

## Review of impact of IRU Statement of Intent across IRU members

The IRU *Statement of Intent* was developed by the IRU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Network and then considered by each university. Each of the Vice-Chancellors or representative then signed the Statement at a formal ceremony at Parliament House on 24 February 2014.

The Hon Alan Tudge, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, launched the statement, showing the Government's support and recognition of the leading role which IRU members have.

Consultations within the IRU to review the Statement of Intent's impact on IRU members took place in mid-2015 in the form of telephone discussions between:

- the IRU Secretariat (Mr Conor King and Ms Sally Way)
- Members of the IRU Indigenous Network and their Senior Managers (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Provost, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Engagement) or similar)

One of the most obvious transformation that has taken place over the past few years is the move beyond the Indigenous Support Centre being the sole focus of Indigenous activity. These centres still play an integral role, but the scope of activity is now focused on a whole of university approach and better use of community engagement. All members have created, or plan to, a senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position to lead the whole of university focus and to strengthen engagement with sector wide issues.

The result of this review has been that IRU members are proud of the Statement of Intent and see it is a landmark document for both IRU and the sector as a whole. The aspiration of the Statement of Intent was to go beyond the stratagem of a Reconciliation Action Plan for each IRU university. This has taken place to a varying extent across IRU members.

## Current member activity

### Charles Darwin University

Each year CDU teaches over 4000 indigenous students in over 150 locations in the Northern Territory. Housed within CDU the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE), a collaborative partnership between Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and CDU, aspires to excellence and results in its teaching and learning programs, community engagement and research endeavours, through its innovative community and state-of-the-art learning hub.

Charles Darwin University is a recognised leader in employing a whole of university approach to indigenous higher education. It is committed to achieving comparative outcomes for indigenous and non-indigenous students through best practice in access, education and support. CDU is leading in its employment of indigenous staff, having appointed senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to positions influencing strategy, policy and advocacy across all core areas of the university.

### James Cook University

James Cook University's approach to improving higher education outcomes is characterised by the delivery of strategies and programs in places, times and formats that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The University study centres in Mackay, Thursday Island and Mount Isa are integral to this approach. JCU also provides individual support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in mainstream programs through the employment of Indigenous Student Support Officers in each Academic Division.

The School of Indigenous Australian Studies has been the University's dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Unit delivering undergraduate and postgraduate programs, and promoting cultural knowledge and cultural competencies. During 2014 the University underwent an organisational restructure with approval to establish an Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander centre, led by a senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leader, reporting to the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor. This new centre is due to be established and will be an opportunity for change and improvement, with the new model seeing an increase in dedicated services and staff.

### **Griffith University**

Griffith University's commitment to indigenous students and staff is outlined in its interlocking plans across all University elements. There are five areas of activity dedicated to the advancement of indigenous education within Griffith University, all of which are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The **GUMURRII Student Support Unit** has a major responsibility and commitment for providing access to study for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with its main focus being the recruitment and support of Griffith's indigenous students. GUMURRII SSU also provides a leadership role in promoting cultural awareness and social justice for Indigenous staff and students, and is represented in a range of university forums.

The work of **Indigenous Community Engagement, Policy and Partnerships Director Boni Robertson** focuses on providing advice and consultancy in key policy areas, whilst developing community engagement and partnerships that enhance life opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The **Griffith University Council of Elders** plays a central role in consolidating Griffith University's reputation for leadership in community engagement.

The **Indigenous Research Unit** was established to build the research capacity of Indigenous academics and students at Griffith University. It aspires to develop community driven approaches to research.

Lastly, **Griffith's First Peoples Employment Strategy** is overseen by the First Peoples Staff project Officer and complements the employment and professional development strategies facilitated by the GUMURRII SSU.

### **La Trobe University**

La Trobe University's Gamagoen Yarrbat is an ambitious indigenous education strategy, incorporating a whole of university approach to indigenous education. The Office of Indigenous Strategy and Education sits within the portfolio of the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The executive director carries the responsibility for monitoring the strategy and for its implementation, directly and in collaboration with other senior university leaders and managers within La Trobe. It covers five domains:

- **Indigenous Students** – is focusing on three target areas of attraction, retention and completion. It aims to do so by developing and implementing evidence-based strategies and targets for all campuses, maintaining links with the Koori Academy of Excellence, developing niche programs for indigenous cohorts and through Regional Education Action Plans.
- **Whole of University alignment** – focusing on two target areas of Governance and symbolism. It aims to do so by establishing protocols and procedures for seeking indigenous representation on University governing bodies Boards and Committees, and increasing the

visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and people in the life of the University.

