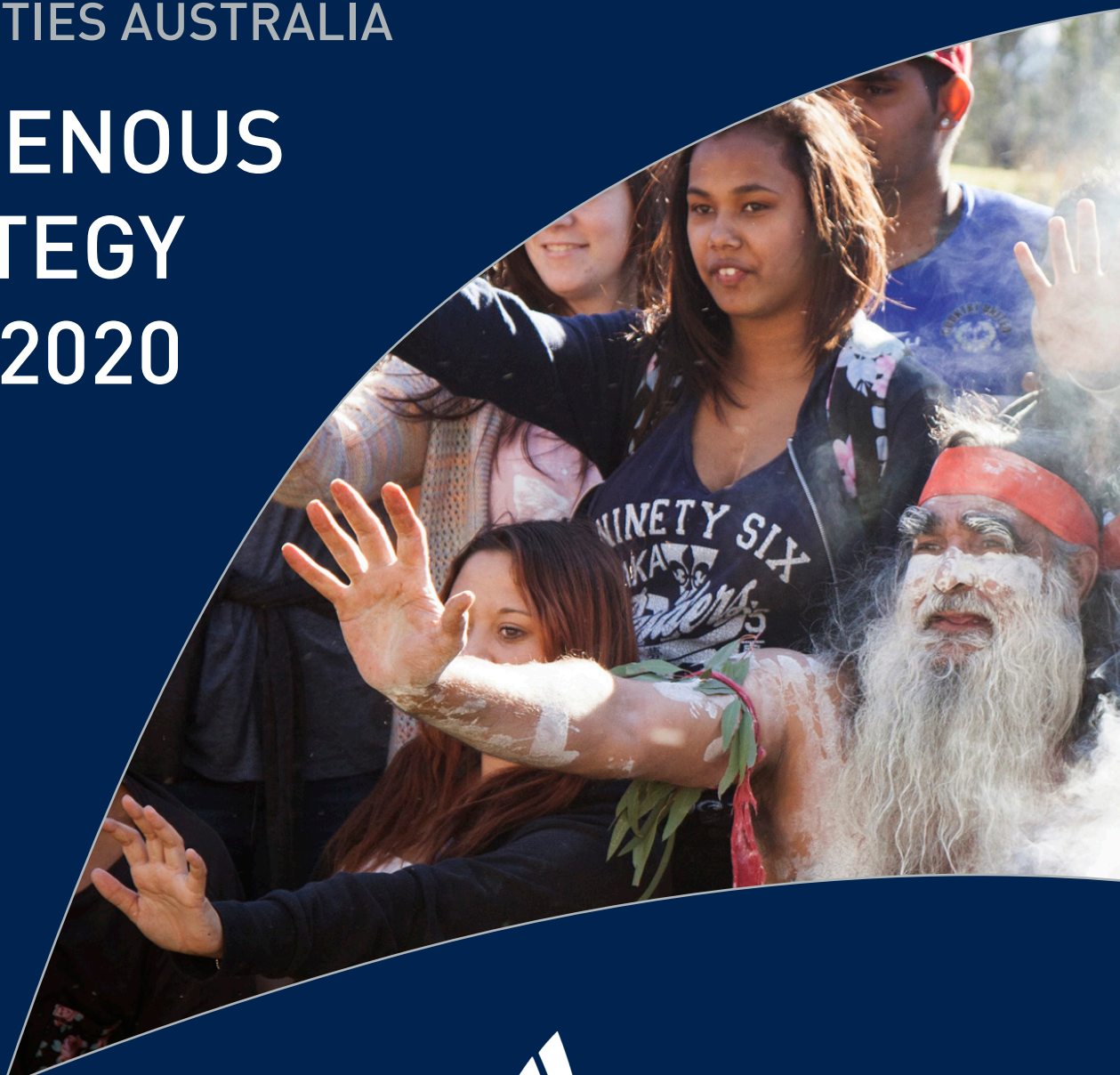


UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

INDIGENOUS STRATEGY 2017-2020



UNIVERSITIES
AUSTRALIA

Cover photo: Western Sydney University -
Wiradjuri Elder Uncle Steve Williams at a smoking
ceremony with young Indigenous school students from rural
NSW participating in a university engagement program.
Photo: Sally Tsoutas

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this document may contain images of deceased people. The image of the late Dr Margaret Williams-Weir is published with the permission of her family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Australia is home to the world's oldest continuing cultures.

This towering achievement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in human history is the foundation story of our country and our national identity.

The campuses of Universities Australia's 39 members have been established on the traditional lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the continent.

On these lands, teaching, learning and research have taken place since time immemorial.

Including this heritage, tradition and knowledge as visible and valued parts of contemporary Australian university life and decision-making is a unique privilege.

Universities Australia acknowledges traditional owners across the vast Australian continent, and pays our deep respects to community Elders - past, present and future.



University of Tasmania - Retiring Riawunna Centre ambassador and Elder in Residence Aunty Phyllis Pitchford. Photo: Scott Gelston

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA FOREWORD

The story of our country's first peoples is one of vast achievement, ingenuity and skill.

In this land, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have sustained societies through ingenious systems of knowledge and learning.

The ancient songlines of this country, the Tjukurrpa, embody that ingenuity.

The stories of this land are within its song cycles.

They are encyclopedias of law and lore. Of governance and leadership. Of agriculture and infrastructure. Of astronomy and navigation. Of art and curation and migration.

