



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Success *Belonging Strategy*

2020 - 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' deep spiritual connection to Country, and in continuing the university's commitment to reconciliation, it is customary to acknowledge Country as we pass through it. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the First Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways where Australian Catholic University campuses are located, and we thank them for their continued custodianship.



Foreword from the Vice-Chancellor and President

At Australian Catholic University (ACU), we are guided by the fundamental values of truth, academic excellence and service. ACU is a young, publicly funded Australian university, and we rank among the top Catholic universities worldwide. Our institution has a significant presence, with seven campuses around Australia – including a new campus in Blacktown, New South Wales – as well as a campus in Rome, Italy, and more than 200 partner universities on six continents.

ACU has long supported the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to take their rightful place in Australia, as Australia's First Peoples. Access to quality higher education underpinned by academic, spiritual, pastoral and cultural support is core to our university's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This Belonging Strategy commits ACU to the next phase of our journey: to be a leading public university in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education. We are focused on embedding excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education at ACU, as well as embracing the connectedness of valuing Indigenous knowledge and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural beliefs and practices.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Craven'.

Professor Greg Craven AO GCSG
Vice-Chancellor and President



Truth in love

THE ACU MISSION

At ACU, our mission and identity as a Catholic university is central to everything we do. This Belonging Strategy is grounded in the university's mission, vision and values.

ACU's approach to learning and teaching, our welcoming and inclusive on-campus cultures, and our commitment to building a just society are all grounded in our mission. We believe our role as a university is to inspire each of our students, staff and graduates, and to equip them with the education and skills they need to develop as a whole person so they can contribute to, and make a difference in, their communities.

The Catholic Church in Australia has had a longstanding engagement with and outreach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This relationship has evolved beyond providing the basic social, health and education needs of this community, through the work of the early Catholic missionaries and early educators. It has progressed to a deeper understanding and recognition of the human dignity of Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Australians, including the valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, Indigenous spiritualities, cultures and cultural identity, health, education and employment parities.

This Belonging Strategy will enhance ACU's strategic approach in engaging collaboratively and building sustainable partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. Together with ACU's Strategic Plan 2020-2023, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Report, and the ACU Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2019-2021, this strategy is intended to facilitate deeper engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' success at ACU. It helps ensure ACU will create the structural change required to make a difference. All our students and staff will benefit from culturally inclusive learning and teaching, workplace practices, and research opportunities.



Our students

ACU embraces its responsibilities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recommits to greater collaboration and a focused whole-of-university effort. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student participation, retention and completion rates are key indicators in achieving Indigenous higher education success outcomes, and these are also aligned with ACU's Strategic Plan. Successful higher education outcomes enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be leaders within their own communities as well as the broader Australian community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the student-focused Indigenous Higher Education Units (IHEUs) provide a welcoming and culturally safe space on six ACU campuses:

- Yalbalinga (Place of Learning):
Strathfield and North Sydney campuses
- Weemala (Distant View):
Brisbane Campus
- Jim-baa-yer (To Learn – To Teach):
Melbourne and Ballarat campuses
- Dhara Daramoolen (Earth, Spirit):
Canberra Campus

Staff offer culturally sensitive support to promote student success. Students are supported to access ACU services including academic skills development, career development, pastoral care, student advocacy, counselling and disability services, and student enrichment opportunities.

“In the beginning, I found it a bit daunting traveling into the big smoke on my own and getting back into the role as a student was surreal. It was while studying at ACU that I realised my potential, and that I could combine my passion for education with my passion for my culture.”

Erin
Bachelor of Education Primary,
Indigenous Studies graduate and a proud
Wangaibon woman



Key objectives

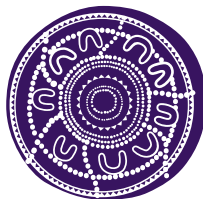
The objectives of ACU's Belonging Strategy are ambitious, enabled by a whole-of-university integrated approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' success in education and employment. An integral component in building successful higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at ACU is

the valuing and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowings and perspectives in our curricula, learning and teaching practices, and graduate attributes. This strategy highlights four key overarching objectives to build and sustain a culture of excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education at ACU.



Objective 1

Facilitate access to education and innovate for the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Objective 2

Facilitate and sustain a strong culture of inclusiveness.



Objective 3

Strengthen capabilities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.



Objective 4

Strengthen the cultural capabilities and competencies of ACU staff.

Outcomes



Objective 1

Facilitate access to education and innovate for the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Objective 2

Facilitate and sustain a strong culture of inclusiveness.

1.1

Increased access to education through collaboration with communities to innovate for new pathways and develop a university-wide commitment to an inclusive enrolment plan.

