

Indigenous Student Success Program

2023 Performance Report

Organisation

LA TROBE 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.

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2. Enrolments (Access)

Supporting Indigenous applications

La Trobe University (LTU) employs the Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS) as the primary mechanism to facilitate Indigenous access to studies. Indigenous students can receive up to 20 bonus points to enhance their entry chances into almost all undergraduate courses at La Trobe. These extra points can be accessed through VTAC, UAC, and direct entry. LTU offers various supports, alternative pathways, and aid for Indigenous applicants, including the creation of specific course entries tailored for Indigenous students in high-demand bachelor's degrees. Prospective students are guided through the application process with culturally sensitive assistance from our Indigenous Student Services Team. The team ensures that all enrolment avenues are thoroughly explored, including the possibility of customised Preparation Pathway options for individuals who have not yet met the entry requirements. Student Admissions and the Indigenous Strategy and Education division have collaborated closely to enhance the alignment between the two departments, aimed to bolster support for Indigenous students and streamline the process of acceptance of offers.

La Trobe Indigenous Strategy

In addition to SEAS, we actively cultivate meaningful connections with Indigenous communities, Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, and Secondary Schools across Victoria. This engagement is facilitated by both the Indigenous Strategy and Education division and, where appropriate, with our internal student recruitment divisions. The collaborative efforts of these teams are guided by our [La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2020 – 2030](#) and our [Indigenous Strategy, 2023 – 2030](#), which serve as the foundation for expanding access to education for underrepresented student groups. This initiative involves broadening the availability of university-level curricula in partnered secondary schools and implementing mentoring programs for aspiring tertiary education students across our regional campuses.

La Trobe University is dedicated to establishing culturally safe and inclusive campuses. Under La Trobe's Indigenous Strategy we have committed to the establishment of an Indigenous Elders Council, the purpose of this council being to provide oversight and guidance of the University's initiatives in relation to the creation of a culturally safe environment for all of our students and staff. We strive to be the university of choice for Indigenous students in higher education. Additionally, La Trobe encourages Indigenous Elders and community members to participate in university events and activities that extend beyond significant Indigenous occasions.

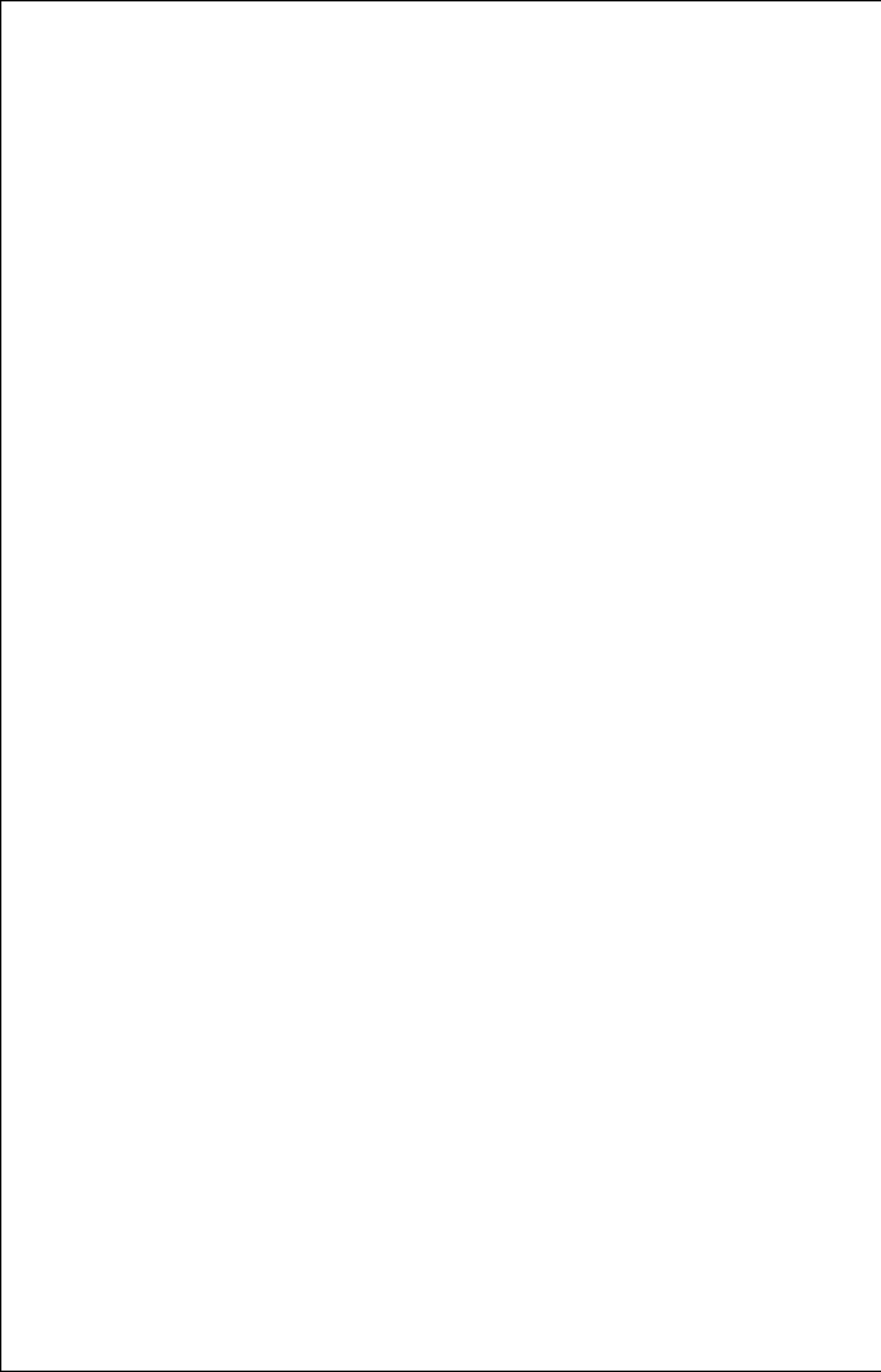
RISE with La Trobe

In 2023, the Indigenous student recruitment program *RISE with La Trobe* experienced significant growth. This Indigenous-specific pathways program continues to play a crucial role in expanding access for potential Indigenous students, offering a range of culturally safe and inclusive opportunities, workshops, and programs to provide comprehensive support throughout their educational journey into Higher Education. 2023 saw RISE welcome its second year of participants from various regions across Australia, totalling 163 students, whilst maintaining valuable relationships with the previous year's cohort. Continued focus on supporting Indigenous High School students to prepare for their future university studies and establish connections with the university has supported and encouraged potential students to continue their education at university.

Participants benefited from a diverse array of activities, camps, and events, encompassing academic learning, cultural activities, cultural connection, mentorship, academic assistance, introductions to university life, and numerous other opportunities. The program also features an academic pathway, granting participants a conditional offer to La Trobe upon completing year 12, along with access to one of LTU's three academic pathway units/programs (Achieve, Prepare, or Tertiary Preparation Program). In 2023, La Trobe continued to provide graduates of *RISE with La Trobe* an option of a \$5,000 per annum stipend scholarship or an Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship.