These stories have been handed from each generation to the next, across tens of thousands of years.

It is important to remind ourselves that this vast lineage of educators spanned more than 2500 generations before Australia's first university was designated formally 166 years ago.

Today, the task of ensuring the nation's universities reflect the long story of our country and its first peoples, both before and since colonisation, remains very much a work in progress.

In recent decades, large strides have been made.

Australia's universities have begun to reflect the vast contribution to Australia – both foundational and continuing – of its first peoples and cultures, and foster deeper public understanding of that contribution.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have guided these advances, leading university efforts across the country and partnering with non-Indigenous Australians to forge change.

This work has sought to foster university cultures that lift Indigenous participation, celebrate Indigenous excellence, and recognise Indigenous contribution.

There is significantly more to do.

In this strategy, drafted in partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC), the sector challenges itself to redouble its efforts. We have made much progress. Now we pledge ourselves anew to the next part of the work.

We thank all of you who have worked to build the insight and capacity of our universities.

Our country is indebted to every one of you leading efforts to lift participation and extend our institutional insight and responsiveness.

For it is through our efforts together that the university sector can fulfil its potential – both for the nation’s first peoples, and for all Australians – to be the very best it can be.

Professor Barney Glover
Chair, Universities Australia



Belinda Robinson
Chief Executive, Universities Australia



NATSIHEC FOREWORD

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC), acknowledges the continuing sovereignties of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

NATSIHEC celebrates the resilience and tenacity of our graduates and postgraduates who led the way in securing our place in the Western Academy and continue to inform the way forward.

Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy was developed in close consultation with NATSIHEC. The consultation process respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's self-determination. In particular we thank the Universities Australia Chair Professor Barney Glover and Lead Vice-Chancellor, (Indigenous Education) Professor Peter Coaldrake, for their leadership. We acknowledge the tremendous support provided by Chief Executive Ms Belinda Robinson, and Policy Analyst Dr Nathan Cassidy.

NATSIHEC's main message is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations have always produced knowledges. The different knowledge systems we developed over many generations enabled our peoples to flourish, develop and survive in this continent named Australia. Our knowledge production involved rituals of bestowal that increased in significance as we moved through the life cycle. We learned from and on our lands. We are ontologically tied to country and remain sovereign.

Drawing on the spirit of our nation's sovereignties, NATSIHEC is encouraged by the aspirations of the Indigenous Strategy and the opportunity to work with Universities Australia to bring about substantive change in the higher education sector.

We will work to ensure that the promise of the Indigenous Strategy has tangible outcomes for our nations. We are committed to our partnership with Universities Australia to become the change makers required to produce substantive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Australian nation.

By working together, we can begin the process of structural realignment required to make Indigenous higher education core business.

Aspiration and substance are crucial to this endeavour. NATSIHEC looks forward to working respectfully with Universities Australia to give effect to the initiatives of the strategy in ways that benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our success is Australia's gain.

Professor Peter Buckskin PSM FACE
Chair, National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Higher Education
Consortium (NATSIHEC)



Distinguished Professor
Aileen Moreton-Robinson
Director, National Indigenous Research
and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Universities have historically underperformed against their obligations to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Enrolments have been low, attrition rates high and Indigenous staff remain few.

In the last decade there have been notable improvements. Participation rates, in particular, are tracking upwards. Individual universities are steadily implementing internal policies, plans and programs to lift participation and attainment by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and are taking steps to make the university environment a welcoming one. The Commonwealth Government, too, is contributing to improvement by opening up universities to all academically capable students and increasing flexibility in dedicated Indigenous funding programs.

What has been missing up to now is a coherent sector-wide initiative that binds all universities together with common goals. This strategy is designed to fill that gap.

Universities Australia, as the peak sector body, builds on previous work, notably the 2012 Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and the 2011 National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities.

The strategy outlines Universities Australia's response to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It acknowledges that universities have responsibilities to Australia's Indigenous people, and to reflect the right of self-determination by working in partnership with Indigenous communities.

Universities Australia also recognises the benefits that universities and the country will accrue through increasing Indigenous involvement and attainment in higher education.

The strategy contains a number of initiatives that seek to:

- increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in higher education as students, as graduates and as academic and research staff;
- increase the engagement of non-Indigenous people with Indigenous knowledge, culture and educational approaches; and
- improve the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The strategy takes as its starting position the following principles:

- That Australia's universities exist on the traditional lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the continent.
- That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold unique knowledge and knowledge systems which are foundational and fundamentally important to Australia's intellectual, social and cultural capital.
- That universities are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on education and the use of Indigenous knowledge and cultures.
- That true partnerships between universities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within and outside the university are essential to deliver the best outcomes.
- That such partnerships should be conducted in a spirit of reconciliation which gives voice to Indigenous people in decision making that affects Indigenous communities.
- That social justice requires universities to implement effective policies and practices that recognise the contribution, potential and insight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, and respond to Indigenous community needs.
- That parity of opportunity and outcome is a central objective of policy and practice.
- That universities control the resources and processes required to achieve these aims, and are committed to using them effectively.



University of Wollongong - Indigenous students Ashlyn Hampton, Erunora Tanner, Aleisha Chessell, Jesse Blair, Taylah Wicks and Alissa Paulson

Arising from these principles, Universities Australia has identified a number of actions and activities that will supercharge Indigenous attainment and involvement in higher education.

Some of these reflect recommendations from the 2012 Review or the 2011 Framework, some reflect identified good practice already undertaken in individual universities and others provide for an increased role for UA itself as the central sectoral body.

