



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**NOTRE DAME**  
A U S T R A L I A

# Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Student Strategic Plan

2015-2018

## Introduction

The University of Notre Dame Australia (Notre Dame) is a distinctive national Catholic university with over 11,000 students across its campuses in Fremantle, Broome and Sydney. At Notre Dame, students are part of a learning community where they are appropriately supported in all parts of the learning journey. As set out in the University's Objects, Notre Dame is committed to the provision an excellent standard of pastoral care for students, teaching, scholarship and research and training for the professions. Notre Dame has one of the highest graduate employment rates in Australia.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at Notre Dame has been increasing thus highlighting the importance of developing a Strategic Plan to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Students to maximise retention and graduation rates.

Underpinned by the University's *Strategic Plan 2013 - 2016*, this *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Strategic Plan 2015- 2018* aims to not only increase the number of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolling in undergraduate and postgraduate courses at Notre Dame but also to facilitate their successful graduation. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates of Notre Dame will then engage meaningfully as leaders within the broader community.

Strategies to improve employment opportunities and career pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people are critical to a whole of University approach that recognises and builds on existing commitments to Indigenous peoples throughout Australia. This support for the process of having a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) promotes justice, recognition and the healing helping all Australians move forward creating a better understanding of Australia's past and how it effects between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Such strategies are to be addressed via separate but related strategic action plans.

## University's Strategic Plan 2013-2016

Notre Dame's *Strategic Plan 2013-2016* underpins this Strategic plan, specifically as related Strategic Goal 3

- 3.0 Active Community Engagement - The University will play an active role in the local, national and international community, by acknowledging at all times that it is a university "in the world" and "for the world". It will be known as a community leader and
- 3.1 Indigenous Reconciliation - Implementing practices and strategies that will promote the ideal of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community.

The goal for the University now is to build upon these aspirations to promote and engage the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community more solidly. Engagement will be achieved

by implementing practices and strategies that will promote the ideal of Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community. Notre Dame values the importance of a University wide approach that recognises and builds on existing commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and respect for Indigenous peoples throughout Australia.

## **The Provision of an excellent standard of pastoral care for students**

As a Catholic university committed to the provision of excellent pastoral care, the University Notre Dame Australia seeks to promote and enhance the wellbeing of each individual student in order to help them achieve wholeness as persons. The University does this through the provision of an integrative education, a personalised educational experience for every student, and providing opportunities and an environment in which students are encouraged to grow and develop in all aspects of their life: personal, social, physical, mental and spiritual.

## **Strategic Objectives**

### **Objective One: Increase and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture across the University**

As a University, Notre Dame encourages various cultural activities and events across its campuses and endeavours to increase the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in learning and teaching for all students. The implementation and continuation of cultural awareness training for staff has provided the opportunity for the University to grow to embrace and understand Aboriginal culture and diversity.

By continuing to build upon this important initiative, all staff have an opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.

#### Strategies:

- ❖ Implement cultural awareness training for new and current staff and students on all campuses as part of their orientation and induction
- ❖ Implement culturally appropriate programs and activities for staff and students
- ❖ Promote knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, health and social events
- ❖ Establish cultural learning spaces within the University by use of symbols and artwork representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- ❖ Establish cultural learning and shared spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff to promote cultural learnings and appropriate support environments
- ❖ Develop relevant teaching opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff
- ❖ Increase support (financial or in-kind mentoring) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Degree by Research students

### Measures:

- ❖ Increased number of staff participating in Cultural Awareness Training
- ❖ Increased number of teaching resources addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture
- ❖ Increased number of staff acting as advocates and mentors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ❖ The number of staff and students interacting with and participating in cultural programs and events
- ❖ The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff involved in teaching
- ❖ Number of Theses published that are based on and/or promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reconciliation.

### **Objective Two:        Improve the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

To achieve this goal, a series of culturally supportive and approved on-campus student Recruitment and Retention Programs (RRP) need to be developed. The RRP will need to be designed in collaboration with staff in appropriate Schools and Offices and with those who teach Aboriginal studies and are informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working.

### Strategies:

- ❖ Foster the provision of scholarships, bursaries and cadetships which allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students access to enhance and support their learning
- ❖ Develop strong relationships with secondary schools which are interactive and engaging with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their teachers, career counsellors and the Notre Dame Prospective Students Offices
- ❖ Ensure access to enabling and tutor support programs provided by the Academic and Enabling Support Centre (AESC) to assist in monitoring student progress
- ❖ Build culturally safe student recruitment and retention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ❖ Increase support (financial or in-kind mentoring) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Degree by Research students
- ❖ Lift the career aspirations and goals amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending University events, career expos and university learning and teaching workshops

### Measures:

- ❖ Student demographics attending Notre Dame reflecting increased numbers of students identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- ❖ Numbers of high school visits by students to Notre Dame to access the *A Day in the Life of a University Student* (ADITL) programs
- ❖ AESC tutor support and number of tutors that are appropriate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student needs
- ❖ Development of culturally appropriate study support programs

- ❖ Development of culturally appropriate resources promoting courses, student associations and campus activities
- ❖ Student placement support appropriate to course
- ❖ Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student volunteers at relevant student campus events and career days
- ❖ Vocational Education and Training student numbers enrolling in VET courses
- ❖ Flexibility built into Broome VET programs to suit each student at their level of learning
- ❖ Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Notre Dame graduates in open days, recruitment/marketing activities, tutoring and student mentoring

**Objective Three: Establish a strong culture of pastoral care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students**

As the University continues to build, one element of the next stage of its development is to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student numbers. Notre Dame is renowned for its excellence in teaching and pastoral care of its students and it is critical to continue this tradition by implementing further strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Strategies:

- ❖ Develop strong working relationships with external Aboriginal Education Support Staff and high school staff who coordinate student attendance at University events
- ❖ Develop opportunities for regular staff and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student contact
- ❖ Build upon mentoring programs for school leavers and also for mature aged students
- ❖ Provide nominated Aboriginal Student Liaison Academics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who can provide additional pastoral care, ongoing support and culturally appropriate assistance

Measures:

- ❖ Increase the number of staff engaged as mentors
- ❖ Increase the number of Schools with Aboriginal Student Liaison Academics.
- ❖ Increase the number of staff involved in cultural activities, events and awareness training
- ❖ Improvement of student retention rates during each semester
- ❖ Increase the number of contacts made between the Prospective Student Offices and high schools
- ❖ ADITL programs designed for the specific high school year groups at all campuses

**Effective: 11 December 2015**