

Aboriginal Education Strategy 2018-2020

Federation University Australia



Prepared by:

Aboriginal Education Centre

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Aboriginal
Education
Centre

Federation
UNIVERSITY • AUSTRALIA



Acknowledgment to Country

In developing this Aboriginal Education Strategy we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend this respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and First Nations Peoples.

The Aboriginal Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters where our campuses, centres and field stations are located include:

Wimmera: Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia, Jupagulk

Ballarat: Wadawurrung

Berwick: Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri

Gippsland: Gunai Kurnai

Nanya Station: Mutthi Mutthi and Barkindji

Brisbane: Turrbal and Jagera

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Executive Summary

This Aboriginal Education Strategy 2018 - 2020 is informed by Federation University Australia's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022, the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy and the Indigenous Governance Committee.

The Aboriginal Education Strategy identifies a three phase approach to Build, Embed and Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and their knowledge, history, and cultural traditions, within the fabric of Federation University Australia.

The strategy articulates Goals and Key Performance Indicators for the next three years that are designed to:

- Increase the numbers of Indigenous students participating in, and completing, higher education qualifications above the 2017 benchmarks;
- Increase the Indigenous knowledge content of curricula, graduate attributes and teaching practices, and ensure this is maintained as an on-going process;
- Promote cultural competency for students and staff so that there is an increase in awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures, traditions and histories.

Vision

Federation University Australia (FedUni) is an education provider that enables the cultural security of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be empowered to succeed, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and cultural practice will be firmly embedded within the University environment.

To ensure that this vision is met FedUni will drive collaboration and partnerships that build trust, and enable the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to be actively engaged, connected participants in the life of FedUni. Systemic barriers to cultural inclusive practices will be identified, and rectified, to ensure the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respected and adhered to.

In order for this vision to be truly met, a whole of University response is required. The commitment towards Aboriginal business and successful outcomes for all students will be a part of “what we do”, and this commitment will be reflected in all University strategy and planning documents, and put in place through actions, activities and processes.

Introducing Federation University Australia

FedUni is a progressive regional university providing high-quality vocational and higher education across a national and international network of campuses. The University has a distinguished history as one of Australia’s oldest higher education institutions. In its current form, the University came into being in January 2014, when the University of Ballarat amalgamated with the Gippsland Campus of Monash University.

Our Victorian campuses are located in Ballarat, Berwick, Gippsland and the Wimmera region. A new campus in Brisbane, Queensland, provides further opportunities for international students and student mobility.

At FedUni, we acknowledge the special place and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and we acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands where our campuses and centres are located.

FedUni has set in place measures to address the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in education, employment and opportunity. We have formalised this commitment with the Australian Government and in our policies, procedures and actions.

The University seeks to provide a learning and working environment that promotes and values diversity and offers equity of access and opportunity to all. Just as this commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is embedded in policy and strategy, then so too is it seated in the practicalities of teaching, learning, research and community engagement that comprise the daily business of the University.

Purpose

The purpose of this Aboriginal Education Strategy is to provide a high level road map for FedUni and its organisational units to follow. The strategy focuses on:

- successful student outcomes;
- quality and culturally strengthening experiences for students;
- setting the foundation to drive inclusive practices of FedUni; and,
- embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge through the University's practices.

FedUni's Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) develops yearly operational plans that are directly linked to this Aboriginal Education Strategy. Other FedUni plans that direct activities and processes include the Reconciliation Action Plan, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Plan and the Wurreker Implementation Plan, all of which are guided by relevant legislative and strategic documents to ensure that requirements within these strategies are met.

The Reconciliation Action Plan

Federation University Australia is committed to the process of reconciliation, and this commitment is formalised and articulated in our Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP), which have been developed in concert with Reconciliation Australia.

FedUni's current Stretch RAP acknowledges our position and intentions with respect to Reconciliation actions and outlines strategies and programs for implementation, as well as setting clear targets to measure impact. This RAP is the fourth, three year RAP undertaken by FedUni and is in line with RA and Universities Australia (UA) social and moral responsibilities.

Indigenous Governance Committee

The FedUni Indigenous Governance Committee (IGC) is an advisory body to the University and Vice-Chancellor with a brief to advise on, review and make recommendations related to the acquittal of all financial operations supporting the education and employment outcomes of Indigenous students and staff. This includes overseeing expenditure related to funding from the following:

- Federal Government Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) as set out in the Indigenous Student Assistance Grants documentation;
- Federal Government Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP); and,
- Victorian State Government Wurreker Implementation Plan.

Aboriginal Education Centre

The Aboriginal Education Centre was first established in 1993 and has developed over time in both its structure, function and impact.

Currently the Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) is the principal location for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business at FedUni and is a welcoming place for students and

community to come to meet, and study. The AEC offers a range of support services for Higher Education and TAFE students with centres located at Ballarat, Mt Helen, Gippsland, Wimmera, and Berwick. Services offered by the AEC include scholarship information, tutorial assistance, dedicated computer lounges, kitchen spaces and social gathering places, and facilitation of involvement and connections with local Aboriginal community and groups. The AEC also provides resources such as a cultural library and pastoral care.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy

FedUni, through its Human Resources Division, has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy which has been implemented to establish the University's priorities and plans for recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff at all levels of the University.

