

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT 2009

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

SECTION 1 OBJECTIVES FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION

La Trobe University is committed to developing and growing educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The 2008 – 2012 Strategic Plan explicitly mentions Indigenous Australian people.

Core Priorities for 2008 – 2012

- **Produce High Quality Graduates**
 - *Promote Equity in Access in higher education*
 - Access to higher education is a key principle of equity and La Trobe will ensure that the targeted equity groups, particularly Indigenous Australian communities, will be assured fair access and the support needed to succeed. (page 11)

Core Functions

- **Teaching and Learning**
 - Improve access, participation, retention and progression of students, particularly those from DEEWR designated equity groups and ATSI students. (page 5)
- **Engaging with our Communities**
 - We will use our network of campuses to provide educational opportunities that are inclusive; encouraging participation of a diverse range of students, particularly Indigenous, low SES, rural and isolated students. (page 19)
 - The percentage of students on regional campuses, from DEEWR identified equity groups, has increased by 10%. (page 21)

The Director, Indigenous Education as the senior Indigenous appointment at the University participated in the Senior Managers forum during the development stages of the Strategic Plan.

The Indigenous Education Strategy details specific targets for Indigenous Students, Indigenous Employment and Indigenous Australian Studies – Teaching and Research. This strategy is led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services) through the Executive Director (Equity and Student Support Services)/Director Indigenous Education and the Manager, Indigenous Student Services.

SECTION 2 ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION POLICY (AEP) GOALS IN 2008 AND PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS

1. *Establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous peoples in educational decision-making*

Number of Indigenous Australians involved in Institutional Decision Making

- Council Member – An Aboriginal alumnus is a current member of the University council.
- Local Aboriginal community member is a member of a campus advisory board.
- Central University Committees with Indigenous members include, Senior Management Committee; Equality Diversity and Wellbeing Committee; Selection, Participation and Retention Committee, School of Social Sciences (Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty), Teaching and Learning (Health Sciences).
- Indigenous Specific Committees with Indigenous membership include Indigenous Student Support Committee; Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee; Indigenous Employment Steering Committee.
- Individual research centres (including the Collaborative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health) with activities in Indigenous communities are advised by various committees and steering groups with Indigenous representation.

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- The University's Ethics Committee has Indigenous Australian representation. The approvals process for research dealing with Indigenous Australians and related issues examines the participation of Indigenous people in advising, monitoring and conducting such projects

Roles of Indigenous Leaders

- Director, Indigenous Education – executive management of Indigenous Education programs, strategic and planning advice to senior executive through PVC (Equity and Student Services), currently performing the role of Executive Director (Equity and Student Support Services) which oversees Equality and Diversity Centre, Counselling Services, Careers and Employment and Indigenous Education.
- Manager, Indigenous Student Services – manages services for Indigenous students across all campuses, planning, reporting and monitoring services, provision of advice on curriculum development
- The Office of the Director, Indigenous Education is the Indigenous Education Unit of the University

Strategies/Policies and Activities

- Evaluation of events and programs delivered to Indigenous students and broader community includes feedback and advice for quality improvements.
- Indigenous staff of the University are members of numerous Indigenous Community committees which are external to the University including Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, local NAIDOC committees and other community organisations. The University encourages community engagement through the contribution of skills and experience.
- All Indigenous staff of the Office of the Director Indigenous Education contributed to and participated in the very successful World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) which was hosted by La Trobe University on the Bundoora Campus.
- Senior Indigenous staff attended the Indigenous Australian Higher Education Association Annual Conference at which their nomination to have Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin acknowledged for her contribution to the Indigenous Australian and wider community recognised. This was a joint nomination with the Wilin Centre, Victorian College of the Arts.

Constraints

- Expanding the Indigenous committee membership has included seeking individuals with a commitment to the goals of Indigenous Education at La Trobe and who may be outside the field of education.
- The University has seven campuses and ensuring regional membership on central committees is time consuming on the part of regional representatives and the impost often too much for individuals. This has been offset by conducting central committees at regional campuses where possible.

2. *Increase the number of Indigenous peoples employed, as academic and non-academic staff in higher education institutions*

Indigenous Employment Strategy

- The Indigenous Employment Strategy is currently being re-developed to capitalise on opportunities facilitated by the re-structure of People and Culture (previously Human Resources). The University has identified its Indigenous graduates as target group within the strategy and will be strategically promoting employment opportunities.
- Four positions at the University are currently identified as part of an exemption VCAT A371/2006, these include administrative trainees (2) and cultural heritage officers (2) within the Archaeology department.
- The majority of Indigenous staff at the University perform professional roles. The University in 2008 appointed Indigenous Student Services Officers at Albury-Wodonga, Mildura and Shepparton Campuses which were previously without dedicated Indigenous Australian staff.
- In 2008, 40 Indigenous staff worked at the University (26 Casual, 14 Continuing/Fixed Term working in both Academic and Professional areas).

