

# 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". This is articulated in the University Strategic Plan 2007-2011 (ISP), *Building Distinction*. 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. This was recognised by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) review report in 2008, which stated that "the University can rightfully claim to be a national leader in Indigenous education and collaboration". The AUQA report also commended the University of Newcastle on "the support given to Indigenous students by Wollotuka including its activities on the Ourimbah Campus as well as on the number of successful completions of Indigenous students".

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 ISP 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.

In 2008, with the strong support of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations) the Wollotuka Support Unit was redesigned to reflect the future directions of Indigenous education at the University and national directions. Three portfolios have been established which focus on key areas for achieving successful outcomes:

- Community Engagement
- Indigenous Support and Development
- Employment, Collaboration and Success

Each of the portfolios is linked with outcomes identified in the Institutional Strategic Plan 'Building Distinction' 2007-2011.

#### *Community Engagement*

The Community Engagement portfolio's primary role is to create awareness and connection to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in relation to Indigenous education at the University. A key goal for this portfolio is to further enhance the positive reputation of Wollotuka and the University and secondly to encourage Indigenous students to consider higher education. Community Engagement works with all stakeholders of the University that are not students.

#### *Indigenous Support and Development*

The Indigenous Support and Development portfolio's responsibility is student development and academic progression. A key goal for this portfolio is to increase the participation and retention of Indigenous students at the University.

#### *Employment, Collaboration and Success*

The Employment, Collaboration and Success portfolio is responsible for the Indigenous Employment Strategy with a key goal to attract additional Indigenous staff to the University and increase retention of Indigenous staff at the University. Other responsibilities of this portfolio include developing the graduate attributes of Indigenous students, encouraging and supporting postgraduate (research) options and developing close relationships with industry, alumni and other key stakeholders.

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

#### *Successes*

Wollotuka - Gibalee Centre at the Ourimbah Campus was relocated in 2008 locating the Centre in the most central and accessible place on campus. Since the relocation, the Gibalee Centre has been able to expand its services and programs, including successfully running comprehensive Cultural Competency workshops for both University and TAFE staff and students on campus. Recognition of achievements in relation to Indigenous education was a feature of the AUQA review report 2008. AUQA commended the University on "the support given to Indigenous students by Wollotuka" and included its activities on the Ourimbah Campus as well as on the number of successful completions of Indigenous students". AUQA also affirmed the University for its "desire to expand the Indigenisation of curricula".

#### *Constraints*

There is an ongoing challenge in attracting appropriately qualified Indigenous staff, particularly academic. Continued efforts are required to targeting students and providing an environment that is conducive to further development building "a grow your own" approach. The second challenge lies in providing young Indigenous people with a sense of entitlement in relation to higher education. There are still a large number of Indigenous students who lack the confidence to pursue higher education. The Pathways project hopes to overcome this challenge.

#### *Plans for the future*

In 2008 a proposal was developed to restructure the provision of Indigenous education and support at the University. The new framework will provide strong leadership, enhanced inclusiveness of Indigenous education across the whole University.

External reviews were completed for the Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies and the Yapug Enabling program. 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 Indigenous community, industry, the broader academic community and specialist roles. Dr Bob Morgan is the current chair of the committee. 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. There is also currently an Indigenous staff member represented on University Council.

The Head of School of Aboriginal Studies, Indigenous Support Program Co-ordinator and Associate Professor in Indigenous Health actively participate in the strategic planning process of the University. The Head of School and other staff have membership on Faculty Boards and associated committees. The Head of School, Wollotuka continued his appointment on the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and on the AIATSIS Board, NSW History Council and ANU Centre for Indigenous History Advisory Council in 2008. The Head of School is also on the NSW Fulbright Selection Committee. Associate Professor Indigenous Health was the Vice-President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association; in 2009 he will progress to the role of President. Indigenous Support Program Co-ordinator continues as Chairperson of the NSW/ACT Higher Education Network Aboriginal Corporation (HENAC) and also sits on the University of Sydney Yoorang Goorang Advisory Board.

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 in order to broaden and enhance their exposure to management and planning. Two staff members from the University of Newcastle also attended the IHEAC conference in Canberra.

### ***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.*

A priority of the University's ISP is to support Indigenous Australians in gaining access to employment. The provision of career development opportunities is also a goal of the Indigenous Collaboration element of the ISP. 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).

In 2008 the University Indigenous staff cohort represents 2.5% of the total staff cohort. Recruitment and enhancing retention is an ongoing process to achieve a target of 3% Indigenous staff by the end of 2011.

In 2007 the Indigenous Employment Strategy was refocussed to complement the Indigenous Collaboration Implementation Plan 2007- 2011. In 2008 the Strategy was further enhanced with a clear focus on ensuring that the University is a safe and productive place for Indigenous staff to work and develop professionally and personally.

The Strategy is focussing on five key areas:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Capacity Strengthening
- Staff Collaboration
- Cultural Competency

Staff collaboration is an integral role for the future of Indigenous employment at the University. Ensuring staff are offered peer support, and opportunities for personal and professional development will ensure successful appointments and progressive pathways for Indigenous staff at the University.

The Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator position was relocated from Human Resources to Wollotuka at the end of 2008. Although the position will maintain a close connection with both Human Resources and Equity and Diversity, Wollotuka will provide a structured, culturally strengthening and supportive environment for the success of Indigenous employment at the University. In the revised structure the staff member with operational responsibility for the Indigenous employment is the leader of the Employment, Collaboration and Success Portfolio. There will be significant collaboration within the team responsible for Indigenous Alumni and Student Success and Collaboration, both of which complement the outcomes of the Employment Strategy.

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

The Strategic Plan outlines a commitment to “encourage Indigenous peoples to aspire to complete higher education degrees by creating additional pathways”, in close communication with Indigenous communities. To generate outcomes in relation to this commitment the Schools to University Pathways Program has been implemented to introduce the professional and personal benefits of tertiary education to Indigenous students. The Discipline of Indigenous Health was also redeveloped to extend on our already strong reputation in the fields of Medicine and Health.

*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 2008, 60 commencing Indigenous undergraduate students were admitted through this scheme, 13 more than 2007. A workshop was provided to all panel members to ensure members were fully informed of policies and processes and to maintain consistency across all interviews.
- Yapug Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enabling program was reviewed in 2008 as a part of the University’s academic review process resulting in 27

recommendations. In response to these recommendations a plan is being created to guide implementation of relevant strategies.

- A two week intensive Indigenous medical preparation program was run as part of the pre-orientation program in 2008. 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 success of the program in 2007 resulted in students from both University campuses maintaining contact and providing peer support to each other.
- The Community Engagement Portfolio was introduced in 2008. This position is responsible for the promotion and attraction of Indigenous students to higher education and for ensuring a close connection and good communication is maintained with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. The Portfolio is inclusive of a Community Engagement Officer, School Liaison/Prospective Student Advisor and a number of casual Community Engagement Portfolio Assistants.
- The Project Officer (recruitment) position was reviewed and a new position, 'Indigenous School Liaison/Prospective Student Advisor' was developed.
- The number of Indigenous students studying in Port Macquarie continues to increase.
- 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 a flexibly delivered coursework Masters in Aboriginal Studies.
- The Schools to University Pathways project was implemented in 2008. The participation of high school students has increased substantially in the past 12 months, and the quality of the program is continually evaluated through consultation with participants, schools and communities. Five students received Principals Recommendation Scholarships from Central Coast and Newcastle High Schools as part of this program.

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

A comprehensive range of support is provided to Indigenous students at the University of Newcastle 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:*

- An Indigenous Support and Development Portfolio was introduced in 2008. This Portfolio is responsible for providing a high level of support and development programs and initiatives to enhance the progression and academic journey of Indigenous students at the University. The programs are inclusive of the Intensive Student Support Program, Indigenous Counselling, Cultural program, Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme and the new position of Retention and Transition Officer responsible for further academic assistance particularly in relation to first year transition and ongoing retention.
- An Indigenous Scholarship Strategy was developed which focuses primarily on the attraction of Scholarships, and the promotion, allocation and recognition of students and donors.
- The Vice-Chancellor committed to contributing to the financial support and successful journey of Indigenous students by allocating \$50,000 per year to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship Fund and up to a further \$40,000 per year matching any externally generated Indigenous Scholarship funds over a four year period. In 2008 approximately \$60,000 of externally generated monies was contributed to this fund.

- The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme attracted 89 students in 2008; this is an increase from previous years due to the introduction of the Intensive Student Support Program in 2007. The ITAS co-ordinator continues to Chair the NSW/ACT ITAS collective, a sub-committee of the NSW/ACT Higher Education Network Aboriginal Corporation which meets every three months.
- The Gibalee Centre at Ourimbah Campus continues to ensure the growing numbers of Indigenous students at the Central Coast are strongly supported in their academic journey and assists 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).
- Ongoing support provided to the Indigenous Student Collective in providing social, emotional and cultural programs and support to students.
- Wollotuka supported 5 Medicine students and 1 staff member to attend the 2008 Australian Indigenous Doctors Association symposium in Hobart.

**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 enhanced individual learning and personal support to Indigenous students is also involving the Indigenous community more in supporting the families of students. Activities in 2008 include:

- An Associate Professor was appointed as Head of Discipline of Indigenous Health to ensure the continued success of Indigenous students in the Medicine and Health disciplines.
- The Indigenous Employment, Collaboration and Success Portfolio was developed. This portfolio is responsible for the Indigenous Employment Strategy but is also inclusive of the Resource Centre, Indigenous Alumni and Success and Collaboration.
- The Indigenous Alumni Officer is a new position responsible for maintaining a connection with our Indigenous graduates; for the provision of networking, mentoring, and professional development opportunities; for celebrating success; and for having a strong, collaborative working relationship with the University Alumni Office.
- The Success and Collaboration Officer is also a new position responsible for enhancing professional development opportunities for Indigenous students. The major programs that have been developed include Elders in Residence program and the Graduate Attributes program. The Graduate Attributes program works with primarily with final year students on networking with Alumni or at discipline related conferences to develop leadership skills, professional skills and to raise awareness of postgraduate options.
- Graduation ceremonies continue to be held for Indigenous students to recognise achievements.
- Collaborative Pathways Awards Ceremony on the Central Coast incorporating DET, TAFE, AECG, Central Coast Community College, NAISDA, Youth Connections and the University. The Pathways Awards night was also held in Newcastle in 2008 as a collaborative with the University, TAFE, DET, AECG and Yarnteem.
- Close communication with Faculties and Schools is an ongoing feature of initiatives. This relationship between Wollotuka and Faculties has been strengthened through the designation of Academic Indigenous Liaison Officers within the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and the School of Nursing.
- The Wollotuka Indigenous Resource Centre was reviewed in 2008 as the Centre was becoming too large to maintain a quality service to both Indigenous and non Indigenous students with the limited resources available. It was anticipated that the usage would continue to increase with the compulsory Aboriginal Studies course

soon to be introduced into the new Master of Education and the Indigenous Inclusive Curriculum initiative across all disciplines of the University. The changes to the way the collection is managed will increase access for larger numbers of students.

- The majority of the undergraduate Indigenous resources have been moved to the “Indigenous Collection” in one of the University’s main libraries. This has resulted in extended access to the collection due to longer opening hours. Advice and guidance on the collection continues to be provided by the Wollotuka Research Centre Co-ordinator. The Wollotuka Resource Centre has become non-borrowing and holds rare and specialised Indigenous resources primarily for research.

**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. A recent Professorial appointment to the position of Academic Co-ordinator for the Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies and Yapug Enabling program will enhance curriculum development and overall coordination of these two important programs.

*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.
- Indigenous perspectives are included in Law, Social Work and Environmental Science programs.
- A working party has been established in response to the AUQA review to continue to expand the Indigenisation of curricula across all disciplines of the University.
- Responses to the recommendations of the Yapug Enabling program and Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies reviews are being developed. A Professor position has been employed to be responsible for the outcomes of the review and undertake the academic co-ordination of the two programs.

*Cultural awareness*

- A University Reconciliation Statement has been developed and will be launched in 2009. Discussions have taken place with Reconciliation Australia in regards to the further development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) that will complement the Statement.
- A Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice Toolkit (CDIP) is available on the University website. 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.

### Research

The implementation plan for the Kulumun (Coolamon) Indigenous journal which will publish across an international field was developed in 2008 and will be launched in 2009. It is devoted to the publication of information in relation to research findings, book reviews and Indigenous methodological epistemologies. This peer reviewed journal seeks to publish works which focus on a range of disciplines, including art, languages, history, anthropology, social justice, health and education. A multi disciplinary approach will provide Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics with an opportunity to disseminate information and knowledge addressing a wide range of issues pertinent to improving relationships and outcomes for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Most importantly this journal will allow input from Indigenous people who may not be from academic backgrounds, but who may have something valuable to contribute to the field of reconciliation. The journal is aimed at developing local, national and international Indigenous academics and scholars, but is not restricted.

## PART 3: EXPENDITURE OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAMME GRANT

| Indigenous Higher Education - Income and Expenditure Statement - 2008 |   |                  |
|---|---|------------------|
| <b>Indigenous Higher Education Income 2008</b>                        |   | <b>\$</b>        |
| 1   | ISP 2008 Grant only   | 1,694,000        |
| 2   | Unspent 2007 ISP Funds, carried over to 2008 - as reported in your providers 2008 audited annual financial statements                                       | 1,071,129        |
| 3   | <b>TOTAL ISP Income for 2008</b>  | <b>2,765,129</b> |
| 4   | Other funds provided to Indigenous higher education (non ISP funds, including other Commonwealth grants, state government grants, privately sourced funds). | 3,426,765        |
| 5   | <b>Total Indigenous Higher Education Income for 2008</b>  | <b>6,191,894</b> |
| <b>Indigenous Higher Education Expenditure 2008</b>                   |   |                  |
| 6   | <b>Expenditure of Indigenous Support Program (ISP) 2008 grant only</b>  |                  |
| 6a  | Operating costs, including salaries for Indigenous support services   | 914,242          |
| 6b  | Capital Items   | 0                |
| 6c  | Higher education provider overheads   | 0                |
| 6d  | Other Indigenous Support Program Expenditure  | 0                |
| 7   | <b>Expenditure of other non-ISP funds committed to Indigenous Higher Education in 2008</b>  | <b>2,902,717</b> |
| 8   | <b>Total Indigenous Higher Education Expenditure for 2008</b>   | <b>3,816,959</b> |
| <b>Unspent Funds as at 31 December 2008</b>                           |   |                  |
| 9   | ISP Funds   | 1,850,887        |

#### **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/unit/equity-diversity/plans-reports.html>

*Building Distinction* Institutional Strategic Plan 2007-2011

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/strategicplanning/index.html>