The following principles guide the establishment of the University's workforce priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- fostering respectful relationships and supporting a work environment that is tolerant and open to diversity and creates a sense of community;
- having respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultures, lands and histories; and,
- promoting opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The University's key strategic goal that guides the workforce strategy is *“Become a university workplace of choice”* with the stated outcome of being *“a preferred employer and education destination for indigenous staff and students”* by 2022.

FedUni's Priorities

All of FedUni's activities are guided by our purpose which is “To Transform Lives and Enhance Communities”. To achieve this purpose our five key priorities are:

- Lifelong Learning
- Global citizenship
- Partnerships
- Research to impact
- Sustainability

(Transforming lives and enhancing communities – Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022. Federation University Australia 2017)

In recognising these priorities and in line with our strategic plan, the following principles will guide behaviour and attitudes within the University when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

1. **Acknowledgement:** recognition of the history, legacy and the unique relationships which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold and the resilience of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This will be achieved through developing an understanding and empathy for this history.

2. **Respect:** for Ancestors and Elders and the knowledge which they contain, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Nation people, and for all cultures.
3. **Informed:** through community partnerships and community insights and the driving of cultural competence within FedUni.
4. **Attitude:** FedUni staff and students will be culturally informed, open, and recognise that there are unconscious biases which need to be addressed to fully appreciate the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
5. **Reflective:** a commitment to ensure that there is reflective practice, and the development of a culture that supports an inclusive growth mindset and evolving thinking.
6. **Learning:** a strong focus on providing culturally safe learning environments where there are high expectations of excellence, achievement and practice that builds on knowledge and understanding.
7. **Sustainability:** an appreciation that practice and change is ongoing, that values and knowledge will shift and that we must all work towards a sustainable, inclusive future.
8. **Strength:** is found in the 60,000 plus years of history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We must all be brave enough to have courageous conversations, to stand up against practices which are wrong, to lead in a culturally informed manner.

Strategic Direction of the Aboriginal Education Strategy

There are three identified phases to this current Aboriginal Education Strategy, each of which is introduced below.

1. **Build:** the building phase over the next three years of business is for the University to continue to build its relationships, reputation and trust with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We will focus on identifying and addressing systemic barriers impacting on students enrolling and completing courses, as well as focussing on internal operations ensuring that staff are equipped to work in a culturally informed and respectful manner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. **Embed:** this phase is the focus for the next iteration of the strategy. It concentrates on ensuring that practices and change have occurred, and that the identified practices in this strategy are embedded within the organisation, and become a natural part of a cultural inclusive FedUni.
3. **Empower:** in phase three of the strategy the focus is on a shift in the balance of power and control. The inequity and imbalances between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal outcomes are overcome, and there is a sense of belonging for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. At this phase Indigenous knowledge is a core part of the University's offerings.

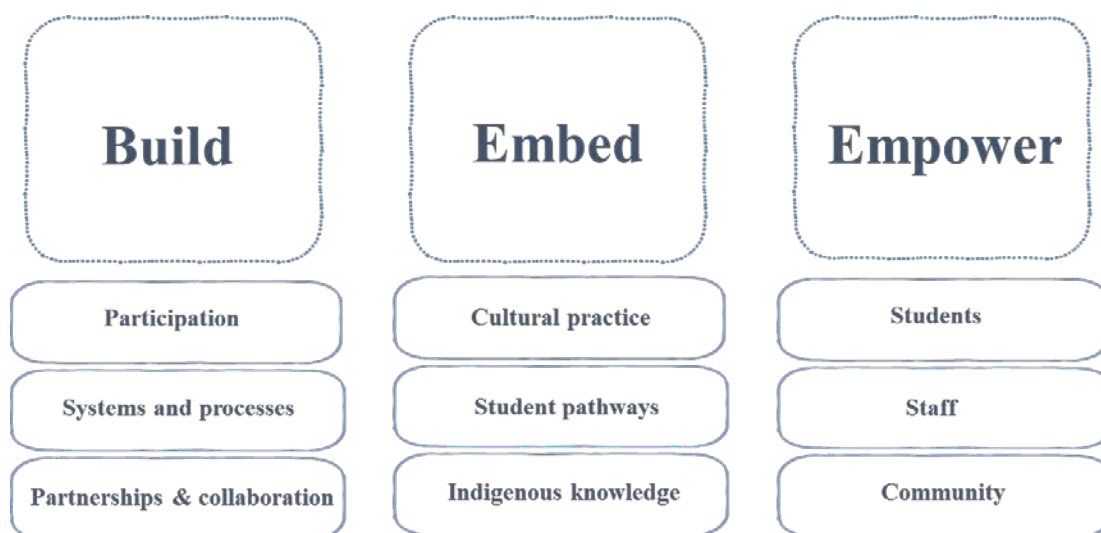


Fig. 1. Summary of key focus areas aligned to each phase of implementation

The three phases of the Aboriginal Education Strategy identified above are further expanded in the following tables which provide Key Strategic Areas, Goals, and Key Performance Indicators for each of the phases.