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Strategies/Policies and Activities

- Creation of a new position – Manager Indigenous Student Services. As part of the Administrative Change Management Program, two Indigenous staff were provided higher duties opportunities as Manager, Indigenous Student Services and Executive Director, Equity and Student Support Services.
- An Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator is located within People and Culture to assist faculties and administrative departments in developing positions and other employment related opportunities as part of the University's Indigenous Employment Strategy.
- Promotional material in various formats has been developed and will be distributed through continuing participation with careers expos and community events.
- All Indigenous staff of the University participate in professional development activities and are supported by existing staff performance programs. There has been an increase in Indigenous staff accessing professional development opportunities that are supported by the University.
- The University allocates central funds to Indigenous Employment initiatives including seeding new positions as part of its Indigenous Employment Strategy.

Constraints

- The qualified pool of Indigenous applicants is relatively small and the sector must compete with higher remuneration scales in both private and public sectors

Future Plans

- Internal and external stakeholder forums will be held promoting the Indigenous Employment Strategy and highlighting opportunities
- The Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator will continue to build La Trobe University's reputation as an employer of choice within Indigenous communities.
- Ongoing maintenance of relationships between Indigenous Employment activities and University community whilst maintaining and developing partnerships within Indigenous communities.

3. *Ensure equitable access of Indigenous students to higher education*

Student Numbers

- Commencing Indigenous Student numbers have increased from 39 (0.5%) in 2007 to 62 (0.8%) in 2008.

Strategies/Policies and Activities

- Further development of the Indigenous Access Protocol to include greater partnerships between faculty, prospective students, staff and schools. The Selection, Progression and Retention Committee (previously Selection and Enrolment Committee) instituted a specific policy to increase access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Potential for success in the underlying principle for selection of Indigenous students.
- Indigenous representation on the University's central Student Admissions Retention and Success Committee which deals with criteria for selection, processes and implements new programs for increasing access to equity groups and under-represented schools.
- Culturally specific marketing, including the development of promotional materials; attendance at Indigenous specific job & training expos/events; targeting of local schools with Indigenous population, and using current Indigenous students as role-models.
- Facilitation of Indigenous student access to pathways like Mildura Campus "Taste of Tertiary" course by subsidising the fee.
- The University awarded 10 Identified Indigenous scholarships to undergraduate students in 2008 valued at \$5,000 per year for the duration of an undergraduate degree. Eligible Indigenous students are conditionally offered the LTU Indigenous Scholarships prior to admission and final senior year results. Scholarships are promoted through schooling and community sector networks, in University publications and LTU sections of Tertiary Admission Centre publications.

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Constraints

- Students are taking on greater levels of part time work to supplement income. At times the inconsistent application of Centrelink policy has impacted upon students currently on Commonwealth study benefits.
- University study is in competition with work place training offered by organisations in both private and public sector employment.

Future Plans

- Targeted collaboration within the schooling and community sector for the promotion of higher education includes establishing relationship with Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in the Northern Metropolitan region.
- Specific promotion of University wide events to the local Indigenous communities
- In recent years, the University has received funds from an external philanthropic organisation, the Towards a Just Society fund facilitating a suite of bursaries delivered to Indigenous students. These are now fully funded by the University. The philanthropic body is working with the University to identify other funding opportunities for increasing access to higher education particularly within the Northern Metropolitan region.

4. *Achieve the participation of Indigenous students in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of other Australians*

Student Numbers

- Total Indigenous student numbers increased from 84 (0.4%) in 2007 to 111 (0.5%) in 2008.

Strategies/Policies and Activities

- The University has a wide ranging scholarship program with specific awards identified for Indigenous students. These include institutional awards, the Towards a Just Society Fund (Melbourne) bursaries and the Invergowrie Foundation Scholarships for Indigenous Women. There has been a significant increase in scholarship applications by Indigenous students enabling all awards to be made in 2008.
- Ongoing activities of the Indigenous Development Action Plan (IDAP) within the School of Public Health increases student participation across the Faculty of Health Sciences by providing opportunities for Indigenous students to effectively co-shape the quality of their education.
- The Towards a Just Society Fund Bursaries awarded to current Indigenous students include support of participation in conferences/events; student generated activities on campuses promoting Indigenous cultures, resources and materials vouchers, support of living expenses and a financial hardship contingency fund.

Constraints

- The ISP funding model does not adequately support institutions with multi-campus sites. Providing specialist support services to Indigenous student needs to be consistent across campuses and this may only be achieved through a funding model that considers multi campus institutions as a particular group within the Australian higher education sector.
- The means test used in the qualification for Abstudy is prohibiting the children of Indigenous University graduates. The costs of study are being borne through increased pressure on already stretched family budgets where available but mostly through increasing hours of part-time work. In the case of many students, the trend has become full-time work and part-time study.
- The personal income allowances impact upon student applications for scholarships, bursaries or accessing paid part-time work experience.

Future Plans

- Active promotion of the University's scholarship and bursary opportunities open to Indigenous students and to expand these opportunities through external partnerships with Industry and philanthropic groups.
- Establish student placements within Industry through work experience, cadetships and mentoring activities.

