

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

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## SECTION 1: OBJECTIVES FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The University of Newcastle has made a commitment to Indigenous education as one of its strategic priorities. It is the resolve of the University "to be a national and international leader in Indigenous collaboration", as articulated in the University Strategic Plan 2007-2011. The University already enjoys a strong reputation for Indigenous collaboration and is committed to actively supporting the aspirations of Indigenous peoples by providing study and employment opportunities.

The University's current activities are consistent with the strategic priorities outlined by the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, with significant potential for these activities to be expanded and strengthened. The University's *Building Distinction* Institutional Strategic Plan (ISP) 2007 – 2011, prioritises 'Indigenous Collaboration' ensuring it's inclusion in all Implementation and Operational Plans across the University. The *Indigenous Collaboration* Implementation Plan can be found at: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/>

The ISP makes a commitment to the following strategic goals:

- We will encourage Indigenous peoples to aspire to complete higher education degrees by creating additional pathways for entry to University.
- We will nurture and support Indigenous students throughout their studies with the aim of increasing the number of Indigenous graduates at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- We will be internationally recognised for the quality of our Indigenous research activities and we will link research outcomes to our teaching curricula.
- We will attract Indigenous academic and general staff to the University on the basis of the quality of our work environment.

The management structure of Indigenous education at the University of Newcastle guarantees strong Indigenous community participation in the setting of key directions and priorities. Activities are governed by a Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training that has all Indigenous membership, including community representatives with skills and experience in Indigenous educational and community matters. Genuine consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders is integral to the University's approach to supporting Indigenous education and has been the foundation of the University's successes.

To reinforce the University's dedication to Indigenous education the Wollotuka, Indigenous Support Unit was realigned to the Academic Division, reporting directly to Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). This provides opportunities for direct communication to the Senior Executive Group of the University. It also creates a more transparent message to students that the Indigenous Support Unit services Indigenous students across all Faculties and Campuses of the University and not just within the Faculty of Education and Arts.

### **Successes, constraints and plans for the future**

#### *Successes*

The University has made a significant effort to better communicate the successes of Indigenous students and staff through the production of an "Indigenous Collaboration Booklet". Indigenous academic staff members contribute at all levels to the enhancement of opportunities for Indigenous students, and one staff member

received the University Young Leaders award. Visits to Canada and the USA opened international collaboration opportunities and Wollotuka organised a special 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 1967 referendum forum at the NSW State Library.

### *Constraints*

Attracting appropriately qualified staff is a challenge for the University of Newcastle. Continued efforts are required to provide graduates with an environment that is conducive to further academic development, building 'a grow your own' approach. The second challenge lies in continuing to attract students. Our aim is to encourage a sense of entitlement in Indigenous young people in relation to higher education. The University of Newcastle's Pathways project aims to address this challenge.

### *Plans for the future*

Plans for the future include skill development opportunities for Indigenous staff, particularly through the implementation of frameworks and systems that enhance planning and reporting skills. Future plans for Indigenous support may also include an extension of remedial programs to provide development opportunities. The 'Indigenous Collaboration Implementation Plan' further elaborates on key initiatives planned for the future.

## **SECTION 2: ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION POLICY (AEP) GOALS 2007 AND PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS**

### ***Goal 1: Establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making.***

The University's Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training is comprised of Indigenous peoples from the community, industry, the broader academic community and specialist roles. Dr William Jonas AM, is the current chair of the committee and is also a member of University Council. A nomination from the Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training is represented on the Academic Senate, ensuring an Indigenous input on critical academic decisions.

Recent appointments include an appointment to the role of Professor, Head of U Mulliko, Research; a conjoint professor of Aboriginal Studies and an Associate Professor of Indigenous Health. U Mulliko is one of six specialist national higher education centres of excellence responsible for the development of high quality Indigenous led post-graduate research and training. The Associate Professor of Indigenous Health is also the Vice-President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA). This position brings a strong Indigenous curriculum framework to the Medical degree and works beside Wollotuka to provide academic support to Indigenous health students.

The Head of School of Aboriginal Studies and the Indigenous Support Program Co-ordinator actively participate in the strategic planning process of the University. The Head of School, Deputy Head of School and other staff have membership on Faculty Boards and associated committees. The Head of School, Wollotuka was appointed to the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and the Fullbright Selection Committee Council for 2008. The Head of School continues to be represented on AIATSIS Board, NSW History Council and ANU Centre for Indigenous History Advisory Council. Indigenous Support Program Co-ordinator is Chairperson of the NSW/ACT Higher Education Network Aboriginal Corporation (HENAC).

