

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

EDUCATION STRATEGY

2017-2020





**Southern Cross
University**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2017-2020

At Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples we acknowledge and pay respect to Aboriginal Elders both past and present of the Bundjalung Nation on which Gnibi is located, remembering that under the concrete and steel of the buildings, the land has and always will be Bundjalung Land.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Australian Government, instigated the *Indigenous Student Success (Higher Education) Programme* (ISSP)¹ from 1 January 2017. This programme is now the major funding source for higher education providers to prioritise progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and replaces the *Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarships Program*, tutorial assistance offered under the *Indigenous Advancement Strategy* and the *Indigenous Support Program*. The changes to this funding arrangement have necessitated changes and the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines* add explanation to the ISSP, including the requirements for eligibility, funding formulae, reporting and governance.

To be eligible for an ISSP grant, there must be an Equivalent Full-time Student Load of at least five Indigenous students, access to other funding to assist Indigenous students, an Indigenous Governance Mechanism, an Indigenous Employment Strategy and an Indigenous Education Strategy. Southern Cross University had the Indigenous Workforce Strategy 2012-2015 and has an Indigenous Governance Mechanism Charter. Further conditions for the eligibility criteria are listed on the following page.

¹ Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*, www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017L00036/Download

INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

- an appropriately qualified senior academic employee ... or an appropriately qualified senior executive employee ... who is an Indigenous person; or a committee constituted by a majority of Indigenous persons, each of whom has skills and experience relevant to the role
- have responsibility for advising on, reviewing, making recommendations about, and monitoring the use of ISSP grants
- have authority within the governance structure of the provider
- have a charter that outlines:
 - the criteria for appointment
 - the roles and responsibilities of the employees or the committee and
 - the decision-making processes of the Mechanism
- prioritise increasing the number of Indigenous students enrolling in, progressing in and completing courses leading to higher education awards
- facilitate, monitor and improve upon the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in curricula, graduate attributes and teaching practices
- include activities for students and employees of the provider that promote cultural competency in Indigenous cultures, traditions and histories and the diversity of circumstances of Indigenous people in Australia

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY 2016-2020

Available for PDF download at
www.scu.edu.au/reconciliationactionplan

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION STRATEGY 2017-2020

- a strategy for improving the success of Indigenous persons in higher education as well as improving the presence of culture and the cultural competency of coursework, students and employees
- include key performance indicators

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

THE MEMBERS OF THIS SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY INDIGENOUS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH STRATEGY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MET FROM MARCH TO AUGUST 2017:

Norm Sheehan	Chair, Indigenous Education and Research Executive Committee Director, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Aunty Bertha Kapeen	Bundjalung Elder
Aunty Hazel Rhodes	Bundjalung Elder
Aunty Irene Harrington	Bundjalung Elder
Airdre Grant	Academic, Centre for Teaching & Learning
Anthony Olive	Team Leader, Indigenous Australian Student Services (IASS)
Bill Boyd	Professor, School of Environmental Science & Engineering; Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee
Cameron Johnson	Manager, Workplace Relations, Human Resources
Cheryl Forrester	Student Advisor, Student Administration Services
Deborah Donoghue	Academic, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Gerald Hoskins	Indigenous Student; Co-founder of Baylin's Gift
Glen Rhodes	Language & Culture Nest Teacher, Goonellabah Public School
Kylie Day	Indigenous post graduate student; Teacher, Richmond River High School
Laurence Holzhauser	Indigenous undergraduate student; The Indigenous Multicultural Exchange
Nia Emmanouil	Academic, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Nicole Cooper	Project Officer, Office of the Vice Chancellor
Paul Robinson	Senior Manager, Student Management – Student Administration Services
Rachel Lynwood	Deputy Director, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Robert Smith	Academic, School of Education
Rod Williams	Academic, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Simon Sutton	Indigenous undergraduate student; The Indigenous Multicultural Exchange
Sophie Kemm	Executive Officer, Office of the Vice Chancellor
Stuart Barlo	Course Coordinator, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
Susan Nancarrow	Chair of Academic Board; Professor, School of Health & Human Services
Virginia Ingham	Administrative Officer, Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples

GNIBI ELDERS PRINCIPLES

THE BUNDJALUNG ELDERS WHO ADVISE GNIBI COLLEGE AT SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY, SHARED THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES IN 2014.

