

ISSP 2025 Performance Report

Organisation	Southern Cross University		
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1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2. Enrolments (Access)

Recruitment

In 2025, Southern Cross University continued to build on previous years recruitment and engagement activities by maintaining a strong presence across our 3 campus footprints in building and creating stronger connections to schools, prospective indigenous students, communities and organisations. Through coordinated strategies the university focused on meaningful interactions, engagements, events and relationships to both disseminate information and support access, pathways and options into higher education through internal and outbound activities.

Engagement

Major activities and engagements for 2025 included:

Outbound

Over 145 schools across the footprint were engaged through a number of SCU targeted events. Events included:

Showcase – A joint university program participated by 7 different universities to showcase, promote and break down the myths, barriers and experiences of current students and staff in university life, pathways, course options, HECS, Scholarships, study flexibility and more. Over 300 Indigenous students engaged.

SCU attended/organised 5 major Career Expos delivered across the Mid and Lower North Coast, Northern Rivers, Tweed, Gold Coast and Southern Queensland regions. These events provided current school students the opportunity to engage in career pathways and sector exposure. Over 500 Indigenous students engaged.

Continued partnerships with select schools (Evans River HS, South Grafton HS, Maclean HS, Palm Beach Currumbin State HS, Ballina HS, Lismore 3 Rivers HS) where SCU have developed, delivered and maintained culturally appropriate support, traditional and non traditional pathways opportunities, Capacity building, Scholarships, cultural strengths and empowerment of young Indigenous students, with the focus on higher education as an achievable and accessible post school career pathway. These schools all have high percentages of Indigenous students

Internal

Internal recruitment and engagement activities were successfully delivered in similar fashion to previous years. Interactive, hands-on events and programs were delivered to showcase SCU to prospective students where the Indigenous Australian Student Services (IASS) unit and Gnibi Indigenous Faculty presented and delivered information sessions centred around Indigenous Knowledges, respectful conversations and practices.

These events included Taster Day – Year 10 targeted students and Master Class – Year 11 and 12 targeted students.

Open Days, Campus tours and School visits consisted of large groups of Indigenous students and community opportunities to gain first hand experiences and insights into university life. IASS and Gnibi hosted over 15 different local schools in 2025 on each of our 3 campuses where Indigenous support, access, pathways and course options were delivered.

Similar information and promotion were delivered in other key events in maintaining relationships with schools through the Schools Update Day for school principals and career advisors as well as Indigenous families through our Parent/Student evening information sessions held through the year.

A number of outreach and internal activities were organised and delivered in 2025 to acknowledge and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage, history and stories.

Southern Cross Universities Indigenous Events Coordinating Committee (SQUIECC) delivered key campus workshops, events, performances and programs centred around National and local events. These included:

Our 2025 NAIDOC celebrations were the largest for quite a number of years. Renowned Indigenous singer, songwriter and artist Troy Cassar-Daley headlined the event across our 3 campuses with well over 1000 people celebrating. NAIDOC again showcased the many talented Indigenous musicians, cultural performers, artists, weavers, cultural workshops, stalls, and community members, celebrating and sharing the vibrancy and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, identity, and heritage with students, staff and the wider community.

SCU Programs that tied into these events included links and information to the National Anniversary of the Apology.

Closing the Gap – Freedom Legacy Ride 60 years on – Guest Speaker Dianne Creighton shared her stories and videos on how the Freedom Ride impacted her community and history.

National Sorry Day – Yarning circles where our Elders and community joined together to share stories, listen and learn from the strength of past Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as survivors of the Stolen Generation.

National Reconciliation Week – Bridging Now to Next.

And Indigenous Literacy week was a celebration of indigenous writers, authors, storytellers, indigenous cultures and achievements.

Community partnerships with local businesses, sporting groups and community organisations continued in 2025 where SCU engaged with mutually aim to promote, support and foster continuing relationships with our Indigenous communities. Partnerships included sponsorships, joint ventures and access and participation in university and community programs.

