



INDIGENOUS STRATEGY

2022-2030

A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT OUR CAMPUSES ARE LOCATED ON THE UNCEDED LANDS OF MANY TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS IN VICTORIA. WE RECOGNISE THEIR ONGOING CONNECTION TO THE LAND AND VALUE THEIR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNIVERSITY AND WIDER AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.

La Trobe University is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, both as individuals and communities through teaching and learning, research and community partnerships across all of our campuses.

La Trobe University has campuses and undertakes teaching, learning and research activities in the traditional lands of the following people:

- Wurundjeri
- Boonerwung
- Jaara Jaara
- Latji Latji
- Barkindji
- Muthi Muthi
- Wiradjuri
- Dhudhuroa
- WayWurru
- Yorta Yorta
- Bangerang
- Taunerong.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present and thank them for their ongoing care of the land, skies and waterways of this beautiful country.

We acknowledge our Indigenous staff for their valuable contributions, dedication and ongoing support of our strategic objectives.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware this publication may contain the names and images of Indigenous people who have passed away.

Indigenous art by Dixon Patten of Bayila Creative

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INDIGENOUS STRATEGY 2022-2030

The University has worked in partnership with ABSTARR Consulting to undertake extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, beginning with Indigenous Elders and community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, and Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students.

After reflecting on the key themes raised through the consultation, this first iteration is our way of testing the direction for the strategy and we welcome your feedback on the:

- values and guiding principles
- targets
- priority reform areas.

PREPARED IN COLLABORATION WITH ABSTARR CONSULTING PTY LTD

We acknowledge the Indigenous communities' engagement across La Trobe's networks, and the participation from Indigenous community, staff and allies in the development of this strategic plan.

TERMINOLOGY

Indigenous peoples is used in this document when acknowledging the diverse populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this land. In this strategy 'Indigenous peoples' is used as the preferred term to represent First Nations Peoples of Australia and the Countries they belong to. These terms are interchangeable.



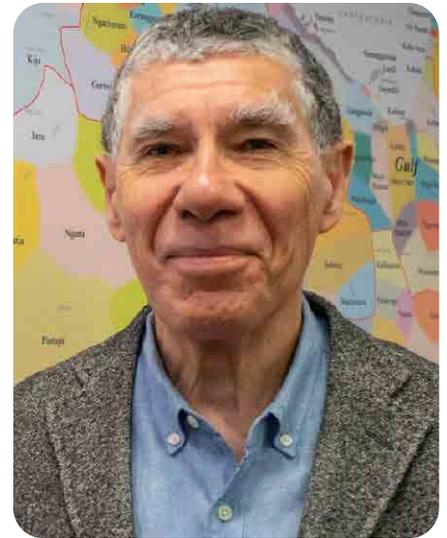
B. DEDICATION

La Trobe University's Indigenous Strategy is written in honour of Professor Dennis McDermott, a proud Koori man – his mother's family are from Gadigal land (inner Sydney) with connections to Gamilaroi country (norther-west NSW).

Professor McDermott was a psychologist, academic and poet, and La Trobe's inaugural Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous. During his career, Dennis wrote and lectured extensively in health and Indigenous education. He made lasting contributions to scholarship and practice through his teaching and research on the social determinants of Indigenous health, racism, incarceration, policy, equity, Indigenous social, spiritual and emotional wellbeing, workforce development and effectiveness of service delivery. Dennis dedicated himself to improving the lives and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. He sadly passed away fourteen months into his tenure at La Trobe University.

La Trobe University is committed to continuing Professor McDermott's work. His call to 'decolonise the academy' at La Trobe will resonate for years to come, and we will work hard to continue the work that Dennis began to foster Indigenous knowledge, values and ways in the academy. Dennis wanted to address both the academy's outward-facing contribution to national discourse and lead a decolonisation of university processes – and ultimately universities themselves.

As part of his legacy, Professor McDermott left La Trobe University with a toolkit to identify language and processes imbued with power imbalances, and to make change in ways that stop the perpetuation of racialised ways of operating. One way we can honour Dennis' life is to respond to issues including Indigenous health, education, decolonisation and wellbeing in a culturally safe and responsive way.