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- 'Topping-up' of the current APA provision as an incentive for prospective higher degree Indigenous students.
- Provision of dedicated postgraduate student services to enrolled Indigenous higher degree students.
- Development of Indigenous ethical research guidelines for students and supervisors to be included in the University Candidature Handbook.

5. *Enable Indigenous students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in higher education as for other Australians*

Student Numbers

- 11 (Bachelor) and 9 (Postgraduate) students completed courses in 2007. 13 (Bachelor) and 4 (Postgraduate) students graduated in 2008.

Strategies/Policies and Activities

- Provision of Indigenous specific Orientation Program for commencing Indigenous students across campuses.
- Engagement of Indigenous Services Officer at regional campuses that were previously without Indigenous staff.
- Continued provision of Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS).
- Development of a specific Indigenous Student Database which may be used to monitor student performance, experience and utilisation of University and other services.
- Continued support for student generated organisations including the Victorian Indigenous Law Students Association.
- Expansion of Indigenous cultural awareness programs delivered to staff as part of Equity Staff Development Program (ESDP).

Constraints

- Current Indigenous Support funding levels do not fully support institutions with multi-campus sites. Providing specialist support services to Indigenous students, needs to be consistent across campuses and this may only be achieved through a funding model that considers multi campus institutions as a particular group within the Australian higher education sector.
- There continues to be increasing number of Indigenous students presenting with mental illness/health conditions. This has increased pressure to source appropriate assistance for students with mental health issues/illnesses.

Future Plans

- Developing workshops in conjunction with Faculty Academic skills advisors as academic support for Indigenous students.
- The Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee (ISTRC) will facilitate academic opportunities to promote academic excellence of Indigenous students across faculties and campuses including publication of work and seminars as forums for dissemination of research and promoting Indigenous cultural values to academic community.
- Develop a protocol to ensure appropriate service provision for Indigenous students with mental health conditions in collaboration with other services of the University and where appropriate external organisations.

6. *To provide all Australian students with an understanding of and respect for Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures*

Strategies/Policies and Activities

- The Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee (ISTRC), reporting to Academic Board, promotes Indigenous Australian Studies across the University and to the broader Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.
- The ISTRC has identified priorities for the University in the development of Indigenous Australian Studies as a multi-discipline and multi-campus program.

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- Inclusion of members of the broader Indigenous communities as guest lecturers and presenters in a wide range of courses and disciplines.
- Expansion of current subject offerings in Aboriginal Studies as part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences thus attracting more students through the provision of a coherent major within the Bachelor of Arts Course.
- Participation on the Mental Health in Undergraduate Curriculum Project Advisory Group (Faculty of Health Sciences), to provide information on culturally appropriate reference material relating to Indigenous mental health issues.
- Provision of lectures and presentations in disciplines without Indigenous lecturing or research staff.
- Development of a new 'On-Country Learning' subject offered from Shepparton Campus.
- Annual events including the Hyllus Maris Memorial Lecture which celebrates the life of an Elder who was a driving force in Indigenous Education within Victoria; National Sorry Day/Journey of Healing events; NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week activities, which encourage participation by the Victorian Indigenous communities in the life of the University. The Bendigo Campus hosts NAIDOC Family day for Indigenous communities in Central Victoria.
- Establishment of the La Trobe University Indigenous Research Gathering which includes Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic staff researching and teaching in the area of Indigenous studies. This group shares information through the Office of the Director, Indigenous Education.
- Contribution to Curriculum Review and Renewal at La Trobe University
- The Equality & Diversity Staff Program is delivered regularly throughout the year and includes an Indigenous cultural component. This program is mandatory for promotion for academic staff and a requirement of induction of new staff to the University. The Indigenous cultural information is delivered by Indigenous people.
- The University has long established relationships with elders of the traditional owners of country where campuses are located.

Constraints

- The University needs to increase the number of Indigenous Australians employed in teaching and research roles across its faculties, sector funding impacts negatively on the achievement of this goal.
- Limited external funding support for research into Indigenous Studies.
- Limited funding support available for Indigenous research students at Masters and Doctoral levels.

Future Plans

- Consolidation of subject offerings within broader context of Indigenous Studies.
- The ISTRC will promote best practice in teaching, learning and research as part of the University's wider Teaching and Learning and Research Management Plans.
- The Office of the Director, Indigenous Education will be responsible for maintenance of University wide promotional materials.
- The ISTRC will examine relationships between professional programs requiring placements and Indigenous communities with the view to enhancing relationships for mutual benefit.
- Courses of professional preparation including Education, Nursing and Social Work will identify appropriate places where Indigenous course content may be added.
- A database of Indigenous community experts will be established to facilitate increased opportunities for Indigenous people to act as guest speakers and lecturers within the curriculum.
- In response to the Bradley Review, a concerted effort will be made to incorporate Indigenous Knowledges into mainstream curriculum across campuses.

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SECTION 3 EXPENDITURE OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAM GRANT 2008

Enquires regarding this section should be directed to
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SECTION 4 HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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SECTION 5 PUBLICATION OF THE STATEMENT

Providers are encouraged to publish Indigenous Education Statements on their website and on publication, provide DEEWR with a link to the statement for the DEEWR website.