Some of the actions and activities are ambitious, but it is the common view of all Universities Australia members that universities owe it to Australia's Indigenous peoples to do all they can.



Western Sydney University - Medical students Artiene Tatian and Jay Dargan who graduated in 2016. Photo: Sally Tsoutas

UNSW - Having grown up in Yarrabah, a remote Indigenous community in far-north Queensland, 21-year-old Destiny Kynuna was accepted to study medicine at UNSW in 2017. "I think I can make more change in my community by becoming a doctor." Photo: Leilah Schubert



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - ACTIONS

Through this strategy, Universities Australia members commit to the following actions:

- maintain institutional growth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' enrolment that are at least 50 per cent above the growth rate of non-Indigenous student enrolment, and ideally 100 per cent above;
- aim for retention and success rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to those of domestic non-Indigenous students in the same fields of study by 2025;
- aim to achieve equal completion rates by field of study by 2028;
- include Indigenous higher education, research and employment as priority areas in core policy documents, including institutional strategic and business plans;
- have Indigenous Research Strategies in place by 2018;
- ensure that implementation of these plans and policies is devolved through the university's faculties, schools and units;
- ensure that additional workload expected of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff is recognised in workload planning and in performance assessments and promotions processes;
- build robust, respectful and collaborative partnerships between themselves and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that they serve;
- take a community leadership role in promoting Indigenous higher education and building opportunities for wider community engagement in it;
- have current executive staff and all new senior staff complete cross-cultural training programs from 2018; and
- have processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study, by 2020.



University of Newcastle - Karlie Noon, a Kamilaroi woman and STEM student from Tamworth

Universities Australia commits to the following actions:

- regularly include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander observers at plenary meetings of Vice-Chancellors;
- hold roundtables between the Universities Australia Board of Directors and the Indigenous academy and leadership to discuss progress against this strategy and relevant sectoral policy matters;
- maintain formal ongoing dialogue with NATSIHEC and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university leaders;
- develop, through the four Deputy Vice-Chancellor Committees, agreed sector-wide initiatives which will be implemented in common across all member universities;
- include Indigenous higher education issues in all relevant submissions it makes and advocacy work it undertakes;
- increase the profile of Indigenous higher education in public events such as the Universities Australia Higher Education Conference;
- continue to advocate for increased Government investment in specific Indigenous higher education initiatives and for related outreach and participation programmes;
- develop, by 2018, a platform or mechanism to identify and share good practices; and
- obtain annual feedback from universities on their progress towards meeting the commitments they have made in this strategy, and publicly releasing annual reports.

PREAMBLE

In 2009, the Australian Government formally endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This endorsement was an acknowledgement by Australia that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had sovereign rights over their heritage, their present and their future, which were to be aided and supported by the Australian Government and community.

Central to this Declaration are the rights of Indigenous peoples to education without discrimination (Article 14), to have Indigenous cultures and aspirations reflected in education (Article 15), and the right to control, protect and develop Indigenous cultures and knowledge (Article 31).

Universities Australia, representing of 39 universities, has developed this strategy – in partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium – as our response to the ethos and content of the UN Declaration.

This strategy is our commitment to work in continuing partnership with Australia's Indigenous peoples.

It guides work towards the common objective of translating declared rights into practice, and ensuring Australian universities are vehicles for social, cultural and economic development of, with and by Australia's diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Through this strategy, Universities Australia members also acknowledge that, as large institutions that contribute significantly to Australia's ongoing nation building, they have a strong moral obligation to social justice and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

They also recognise the valuable contribution made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – through knowledge, expertise and experience – to universities' development of effective global citizens and to the generation of new knowledge.

Universities are places for the development of new thinking and practice, of freedom in academic pursuit, and that welcome diverse perspectives and approaches.

Universities Australia recognises and celebrates Indigenous Australian cultures and perspectives.

We also value the vast contribution made through the growing participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the university academy and community.

Australian universities are better and stronger for it.

RATIONALE

Universities have historically underperformed against their obligations to Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It was not until 115 years after the establishment of the first Australian university in 1851 that the first Aboriginal Bachelor degree student graduated in 1966.

Fifty years on, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students remain relatively underrepresented both in enrolments and graduations, and staff – particularly academic and research staff – are few.

The lived experience of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been that university is seen as beyond reach or an unwelcoming and alien place into which Indigenous people are merely invited.

In this, universities have been part of a wider pattern of disadvantage and discrimination in Australia.

In the twenty-first century, higher education is a powerful vehicle for individuals to change their futures and improve and shape the world they live in.

It is the responsibility of universities, individually and collectively, to create an environment that enables successful higher education experiences and fruitful careers for all members of society.

Increasingly, a larger cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aspire to gain a university education, and universities need to improve their practice to ensure this happens.

In partnership with the Commonwealth Government and with local communities, universities already seek to improve success in higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

They do so through community outreach and by providing alternate entry pathways, dedicated centres and units of excellence and support, and targeted programs that respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

There have been great improvements in enrolment and graduation rates in recent years.

But universities can and must do more to improve Indigenous success in higher education and to better draw on the abilities, knowledge and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

THE BENEFITS WE ALL GAIN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make substantial contributions to universities across Australia. As leaders, researchers, teachers, administrators and learners. As creators, disseminators and debaters of knowledge – both in Australia and beyond.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also make a unique contribution to Australian universities, sharing insight and knowledge from our country's first cultures with the wider Australian community.