Professor Dennis McDermott Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous (2018-2020)

'THE CONSEQUENCES OF COLONISATION STILL LIVE WITH US.'

C. JOINT STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT/INTENT

La Trobe University is committed to improving the way we work with Indigenous communities, staff and students. We know our previous methods have met with mixed success, and we are committed to strengthening and building relationships, strategies and initiatives to contribute to closing the gaps in Indigenous communities' outcomes.

La Trobe University's Indigenous Strategy and Implementation Plan 2022-2030 represents our partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities we serve for the achievement of our joint strategic vision.

Our joint vision is:

An institution where Indigenous leadership, self-determination and knowledges thrive, for the benefit of Indigenous students, staff and communities.

We will achieve this by:

- giving back to Indigenous communities
- excellence in scholarship

- being a culturally safe institution
- being an employer and provider of choice for Indigenous staff and students.

We commit to enabling self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a right-based approach, both within and external to the University. We commit to Indigenous peoples' push for treaty, voice and truth, and intend to ensure the way we work aligns with these objectives and the objectives directed through the 2007 United Nations Declaration of the Rights for Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the 1999 Coolangatta Statement.

We intend to join with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities we serve to advance public intellectual conversations about the place of, and respect for, Indigenous knowledges and protocols in the social, political and economic life of Australia.

In partnership between Aboriginal communities and La Trobe University campuses, they will:

- collaborate connection in teaching, learning and research
- engage with Aboriginal community stakeholders to build and support students and staff
- participate in knowledge building in La Trobe education programs.



D. STATEMENT FROM PRO VICE CHANCELLOR INDIGENOUS

Giinagay girrwa,

The University's refreshed Indigenous Strategy seeks to continue La Trobe's long tradition of authentically partnering with Indigenous Australians and their communities. We will do this by strengthening the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to determine their own futures, respectfully supporting the stewardship of Indigenous knowledges, nurturing the next generation of Indigenous graduates and scholars, and empowering Indigenous leaders. These partnerships are for all students and staff of La Trobe to inform everyone of the dignity and beauty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

This strategy breathes life into the University's enduring commitment to walk with First Nations Australians as we continue the process of reconciliation, truth telling and treaty making. The University fully commits to the principles of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, and acknowledges our important role as Victoria's only state-wide institution of higher education to further the treaty process.

La Trobe's Indigenous Strategic Plan ended in 2020 and through loss and a pandemic we have re-envisioned this plan to build on the history of partnerships with Indigenous communities across Victoria and beyond. La Trobe identifies with the values of being connected, innovative, accountable and caring. These principles are embedded throughout this community-directed strategy, and the strategy's seven priority areas encompass these values with commitment and actions to achieve these priorities.

La Trobe has the opportunity to strengthen our approach to supporting Indigenous scholarships through decolonising the curriculum and graduating the next generation of



Indigenous leaders across a spectrum of fields. The pandemic deeply impacted Indigenous Australians across Victoria, and this strategy seeks to position La Trobe as a culturally safe institution of learning and discovery. We remain committed to supporting social change by leveraging the power of education to build generational capacity.

As a proud Gumbaynggirr man from the Donovan's of Nambucca Heads who grew up in western Sydney, I am committed to working with Victorian Indigenous communities to achieve the goals articulated in this strategy. With campuses located across the lands of at least a dozen traditional owners, and an increasing cohort of students learning across Australia and the world, La Trobe has a unique opportunity to meet our obligations to Indigenous Australians. I will be guided through the directions of our First Nations communities in

developing collaborative understandings through student support, research and teaching. These efforts will better support and inform all students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and allow these understandings to be projected into the workplaces of our future La Trobe graduates.

Through maintaining the values of our Indigenous Strategy, La Trobe is committed to supporting social change as the country nears this critical juncture. We will strive to create an institution where Indigenous leadership, self-determination, Indigenous knowledges and social justice thrive, for the benefit of Indigenous students, staff and communities.