1. Indigenous Knowledge is relevant, ethical, intelligent, effective and a useful way of knowing.
2. Indigenous peoples are active, able and worthy peoples.
3. The truth about our histories and value of Indigenous ways are determined by us, we carry this knowledge.
4. Elders hold our Aboriginal spirituality and our culture close. We choose what is open and shared and what will be closed. Aboriginal spirituality is the basis for life, Indigenous education and cultural competency, it infuses everything.
5. Our knowledge is relational. Our principles are the basis for Southern Cross University to establish and sustain an active, informed and respectful relationship with Indigenous Elders who will give considered collective input. The continuance of this relationship through the Elders group is essential.
6. Culture is sacred to us. We are and own this living culture. We do not need a 'book'. We share with you so that you can learn how to listen and hear what we say.
7. Identity is based upon things [inside] beneath the surface. Empowered, individual, affirmed identity is the basis of positive, productive, healthy and non-destructive lives – opportunities to engage and build knowledge builds strong mob through [inside] learning.*
8. Learning everyday with each other has to be informed and sustained by a politic of open, positive and ethical interactions.
9. We as Elders have presented these things all our lives without being heard – we are often listened to but our message is not heard nor heeded. We take this opportunity to speak in the understanding that you will listen in the right way, hear us and learn.

* [...] denotes culturally significant understandings in English words.

FOREWORD

The Indigenous Education Strategy should be read in conjunction with

- the guiding principles of Southern Cross University:
 - Strategic Plan 2016-2020¹
 - Principles in Action
 - Indigenous Employment Strategy 2016-2020²
 - Reconciliation Action Plan
 - Gnibi Elders Principles
 - Gnibi Research Principles
 - Gnibi Principles
- the guiding principles of the Universities Australia National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities.³

INTRODUCTION

Southern Cross University acknowledges the vast contribution made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the university, particularly Bundjalung Elder Aunty Bertha Kapeen who, over many years and throughout her last months, remained committed to the development of this strategy. Southern Cross University acknowledges that we are situated on the ancestral lands of the Bundjalung, Gumbaynggirr and Yugambeh Nations, and branch campuses are on Eora and Woiworung lands. We respect and honour the spirits of these lands, the Elders and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for their resilience, inherent diversity and their generosity in sharing their understandings with us. We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their representation of their respective clans.

Southern Cross University acknowledges Australia's colonial history of dispossession, exclusion and the social disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We reaffirm our commitment to easing these disadvantages through education, research and community engagement. This Indigenous Education and Research Strategy will build upon our commitment to Reconciliation and the positive and productive relationships we have with Aboriginal Elders and communities in the Northern Rivers and beyond, for the benefit of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the Southern Cross University community and all the communities we work with into the future.

1 www.scu.edu.au/reconciliationactionplan

2 Ibid

3 www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/uni-participation-quality

RATIONALE

WE CHAMPION INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AS A PRODUCTIVE, VALUABLE AND COGENT DISCIPLINE THAT STRIVES TO INFORM A SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL, FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE FOR ALL.

Establishing Indigenous Knowledge as a discipline area in Southern Cross University situates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and academics to be able to affirm their Indigenous identity and identification with the world as integral to their educational experience, scholarship and success.

We are committed to this direction that ethically accepts diverse knowledges, thinking and thinkers, expects the best of individuals and allows positive self-identification as a means for sustaining generational movement, essential to the success of this Strategy.

Colonisation (invasion) marginalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through separation from traditional knowledge, dispossession, disease, and attempts to destroy self-concepts. The dominant paradigm to emerge from early settler society aided the pervasive ideologies that formed the racist, protectionist policies framed by the nation's Governments.

In 1977, Bundjalung people founded an Aboriginal Community Education Centre at the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education in Lismore. This became the Gungil Jindabah Centre (Gnibi) College of Indigenous Australian Peoples when Southern Cross University was established in 1994.

Education and research are vital elements in the life of a people and a culture. Along with expectations of success, they work to decolonise spaces, places and services and to reconcile historical and contemporary realities. While systematic empirical investigation, teaching and learning passes on essential knowledge, skills and attributes to the generations, it also positions a people to understand who they are in the world.

The revival and sharing of Indigenous Knowledges is essential in growing the deeper *Inside Learning* aspect of education, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can build positive self-images through exploration, study and expectancy.

We believe that this *Inside Learning* task is essential to our people's success in higher education, as well as to the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, and communities.

PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

These principles are informed by the principle-based approach of the Gnibi Elders to provide a framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement, success and wellbeing in all aspects of university policy, procedures and measures of service levels, participation and support.

TRUTH AND COURAGE

We base this strategy on genuine and meaningful relationships that truly value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community histories, cultural knowledge, scholarship, wisdom and expertise. We will engage Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Methodologies to demonstrate their effectiveness and build trust and respect between all people.

POSITIVE POTENTIAL

We hold positive and affirming expectations with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will do well, and we will collaborate with all staff and students to support them in ways that affirm and maintain their self-belief as a basis for their success.

EQUITY ACROSS DIFFERENCE

We regard cultural difference and social diversity as an enabling strength that brings life to education and supports the highest achievement for all our students.

REAL PARTNERSHIPS

We will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community, staff and students are engaged in decision-making, planning, delivery and evaluation of higher education teaching, learning and research, in all discipline areas across all schools and work units within Southern Cross University. Real partnerships and authentic relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community, academic and professional staff and student colleagues are the basis for successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' wellbeing and engagement in learning.

LOCAL APPROACHES

We show all respect and care for the Country where we teach, learn and conduct research. We use local Aboriginal languages, Welcomes to Country and culturally relevant approaches to maintain unique communities, because this respect generates relevant and positive educational experiences and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

CULTURAL SECURITY

This strategy will establish safe cultural and intellectual places where Inside Learning programs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's histories, values, languages and cultures inform teaching, learning and research. This cultural security is the basis for strong identity, cohesive community, and secure wellbeing for all students.

QUALITY

We believe that the best education goes beyond diverse information to also engage students within diverse ways for acting and interacting with information so that different ways of coming to knowledge are also understood. This deeper quality ensures that policies, practices, programs and partnerships are truly informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through this strategy Indigenous Pedagogies will become a significant dimension of learning and teaching quality assessment across the university.

INTEGRATION WITH SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES

The Indigenous Education Strategy is linked with current governance, human resource and quality assurance instruments, and integrated into the policies, procedures and review processes of the University. These actions enable a whole of University approach to ensuring equitable higher education access, participation, and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at rates commensurate or higher than those of all other Australians.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We will conduct annual evaluations and appropriate research in an effort to ensure that teaching, learning and research staff and systems are accountable, transparent and responsive to the changing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their communities.

CEREMONY AND CELEBRATION

Southern Cross University will celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student achievement through ceremonies that reflect both the culture of the university and the cultures of the participants. In this we will showcase the cultural strengths of Aboriginal communities, the life-affirming dimensions of Indigenous Knowledge and the successful and productive collaborations in teaching and learning across cultures and disciplines.

PURPOSE

1. POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGEMENTS

Promote positive relationships and successful engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to increase the number of our people participating in higher education as undergraduate and postgraduate students, graduates and as professional, academic and research workforces.

2. CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Increase Indigenous cultural competency education for non-Indigenous students, graduates and staff.

3. CULTURAL SECURITY

Build a culturally secure university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4. KEY DISCIPLINES

Maintain equitable diversity and cognitive justice in higher education by establishing Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Research Methodologies as key disciplines within the university.

5. RESPECTFUL CONSULTATION

Engage and consult respectfully, appropriately and productively with Aboriginal Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding all aspects of this strategy.

6. RECONCILIATION

Promote Reconciliation locally, nationally and internationally.

7. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by hosting community development and research initiatives, providing reports, and conducting meetings to transparently detail the opportunities and outcomes of this Strategy.

8. INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP

Develop entry (admission) and/or credit for prior learning pathways, courses and units of study to allow Aboriginal Elders and students, families and communities to engage effectively in intellectual and cultural pursuits. Develop scholarship and conduct research for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and communities.

9. CULTURAL SANCTUARY

Foster the co-design of cultural sanctuary programs with Aboriginal Elders and communities as a direct contribution to social and emotional wellbeing across our campus regions.