This greatly enriches the intellectual and cultural depth of a university education for staff, students and community.

By better embracing the talent and resources of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, all of us will prosper.

First, universities are institutions through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people directly develop professional skills and qualifications, deepen knowledge and capabilities, and lay foundations for successful careers and leadership roles in Australia or overseas.

As a matter of both equity and excellence, Australia needs to draw on the talents of all its peoples, especially its growing population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Second, universities educate the vast bulk of the professionals who design policy and deliver essential services to the Australian community.

The worldviews of these professionals are shaped in part through their experience at university, and the skills, insights and abilities to interact with diverse communities can be developed during study.



Charles Darwin University - Indigenous Student Ambassadors Natalie Leysley, Teresa Edwards and Mark Munnich, assisting at the 2016 Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture



The University of Melbourne - The late Dr Margaret Williams-Weir, the first recorded Aboriginal person to enrol in a university course in Australia with Indigenous students and staff (from left) Genevieve Grieves, Kate Rendell, Lilly Brown and Clinton Benjamin, at the 2014 Wominjeka. Picture: Peter Casamento

Through interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander classmates and staff, and understanding more about our history and its continuing legacies in Indigenous communities, the skills and capabilities of the nation's future service providers, planners and professionals can be strengthened.

Third, universities generate new knowledge, technology and innovations that can help address the range of challenges and opportunities for individuals, the nation and the world.

This may include research and knowledge transfer which can help address issues of importance to Indigenous communities. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers also contribute to issues of much wider scope across all fields of endeavour.

Fourth, universities are cultural and intellectual hubs for local and regional communities.

By celebrating, highlighting and drawing on the insight of Australia's Indigenous peoples' heritage and contemporary cultures, universities lift the visibility of our history and shared heritage throughout the Australian community.

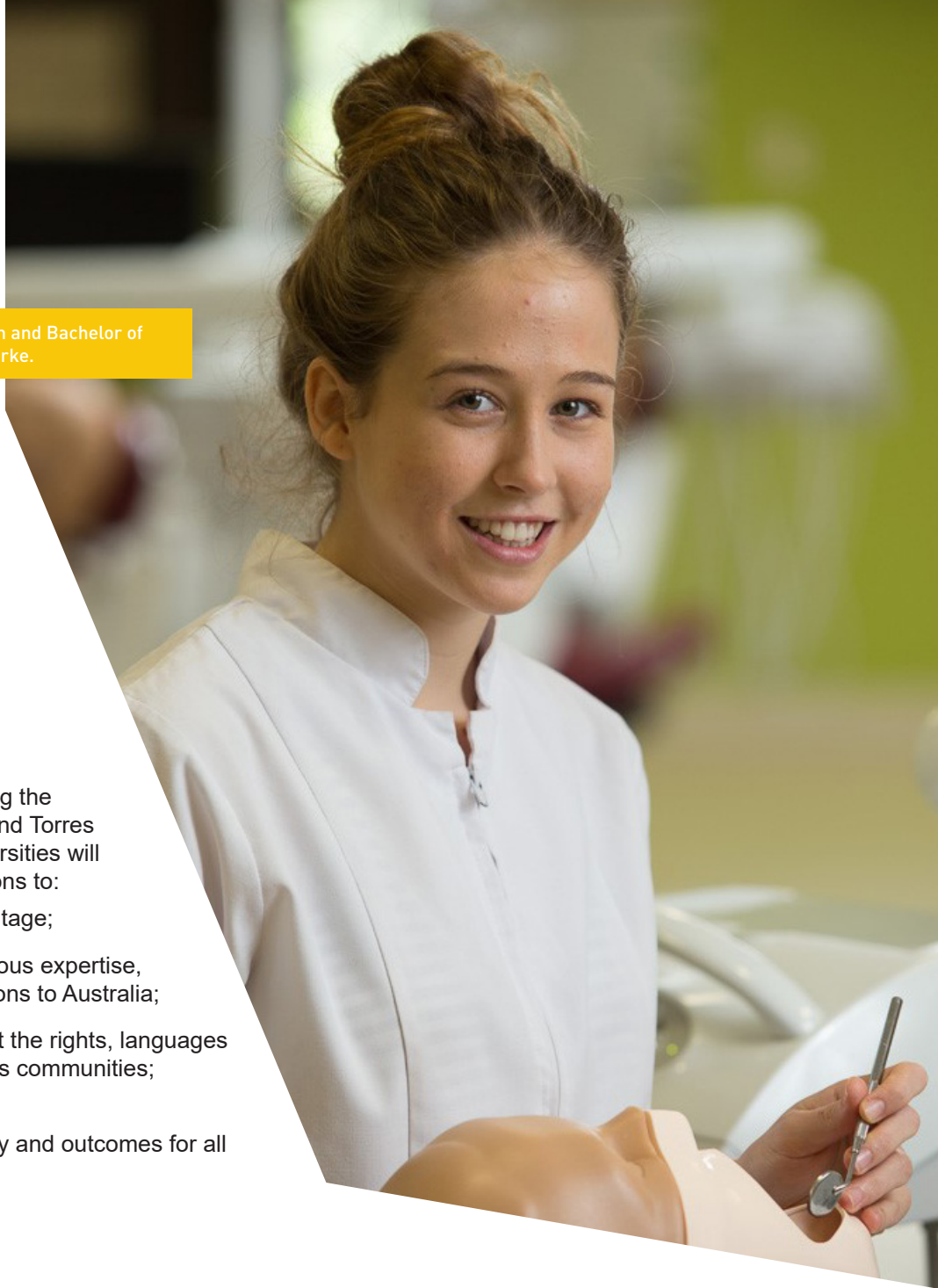
This can build wider insight and knowledge about Australia's unique first cultures (which are the very foundation of our unique national identity), and foster opportunities for research and educational collaboration that will benefit universities and the nation.