Indigenous Indicator (main)	Enrolment Year	Student Count
Indigenous	2019	292
Indigenous	2020	325
Indigenous	2021	288
Indigenous	2022	322
Indigenous	2023	299

Table A. Indigenous student count 2019 – 2023



New strategies, activities and programs

In 2023, the University initiated our commitment to the Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship, ensuring on-campus housing for eligible Indigenous students. This initiative, financed through foregone revenue, supported 16 students in securing on-campus accommodation. This program enables up to \$4 million in accommodation stipends to be distributed to our prospective Indigenous cohort. Support and opportunities for Indigenous students to reside on campus has fostered a profound sense of support and inclusivity, showing in a notable increase in both the utilisation of our Indigenous Student Centres and active participation in various on-campus activities among the student body.

Additionally, the introduction of 10 Indigenous-specific bachelor degree VTAC application codes in 2022 led to 16 offers with 10 students accepting their offers and enrolments in 2023.

Scholarships, bridging and enabling support and outreach services

The University acknowledges the important role played by ISSP funding in supporting various bursaries and scholarships for Indigenous students. In 2023, the University progressed with its commitment to ensuring that all commencing Indigenous students were provided the opportunity to receive either a \$5,000 per annum access scholarship or an Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship. These scholarships are sustained by multiple funding sources, including ISSP, Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP), Operating funds, and philanthropic contributions. In 2023, the success rates for scholarship recipients reached 82.7%, indicating a 1.1% rise from the previous year. Ensuring that every new Indigenous cohort has access to some form of financial assistance remains a fundamental aspect of our updated scholarship approach.

In 2023, the University made a commitment to offer a scholarship to all commencing undergraduate Indigenous students by 2024. This objective is articulated in our Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030. This program of support led to more than 60% of commencing Indigenous students receiving either a bursary or scholarship in 2023.

The Introduction of the La Trobe Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship ensures guaranteed on-campus accommodation for Indigenous students and closes the gap between ABSTUDY rent assistance and accommodation fees. 2023 welcomed LTU's first cohort of students into accommodation, enabling on-campus housing for 16 Indigenous students in 2023.

Strategies to increase access and enrolments that do not rely on ISSP funding

In October 2023, La Trobe cemented its commitment to First Nations students, staff and communities with the launch of a new [Indigenous Strategy 2023 - 2030](#). The strategy outlines LTU's aspirations across teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and the establishment of a culturally safe study, work, and physical environment.

The Strategy was developed through extensive consultation with Indigenous Elders, community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous La Trobe staff and Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students and outlines a range of initiatives to support its goals. These include the recruitment of an Associate Dean (Indigenous) across all academic schools and a Council of Elders to provide strategic and cultural advice on a range of matters including Indigenous access, participation and success in education, research, and employment.

La Trobe continues to prioritise the development of enduring community partnerships and connections with Elders. An example of this is our strengthened relationship and collaboration with the Munarra Centre for Regional Excellence on Yorta Yorta Country, through a memorandum of understanding, with a commitment to invest \$1 million over the next three years. La Trobe University a deep connection to community and common values and aspirations, including contributing to the prosperity of the regional communities we both serve.

The University's commitment is to provide scholarships to all commencing Indigenous undergraduate students by 2024, as outlined in our 2020 Scholarships Strategy and 2022 Indigenous Strategy. In 2023, La Trobe launched the La Trobe Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship to advance this goal and provided Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) funded scholarships to further support student retention.

In addition to tailored programs aimed at supporting Indigenous students, our Indigenous students are provided with access to all services and opportunities available within the University. This approach ensures that all Indigenous students can fully engage with and benefit from the wide array of resources, facilities, and opportunities offered by La Trobe University. From academic support services to extracurricular activities, Indigenous students are encouraged to explore and utilise all avenues that contribute to their holistic development and success. This commitment to equitable access underscores La Trobe's dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all its students, regardless of background or identity.

We support Indigenous students to access higher education through VTAC pathways (First Nation Australian Entry). In addition, our Alumni and Advancement division actively advocate for First Nations support when working with philanthropic donors. These activities last year led to several targeted First Nations scholarships and bursaries aimed at supporting access and retention.

Table 1 - ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2023 payments¹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³								
Undergraduate ⁴	\$156,500	74	0	16	0	0	\$156,500	90
Post-graduate ⁵	\$15,750	10	0	0	0	0	\$15,750	10
Other	\$2,751	1	0	0	0	0	\$2,751	1
Total	175,001	85		16		0	\$175,001	101

Progression (outcomes)

ISSP strategies, activities and programs to support students to complete units

The Student Advising Program and Academic Progressions Policy are the institutional responses to supporting student progression. This program includes an Indigenous-specific advising program, which provides culturally safe and appropriate developmental advising support to our cohort of Indigenous students. The instalment of the 'At Risk' Trigger system within our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) alerts Indigenous Student Services Staff to students who are either at risk of failing or falling below a weighted average mark of 60. The strategy has allowed for Indigenous Student Support (ISS) staff to intervene and provide additional Indigenous Academic Enrichment Program (IAEP), tutoring and additional academic supports to students who fall into either of these categories. The positive impact of scholarships is evident in the advancement and perseverance of recipients compared to their peers without financial assistance. Indigenous students who were awarded accommodation or access scholarships demonstrated a higher likelihood of maintaining above-average grades and successfully completing their academic year. Furthermore, scholarship recipients were 50% more inclined to actively participate in Indigenous student services compared to non-recipients. The distribution of Indigenous scholarships in 2023 led to a notable surge in retention among those who availed themselves of these opportunities.

Our dedicated Indigenous Student Advisors work closely with other Academic Advisors. These staff continue to be responsible for the proactive outreach and monitoring of Indigenous students on all La Trobe campuses. The employment of Indigenous Engagement Officers has enabled the Indigenous Strategy and Education unit to provide dedicated staff to Student Engagement activities, programs, and events. The work of these employees has improved student engagement and participation and created an overall increase in student satisfaction and connection with the university and Indigenous peers.

We utilise the IAEP for Indigenous students, alongside a centralised referral system to Indigenous-specific wellbeing services as well as fostering cultural connectedness and connection to country, community and kin through events, camps and visiting cultural sites of significance. La Trobe also provides First Nations students with an Indigenous-specific Orientation Program. All Indigenous students are able to access a culturally safe study space through Indigenous student services centre located on each campus. It is important to note that our online, regional and remote can access these centres as well. The IAEP continues to serve as our cornerstone academic and educational support initiative, aiding students in successfully completing their units. Through this program, students have the opportunity to receive personalised tutoring for up to 2 hours per subject per week. Each La Trobe University campus has a designated staff member dedicated to supporting students throughout their educational studies. Culturally safe study spaces are available at each campus, providing students with environments where they can connect, study, and learn comfortably. Plans are underway to refurbish these spaces, ensuring they remain culturally safe and serve as a welcoming 'home away from home' for Indigenous students. We understand the positive impact that financial assistance and support can have on student progression. In 2023, the University pledged to offer scholarships to all incoming Indigenous undergraduate students by 2024, as outlined in our Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030. Over 60% of new Indigenous students received financial support through bursaries or scholarships in 2023. Additionally, the introduction of the La Trobe

Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship provided guaranteed on-campus housing for Indigenous students, bridging the gap between ABSTUDY rent assistance and accommodation costs. The University welcomed its first cohort of Indigenous students into on-campus accommodation in 2023, accommodating 16 students. Furthermore, in 2023, the University continued its commitment to providing either a \$5,000 per year access scholarship or an Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship to all incoming Indigenous students.