BENEFITS, OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

Enable a whole of University approach to ensure equitable higher education access, participation, and graduation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at rates commensurate or higher than those of all other Australians.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific entry and/ or credit pathways in partnership with industry and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that complement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment aspirations. 2. Employ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders to undertake application to admission and enrolment outbound call campaigns to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander application to admission and enrolment conversion rates. 3. Increase in the number of Indigenous Australian students enrolled (currently 4.4%) at Southern Cross University to 5% of total enrolments by 2020.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation/ retention.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve participation/ retention rates commensurate or higher than those of all other Australians. 2. Sustain growth rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student numbers at 50% greater than total domestic enrolment growth. 3. Improve rates of retention (currently 67%) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to 75% or more by 2020.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander completion / graduation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase completion rates (currently 47.8%) commensurate or higher than those of all other Australians.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student satisfaction survey results.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student satisfaction.

Establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision making, affirm Southern Cross University's values, enact our commitment to Reconciliation, and reaffirm relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Honour and respect the Aboriginal Nations on whose lands Southern Cross University campuses stand.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welcome to Country is performed by a suitably remunerated Aboriginal Elder to open all University public events, graduations, and formal celebrations. 2. Staff are trained and provided with appropriate resources to confidently undertake an Acknowledgement to Country to open all University meetings and teaching learning/ research experiences.
Cultural security for all staff and students by ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are a visible, valued and respected aspect of the social life, academic programs and culture of the university.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University signs are produced in dual languages (English and the language of the Aboriginal Nation on which the sign stands). 2. University staff routinely participate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competence programs 3. University staff are able to attend meetings, events, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural celebrations as part of their remunerated role and responsibilities, regardless of their work unit. 4. Core University business processes are cognisant of the extended kinship culture and ongoing traumas of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and make reasonable adjustments, for example through compassionate leave, special consideration and exams, course completion times etc.
Increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education decision making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish the Indigenous Education Strategy Committee chaired by the senior Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander academic, to administer the strategy and advise the Vice Chancellor on related governance matters. 2. Elders Advisory Committee meetings and Action item implementation. 3. Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on all relevant Southern Cross University committees, Advisory groups, and Working Parties: Ethics and Higher Degrees Research Committee, University Council.
Implement the University Reconciliation Action Plan and promote reconciliation as a living part of our campuses, communities, and international engagement.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in academic and professional positions; through correlation between this Strategy and University-wide governance and human resource instruments.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in academic and professional positions through enhanced recruitment, career development and retention practices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create culturally supportive employment pathways into and through Southern Cross University for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates and higher degree research candidates. 2. Increase professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, including specific skills development initiatives towards career development and promotion. 3. Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment to 4.2% of total employees by 2020.
Strengthen Indigenous cultural competency in non-Indigenous employees.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-Indigenous engagement in cultural competence professional development to 100% of total employees by 2020.

Facilitate development of culturally secure spaces and places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, informed by Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and their communities, to create unique campus identities, novel learning places and cultural celebrations that fit with Southern Cross University's vision of social justice and human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Cultural orientation.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Orientation and morning tea with the Elders per session by Session 2, 2019. 2. Implement the Aunties and Uncles program by Session 2, 2019.
Cultural secure spaces.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Co-design and construct culturally secure Aboriginal teaching, learning and research spaces on each Southern Cross University campus by 2020.
Increase the engagement of non-Indigenous students in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency and Indigenous Knowledge programs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-Indigenous engagement increased to 50% of total enrolments by 2020.

Map the University's path as a continuing leader for Indigenous Education, Inside Learning and Indigenous Research. Promote Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Research methodologies as essential components for academic and cultural enrichment of higher education, spanning all disciplines, so that all Australian and International students understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Support refinement of Graduate Attribute 7 to facilitate greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.	1. Establish Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous Praxis within teaching and learning contexts across all discipline areas of the University by 2020.
Further develop Indigenous Knowledge as a university discipline and affirm the equal place of Indigenous Research methodologies with western methods.	1. Establish an Indigenous Knowledge Research Institute by 2020.
Establish Indigenous research methodology pathways to higher degrees by research for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.	1. Establish pathways to uptake of Indigenous research methodologies.

Build robust relationships and connectivity to underpin positive and diverse higher education opportunities and outreach ventures with regional and remote communities, through Learning on Country programs.

Focus Area	Performance Indicator
Diversify University higher education opportunities.	1. Develop and implement the Indigenous Knowledge Learning on Country Graduate Diploma by Session 1, 2018.
Implement mutually beneficial venture partnerships with regional and remote communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and effectively manage partnership arrangements and collaborations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to diversify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching and learning experiences on Country. 2. Promote the Southern Cross Enterprise Lab and start-up Enterprise Hub to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander regional and remote communities.



