

# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT 2010

## 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)

#### New Strategic Plan

The University is currently developing a new Strategic Plan and the Indigenous Education Strategy will form one of the Core Activity Plans within the planning structure. This plan will be completed with input of Indigenous staff, students and community members.

The Director, Indigenous Education as the senior Indigenous appointment at the University has contributed directly to the drafting of the University plan through his role as a senior member of staff within the Division of Equity and Student Services.

The new Indigenous Education Strategy will detail 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 Director (Equity and Student Support Services)/Director, Indigenous Education, the Manager, Indigenous Student Services and Indigenous Employment Coordinator.

### 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 alumna 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: Director's Committee; Equality Diversity and Wellbeing Committee; Student Admissions, Retention and Success Committee; Selection, Participation and Retention Committees for School of Social Sciences (Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty) and Teaching and Learning (Health Sciences).

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- 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 Lowitja Institute (incorporating the Collaborative Research Centre for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health) with activities in Indigenous Australian communities are advised by various committees and steering groups with Indigenous Australian representation.
- Indigenous membership on the sub review Student Support Services Reference Group.
- 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 Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity and Student Services), currently performing the additional role of Director (Equity and Student Support Services) which oversees Equality and Diversity Centre, Counselling Services, Careers and Employment, Indigenous Education and Student Complaints.
- 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.
- La Trobe University through its Director, Indigenous Education is an active member of the National Indigenous Higher Education Network (NIHEN).

### **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 five teaching 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***

The Indigenous Employment Strategy is situated within the People & Culture Division. As an initiative of the modernisation of the Division, a review of the existing strategy was undertaken and an external specialist was engaged to review and establish the framework for the revitalisation of the Indigenous Employment Program.

A major achievement for 2009 was the establishment of the commitment by the University to recruit 35 Indigenous staff over a 5 year period. The 35 in 5 Strategy is a result of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with the LTEU.

In 2009, the University's Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator resigned. The University undertook a lengthy recruitment process to obtain a suitably qualified Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator, who commenced in January 2010.

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### **An outline of your active Indigenous Employment Strategy including details on how it was authored, how current it is and whether or not it is publicly accessible on the internet.**

The 2007-2010 Indigenous Employment Strategy was developed by the Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator and adopted by the University. The Strategy outlines the University's commitment to the employment of Indigenous staff over the period of the strategy. The Strategy was available on the University's website.

### **Information on your strategies for increasing numbers of Indigenous Australians employed at your university.**

The promotion of the Indigenous Employment program and notification of vacancies to potential Indigenous applicants has been achieved through a number of initiatives, which include the ongoing consultation with Aboriginal community organisations, Job Services Australia and Structured Training and Employment Projects Employment Related Services (STEPERS) providers.

### **The number of Indigenous-specific positions at your university, detailed by occupation and level.**

There were 2 identified positions within the University (Cultural Heritage Officers) and a total of 12 Indigenous specific positions including:

- 2 - Cultural Heritage Officer
- 1 - Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator
- 5 - Indigenous Student Service Officers
- 1 - Manager, Indigenous Student Services
- 1 - Director, Indigenous Education
- 1 - Research Officer
- 1 - Therapist

### **The current number of Indigenous staff at your institution and their spread across the university (including numbers in academic and non-academic roles, and by level).**

There is a total of 46 staff, identified as Indigenous staff, employed at La Trobe.

- 14 part-time/fixed-term/continuing
  - 1 - Cultural Heritage Officer
  - 1 - Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator
  - 5 - Indigenous Student Service Officers
  - 1 - Manager, Indigenous Student Services
  - 1 - Academic (over 50 units with Indigenous Australian content)
  - 1 - Director, Indigenous Education
  - 1 - Project Office Manager
  - 1 - Research Officer
  - 1 - Administration
  - 1 - Family Therapist
- 31 casual staff [both academic and general appointments]

### **The role played by your IEU in improving Indigenous employment at your institution.**

The Office of the Director, Indigenous Education works closely with the Indigenous Employment Coordinator and the People & Culture Division, to monitor progress of the strategy and contributes through regular updates by the Indigenous Employment Coordinator.

### **Constraints**

- Resignation of the Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator in April 2009 led to the La Trobe University Indigenous Employment Program being restricted. The University undertook a nationwide search to recruit a suitable replacement.
- The current funding climate in the Australian higher education sector impacts on participation of faculties and administrative divisions in the strategy. Enthusiasm for involvement is tempered by budgetary implications.
- The qualified pool of Indigenous Australian applicants within Victoria is relatively small and the sector must compete with higher remuneration scales in both private and public sector.