New strategies, activities or programs to support students' complete units in 2023

Our programs have implemented a variety of initiatives designed to enhance Indigenous student services and promote their academic success. An expansion in the provision of social, cultural, and educational activities, as outlined in detail in section 5 of the report has been implemented, with laptops provided to students that are facing financial constraints, a commitment of providing essential IT support for their academic success is also readily available. To further support student retention, cultural camps were organised on Boon Wurrung Country, accessible to all enrolled Indigenous students. Efforts were made to enhance communication and engagement by increasing the frequency of call campaigns to bi-annually. This initiative facilitated regular interaction between Indigenous students and the University, aiding in the monitoring of their well-being and academic progress. Additionally, the division spearheaded the development of an additional Indigenous mobility global exchange option known as Yani, planned to commence implementation in second semester 2024.

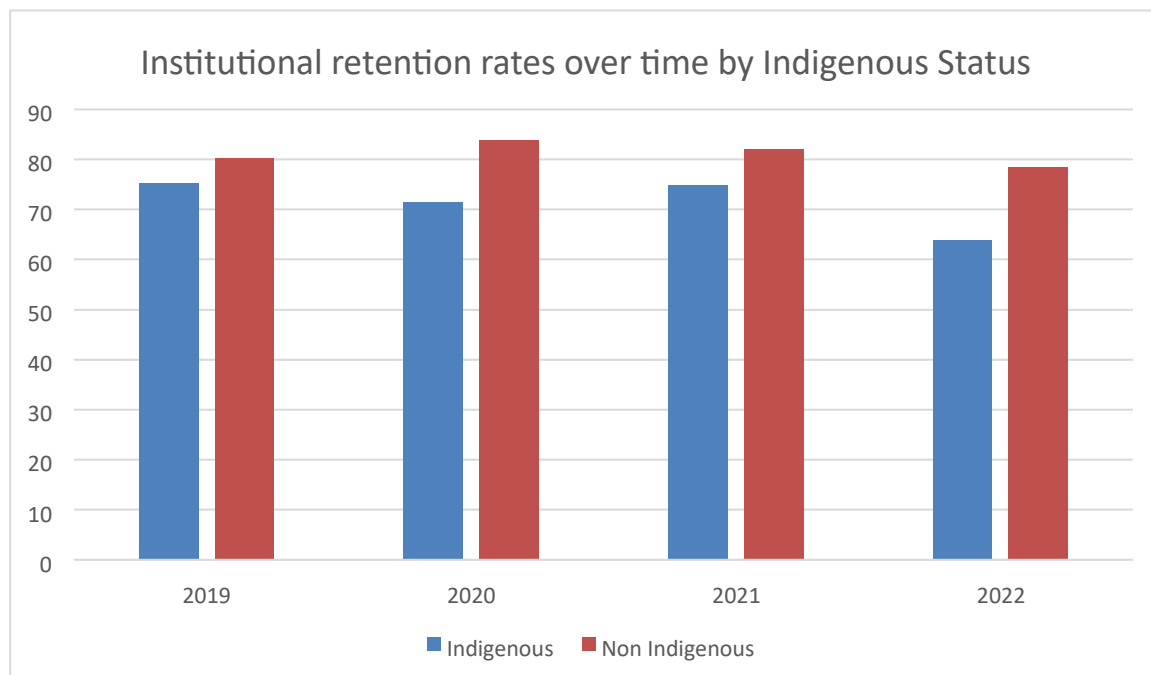


Figure A – Indigenous and non-Indigenous retention rates over time

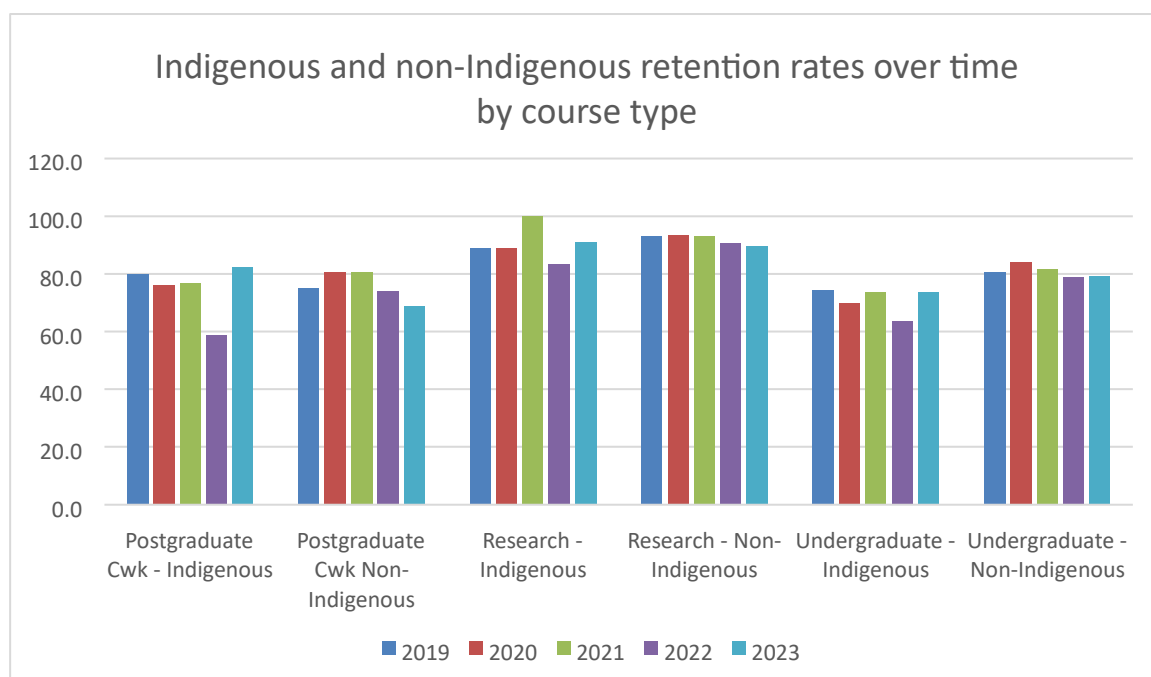


Figure B – Indigenous and non-Indigenous retention rates over time by course type