Fifth, universities are a respected source of civic voice and debate, able to promote social justice and improve awareness and outcomes relevant to Indigenous communities.

James Cook University - Kirrae Whurrong woman and Bachelor of Dental Surgery student, Georgia Clarke.

By deepening and enhancing the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, universities will expand their own contributions to:

- close the gap in disadvantage;
- lift the visibility of Indigenous expertise, excellence and contributions to Australia;
- acknowledge and support the rights, languages and cultures of Indigenous communities;
- tackle racism; and
- promote equal opportunity and outcomes for all Australians.



PRECURSORS TO THIS STRATEGY

The principles and actions in this strategy are informed by the many examples published in a range of sources over the last decade. These include but are not limited to:

- The Review of Higher Education (“Bradley Review”) (Australian Government, 2008);
- The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (“Behrendt Review”) (Australian Government, 2012);
- The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (Universities Australia/IHEAC, 2011);
- The National Indigenous Higher Education Workforce Strategy (IHEAC, 2011);
- The Accord on Indigenous Education (Association of Canadian Deans of Education);
- The Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies);
- World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium Accreditation Handbook (Higher Education) Version 3; and
- Existing university Indigenous education, employment and organisational strategies.

There is a high degree of commonality in approaches recommended in these major inquiries and reviews.

This indicates strongly that the way forward is known, and can be implemented effectively through commitment by universities and other organisations and agencies connected to higher education.

Universities Australia encourages all member universities to continue to adopt the recommendations for practice contained within these and similar materials.

They embody a rich cache of knowledge and example that will greatly improve performance and outcomes and which complement and extend the commitments in this strategy.

“By working together, we can begin the process of structural realignment required to make Indigenous higher education core business.”

Professor Peter Buckskin PSM FACE - Chair, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC)
Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson - Director, National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN)

PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

The primary power to implement change within universities rests with universities themselves.

However, many external bodies can also support efforts to ensure that universities reflect the skills, expertise and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and meet Indigenous educational needs.

These groups may include schools, funding agencies, regulators, accreditation bodies, policy developers, employers, unions, industry and peak bodies, and – above all – our country's diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Universities Australia, as the peak body for Australian universities, has a role to:

- demonstrate sectoral commitment;
- support members through encouragement;
- provide public visibility and example; and
- advocate on behalf of the sector for appropriate changes to government funding policies and programs.

The principles, commitments and actions in this strategy reflect these four roles.

CQUniversity - CQUni Chancellor John Abbott congratulating Gooreng Gooreng woman Billie-Jean Ryals at the 'Indigenous sashing' ceremony. Billie-Jean Ryals graduated with a Bachelor of Learning Management (Early Childhood Education) in 2016.





PRINCIPLES

Through this strategy, the members of Universities Australia endorse the following principles:

- That Australia's universities exist on the traditional lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the continent.
- That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold unique knowledge and knowledge systems which are foundational and fundamentally important to Australia's intellectual, social and cultural capital.
- That universities are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on education and the use of Indigenous knowledge and cultures.
- That true partnerships between universities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within and outside the university are essential to deliver the best outcomes,
- That such partnerships should be conducted in a spirit of reconciliation which gives voice to Indigenous people in decision making that affects Indigenous communities.
- That social justice requires universities to implement effective policies and practices that recognise the contribution, potential and insight of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students, and respond to Indigenous community needs.
- That parity of opportunity and outcome is a central objective of policy and practice.
- That universities control the resources and processes required to achieve these aims, and are committed to using them effectively.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENTS

In endorsing this strategy, the members of Universities Australia commit to collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and community leadership to implement the following actions.

TARGETS - UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ENROLMENT, RETENTION AND COMPLETION

Australian universities will work towards achieving an Indigenous student population in parity with the overall Australian population figures.

In 2015, there were 15,585 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in universities.

This equates to 1.6 per cent of all domestic enrolments.

In the 2011 Census, 2.7 per cent of Australia's working age population identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Since the introduction of the demand driven funding system for universities, Indigenous enrolments have increased year-on-year by up to 10 per cent, with an annual average over the period of approximately 8 per cent.

There are now 70 per cent more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending university than there were in 2008, while the overall domestic student population has increased by 37 per cent over the same period.

Between 2014 and 2015 the Indigenous enrolment growth rate (7.1 per cent) was more than triple that of the overall domestic rate (2.1 per cent).

Since 2010, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students graduating each year grew by 54 per cent – compared to 21 per cent growth in non-Indigenous student graduations.

These are welcome increases.

However, retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, while increasing (up from 69 per cent in 2009 to 71.2 per cent in 2014) remain well below all domestic students (79.9 per cent in 2014).

Completion rates, too, remain relatively very low. Only 47.3 per cent of the 2006 cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bachelor students had completed their degrees by 2014, compared with 73.9 per cent of non-Indigenous students from the same cohort.