In 2025 IASS continued to deliver and administrate the Testing and Assessment (T&A) Alternate entry pathway for Indigenous student to gain entry to courses at SCU. The aim of T&A allows Indigenous students who have not met the entry requirements from their application to be invited to sit an academic assessment to be then determined the best options for entry.

These options include:

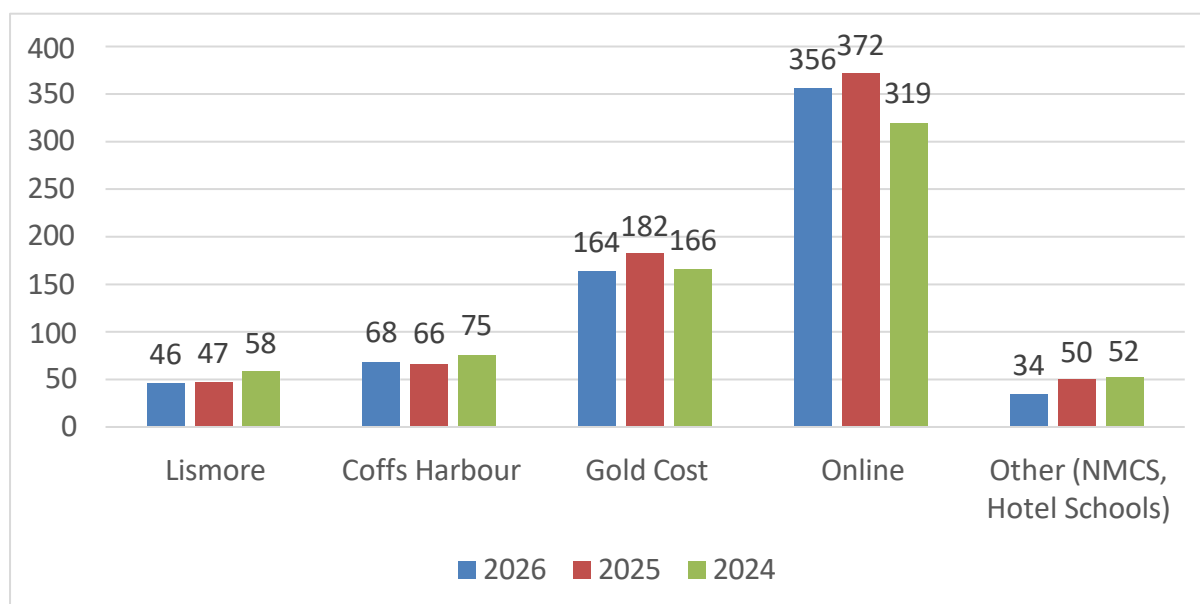
- Direct offer into their chosen undergraduate course
- Offer into a lesser ranked course
- Offer into a Diploma or Certificate entry course
- Offer into the Preparing for Success Program (PSP)

36 Indigenous students successfully undertook T&A, with all students successful in gaining entry through the options mentioned above. Overall SCU's 2025 engagement across the sector has resulted in a positive growth trend of Indigenous students choosing to study at **SCU**. **The below table** highlights the increased Indigenous student intake from 2024 to 2025 with current patterns trending further to exceed 2025 numbers in 2026

2026 YTD = 668

2025 = 716

2024 = 670



What new strategies, activities and programs has the university implemented to support and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2025? What have been the outcomes or success?

In 2025 IASS, Gnibi and SCU's Future Students Teams successfully delivered a Schools and Culture Day. The program showcased the role and function of Indigenous Knowledges, and First Nation ways of knowing, being and doing, across the range of services, industries and future options. The program featured Gnibi led design challenges aimed at empowering young Indigenous people to recognise their potential to apply Indigenous Knowledge to strengthen their future. Over 10 local schools with 80 Indigenous students participated. Local Indigenous caterers were employed to support the event. The success of this program in late 2025 saw a number of positive outcomes. Cohorts of students who attended this session directly applied and commenced study with SCU in 2026. Schools who participated have broadened our engagement into their schools where Indigenous Knowledges has been used as the basis of embedding culturally appropriate content into school curriculum, upskilling Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff into delivering culturally appropriate practices and support of Indigenous students.