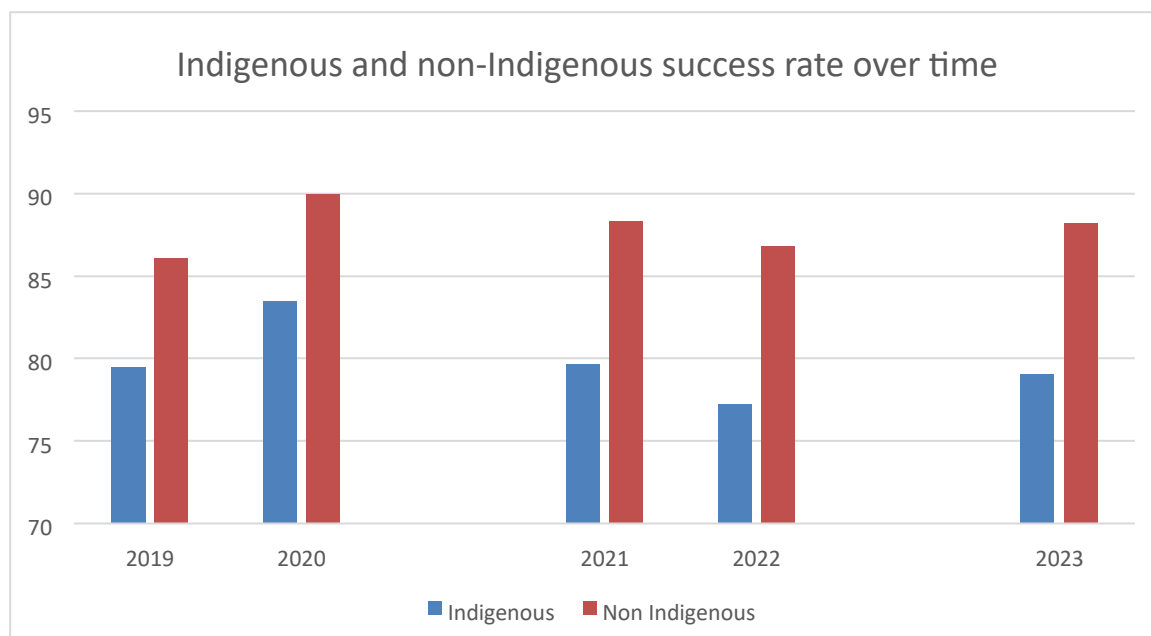


Figure C – Indigenous and non-Indigenous success rate over time.

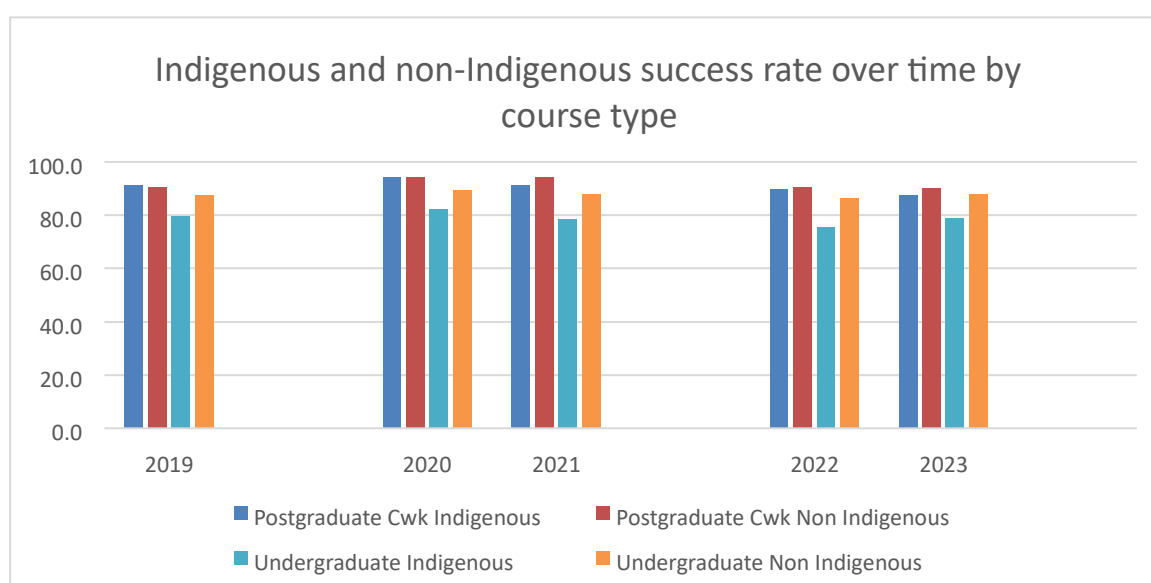


Figure D – Indigenous and non-Indigenous success rates over time by course type

A comparable discrepancy in success rates has been observed, as depicted in Figures C and D, showing a slight decline of the gap between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students in course outcomes during 2023.

A variation in achievement rates has been noted, as illustrated in Figure D, indicating a slight reduction in disparity between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous students in course performance throughout 2023.

New strategies, activities or programs to support students complete units in 2023

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To measure the effect that these strategies have on student progression, we leverage focused analytical data and are able to systematically map course completion rates at the conclusion of each semester, comparing them with previous years to identify any implemented changes that may account for variations in the data. In addition, the ISE division periodically distributes surveys among Indigenous students to incorporate their perspectives and enhance service improvements. In 2023, the ISE conducted a survey targeting students to gather their perspectives and suggestions for enhancing services. One particular survey centred on the Student Services Centre, aiming to identify areas perceived as lacking by students, as well as gathering feedback on aspects that were functioning effectively. This survey not only revealed areas of improvement and student grievances but also highlighted positive aspects of the services provided.

Impact of support through tutorial assistance, mentoring and other measures

The Indigenous Academic Enrichment Program (IAEP) offers tutoring and other academic assistance to at-risk students, aiding students in successfully completing their units. Through this program, students have the opportunity to receive personalised tutoring for up to 2 hours per subject per week. In 2023, our tutorial assistance program experienced reduced uptake despite widespread communications to students. In 2024, we will continue to innovate in the ways in which we engage with students to provide support through these programs.

The IAEP supported a total of 39 students in 2023. This was an increase from the 21 students who had enrolled by April. The increase from 21 to 39 students was due to proactive efforts by the Indigenous Strategy and Education team to increase engagement. Strategic changes have been implemented to improve program accessibility and engagement for 2024. Changes included the introduction of a First Year Coordinator role to guide and assist first-year students, the implementation of mandatory semester 1 tutoring for students entering La Trobe via RISE, the launch of a targeted marketing campaign to raise awareness of the program, the prioritisation of Indigenous Alumni and high-achieving students for IAEP tutoring positions to increase access to Indigenous tutors and mentors, and an overhaul of administrative processes to streamline operations and improve data retrieval capabilities.

The Weighted Average Mark (WAM) of IAEP participants throughout 2023 averaged at 68.55. Notably, 30% of IAEP student participants experienced an improvement in their WAM over the course of the year. Looking ahead to 2024, the retention rate among students who engaged in IAEP throughout 2023 is significant, with 79% now admitted into a La Trobe course. Additionally, 13% of IAEP participants successfully graduated by the conclusion of 2023, marking a substantial milestone in their academic journey.