Universities Australia members commit to the following actions:

- maintain institutional growth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' enrolment that are at least 50 per cent above the growth rate of non-Indigenous student enrolment, and ideally 100 per cent above;
- aim for retention and success rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students equal to those of domestic non-Indigenous students in the same fields of study by 2025, and
- aim to achieve equal completion rates by field of study by 2028.



The University of Tasmania hosting a Northern Arizona University Indigenous students' visit to Bruny Island. Pictured here with Tasmanian Aboriginal Elder Rodney Dillon. Photo: Peter Matthew

These are ambitious targets and may not be easy to achieve.

But Universities Australia and its members agree that lack of ambition in this matter could result in the greater part of another generation of potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being unable to take full advantage of a higher education.

These targets are intended to provide flexibility for individual universities and recognise their circumstances and allow for fluctuations in overall enrolment trends at the national or regional level, while providing a consistent national objective.

In accepting these targets, universities are encouraged to:

- develop their own internal strategies and processes to achieve these objectives in ways most appropriate to their own regions, communities and situations; and
- collaborate and enter into partnerships to achieve these goals, particularly through outreach and participation building activities. Universities Australia notes by way of example that Victorian universities have collaborated on building Indigenous participation and success since 2009 under the Toorong Marnong Higher Education Accord.

TARGETS - POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

The numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertaking postgraduate study at the Masters and Doctoral level remain very low, both in absolute and relative terms.

Because of the need to develop better undergraduate enrolment and completion pipelines that can lead into postgraduate study, especially higher degrees by research (HDR), this strategy does not yet include express targets on postgraduate study numbers.

However, Universities Australia believes that enlarging the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research community will have enormous benefits across university achievement at all levels, including undergraduate and staffing.

In 2017, the Universities Australia Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) Committee will develop sectoral approaches to improve HDR enrolment and success.

This will include suggested targets, support mechanisms, ways to identify and foster likely Indigenous HDR candidates during undergraduate study, ways to improve supervisor training, and possible policy positions to advocate to Government.

This strategy will be updated to reflect the work of the Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) Committee.



The University of Sydney - Professor Shane Houston, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Strategy and Services

EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION ACROSS MORE POLICIES

While universities have specific Indigenous strategies or reconciliation action plans, these should serve as complementary to, not a replacement for, central policy documents.

Universities commit to including Indigenous higher education, research and employment as priority areas in their respective core policy documents, including institutional strategic and business plans.

TAKING A WHOLE OF UNIVERSITY APPROACH

By embedding Indigenous issues within core policies, universities commit to ensure that central administration and Indigenous education units do not have sole responsibility for effecting these policies.

Faculties, schools and divisions across universities will be equally responsible and accountable for progress.

Universities commit to a leadership role in disseminating relevant information, guidelines and support material throughout their organisations.

This recognises that Indigenous education and advancement is everyone's business.

It is vital that all university staff recognise the importance of creating learning environments for all students and working environments for all employees that are respectful and welcoming, and that embed Indigenous views, knowledges and voices.

SHARING THE WORKLOAD

Responsibility for creating, maintaining and monitoring university Indigenous policies, mechanisms, and community relationships, as well as pastoral care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and employees, often falls disproportionately on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This is not always considered in the workload structures for these staff.

Universities commit to ensure that, where additional workload is expected of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, this is recognised in workload planning and that such workload is considered in a non-prejudicial way in performance assessments and promotions processes.

Universities are encouraged to develop the skills of non-Indigenous staff to enable them to effectively share the extra workload currently delegated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Universities commit to building robust and collaborative partnerships between themselves and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that they serve, founded on mutual respect and two-way communication.

These partnerships will seek to involve local communities in the life of the university.

This vital work builds the capacity of university communities on matters of protocol, symbolism and recognition of traditional owners (such as Welcomes to Country and the naming of major facilities).

It also builds capacity in curriculum and content design (such as involving Elders and other community leaders in program development and delivery or policy construction).

Universities will ensure that the development and maintenance of these relationships are not the responsibility of individuals, and have multiple points of contact within the university.

Universities, as large community institutions with many connections with other education providers, organisations and businesses, also commit to a leadership role in promoting Indigenous higher education and building opportunities for wider community engagement in it.



EMBEDDING RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Universities commit to have Indigenous Research Strategies in place by 2018.

These strategies will include supporting research by Aboriginal and Torres Strait researchers, particularly through providing an environment and employment structure that enables the development of the skills and increases the numbers of early career researchers.

These strategies will also include effective and appropriate guidelines on research related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples or cultures, including ensuring ethics processes fully involve relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

PROVIDING CULTURAL TRAINING FOR SENIOR STAFF

Universities commit to have current executive staff and all new senior staff complete cross-cultural training programs from 2018.

Universities are encouraged to extend such training to other staff where possible, especially to those staff who interact professionally with local Indigenous communities and to supervisors and potential supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher degree by research students.

INCREASING CULTURAL CAPABILITIES OF GRADUATES

By 2020, universities commit to have plans for, or have already in place, processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study.

This will give all Australian university graduates in the future the chance to develop their capabilities to work with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Universities will differ in how they approach this, but it may involve the development of formal graduate attributes, discrete units of study, and campus or off-campus experiences or other activities, but all approaches will be developed in partnership with local communities.

COMMITMENTS CONNECTED TO GOVERNMENT INDIGENOUS SUPPLEMENT FUNDING GUIDELINES

In 2017, the Commonwealth Government, through the Indigenous Student Success Program, changed the rules for gaining access to additional funding for Indigenous higher education purposes.