**Associate Professor Michael Donovan
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous)**

E. BACKGROUND & STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This strategy has been developed by extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders, beginning with Indigenous Elders and community members, Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees, Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the Indigenous Strategy & Education Committee. The strategy aligns with the La Trobe University Strategic Vision 2030, particularly that the University will continue to decolonise curricula and embed Indigenous knowledge and perspectives across our courses.

In addition to aligning with La Trobe University's strategic vision, this strategy aligns with, and draws on, the following documents and reforms:

- Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022–2025
- National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australia Universities
- Indigenous Student Success Report 2020 ISSP Performance
- La Trobe University's Indigenous Employment Strategy
- La Trobe University's Research and Industry Engagement Plan
- Closing the Gap priority reforms
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
- Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (Treaty Act)

WE PARTICULARLY DRAW ON UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS STRATEGY 2022-2025, INCLUDING COMMITMENTS TO:

- commitment
- empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- acknowledgement of their sovereignty as First Peoples
- zero tolerance of racism
- truth-telling
- cultural safety
- respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique knowledges
- accountability for the use of Indigenous knowledge and cultures
- true partnership – giving voice to Indigenous people in decision-making that affects them
- equality of opportunity and outcome as a central objective of policy and practice
- resourcing
- capacity building.

F. VALUES & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

La Trobe University understands that the values and principles important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are critical to improving higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

La Trobe University's values will continue to anchor our strategic efforts:

- inclusiveness, diversity, equity and social justice
- pursuing excellence and sustainability in everything we do
- championing our local communities in Melbourne's north and regional Victoria
- being willing to innovate and disrupt the traditional way of doing things.

In addition to these values, the following guiding principles were developed through consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and communities. These principles form the lens through which this strategy has been developed.

- **Self-determination:** commitment to the rights-based principles asserted in United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and commitment to the principles and goals of Victoria's attempts to produce the first modern treaty/treaties with Traditional Owners in Victoria through the Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (Treaty Act). This means we view traditional owners as sovereign landlords and knowledge holders with whom we negotiate with, rather than merely as another cohort we seek to include.
- **Respect:** understanding that Indigenous knowledges are not commodities for western research institutions to co-opt or own, but rather, represent opportunities to learn from each other, with respect for Indigenous data sovereignty, protocols and ethics, to the benefit of all.
- **Indigenous leadership:** commitment to empowering Indigenous staff, students and community voices as leaders in strategy and quality assurance, not merely as advisors or operational functionaries.
- **Shared decision-making:** commitment to achievable and measurable governance and structural arrangements that elevates Indigenous community representatives to joint decision-makers with the institution.





G. OUR TARGETS

La Trobe University understands that the values and principles important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are critical to improving higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The plan presents an important opportunity for La Trobe University to make substantive and significant progress. Through the priority areas listed below, we will meet the objectives of this plan and measure our success against the following targets:

- achieve parity in retention, progression and success for all Indigenous students studying at the University
- achieve population parity for Indigenous graduate researcher retention and success
- exceed population parity for Indigenous student participation at all study levels
- exceed population parity for Indigenous employment at the University
- achieve parity in Indigenous academic career progression
- establish and maintain an Elders Advisory group and Indigenous Advisory body
- all staff (professional and academic) participate in cultural safety awareness training to better engage with Indigenous understandings in their work practices.

