



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION PRETORIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia partners with the Desmond Tutu Tutudesk Campaign to deliver 90,000 desks across Africa

More than 90 million African children either do not currently have desks at their schools or attend classes in overcrowded classrooms without sufficient space for traditional desks. This has a detrimental effect on literacy development, learning and academic performance.

In an effort to mitigate these challenges, the Desmond Tutu Tutudesk Campaign Centre has developed a unique solution by providing portable lapdesks (called Tutudesks) to schools in disadvantaged areas across South Africa and the rest of the continent.

The Australian Government has partnered with the Tutudesk Campaign to provide more than 90,000 Tutudesks to primary school learners in 9 countries including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, Congo, Niger, Uganda, Southern Sudan, Zimbabwe and South Africa. A further 5,800 Tutudesks will be provided by the Australian government to eight underprivileged schools in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape provinces by the end of 2013. More broadly, the Tutudesk Campaign aims to provide 20 million Tutudesks to 20 million children across Africa by 2017.

The Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, His Excellency Mr Graeme Wilson, today met with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and patron of Tutudesk Campaign, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, to discuss Australia's partnership with the Tutudesk Campaign. Archbishop Tutu also serves as Patron of the prestigious *Australia Awards* program in Africa which provides short-term training opportunities and scholarships across 51 countries in Africa (see www.adsafrica.com.au for further details).

“Promoting opportunities for all is one of the five strategic goals of Australia’s aid program - in education, this means enabling more children, particularly girls, to attend school for a longer and better education”, Mr Wilson said.

“The Australian Government is proud to have had the opportunity to contribute in a practical way to a brighter future for many South African children. Education is a great enabler. It improves health outcomes, empowers women and promotes better governance and more sustainable development”, he said.

A recent impact study, sponsored by the Australian Government, has demonstrated that Tutudesks significantly improve the learning conditions and academic performance of children in under-resourced schools. 76 % of learners surveyed said they felt more motivated after receiving a Tutudesk, 80% of teachers said they could interact more positively with their pupils, and close to 70% of learners surveyed believed they were concentrating better and the quality of their handwriting had improved. This impact study collected data from 426 teachers at 52 schools, representing over 16,000 students who have been using Tutudesks for at least 24 months.

In 2012-13, the Australian Government’s investment in education globally is expected to be \$1.58 billion. By 2015-2016, we expect to be one of the largest bilateral donors in education.

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