These include several requirements of university policy and practice and thus have a bearing on the purpose of this strategy.

The following items outline these new rules.

While they are not formally part of the strategy, Universities Australia encourages its members to go beyond the baseline requirements of these funding guidelines.

Internal university governance structures

The Government guidelines require that universities constitute a body of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which will have responsibilities for providing advice and oversight on expenditure of Indigenous higher education funding.

Universities Australia urges its members to give these bodies strong authority regarding all aspects of Indigenous policy and practice within the university.

While this may include direct responsibility for some activities, it will more frequently mean that they should work in close partnership with the executives holding specific portfolio responsibilities.



University of Wollongong - Wiradjuri student Kylie McElhone says
"Indigenous success is everywhere; it is in the rekindling of culture."



Federation University - Gunai Kurnai man and visual arts student Ronald Edwards from Morwell, Victoria

Workforce strategies

The Government guidelines require that universities have in place by 2018 effective Indigenous workforce strategies that will include measures for recruitment, retention, promotion and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

This explicitly includes plans to increase the number of such staff to three per cent of the total workforce and for the employment of at least one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person in a senior executive role.

Universities Australia urges its members to plan to increase their Indigenous workforces to reflect their overall staff balance.

This encompasses the relative size of academic and professional workforces as well as rank and, for academic positions, field of education.

Workforce strategies should also include policies that foster staff retention and continuity.

Education strategies

Government guidelines require that universities will have Indigenous education strategies that include plans to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and graduates, lead to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in curricula and include activities that promote the Indigenous cultural competency of students and staff.

Many specific actions and targets outlined in the strategy are directed towards these goals.

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA ACTIONS

The organisational structure of Universities Australia includes governance and committees drawn from across the sector, and a supporting directorate and policy office.

As part of this strategy, the organisation will undertake the following activities:

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PRESENCE ON MAJOR COMMITTEES

In 2015, Universities Australia began the practice of embedding two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives on each of its four Deputy Vice-Chancellor Committees – Academic, Corporate, International and Research.

This practice seeks to place Indigenous matters and considerations as central to the work of these major advisory groups and to expose up-and-coming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to a wide cohort of other senior university figures and their work.

This practice will continue through the duration of the strategy.

From 2018, Universities Australia will also extend this activity to include two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives of Pro or Deputy Vice-Chancellor level as regular observers at plenary meetings of Vice-Chancellors.

Again, the two purposes will be to ensure that Indigenous higher education issues remain central to UA's work, and to provide exposure to the highest level of university management and its work.

UA expresses its desire that in the near future, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander academic and professional staff will increasingly occupy senior leadership positions across all portfolios within the higher education sector, including at Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor levels.

GOVERNANCE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INDIGENOUS ACADEMY

The Universities Australia Board of Directors will hold roundtables with the Indigenous academy and leadership to discuss progress against this strategy and relevant sectoral policy matters.

Universities Australia will also maintain regular ongoing dialogue with NATSIHEC and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university leaders.

PORTFOLIO INITIATIVES

Individual universities are responsible for implementing the specific commitments of this strategy in ways that are most appropriate to their organisation and circumstances.

Yet there is great value in sharing work across the sector to speed gains and unlock further progress.

With this in mind, Universities Australia's four Deputy Vice-Chancellor Committees will each develop agreed sector-wide initiatives on matters relevant to their respective portfolios, which will be implemented in common across all member universities.

The first set of initiatives is expected to be developed in 2017 and implemented from 2018. Other initiatives will follow.

The first portfolio initiatives being developed are:

- **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)**
Ensuring that all internal course accreditation processes formally involve Indigenous consultation or input.
- **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Corporate)**
Employment strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, focusing on how to involve and promote staff who may not have progressed through traditional academic pathways.
- **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International)**
Development of a sectoral strategy to increase international mobility and exchanges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- **Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)**
Development of ways to increase the numbers of, and support for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher degree by research students.

This strategy will be updated as these committees develop their initiatives.

“Our country is indebted to every one of you leading efforts to lift participation and extend our institutional insight and responsiveness.”

Professor Barney Glover - Chair, Universities Australia
Belinda Robinson - Chief Executive, Universities Australia

ADVOCACY FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION ISSUES

To raise the profile of Indigenous higher education issues, Universities Australia will include them in all relevant submissions it makes and advocacy work it undertakes.

This will include our advocacy with Government and with other bodies and organisations within the higher education community (for instance, with agencies responsible for research ethics codes, with professional accreditation bodies and with regulatory bodies).

Where appropriate, Universities Australia will also increase the profile of Indigenous higher education in public events such as the Universities Australia Higher Education Conference.

SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities Australia will continue to advocate for increased Government investment in specific Indigenous higher education initiatives and for related outreach and participation programmes.

ENABLING THE SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICE

Sharing best practice across the sector is vital to deliver the best outcomes for the most people.

This requires identification and verification of best practice activity not just by universities, but also local communities and student groups.

Universities Australia, its members and partner organisations will investigate ways in which good practice can be identified and shared, with a platform or mechanism to be made available from 2018.

UNSW - Former electrician, Justin Keevers (far left) wants to become the first Indigenous specialist in obesity-related surgery. He was among eight Indigenous doctors to graduate from UNSW Medicine in December 2015. Photo: Grant Turner/Mediakoo



REPORTING AGAINST THE STRATEGY

Starting in 2018, Universities Australia will obtain annual feedback from universities on their progress towards meeting the commitments they have made in this strategy, and will publicly release a de-identified report on the findings.