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### **Future Plans**

- Internal and external stakeholder forums will be held promoting the Indigenous Employment Program and highlighting opportunities.
- The commencement of a new Indigenous Employment Co-ordinator is working towards building La Trobe University's reputation as an employer of choice within Indigenous Australian communities.
- Preparation and development of a new Indigenous Employment Strategy to achieve the 35 in 5 employment commitment.
- Development of a national strategy to promote employment opportunities to a national Indigenous network.
- The development of an Indigenous Employment Program Expression of Interest form for potential Indigenous applicants to complete and participate in the Indigenous Employment recruitment process.
- A database to track Indigenous applicants through the recruitment process, from the receipt of the Expression of Interest form through to commencement of employment is also being implemented.
- 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 were 62 (0.8%) in 2008 and 43 (0.6%) in 2009.

#### **Strategies/Policies and Activities**

- Further development of the Indigenous Access Protocol to include greater partnerships between faculties, 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 and 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 at the Mildura Campus "Taste of Tertiary" course and at the Albury Wodonga Campus "Tertiary Enabling Program".
- The University awarded 10 Identified Indigenous scholarships to undergraduate students in 2009 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.
- The development of policy in relation to Indigenous Welcome to Country/Acknowledgement of Country and related cultural protocols, including flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags; Acknowledgement of Country on respective La Trobe websites.
- Development of network consisting of the Division of Allied Health Research, the Mother and Children's Research Centre, the Bouverie Centre and Indigenous Student Services, with the aim to increase numbers of female Indigenous higher degree students in Health Sciences.
- Development of an Indigenous Australian Entry policy for implementation by all faculties to ensure consistency and transparency.
- Involvement in the "Crescent Program", a collaborative project between La Trobe, University of Melbourne and Victoria University in the area of Health Sciences.
- Strengthening ties with agencies, businesses and organisations that provide professional development opportunities for Indigenous Australian students.

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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.
- The financial cost of applying through conventional methods such as VTAC, compounded by late applications fees and the cost of the STAT.

### **Future Plans**

- Targeted collaboration within the schooling and community sectors 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.
- Development of information workshops with Faculty Selection Officers in relation to alternative entry methods/processes for Indigenous Australians.
- Commitment to the Seamless Transition to Education Pathways Program (STEPP), in partnership with the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and University of Melbourne.

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

### **Student Numbers**

- Total Indigenous student numbers in 2008 were 111 (0.5%) and 105 (0.5%) in 2009.

### **Strategies/Policies and Activities**

- The University has a wide ranging scholarship program with specific bursaries for Indigenous students. These 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.
- 'Topping-up' of the current APA provision as an incentive for prospective higher degree Indigenous students.
- Development of a protocol to ensure appropriate service provision for Indigenous Australian students with mental health conditions, in collaboration with the University's Equality & Diversity Centre and Counselling Services.

### **Constraints**

- The Indigenous Support Program 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.

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### **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.
- Provision of dedicated postgraduate student services to enrolled Indigenous higher degree students.

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

#### **Student Numbers**

- 13 (Bachelor) and 4 (Postgraduate) students graduated in 2008 and 18 (Bachelor) and 17 (Postgraduate) students graduated in 2009.

#### **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.
- Expansion of Indigenous cultural awareness programs delivered to staff as part of Equity Staff Development Program (ESDP).

#### **Constraints**

- Current Indigenous Support Program funding arrangements 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.

#### **Future Plans**

- In conjunction with Faculty Academic Skills advisors, developing academic support workshops for Indigenous students.
- Facilitating 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.

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

#### **Strategies/Policies and Activities**

- Identifying potential opportunities within curriculum for inclusion of Indigenous Australian perspectives as part of the University's curriculum renewal project Design for Learning.
- The Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee has identified priorities for the University in the development of Indigenous Australian Studies as a multi-discipline and multi-campus program.
- 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. including Occupational therapy, Politics, Linguistics, Gender Studies, Health Sciences).

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- Development of a new 'On-Country Learning' subject offered at the Shepparton Campus in collaboration with local Elders and community members.
- 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. The Mildura Campus hosts a number of events throughout the year in collaboration with the Dulka Yappata Koorie Cultural Centre of the Sunraysia TAFE which aim to bring Indigenous Community onto campus.
- 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.
- A Research Fellow in Aboriginal Health has been appointed in the Division of Health Science Research, Faculty of Health Sciences.
- An Aboriginal Adjunct Professor within the School of Social Work
- An Aboriginal Associate Fellow within Humanities and Social Sciences on the Bendigo Campus

### **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 Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee 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 Indigenous Studies Teaching and Research Committee 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 2009**

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.

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