Phase	Key Strategic Area	Goal	Key Performance Indicators
Build	Participation	To work with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to increase their participation in University events and education opportunities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to build relationship with Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGs) as the community led approach to education. 2. Strengthen presences in other established professional Aboriginal forums. 3. Invite community to attend and participate in key celebrations held within the University. 4. Create culturally appropriate spaces where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community can visit and strengthen their connection with FedUni campuses.
	Systems and processes	Systemic barriers and key processes which inhibit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in further education are identified and a plan is developed to address these barriers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Delivery of regular cultural awareness training for staff. 2. Completion of a survey of current students and their experiences at FedUni. 3. Continue to work with LAECGs to determine localised barriers within community. 4. Implementation of the actions within the Reconciliation Action Plan which focus on enhancing the cultural safety of staff and students.
	Partnerships and collaboration	The removal of 'silos' and enhanced collaboration between the University and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on key committees within the University. 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice is incorporated into the design of new approaches and plans that govern the University. 3. FedUni staff are participating in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander celebrations which are off campus and in community.

Embed

Cultural practices	Respecting cultural protocol and practices will be the norm amongst staff and students.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Meeting the objectives in the Reconciliation Action Plan.2. Meeting the objectives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce strategy.3. Welcome to Country ceremonies are conducted at key FedUni events.4. Cultural ceremonies are performed at the start of each academic year.
Student pathways	Enhancing and diversifying pathways for how students enter and advance their education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete a scan of other organisations' pathway programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.2. Identify and develop specific pathways from TAFE campus to Higher Education campus which meet the needs of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.3. Promotion of entry options to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and empower community with the knowledge of educational options and support services.
Indigenous knowledge	Indigenous knowledge will be recognised and respected as a valued contribution to the University.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Academic staff.2. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research projects.3. Incorporate Indigenous knowledge as a recognised form of research.4. Development of engagement and consultation protocols.5. Ensure that cultural protocols are embedded in ethics approval processes.6. Indigenous voice on the Academic Board.

Empower

Students

Students will complete their education at FedUni feeling culturally strong.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific student surveys will be conducted annually.
2. Conduct campus inductions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
3. Regular contact from the AEC to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
4. Early identification of students at risk.
5. Providing a culturally informed support service for students.
6. Increase in student numbers.
7. Increase in student retention, progression and completion.
8. Cultural and ceremonial leave to be regarded as grounds for special consideration upon application.
9. Significant cultural events to be held on campuses for all to enjoy and promoted directly to Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander students and community.

Staff

Are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to support the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

1. Implementation of cultural understanding assessments (at an individual and organisational level) that support staff along their cultural competency journey.
2. Embedding cultural perspectives and examples within course content.
3. Increase number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
4. Increased number of Aboriginal academics and researchers affiliated with FedUni.

Community

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and FedUni will be working alongside each other.

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending and supporting FedUni events.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in key University committees such as the IGC, RAP.
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice is heard through the guidance of Marrung, Wurreker, Universities Australia Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework.

Monitoring and Oversight

The monitoring of the strategy will be maintained by the Manager of the Aboriginal Education Centre on a day to day basis, however final responsibility lies with the Vice-Chancellor.

An oversight function will be performed by the Indigenous Governance Committee which meets four times per year, and which will report progress through the Chair.

An annual report will be prepared by the Indigenous Governance Committee and presented to the Vice-Chancellor.

Cover Art:

The cover painting represents reconciliation across all lands, from the skies down to the waters including the mountains, grass and sand. The hands represent people of all cultures reaching for a brighter future, and the men and women in talks of how reconciliation can be achieved. Last but not least, the footprints represent our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors that have fought for reconciliation before us and their steps/progress towards reconciliation.

Artist Bio:

Josh Muir – Josh is a proud Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara and Barkinji man, who holds his culture strong to his heart as it gives him a voice and great sense of my identity. Josh is a Ballarat-based multimedia artist. In 2015 Muir was the recipient of the Telstra National Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Art Award – Youth award and the Hutchinson Scholarship, through which he undertook a 12-month residency at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne. Muir's work has been acquired by the Koorie Heritage Trust, The National Gallery of Australia, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, the National Gallery of Victoria and was commissioned as a major project artist by White Night.

Shanaya Sheridan – Shanaya is a proud Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung and Boon Wurrung woman who has resided in Ballarat for 20 years, after living in Horsham, Shepparton and Melbourne. Growing up and watching her Elders and their style of artworks, Shanaya is influenced by a traditional style of Aboriginal art, mixing it up with contemporary colours. This reconciliation piece is Shanaya's first commission.