Investment in the cultural competency of staff and students

Strengthening cultural safety is at the heart of La Trobe's Indigenous Strategy 2022-2030. The establishment of the University Elders' Council will guide and inform our institutional practices to cultural safety, and sits alongside a suite of activities, including the rolling out of mandatory cultural safety training for staff in 2024.

La Trobe is deeply committed to raising aspirations and supporting Indigenous students to access higher education and achieve success during their studies. Through our culturally safe and inclusive Indigenous Student Support Centres on all campuses, and our work in community, we build a supportive community for students to develop their knowledge and experiences. We believe in helping students to achieve their best by encouraging them to become independent learners with the confidence and capacity to express their beliefs and share their professional knowledge and experiences in ways that will shape our society for the better and give back to community.

Throughout the year, the Indigenous Strategy and Education division (ISE) coordinated university-wide cultural activities, including Welcome to Country Ceremonies, Smoking Ceremonies, and sessions for sharing cultural knowledge.

As part of their academic requirements, all students are required to complete the Wominjeka module - an online Cultural Competency program exploring Indigenous history, culture, values, and contemporary issues. Recently, this module has been extended to allow staff members to self-enrol and engage with its content. Completion of the Wominjeka module is mandatory, with completion rates in 2023 ranging from 80-85%.

The University actively maintains its long-standing relationships with Elders of the traditional custodians of Country and Indigenous community organisations and groups in all regions where campuses are located. This involves ongoing membership of and collaboration with Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECG) and Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs). Additionally, Indigenous Elders and other Knowledge holders are engaged on campus to participate in cultural events, alongside continued involvement in Indigenous community engagement activities within the campus regions.

Furthermore, the University utilises a specific Indigenous Student Database and maintains a network of college academic and professional staff who assist with student progression, support, and advocacy. It offers a suite of bursaries complementary to scholarship support and develops academic support workshops tailored for Indigenous students. Opportunities for scholarly excellence among Indigenous students are facilitated, and an Indigenous-specific library orientation and access program has been developed.

To ensure comprehensive and up-to-date support, Indigenous Student Services professional development is consolidated around academic and other support areas, with the implementation of the Indigenous Student Services Charter. Events and programs delivered to Indigenous students and the broader community are regularly evaluated for effectiveness and relevance. To support the embedding of Indigenous knowledges and cultural competencies in the curriculum, La Trobe University has employed a Senior Indigenous Education Development Advisor alongside Indigenous academic staff.

The University is actively investing in cultural safety initiatives, continuously developing monitoring tools to assess their effectiveness.

Strategies to support student progression that do not rely on ISSP funding

La Trobe University supports all students through our Student Advising Team that provides proactive and reactive interventions to support student retention and success. The team leverages predictive analytics informed by at-risk modelling, to proactively engage with students at risk of failing/disengaging from their course. The team also support students in need of academic recovery by leading our progressions processes. All students identified as being at 'high-risk' and 'medium-risk' receive proactive developmental support from the Student Advising Division ahead of the census date in the teaching period they are identified in. This involves an SMS, email, and phone call to invite to a personalised appointment offered by a Student Advisor. Students who report non-academic issues that put them at risk of not successfully completing their units are offered the opportunity to apply for adjustments or are referred to specialist services.

Table 2 Tutorial assistance provided in 2023.

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended⁷	Total hours of assistance⁸	Expenditure⁹(\$)
Enabling	6	62	80.75	5,664.14
Undergraduate	28	714	1243	89,909.05
Post-graduate	5	158	413.5	30,184.74
Other				
Total	39	934	1,737.25	125,757.19

3. Completions (outcomes)

ISSP strategies, activities and programs to improve award course completions and their impact

In 2023, there was an overall 20% decline in completions compared to the previous year. Many students opted for Leave of Absence (LOA) or became Absent Without Leave (AWOL), contributing to this decline. Despite this, the Indigenous Strategy and Education (ISE) team remained proactive in reaching out to these students to encourage their return to studies.

Several factors contributed to the rise in LOA (Leave of Absence) and AWOL (Absent Without Leave) students. These include the necessity for students to seek employment due to the cost of living crisis, challenges associated with returning to normal study routines post-COVID-19, and heightened family financial obligations.

Our strategies for enhancing completion rates, as outlined in the "Progression (access and outcomes)" section, are aimed at addressing this issue. Internally, our six-year completion rate for the Indigenous cohort stands at 33.8% compared to 47.3% for our non-Indigenous cohort. However, it's important to note that completion rates compiled by the Department of Education, Skills, and Employment (DESE) may vary due to differences in how they track student movements across the sector. In 2023, La Trobe University saw a less than 1% decrease in overall completions compared to the previous year. The ISE team remained actively involved in reaching out to Indigenous students, supporting and encouraging a return to their academic studies. The strategies implemented to address and improve completion rates are outlined in the aforementioned "Progression (access and outcomes)" section.

In 2023, five Indigenous students received Completion Scholarships of \$5,000 each, this scholarship is designed to support progression and completion rates in the final year of their degree programs. These targeted scholarships, funded from sources other than ISSP, aim to alleviate financial pressures during the concluding stages of their studies. While there remains a gap in provisional retention outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cohorts (Figure A), the provisional 2023 data indicates a narrowing of this gap (Figure B). The employment of Indigenous Engagement Officers within the Indigenous Strategy and Education (ISE) unit has facilitated dedicated staff involvement in Student Engagement activities, programs, and events. Their efforts have enhanced student engagement, participation, satisfaction, and connection with the university and Indigenous peers. Furthermore, the university provided funding to offer each final year student a \$5,000 scholarship to alleviate financial hardship during their concluding year of study.

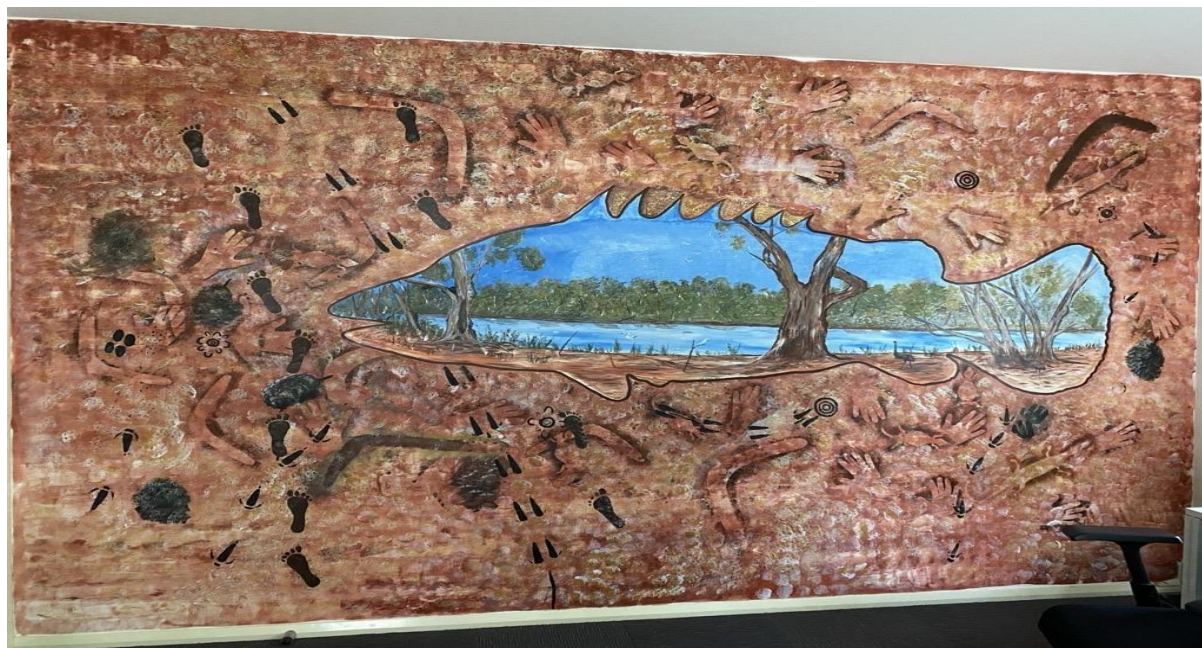
To monitor course completion, detailed analytical data is utilised, mapping completion rates at the end of each semester and comparing them with previous years. Additionally, the ISE division periodically conducts surveys among Indigenous students to incorporate their feedback and enhance services accordingly.