- **Indigenous employment** – focusing on two main target areas of Academic and Professional. It aims to assist various colleges within La Trobe in setting employment targets for indigenous staff and investigating opportunities to “grow our own” staff from professional positions into academic positions.
- **Knowledge and Research** – focusing on two target areas of the curriculum and indigenous knowledge systems. It aims to increase the offerings of Indigenous Australian studies and perspectives in undergraduate programs across disciplines and campuses and to develop a suite of policy documents on Indigenous Knowledge Systems whilst increasing university wide understanding and practice of ethical research practice with indigenous people and knowledge.
- **Community Engagement** – through partnership and profile. It aims to establish, implement and build on specific partnerships supporting indigenous La Trobe. It also aims to elevate and reinforce an Indigenous profile throughout the fabric and culture of the university.

### Flinders University

Flinders University has committed itself through its Strategic Plan to a vision of cultural inclusivity for Indigenous people. Enhancing the prominence and status of Indigenous cultures, knowledge and studies is a core part of this vision. Flinders is a University engaged with its communities, and is working towards building and strengthening its connections within southern Adelaide, regional South Australia, western Victoria and the Northern Territory. Through its Strategic Plan, Flinders University has committed to implementing the Flinders Indigenous Engagement Framework to meet these objectives and aims to meet seven key objectives:

- **Valuing our People** – Flinders aims to increase the diversity in the workforce through the employment of indigenous peoples in both academic and professional staff positions, as well as increasing the participation of and opportunities for indigenous staff.
- **Enhancing educational opportunities** – Flinders is at the forefront of developing alternative entry pathways that support the complementary national objective of facilitating university participation rates of indigenous Australians and has set a target doubling the number of indigenous students enrolled at Flinders.
- **Enhancing the student experience** – Flinders is committed to enhancing opportunities for effective student participation and advocacy by providing culturally appropriate services focused at learning, health and welfare and graduate opportunities.
- **Research** – Flinders aims to ensure that research that involves or impacts on Indigenous peoples is culturally aware, respectful and is conducted in a culturally competent way in partnership with Indigenous peoples and communities. Flinders also seeks to increase the level of high quality research activity in indigenous research, foster and promote inter-disciplinary indigenous research collaborations and support and increase in the number of Indigenous HDR students.
- **Curriculum, teaching and learning** – Flinders is committed to integrating indigenous Australian perspectives in its courses where they are relevant to the curriculum and course content. In its course development, teaching and educational activities it will endeavour to promote greater understanding between indigenous Australians and the broader Australian community.

- **Building supportive communities** – Flinders is committed to establishing and maintaining relationships with Indigenous Nations in order to support the educational participation of Indigenous people.
- **University governance** – Flinders seeks to have indigenous people, staff and students actively involved in its governance and management.

### **Murdoch University**

Murdoch University will incorporate the cultural knowledges and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in its quest to:

- Be a research led university with a reputation for high quality international research in select areas of knowledge, engaging with significant social and scientific challenges of our time;
- Provide a rich and diverse academic learning experience with a curriculum integrally linked to quality research and up-to-date pedagogy, equipping students with life-long learning skills and the capacity to successfully engage in a global world; and
- Communicate and engage with various communities at local, regional and international levels, cultivating knowledges partnerships, participating in mutual endeavours and contributing to public debate and cultural enrichment.

#### **Leading activities to achieve these goals are:**

- mentoring programs to encourage and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on University governing bodies without overburdening them (due primarily to the low numbers of identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff currently at Murdoch);
- formal structures such as an Aboriginal Advisory Committee to provide advice to senior executive staff with the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and staff on an ongoing basis;
- embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges into the curriculum and its development, as well as identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges as a course learning outcome in appropriate courses, majors and units. Murdoch also aims to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness as a graduate attribute of all students of Murdoch.
- an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research strategy to build Murdoch's indigenous research capacity. This will include the appointment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Senior Researcher at Professorial level to lead and coordinate indigenous research in areas of institutional strength.