In 2025 IASS forged a new partnership with one of the largest schools in Tweed/Gold Coast region, Palm Beach Currumbin State School. The partnership focuses on fostering relationships and engagement touch points with the school's Indigenous students and staff to promote SCU courses, pathways and Indigenous student support, underpinned by 4 annual scholarships to progress successful student transition post high school career pathways into higher education.

Table 1 ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2025 payments¹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	7000	4	5000	1	1000	2	13000	7
Undergraduate ⁴	257000	103	403000	74	170500	246	830,500	314
Post-graduate ⁵	11500	6	46000	10	10000	16	67500	24
Other	0	0			0	0	0	0
Total	275500	113	454,000	85	181,500	264	911000	344

3. Progression (outcomes)

Tutorial support

IASS continued to deliver an effective indigenous tutoring service (ITAS) in 2025, supporting 155 Indigenous students studying undergraduate, postgraduate and enabling courses. A total of 7,197 hours of tutoring support was delivered (refer to Table 2a). IASS maintained a casual tutor register with over 150 active and qualified tutors available to tutor across all disciplines at SCU. IASS continue to review and adapt the tutoring program to align with the University's six-week term Southern Cross Model. Indigenous students engaged in tutorial support were measured to have achieved higher success rates and progression than students not engaged in support.

Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2025

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ⁷	Total hours of assistance ⁸	Expenditure ⁹ (\$)
Enabling	45		1820	\$109,539
Undergraduate	104	416	5247	\$182,815
Post-graduate	6	20	130	\$6,662
Other				
Total	155	456	7197	\$299,016

What embedded ISSP strategies, activities and programs has the university implemented to support students to complete units?

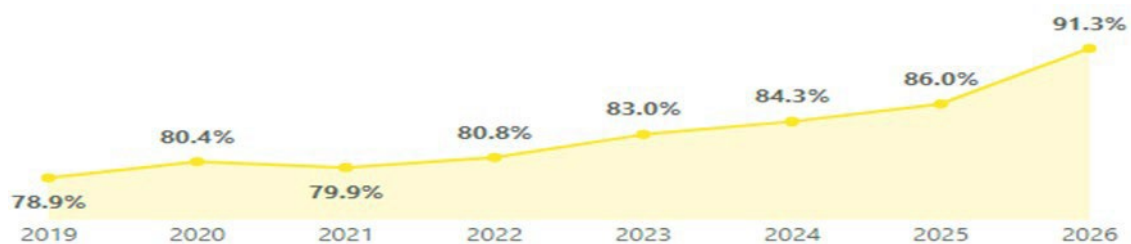
IASS created a new role in 2024, Student Success Management position, which continued in 2025. The role's focus is to help facilitate student success. This position engages with Indigenous students identified as at risk of disengaging from their learning and the institution, failing units and or progression, referring and connecting them to appropriate SCU services. The role contributes to an

environment in which the student success is maximised by assessing students at risk status, intervening with strategies and support that connects students and monitors completion and progression outcomes.