4. Regional and remote students

Support offered through ISSP to regional and remote students to improve access

Our regional and remote students benefit from culturally secure study environments and have access to the Indigenous Academic Enrichment Program (IAEP). RISE with La Trobe continues to be successful by specifically supporting prospective students from regional and remote areas, with over 85% of all participants residing in such locations. To reach our regional and remote stakeholders and partners, we developed and disseminated marketing and information-sharing short films.

Various educational, cultural, and social activities and events were organised for Indigenous students from each region in 2023, creating opportunities for connection and engagement. Notable highlights included: Sorry Day ceremonies, Orientation events, Indigenous week, Open Day, NAIDOC Week activities RISE information and cultural sharing days and events to discuss the 'Voice to Parliament'. An event for each of these activities were held at every regional and remote campus. All events were open to students and their family's/communities. These events catered for continuing, commencing and prospective students.



* Commissioned artwork on the Albury/Wodonga and Mildura campuses, highlighting Indigenous local culture.

The Indigenous Uni games, held at Monash University, was well attended in 2023 and saw La Trobe University doubling our participation numbers from that of last year, with 16 students attending. This event is the largest Indigenous Higher Education gathering and provides cultural and academic network development building. The team was represented with at least two students from each campus participating. Participants were able to connect and play sports alongside First Nation students from across Australia.

This year saw us hold our first ever student retention and connection camp. Indigenous Students were invited to spend three days and two nights on Boon Wurrung Country, where an array of workshops and activities were held to help students connect with Country and with each other. In addition, social and educational activities were held quarterly at each campus throughout the year. These activities included movie nights, exam preparation workshops, comedy nights, afternoon teas, art competitions and guest speaker seminars.

Table 4 ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2022 Payments	240,000	75 (48 awarded)	10,000	2			250,000	50
B. 2023 Offers ¹¹	190,750	47 (45 awarded)	23,472	3			214,222	48
C. Percentage ¹² (C=B/A*100)							85.7%	
2023 Payments							175,001	98

Note: All Indigenous students at La Trobe University receive a scholarship offer upon commencement. A decrease in 2023 enrolments for Indigenous Students has resulted in an inability to meet the threshold of 95% of scholarships offered in 2023 as awarded in 2022 as per *the Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*

5. Eligibility criteria Indigenous Education Strategy

5.1. Indigenous Education Strategy

La Trobe University (LTU) is dedicated to decolonising the curriculum to empower Indigenous communities and ensuring cultural safety in our teaching and learning methods. We strive to enhance accessibility to higher education for Indigenous communities and to deepen the understanding of Indigenous peoples among all La Trobe students. By working to embed Indigenous knowledges into our and all facets of our educational programs, we aim to enlighten students about the richness of Indigenous knowledge relevant to their disciplines.

To fulfill these commitments LTU will establish a University-wide Indigenous Education Advisory Committee, jointly chaired by the Director of Indigenous Education and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). We will also provide targeted professional development opportunities to assist academics in incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum and understanding Indigenous teaching and learning styles, as well as Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. We will increase recruitment and offer career development opportunities for Indigenous staff (both casual and ongoing academic positions) to ensure representation and genuine partnerships across disciplines. We will recruit and support Indigenous curriculum developers to collaborate with academics, Elders, and Indigenous communities in designing authentic learning activities and embedding Indigenous knowledge. We will systematically integrate Indigenous knowledge and experiences across all fields of study and courses within La Trobe educational programs.

LTU boasts a well-established and highly esteemed array of Indigenous research initiatives. Under the Research 2030 Strategy, the University is poised to advance its research endeavours, focusing on key areas such as sustainable food and agriculture, resilient environments and communities, promoting health and well-being in individuals, families, and communities, understanding and preventing diseases, as well as fostering social change and equity. Indigenous research permeates across all research themes, owing to the holistic understandings, Indigenous knowledge, and methodologies employed by Indigenous researchers.

Collaborating closely with researchers and communities, we aim to expand research endeavours that positively impact our communities. La Trobe University is steadfast in its commitment to embodying the guiding principles outlined by the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. To fulfill our commitments, LTU will establish the La Trobe University Indigenous Research Centre to support and connect Indigenous researchers and those engaged in Indigenous community-led research. We will promote appropriate and beneficial research on Indigenous issues, ensuring collaboration with Indigenous communities in transdisciplinary research endeavours. Additionally, we will provide training, protocols, and support to researchers and students to ensure culturally competent research practices. The expansion of the Dennis McDermott Scholarship program will continue, and we will implement a university-wide Indigenous research advisory committee, co-chaired by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Industry Engagement and Academic Director Indigenous Research. A framework and supporting processes will be developed, addressing Indigenous data sovereignty and research ethics. Lastly, we will establish Indigenous higher degree research networks to guide students in engaging research through appropriate Indigenous research processes and protocols.

The Indigenous Education Strategy 2023-2030 was launched in July 2023. [Current link](#) to the Indigenous Strategy 2023 – 2030.

5.2. Indigenous Workforce Strategy

La Trobe University Indigenous Workforce Strategy under Section 12 of the ISSP Guidelines

In line with our [Indigenous Strategy 2022-2023](#), La Trobe University acknowledges and thanks our Indigenous employees for their outstanding contribution and commitment to our university. We value the contributions that our Indigenous staff make to enriching the experience of our students and acknowledge the cultural load they hold on to behalf of their community and the University. Priority Reform Area Six of our Indigenous Strategy; Indigenous Employment, sets out La Trobe's actions and goals in this domain.

The University is aspiring to achieve a 3% participation rate for Indigenous employment across both professional and academic workforces. In 2023, the University approved funding for the appointment of three Associate Deans (Indigenous). These three senior academic appointments are the first of up to ten Associate Deans (Indigenous) that will be in place by 2030. In 2023, we also recruited to an additional role to support both Indigenous employment support and recruitment and established senior Indigenous academic leadership roles (Academic Directors for Research and Teaching). Currently the Academic Director Indigenous research is filled, and the Academic Director Indigenous Education position was advertised twice but not successfully filled.