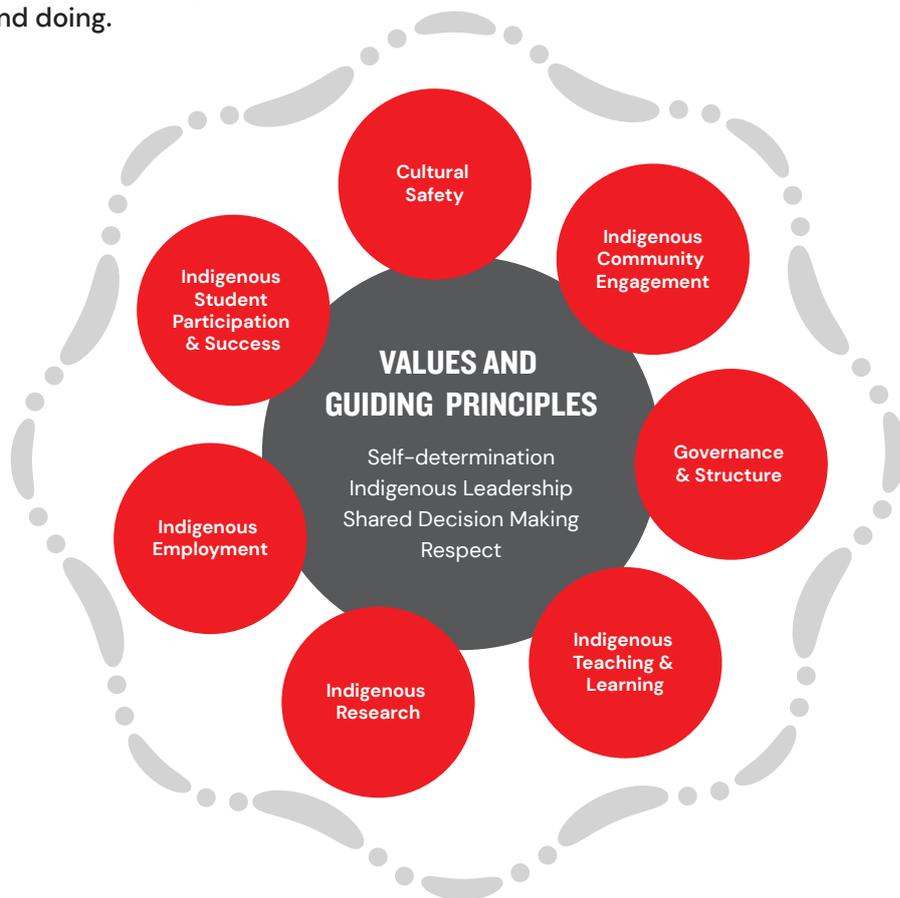


H. PRIORITY REFORM AREAS

This strategy is a living document which will inform the work that we do and our commitment to embedding Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

With a focus on seven priority reform areas we will ensure the values and guiding principles are actioned and implemented. They are:

1. Cultural safety
2. Indigenous community engagement
3. Governance and structure
4. Indigenous education, teaching and learning
5. Indigenous research
6. Indigenous employment
7. Indigenous student participation and success



PRIORITY REFORM 1:

CULTURAL SAFETY

La Trobe University acknowledges the cultural load placed upon our Indigenous staff members and students in dealing with racism, ignorance and unconscious bias. La Trobe University strives to create a community that is safe, supportive and inclusive and will not tolerate racism in any form. We have a responsibility to ensure that our Indigenous staff and students are supported and will take meaningful steps to ensure all staff and students engage with training to improve their cultural understanding and create campus environments that are culturally safe.

COMMITMENTS:

- create culturally safe campuses for Indigenous faculty, community members and students to come together
- all University staff and students will engage in mandatory training for both staff and students to develop cultural awareness, cultural capability and cultural safety
- all University staff will align their work practices with culturally safe understandings and maintain a culturally safe environment.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- celebrate and promote the achievements of our Indigenous staff, students and community
- showcase and promote Indigenous culture, history, language and art in the design, naming and planning of our physical campus spaces, website presence and internal and external communications through appropriate consultation with Aboriginal communities
- develop and implement a cultural safety framework for the University that supports us to realise our vision and contributes to the self-determination of Indigenous peoples
- develop a culturally safe and supportive approach to the reporting and response to racism and implement practices to maintain zero tolerance to racism
- review the Wominjeka La Trobe module with a view to developing mandatory cultural safety, awareness and capability training for students and staff
- provide opportunities for Indigenous Elders and community members to engage in university events and activities that extend beyond significant Indigenous days.

