences between the average performance of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in both reading and scientific literacy, and in problem solving."

"While some Indigenous students performed well in PISA mathematical literacy, this was a very small proportion of the overall sample and many more were performing at the lower proficiency levels. It is important for Indigenous students to continue to receive additional support to raise their performance levels," Professor Masters said.

The full international report is available from the OECD website at [www.pisa.oecd.org](http://www.pisa.oecd.org). The Australian Report, *Facing the future: A focus on mathematical literacy among Australian 15-year-old students in PISA 2003*, by Sue Thomson, John Cresswell and Lisa De Bortoli is available for download from the ACER website at [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au)

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