The existing staffing figures at LTU do not align with our desired levels of health. The Enterprise Agreement 2023 aims to achieve a 3% participation rate by 2026. Presently, discussions are underway to devise strategies to rectify this deficit and fulfill our strategic objectives, we currently have 33 Indigenous employees working across the University.

Over the last few years there has been regular recruitment efforts to fill the vacant roles in the Indigenous Strategy and Education Division. All roles have been advertised multiple times across a diverse range from engagement officers, student advisors, senior academic leads and the PVC Indigenous. The strategies outlined above, as well as the continuing refinement of the position descriptions and team structure, seek to address these vacancies.

La Trobe is committed to creating a culturally safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for our staff by giving staff opportunities to start, develop and build their careers in ways that help them to achieve their aspirations for the future. La Trobe is committed to:

- Creating opportunities for Indigenous staff to develop their careers and progress within the University and beyond.
- Ensuring our recruitment, performance and promotions policies and practices are culturally safe and recognise the cultural skills, relationships, leadership, and community work undertaken by our staff.

To meet these commitments, La Trobe will:

- Increase employment opportunities across all levels of professional, academic, and executive classifications for Indigenous people.
- Review recruitment and selection policies and processes and ensure they better support Indigenous people to join the University.
- Review current staff retention activities and consult with Indigenous staff to implement comprehensive internal and external retention strategies and services to support the ongoing employment of Indigenous staff.
- Develop tailored opportunities and programs to support Indigenous staff to develop their professional and leadership skills.
- Review existing workload, career success and promotions processes and policies to embed recognition of the cultural work, community work, and leadership undertaken by Indigenous staff.
- Establish structures to support and build capacity with Indigenous staff to senior discipline levels.
- Provide opportunities for Indigenous staff to connect with each other, share their experiences and explore their culture.
- Establish and maintain capacity building of Indigenous staff across schools and faculty in relation to Indigenous understandings. Support the capacity building and career progression of Indigenous staff and contribute towards embedding Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum.

6.3 Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Indigenous Governance Mechanism under Section 11 of the ISSP Guidelines

The University has embraced the Indigenous Governance Mechanism Charter, incorporating the establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Support Group (ISAG) and ISSP Advisory Board. These committees offer guidance on matters pertaining to the management, reporting, and evaluation of Indigenous student activities and funding.

As outlined in our Indigenous Mechanism Charter, the ISAG consists of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous), Senior Manager, Indigenous Student Success, Coordinator, Indigenous Operations, a member of the Office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and up to three University employees identifying as Indigenous. Members of Indigenous communities also have a standing invitation to attend these meetings.

In 2023, our Indigenous Governance Mechanism incorporated two of the University's most senior Indigenous staff members, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous), Associate Professor Michael Donovan, and Senior Manager, Indigenous Student Success, Renee Sleigh. An Indigenous Advisor, Indigenous Student Recruitment was also a representative who was heavily involved in Indigenous Student Success.

The annual ISSP budget undergoes endorsement by the University's Senior Executive Group, including its sub-committees, allowing them to provide insights on the alignment of expenditures with broader strategies. Notably, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) holds membership within the Senior Executive Group (SEG).

The University recognises the significant expertise of our communities and the value of embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being into our governance and operational practices. We will work in partnership with our communities, students and staff to achieve the outcomes of this plan – an accountability shared at all levels of our organisation. La Trobe University's accountability and governance structures are based on the guiding principles from the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities and Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025.

6.3.1 Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Consistent with subsection 17(2)(b) of the guidelines, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) confirms the ISSP grant funding for 2023 has been expended as shown in the financial acquittal; and that this performance report is an accurate reflection of decision-making processes and performance in 2023.

Associate Professor Michael Donovan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) Email:
M.Donovan@latrobe.edu.au

Professor Jessica Vanderlelie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Email:
j.vanderlelie@latrobe.edu.au

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2023. 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 2023 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 This 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 2023 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 2023 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2023 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2022 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

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

Indigenous Student Success Program

2023

Financial

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

Acquittal

Organisation

1. Financials – Income and expenditure

Table 1a ISSP income available to support Indigenous students in 2023 (excluding GST) ¹

Item	(\$)
A. ISSP Grant 2023 ²	1,453,231.72
B. Other ISSP Related Income	
Interest earned/royalties from ISSP funding ³	0
<i>If no interest has been earned briefly state why</i> ISSP funding does not sit in an account that earns interest, this allows funds to be readily accessible.	
Sale of ISSP assets	0
2023 ISSP Grant Income (excluding rollovers)	\$1,453,231.72

Table 1b Other funding used to support Indigenous students in 2023 (excluding GST)⁴

Item`	(\$)
A. Other non-ISSP funds ⁵	
Other funding provided under HESA ⁶	157,343
Other Commonwealth Government funding	1,474,141
Funds derived from external sources ⁷	205,750
Total of other non-ISSP funds for 2023	\$1,837,234

Certification

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Table 1c ISSP Grant Expenditure on support for Indigenous students during 2023 (excluding GST) ⁸

Item ⁹	Actual ISSP (\$) ¹⁰
Scholarships from flexible ISSP funding	175,001.00
Salaries for staff working on ISSP activities ¹¹	1,042,503.00

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Tutorial Assistance, Pastoral Care, Outreach activities, cultural competency strategies etc (non-salary components)	487,832.00
Travel – domestic (airfares, accommodation & meals)	28,784.00
Travel – international (airfares)	0
Travel – international (accommodation and meals)	0
Conference fees and related costs ¹²	0
ISSP Asset purchases made during 2023 ¹³	0
A. Total Expenditure of ISSP 2023 Grant (excluding expenditure from all rollovers into 2023)	\$1,734,120.00
B. Unexpended 2023 ISSP funds <i>approved</i> for rollover into 2024 grant year¹⁴	\$530,467.25
C. Unexpended 2023 ISSP funding to be <i>returned</i> to the NIAA	0
2023 ISSP funding committed (A + B + C) ¹⁵	\$2,264,587.25

2. Rollovers

Table 2 Rollovers ¹⁶

			The two options below should total unspent funds for that line	
	Project Funds Rolled over (\$)	Project Funds Expended/committed ¹⁷ (\$)	Excess Option 1: Unspent funds to be rolled into 2024 ¹⁸ (\$)	Excess Option 2: Unspent funds to be returned to the NIAA ¹⁹ (\$)
2021 funds rolled over into 2023 - please complete column for Option 1 or 2 for any unspent funds	526,137.00	280,887.75	245,249.25	0.00
2022 funds rolled over into 2023 - please complete column for Option 1 or 2 for any unspent funds	285,218.00	0.00	285,218.00	0.00
Unexpended 2023 Funds (From Table 1c, Rows B and C)			530,467.25	0.00
Total funds approved for rollover into 2024 or to be returned ²⁰			530,467.25	0.00