PRIORITY REFORM 2:

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The University acknowledges that Indigenous Elders and communities play an integral role in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that outcomes can be achieved through local decision-making and strengthened partnerships.

We will build collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships between the University and Indigenous communities to support our communities to achieve their vision of success, and to continuously improve the operations of the University to maximise the success of our Indigenous students, staff and communities.

COMMITMENTS:

- La Trobe will establish true partnerships and collaborations with Indigenous communities with a view to being a partner of choice for our communities, with particular focus to La Trobe's teaching, learning and research partnerships
- La Trobe will support the prosperity of Indigenous communities and local Indigenous businesses
- La Trobe pledges support for the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and is committed to treaty, voice and truth.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- establish a Council of Elders that will provide strategic and cultural advice to the Vice-Chancellor and University on a range of matters including Indigenous access, participation and success in education, research and employment – being aligned with the principles of Treaty, Voice and Truth
- establish genuine partnerships and recognition of local Indigenous communities' sovereignty and prior occupation of the lands on which La Trobe campus reside through coordinated partnerships with the Office Indigenous Strategy and Education
- develop an Indigenous Community Engagement model and protocols for the University to support our engagement with community and Indigenous stakeholder organisations
- foster a community of Indigenous leaders who are alumni of the University
- develop and embed an Indigenous Procurement framework and processes
- develop regular local Indigenous community meetings to discuss community needs and partnership between La Trobe and how best to support and give back to community
- raise awareness within our University community of the Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and advocate for and support our Indigenous communities as our community engages with truth telling and treaty.





PRIORITY REFORM 3:

GOVERNANCE & STRUCTURE

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 2022–2025.⁷

COMMITMENTS:

- extend the engagement and opportunity for Indigenous people to participate in the governance and strategic work of the University
- develop formal mechanisms to bring Indigenous community voices to be presented in advice to La Trobe University directions
- invest in Indigenous leadership and provide meaningful ways to support the advancement of Indigenous people as students, graduates, researchers and staff.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in University governance
- include the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous as a standing member of the Senior Executive Group
- embed measurable targets in all school and divisional business plans that directly connect to the aspirations of this plan, and ensure accountability of our shared responsibility
- establish an Indigenous Strategy Committee chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous that will oversee the implementation of this plan and be comprised of representatives from across the portfolios and schools
- establish an Indigenous Advisory Board comprised of Indigenous Elders and community representatives from all campus communities to provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous on matters of strategy and community engagement
- report regularly to the Indigenous advisory bodies and community on our progress against this plan
- invest in Indigenous senior leadership capability in all schools through the establishment of a Deputy Dean (Indigenous) role.

PRIORITY REFORM 4:

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

La Trobe University is committed to decolonising the curriculum in a way that empowers Indigenous communities, and to ensuring the cultural safety of our teaching and learning pedagogies. We aim to ensure higher education is accessible to Indigenous communities, and to improve the level of knowledge and understanding of Indigenous people and communities to all La Trobe students. Through engaging with Indigenous histories and cultures across all aspects of La Trobe educational programs, we will inform all students about Indigenous Australia about the wealth of Indigenous knowledges that can be connected to their disciplines.

COMMITMENTS:

- decolonise the curriculum and support the embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in all courses
- develop our teaching workforce to ensure they can design and deliver inclusive curriculum and teaching
- support schools to develop partnerships with Indigenous communities and Indigenous discipline authorities/organisations.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- implement a University-wide Indigenous education advisory committee, co-chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Academic Director Indigenous Education
- develop targeted professional development to support academics to embed Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum and better understand Indigenous teaching and learning styles, and Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing
- increase Indigenous staff (casual and ongoing academic) recruitment and career development to deliver representation and true partnerships across disciplines
- recruit and support Indigenous curriculum developers to work with academics, Elders and Indigenous communities to design authentic learning activities and embed Indigenous knowledges
- systematically embed Indigenous knowledges and experience across all fields of study and courses within La Trobe educational programs.