To minimise administrative burden, this feedback will be based on existing reporting undertaken by universities for government or other purposes.

The format and content of this reporting structure will be developed during 2017 by Universities Australia in collaboration with NATSIHEC and the Commonwealth Government.



Curtin University - Nyikina and Jabirr Jabirr woman and Indigenous Tertiary Enabling Course student Kareemah McKenzie

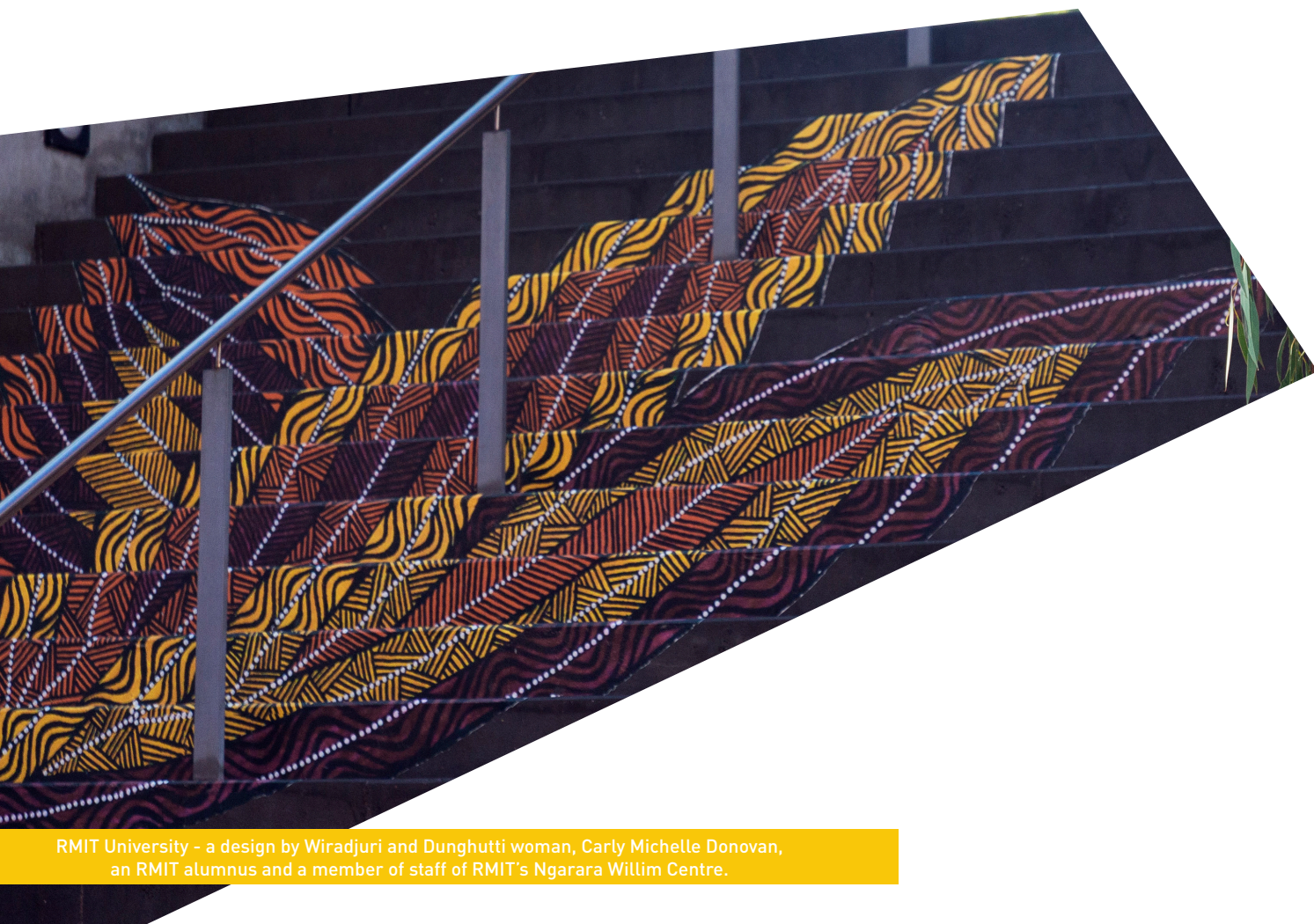


Western Sydney University - Yuin and Kamilaroi woman Aunty Mae Robinson was the first Aboriginal student to graduate from the School of Education at the Milperra College of Advanced Education. Aunty Mae is pictured here at the December graduation ceremonies in 2011, where she received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters. Photo: Sally Tsoutas

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Universities Australia will work collaboratively with external partners to implement the strategy.

These will include, but not be limited to, the Australian Government and its agencies and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium.



RMIT University - a design by Wiradjuri and Dughutti woman, Carly Michelle Donovan, an RMIT alumnus and a member of staff of RMIT's Ngarara Willim Centre.

REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY

The impact of this strategy on the Australian higher education sector will be reviewed by Universities Australia in 2020.

Universities Australia will review the principles, commitments and actions contained in this strategy against best practice and developments, and will revise the strategy as considered necessary at that time.



University of Canberra - Kungarakan Elder and Chancellor, Professor Tom Calma A.O., and midwifery graduate Karel Williams, recipient of the inaugural Tom Calma medal Photo: Michelle McAulay



UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA



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