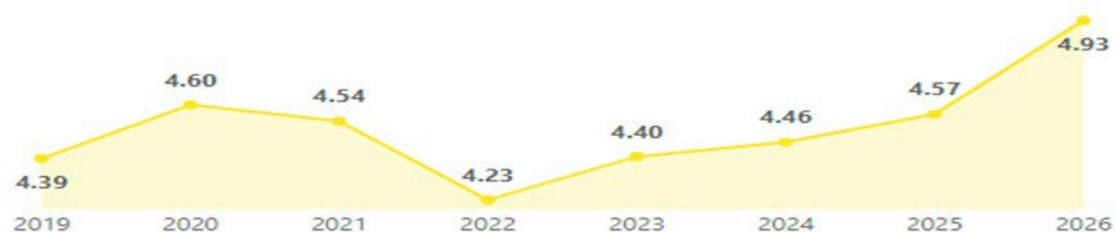
Also in 2025 IASS forged stronger collegial partnerships with First Year Advisors (FYA) within the Study Well Unit. FYA's have a similar role to the abovementioned Student Success Management role but works to support both Indigenous and non indigenous students in their first year of study. This partnership has increased the advocacy, referral and early intervention of Indigenous students through our established systems to share and report direct issues, student flags and monitoring which has directly improved our student success rates.

These strategies have contributed to the universities on going aims to raise the completion and success rates of Indigenous SCU students, with 2025 figures reflecting positive upward trends in success and GPA whilst conversely showing improved lower rates of Absent Fails and Early Withdrawn outcomes.

Success Rate



GPA



Absent Fails rates



Early Withdrawn



4. Completions (outcomes)

Throughout 2025, Indigenous Australian Student Services (IASS) continued to provide a comprehensive range of academic, financial, social, and emotional support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Enabling, Undergraduate, and Postgraduate courses, including the Preparing for Success Program (PSP – a fee-free enabling program) aimed at enhancing completion rates and progression. A dedicated team of Indigenous Student Management Officers supported students across the Lismore, Gold Coast, and Coffs Harbour campuses, as well as online. ITAS and PSP Support Officers offered academic assistance, including navigation, course content, essay interpretation, assignment structure, research skills, referencing, tutorial presentations, time management, moral support, and advocacy.

Engagements and touchpoints included weekly Zoom sessions, phone calls and pre orientation online information sessions, and daily access to support services through call campaigns, emails, Social Media, Blackboard sites, and monthly newsletters.

Weekend and out of hours support sessions were also provided. IASS collaborated with key university student support areas, including access and inclusion (disability and medical support), financial support, on-campus and external accommodation, SCU Health Clinic and counselling and crisis support.

Key IASS activities to support student progression included further development of existing short self-help online videos targeting specific study areas and support, such as navigation of essential student learning sites, academic writing skills, assignment structure, and referencing.

Failed Grade review, support and follow up – contacting students who have received failed grades each term to firstly identify where fails have occurred, provide strategies and support to increase future progression and follow up regularly to ensure the student is on track.

Withdrawn campaigns involved contacting and supporting Indigenous students who had withdrawn from studies in the previous 12 months, understanding their reasons, and structuring support to facilitate their return and progression.

Social and study spaces for indigenous students were maintained across all three primary university campuses, offering 24/7 access to ensure continuity and reliable study environments, thereby reducing withdrawals or deferments due to lack of access to important resources including internet, computer, wifi and printing services.

* Graduate Completions

2025 saw SCU's Indigenous student graduation number climb to record heights.

113 Indigenous Student Graduated in 2025, the highest ever at SCU. A further breakdown of those number reflected by location:

- Gold Coast – 60 (Highest ever Indigenous graduating cohort)
- Sydney – 8
- Coffs Harbour – 14
- Melbourne – 14
- Lismore – 17

5. Regional and remote students

Indigenous Australian Student Services continued to provision essential support and access for current regional and remote students. IASS participated in over 60 events and engagements across wider locations, focusing on schools and community outreach activities. IASS established new connections and presence in local Aboriginal communities and schools in the Western NSW, Lower Far North Coast of NSW, Lower and South West QLD regions, promoting information, support, pathways, and partnerships through the aforementioned Showcase events, regional and rural Career Markets, Expos and Croc Fests.

IASS ongoing internal support and touchpoints for remote students included phone call campaigns and Zoom sessions, pre-orientation online information sessions, on-call access to support services, regular correspondence, and updates on key teaching and study schedules. These were facilitated through call campaigns, emails, social media, Blackboard sites and targeted Indigenous student messaging through our CRM system.