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3. Goods and Services Tax

Table 3 Goods and Services Tax (GST) paid under ISSP - 1 January – 31 December 2023²¹

1. GST received by you in 2023 as part of the Indigenous Student Success Program funding under the <i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i> ²²	\$0
2. GST remitted or committed for payment to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) (in the remittance instalments shown below)	\$0

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Amount remitted: \$ Date remitted: / /	Amount remitted: \$ Date remitted: / /	Amount remitted: \$ Date remitted: / /
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4. ISSP Assets

Table 4a ISSP Assets inventory ²³

Asset Description/ category	Adjustable Value ²⁴	ISSP contribution ²⁵

Table 4b ISSP Assets - purchases during 2023 ²⁶

Asset Description/ category	Purchase Value	ISSP contribution

Table 4c ISSP Assets - disposals during 2023

Asset Description/ category	Adjustable value	Disposals/ Sale Price ²⁷	ISSP component ²⁸	Disposals Age ²⁹

5. Endorsement of the Financial Acquittal³⁰

As an Authorised Officer, I understand that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2023 Financial Acquittal supported and initialled by Authorised Officer:

Name:	JODIE BANFIELD		
Title:	CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER		
Phone:	03 9479 1090	Email:	j.banfield@latrobe.edu.au
Signed:			Date: 10/04/2024

INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM 2023 CERTIFICATION

Complete this certification after reading the completed 2023 Performance Report and 2023 Financial Acquittal for the Indigenous Student Success Program.

I certify that:

- (i) the Institution has met the eligibility requirements of the Indigenous Student Success Program as set out in the Indigenous Student Success Program guidelines and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*; and
- (ii) the 2023 Indigenous Student Success Program Performance report presents an accurate summary of the Institution's use of program funds and of other activities undertaken by the Institution to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student and staff outcomes; and
- (iii) the 2023 Indigenous Student Success Program financial acquittal represents a complete, true and correct summary of transactions that took place during 2023 under the Indigenous Student Success Program; and
- (iv) Indigenous Student Success Program funds, and any interest earned or royalties/income derived from these funds, was expended on activities consistent with the Indigenous Student Success Program guidelines and the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

I understand that:

- (i) the Minister or the Minister's delegate may seek further information to support this certification; and
- (ii) the information contain in this report may be shared with Universities Australia; and
- (iii) in the event that I have not remitted GST paid under the Agreement to the Australian Taxation Office, that it is my obligation to remit those amounts, as required under the *A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999*; and
- (iv) it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

Certification recommended by the university's Indigenous Governance Mechanism:

Name:

Title:

Signed: Date:

Certification made by Vice-Chancellor or equivalent delegate³¹:

Name:

Title:

Signed: Date:

Additional information for completing the template

- ¹ The financial tables have a dual purpose of itemising actual income and expenditure associated with the ISSP in 2023, as well as estimating other funds and expenditure supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the university. The information in tables 1a, 1b and 1c helps NIAA recognise the commitments your institution is making to lift and sustain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes. Please feel free to add additional "item" lines as required.
- ² Do not include rollovers in ISSP 2023 Grant amount. Prior year's rollover figures to be included in Table 2.
- ³ Interest earned on ISSP is considered to be ISSP funding and must be used in accordance with the ISSP Guidelines.
- ⁴ Please estimate the funds available if exact amounts are not known.
- ⁵ Please insert additional lines if the listing below do not suit your university's arrangements.
- ⁶ Please include funding provided under the Commonwealth Grants Scheme and Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program.
- ⁷ Examples of other funding are philanthropic donations, other student payments, business income etc.
- ⁸ Where applicable, figures provided in this table must be consistent with the figures provided in the institution's 2023 Performance Report.
- ⁹ Please insert additional lines if the listing below do not suit your university's arrangements.
- ¹⁰ List the expenditure of the income listed in Table 1a, not including the funding rolled over from previous years (this is detailed in Table 2).
- ¹¹ If the staff member works on non-ISSP specific activities, only record the pro-rata amount that reflects the amount of time the staff member worked on ISSP-specific activities. Include expenditure on salaries for staff that provide tutorial assistance. May include pro-rata expenditure on salaries for staff time spent monitoring and recording tutoring and student withdrawals.
- ¹² Costs may include, but are not limited to, registration fees, presentation fees, equipment costs etc.
- ¹³ Assets are defined in the *Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017*, and are items that have an individual value of \$5,000 or more.
- ¹⁴ This should match the figure in Table 2.
- ¹⁵ This figure should equal the Grand total in Table 1a
- ¹⁶ All rollovers have to be agreed with the NIAA and listed in a relevant determination, check with NIAA if you are unsure of your rollover information.
- ¹⁷ For 2021 and 2022 funds rolled into 2023, the amount included here should be the amount expended in 2023.
- ¹⁸ This is the amount of the rollover not expended that has been approved to be rolled over into 2024.
- ¹⁹ This is the amount of the rollover not expended and not rolled over into 2024. NIAA will issue an invoice for any amounts listed in this column.
- ²⁰ Total funds in this row should equal the unspent ISSP balance in the Providers bank account at 31 Dec 2023. ²¹ If GST is not paid to you, do not complete Table 3. If GST is paid to you, the amount of GST funding included in each payment is set out in a Recipient Created Tax Invoice (RCTI) issued to you at the time of the payment. State whether these amounts have been remitted to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) or committed for payment to the ATO.
- ²² This amount is stated on your Recipient Created Tax Invoices (RCTIs).
- ²³ Record all active assets acquired using ISSP funding. Active assets are those that have not been sold or disposed of. ²⁴ Adjustable value means the cost of an asset less its decline in value determined in accordance with the Australian Taxation Office Guide to Depreciating Assets 2023.
- ²⁵ The ISSP contribution should be recorded in the same ratio to the ISSP funds used to purchase the item (this includes any sale of an older asset trade in of old assets purchased with ISSP funding).
- ²⁶ Include any assets purchased during 2023 using ISSP funding that are valued over \$5,000. Any assets in this category should have been agreed with the NIAA prior to the item being purchased.
- ²⁷ Where an item has been stolen or destroyed, the words 'stolen' or 'destroyed' should be listed in the sale price column. ²⁸ The ISSP component should be the proportion of the sale price in the same ratio as the proportion of ISSP funding that contributed to the purchase of the asset.
- ²⁹ Where groups of assets are disposed of, an average age can be provided.
- ³⁰ Appropriate endorsement/authorisation is required to ensure compliance with the ISSP Guidelines and the 2024 Outcome Letter. If the organisation is subject to audit by an Auditor-General of the Commonwealth or State or Territory government this endorsement must be signed by the Chief Financial Officer or an executive officer with primary responsibility for the organisation's internal audit function (e.g. an internal auditor). If the organisation is not normally subject to audit by an Auditor-General, then the organisation's auditor should sign this authorisation.

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³¹ For the purposes of this certification, an equivalent delegate is either the Acting Vice Chancellor, a Deputy ViceChancellor, a Provost, or a relevant senior executive who reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

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