Indigenous history push

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FULL TEXT

INDIGENOUS languages and -detailed lessons about the Stolen Generation would be taught to students under a curriculum overhaul that would also have dedicated staff teaching Aboriginal people's history in every Australian school.

Calls are mounting for specialist staff to teach more Indigenous history in primary and secondary schools after almost 300,000 people signed a petition presented by singer Isaiah Firebrace, an Indigenous man, to federal parliament last year.

The petition appears set to become one of the most signed on Change.org, Midnight Oil lead and former politician Peter Garrett and former Hunters and Collectors frontman Mark Seymour are among singers also backing the push to see dedicated "cultural educators" in every school through World Vision's Know Your Country Campaign.

Mr Firebrace said he remained in talks with the government since presenting the petition and would meet opposition education spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek to discuss ideas such as assigning staff to teach students the Aboriginal languages of the land on which their schools sat, and also naming subjects and classrooms in that language.

"It would be great to have Black history taught because this is a Black country. There are still some people who don't know about things like the Stolen Generation," he told the Sunday Herald Sun.

Garrett said: "If we're serious about achieving reconciliation, if we're serious about implementing the national curriculum, this is the way to do it." The renewed push comes after Deakin University's contemporary history survey of 5000 Australians -revealed support across all age groups for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the school -curriculum.

Victorian students currently learn about -Aboriginal history in all grades until year 10.

While some schools have already shaken up their Indigenous curriculums, Institute of Public Affairs Foundations of Western Civilisation Program director Bella d'Abrera said having a dedicated cultural educator was a "completely unnecessary" change because it could prevent students being taught a "balanced" view of Australia's history.

"It's clear that for some reason Peter Garrett and his fellow activists are determined to pretend that modern Australia doesn't exist," Dr d'Abrera said.

"They should understand that all Australians are beneficiaries of the great institutions of liberal democracy, the rule of law and freedom of speech given to us by the British." Researcher at Monash University's Indigenous Studies Centre Jacinta Walsh, a Jaru woman, said conservative calls for more emphasis on Western history risked excluding -Aboriginal perspectives on history.

Victorian Education Minister James Merlino said: "We acknowledge that more can be done to ensure all Victorians have a shared understanding of the state's history, and the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission's historic truth-telling process will be critical to that.

"Victoria is advocating at the -national forum of education ministers across Australia for stronger representation of First Nations history in the Australian curriculum." olivia.jenkins@news.com

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