Remote students received starter packs containing information and tools to support online studies. IASS collaborated with the University's key student support areas, including equity and inclusion (disability and medical support), financial support, on-campus and external accommodation, SCU Health Clinic, and counselling and crisis support, to identify at-risk students, provide strategies and options, and plan structured approaches to ensure progression and success.

Table 4 ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2024 Payments	\$269,332	112	\$408,000	78	\$330,000	277	\$579,500	196
B. 2025 Offers ¹¹	\$264,000	66	\$408,000	51	\$112,500	163	\$784,500	279
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)	98%	59%	100%	65%	34%	59%	135%	82%
2025 Payments	\$161,500	64	\$269,000	51	\$109,000	158	\$539,500	199

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1. 6.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

The University's Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples remains committed to delivering dynamic and innovative courses, providing professional career pathways, and engaging in scholarship and research relevant to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the discipline of Indigenous Knowledge and prepares graduates to work within Indigenous communities, building capacity for social, cultural and economic development and with a focus on education, health and wellbeing and employment opportunities.

The strategic focus areas continue to be:

- increasing the number of appropriately academically prepared Indigenous students enrolling in, progressing in and completing courses leading to higher education awards
- facilitating, monitoring and improving the inclusion of indigenous knowledge throughout the university as appropriate
- opportunities for students and employees that promote knowledge and understanding of indigenous cultures, traditions and histories and the diversity of circumstances of indigenous people in Australia.

6.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

Southern Cross University is committed to:

- Creating quality work and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,
- Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are understood and
- valued at Southern Cross University, and
- Educating our employees to be culturally competent in this understanding.

The University is on the traditional lands of the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yugambeh people. The University deeply values its connections to these communities and the ongoing support and advice of elders from these lands and the contribution of indigenous members of staff and students to the vibrancy and diversity of the University community as a whole.

Through our long-term commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment, Southern Cross University has one of the highest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce representation rates amongst Australian universities (3% as at 31 December 2025). The University in place an Indigenous Employment Strategy as well as an Indigenous Education Statement which set out our deeply held commitment to enabling and progressing the success of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. Southern Cross University's senior indigenous academic resigned toward the end of 2025. The University intends to commence recruitment for his successor in the near future.

6.3. Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Southern Cross University's Gnibi Elders Council – comprising over 25 members of Elders, senior indigenous community representatives and Gnibi/IASS staff from across the University's campus footprint from the lands of the Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung and Yugambeh people – also played a pivotal role in furthering the University's engagement activities. In addition to undertaking this important engagement and outreach role, during 2025 the Elders Council met face-to-face and online to provide advice and recommendations on matters relevant to Indigenous issues that involved and impacted Indigenous students, staff and Indigenous communities. In 2025 SCU undertook activities to record Elders stories to share, preserve and honour our Elders and to serve as an inspiration and motivation for our current and future students to succeed and lead future generations.

6.3.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Southern Cross University's ISSP Committee operates under a charter from the University, and has the responsibility and authority for advising, recommending and monitoring the use of ISSP grant funding. Pursuant to the charter, the majority of the Committee's members are indigenous, including its chair. The committee meets regularly, approximately every 6 weeks.

Prof. Stuart Barlo Dean of Gnibi College and chair of the ISSP Committee

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2025. The figures for students should include the actual number (head count, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (head count and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2025 should be included in this table. For multi-year scholarship agreements, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded in the performance reporting for the relevant future grant year.

² These figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.

³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁶ Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

⁷ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

⁸ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁹ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

¹⁰ Only record amounts which required payment during the 2025 calendar year. For multi-year scholarship offers, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded against the reporting for the relevant future grant year. Note the data in this table is a subset of the scholarship data provided in Table 1.

¹¹ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2025 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2025 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2024 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

¹² This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.