### **Examples of member activity against the Statement of Intent's main themes**

#### **Develop staff and students' cultural integrity, core competencies and understanding through ongoing positive engagement**

- La Trobe University's compulsory learning unit – **Wominjeka La Trobe**  
An interactive learning module that is undertaken by all commencing students from 2015. The aim of the unit is to provide all students with a specific threshold understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and culture.
- **Graduate attribute** - Murdoch University

Through graduate attributes, work is underway to ensure that graduates to exit Murdoch University leave with a demonstrable knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culture and histories.

- **Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outdoor Teaching Space** – James Cook University

An Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outdoor Teaching Space has been built and opened at James Cook University. An open air classroom is an alternative to traditional pedagogical space by providing a learning environment almost without boundaries to the external environment.

### **Whole of university alignment**

- Flinders University - **Flinders Indigenous Engagement Framework (FIEF)**

An operational framework that incorporates a whole of university approach to indigenous engagement, linked in with the University's Strategic plan. It includes targets to increase the number of Indigenous Staff together with streamlined career progression on par with non-indigenous staff.

- La Trobe University – **Gamagoen Yarrbat – Indigenous Education Strategy 2015-2017**

Together with La Trobe University's Future Ready agenda, Gamagoen Yarrbat is designed to create a whole of university approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education both for indigenous and non-indigenous students. The La Trobe Indigenous strategy revolves around five distinct domains of Students, University Alignment, Knowledge / Research and Community Engagement. A key enabler of this strategy will be La Trobe University's dynamic and authentic relationship with the Victorian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

### **Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples moving into and completing postgraduate study and research**

- **Proposal to establish an IRU network of Indigenous HDR Students**

This is a cross-institutional approach to address Indigenous people being underrepresented amongst higher degree by research (HDR) students proportional to their representation in undergraduate programmes. Given the importance of developing collaborative networks in research and the issues unique to these future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, the IRU will create an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR Network. This network will form a critical mass of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students across the IRU that will:

- Foster the development of a supportive network of mentors and resources that would be shared across the IRU network;
- Deliver annual workshops, hosted by IRU members on a rotating bases, for network members to form enduring links between HDR students and to allow for the sharing of information and experiences;
- Provide online resources / web portal to be accessed by network members and staff as a mechanism for resource sharing; and
- Generate an environment in which collaborative research projects / grant applications / initiatives could be developed and pursued by network members.

- Griffith University – **Indigenous Research Unit**

The Indigenous Research Unit, within Griffith University was established to build and support the research capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and students at Griffith University. The Unit aspires to develop a community and researcher-driven research focus and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers in undertaking and furthering their

research interests. Up to \$5,000 financial support is available from the Unit to assist members to increase their research profile and publication output through Small Research Grants.

### **Community Engagement**

- **Charles Darwin University and Larrakia People Memorandum of Understanding**

An MOU was negotiated and agreed between Charles Darwin University and the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, the Larrakia Development Corporation in an effort to strengthen the relationship. The MOU outlines Charles Darwin University's formal acknowledgement and recognition of the Larrakia people and Charles Darwin University's commitment to formally acknowledge the Larrakia People on both the Casuarina and Palmerston campuses. The MOU has also seen the appointment of Charles Darwin University's first Academic Larrakia Elder in Residence. The appointment recognises the fundamental role and importance of Elders in Indigenous society and Charles Darwin University's commitment to indigenous knowledges in learning teaching and research.

- James Cook University – **Guide to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols**

James Cook University have developed a guide to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols. Driving this initiative was Traditional Owner Elder Professor Gracelyn Smallwood, 2014 NAIDOC Person of the Year and JCU Outstanding Alumni Award recipient. In consultation with Traditional Owners, Historical Peoples and the wider community in which JCU has a presence (study centres and / or campuses), Professor Smallwood developed the guide to cultural protocols. The Guide clarifies the importance and significance of the culture and protocols that should be followed at JCU. The Guide is online and is used widely within JCU, as well as at staff inductions and student orientations.