1.2

Evidence-based success is demonstrated through monitoring and continuous improvement, as well as enhanced student and staff participation.

1.3

Strengthened community engagement activities and increased placement and practicum opportunities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or communities.

1.4

Enhanced student leadership opportunities and capabilities.

2.1

Culturally inclusive practices are embedded in the course review process and development of new courses.

2.2

All students are able to demonstrate respect for and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

2.3

Increased confidence among non-Indigenous academics to design inclusive curricula, and to engage in and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and content.

Outcomes



Objective 3

Strengthen capabilities in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research.



Objective 4

Strengthen the cultural capabilities and competencies of ACU staff.

3.1

Increased participation and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher degree research (HDR) programs.

3.2

Strengthened culturally inclusive practices in research aligned with Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.

4.1

ACU is recognised as an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4.2

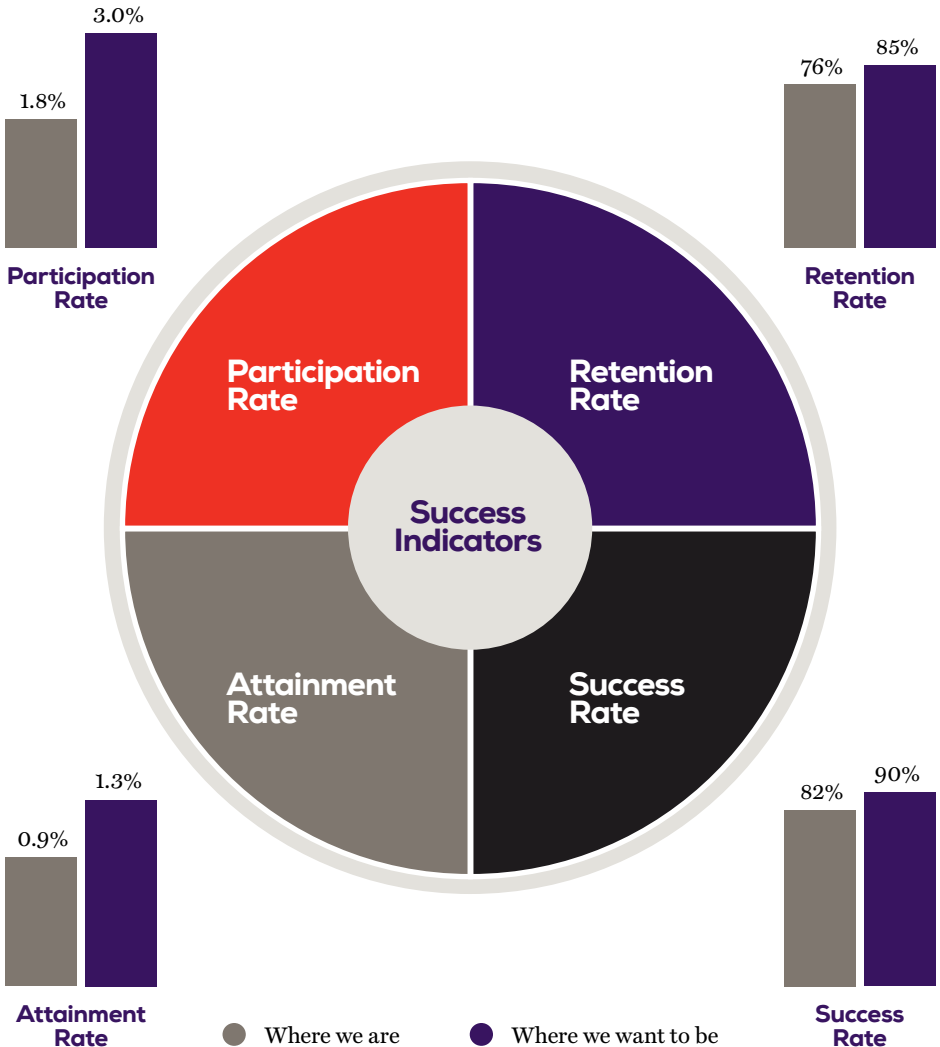
Strengthened staff cultural capabilities in learning and teaching through the development of university-wide culturally informed and inclusive teaching practices.

4.3

Collaboration with Human Resources and the Office of the Provost to build pathways that increase opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics.

Success indicators¹

Successful higher education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at ACU, demonstrated through participation, retention, success and attainment rates



¹ Department of Education, Skills and Employment Selected Higher Education Statistics 2018, Section 16 –Equity Performance Data

We acknowledge that this artwork was created exclusively for First Peoples by Gilimbaa.



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ACU

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