Both academic and general Indigenous staff participate in the Higher Education Network Aboriginal Corporation (HENAC), the National Indigenous Higher Education Network (NIHEN), ITAS Co-ordinators' and Indigenous Promotions forums to broaden and enhance their exposure to macro management and planning. Four staff members from the University of Newcastle also attended the IHEAC conference in Adelaide.

**Goal 2:        *increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in education and training.***

*Structures/strategies in operation to increase the number of Indigenous staff (general and academic), e.g. through Indigenous Employment Strategy, Staff Professional Development/Training Strategy, scholarships, internships, mentoring.*

Supporting Indigenous Australians gain access to employment and the provision of career development opportunities is a priority of the Indigenous Collaboration element of The University's Institutional Strategic Plan. That commitment is most clearly demonstrated by the internal resourcing and support of the University's Indigenous Employment Strategy and by the employment of a fulltime Indigenous Employment Coordinator (IEC).

The number of Indigenous staff increased from 53 in 2007 to 61 in 2008. As at the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2008, the University Indigenous staff cohort comprised of 41 general and 20 academic staff representing 2.5% of total staff cohort.

The Indigenous employment Strategy was recently refocussed to compliment the Indigenous collaboration Plan 2007- 2011. Recruitment action and enhancing retention is an ongoing process to achieve a target of 3% Indigenous staff by the end of 2011.

Critical to success, is the work of the Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator and the support of senior management for the Indigenous Employment Strategy. Senior management is committed to recruiting Indigenous staff through various strategies:

- i)        establishing Indigenous traineeships and apprenticeships; cadetships and internships;
- ii)       conversion of Indigenous staff on contracts to ongoing status (subject to satisfactory performance);
- iii)      targeting of suitable positions when such positions are advertised externally;
- iv)      Indigenous Partnerships with Community and Job Network Agencies;
- v)       the introduction of School based traineeships (pilot program) from 2009.

Mentoring and supporting trainees to successfully complete various levels of formal training followed by progression into ongoing positions, is enhanced through partnerships with Community and Job Network Agencies. This program has led to:

- i)        the ongoing employment of 4 Indigenous trainees who successfully completed their coursework throughout 2006 – 2007;
- ii)       contractual employment for another 3 trainees who successfully completed there coursework throughout 2006 - 2007,
- iii)      part time /casual employment for 2 former trainees/apprentices
- iv)      three Indigenous staff members being promoted or reclassified to higher level positions in 2007.

Supporting and encouraging Indigenous staff to access internal training courses through the University's Leadership and Staff Development program is ongoing through a variety of specialised internal and external programs,

- i) Provision of Cultural Awareness programs for Non-Indigenous staff (ongoing),
- ii) Access to Special Studies Program (SSP – academic staff),
- iii) Offering Equity Research Fellowships of \$25,000 to Level A & B academic staff (ongoing),
- iv) Promotion of the Indigenous Staff Scholarships program administered through Department of Education, Employment Workplace and Relations (DEEWR).

**Goal 3:        *Ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Islander students to education and training***

The Strategic Plan outlines a commitment to explore opportunities for an additional two pathways for Indigenous students to access higher education, in close communication with Indigenous communities. The Implementation Plan further elaborates on these pathways focusing on a review of the Yapug enabling program to be inclusive of distance education options and a Principals Recommendation Scheme as an additional entry pathway.

*Supportive pathways, eg. Outreach programs, modified entry requirements, enabling/bridging/foundation courses, tailored exit points.*

- In the last two years the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the University has increased from 346 in 2006 to 418 in 2008.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Entry program provides alternative entry for Indigenous students at Callaghan, Ourimbah and Port Macquarie campuses, through interview to determine potential to undertake undergraduate studies and to establish the person's Aboriginality. In 2007, 47 commencing domestic undergraduate students were admitted through this scheme.
- Yapug Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enabling program is under review in 2008 as a part of the University's academic review process.
- To increase the retention and academic success rates of Indigenous medical students a two week intensive preparation program was initiated. Commencing students from both the University of Newcastle and University of New England under the new Joint Medical Program (JMP) participated in this program.
- The number of Indigenous students studying in Port Macquarie has increased from 3 in 2006 to 8 in 2007.
- Proactive articulation and accreditation arrangements with Hunter Institute of TAFE in relation to Indigenous programs facilitate greater access opportunities for Indigenous students. Indigenous programs offered through TAFE also increase opportunities for mainstream entry.
- The University continued to offer flexibly delivered coursework Masters in Aboriginal Studies.
- Wollotuka visited Aboriginal communities along the north coast as a travelling roadshow.
- Schools to University Pathways project was established and introduced to schools in 2007 for final implementation in 2008. Principals Recommendation Scholarships were established and presented to five students from Central Coast and Newcastle High Schools. Successful applicants were given a \$1,000 scholarship to assist in their transition into higher education. Students were also provided the option of a TAFE pathway where they would have been awarded \$300 on enrolment at TAFE and the \$700 balance when they articulate to University.