PRIORITY REFORM 5:

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

La Trobe University has a well established and highly respected suite of Indigenous research activities. Through the Research 2030 Strategy, the University will continue to progress our research through the lens of our focus areas:

- sustainable food and agriculture
- resilient environments and communities
- healthy people, families and communities
- understanding and preventing disease
- social change and equity.

Indigenous research cuts across all research themes due to Indigenous researchers' holistic understandings, Indigenous knowledges and approaches. We will work with our researchers and communities to expand research that makes a difference to our communities.

La Trobe University is committed to embedding the guiding principles set out 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.

COMMITMENTS:

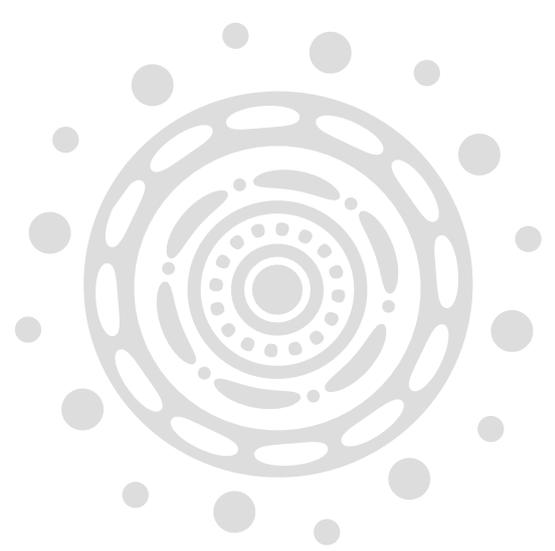
- increase opportunities for Indigenous peoples to develop their research careers
- increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led projects that have positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- establish the La Trobe University Indigenous Research Centre, with a view to supporting and connecting Indigenous researchers and those engaged in Indigenous community led research
- encourage appropriate and beneficial research of Indigenous issues, ensuring transdisciplinary research is developed in partnership with Indigenous communities
- develop training, protocols and support for researchers and students to ensure all research is undertaken in a manner that demonstrates cultural competence
- continue to expand the Dennis McDermott Scholarship program
- 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
- develop a framework and supporting processes that addresses Indigenous data sovereignty and research ethics
- build Indigenous higher degree research (HDR) networks to guide students in engaging research through appropriate Indigenous research processes and protocol.

PRIORITY REFORM 6:

INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT



La Trobe University acknowledges and thanks our Indigenous employees for their outstanding contributions and commitments to our University. We value the contributions our Indigenous staff make to enriching the experiences of our students, and acknowledge the cultural load they hold on behalf of their community and the University.

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

COMMITMENTS:

- create opportunities for Indigenous staff to develop their careers and progress within the University and beyond
- ensure 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 OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- increase employment opportunities across all levels of professional, academic and executive classifications for Indigenous people
- review recruitment and selection policy processes to 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 to fulfill priorities across schools and faculty in relation to Indigenous understandings.
- support the capacity building and career progression of Indigenous staff contributing towards embedding Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum.



PRIORITY REFORM 7:

INDIGENOUS STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS

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.

COMMITMENTS:

- raise the aspiration and participation of Indigenous Australians in higher education
- further enhance the programs and strategies that directly improve student retention, progression and completion
- provide financial support to all Indigenous students through our comprehensive scholarships program.

TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY WILL:

- further develop and embed the Indigenous Student Advising program to provide development support to all Indigenous students studying at La Trobe
- embed a comprehensive approach to supporting Indigenous student engagement, retention and completion across all campuses, led by the Indigenous Strategy and Education team with broad accountability and support from relevant areas across the University
- position RISE with La Trobe as the core Indigenous pathways program for school leaver and mature age Indigenous cohorts, with well-established links to Aspire and a tailored program of support for students through a variety of pathways, including enabling and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- provide guaranteed and subsidised accommodation for Indigenous students wishing to live on campus
- create a vibrant student engagement program with opportunities for students to build social connections and celebrate success
- provide tailored course and career advice to students that meets their aspirations and ensures they exit with a qualification wherever possible.







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