**Goal 4:        *Ensure participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education and training***

Indigenous support to students at the University of Newcastle is provided by Wollotuka, Support Unit across all schools, faculties and campuses. Support programs and services are continually reviewed and evaluated to meet the current demands of Indigenous students.

*Support strategies to assist participation of Indigenous students include:*

- The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme attracted 89 students in 2007, this has been an increase from previous years because of the introduction of the Intensive Student Support Program in 2007. The ITAS co-ordinator is Chair of the NSW/ACT ITAS collective which meets in conjunction with HENAC every three months.
- The Intensive Student Support Program (ISSP) was fully implemented in 2007 reducing the number of 'at risk' students in the first semester from 79 to 50. The ISSP highlighted the need for an Indigenous Counsellor which was appointed in September 2007.
- A Team Leader was employed at The Gibalee Centre at Ourimbah Campus to ensure the growing numbers of Indigenous students at the Central Coast are strongly supported in their academic journey and to assist in the provision of a strategic direction for Indigenous education on the Central Coast. The Team Leader is also the Regional Chairperson of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).
- The Gibalee Centre has been relocated to the centre of campus providing an accessible area that is user friendly for Indigenous students and community.
- Support provided to the Indigenous Student Collective in providing social, emotional and cultural programs and support to students.
- Wollotuka supported 6 Medicine students to attend the 2007 AIDA symposium in Adelaide. Support was also provided to a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Medicine student to undertake an exchange program in England.
- The Wollotuka Indigenous Resource Centre continues to expand and currently holds close to 5,000 resources. Negotiations have been discussed with community organisations to acquire some specialised materials primarily for research purposes.

**Goal 5: *Ensure equitable and appropriate achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.***

Wollotuka has been exploring a number of initiatives to support the achievement of Indigenous students. To improve academic performance and completions, the University is providing further individual learning and personal support to Indigenous students as well as involving the Indigenous community more in supporting the families of students. These include:

- Targeting students that meet the criteria for individual cadetships and graduate programs. Maintaining communication between donors and students to assist with the application process.
- Continued encouragement of Indigenous students via a range of scholarships and awards for performance.
- Enhancement of Alumni database to determine destinations and invite Alumni to Wollotuka and University activities and as mentors for current students.
- Graduation ceremonies for Indigenous students to recognise achievements of students.
- Collaborative Pathways Awards Ceremony on the Central Coast incorporating DET, TAFE, AECG, Central Coast Community College, NAISDA, Youth Connections and the University.
- Implementation of a process within alternative entry that highlights the level of support required to allow appropriate learning advancement on enrolment.
- Provision of financial assistance for attendance at discipline specific conferences or workshops.
- Close communication with Faculties and Schools. This relationship has been reinforced through the designation of Academic Indigenous Liaison Officers within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Nursing.

**Goal 6: *Promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures and languages to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.***

The University is building on its reputation as a national and international leader in Indigenous education and collaboration. By linking education with traditional knowledge and with role models who have insights into what assists Indigenous students, we hope to ensure that Indigenous students maintain cultural practices and values as well as achieve successful outcomes.

*Indigenous perspectives across curricula*

- Core Aboriginal Health Studies are included in all undergraduate Health programs.
- All undergraduate students in the School of Education take an Aboriginal Studies course as a compulsory component of their program. Discussions are currently being undertaken to broaden this into postgraduate coursework programs.
- Indigenous perspectives are included in Law, Social Work and Environmental Science programs.

*Cultural awareness*

- A Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Toolkit (CDIP) was launched early 2007. The CDIP toolkit is used as a guide to ensuring that curricula and teaching & research practice are culturally inclusive.
- All non-Indigenous ITAS tutors are required to participate in a cross-cultural awareness program.
- The University hosts a number of events designed to celebrate Indigenous culture and to extend appreciation of Aboriginal Reconciliation and culture beyond the University community eg a Reconciliation Scholarship Dinner Dance and NAIDOC activities across campuses incorporating strong community participation.
- Indigenous collaboration is incorporated throughout the Strategic Plan, including areas relating to Teaching and Learning, International, Research, Staff and Students.

**PART 3: EXPENDITURE OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAMME GRANT**

#### **PART 4: INSTITUTION'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

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#### **PART 5: PUBLICATION OF THE STATEMENT**

The University's Indigenous Education Statement can be found at the following address:  
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/equity/>

*Building Distinction* Institutional Strategic Plan 2007-2011  
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/index.html>