

Indigenous Student Support in Australian Universities

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Introduction

Indigenous Student Support in Australian universities is essential to ensure that Indigenous students are able to wholly engage with both university life and their programs of study. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are first in family to enrol in undergraduate degrees need a comprehensive support program to ensure they are retained in their studies and are able to seek assistance to progress. In the majority of instances they also need assistance from student support staff to deal with their personal difficulties and be capable of making considered decisions to solve their problems. This may come in the form of referrals, guidance in how to resolve such matters and how to contact organisations or services that can deal with their difficulties. Indigenous students seek assistance from their support centres for advice that encompasses all aspects of their lives. The staff of the Indigenous support services that provide the advice and have the appropriate rapport with the students are vital in ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students complete their studies.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support goes beyond academic skills, tutorial assistance, and enrolment matters. Indigenous students require support programs that are also areas of cultural safety so that they can have academic, social, cultural and emotional support as they progress through their years of study.

Being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student in a university brings with it not only learning how to adjust to a new mode of learning, but also how to deal with institutions that are highly competitive, emphasise western modes of learning, and are dominated by non-Indigenous Australian class and culture. The students are also confronted by unconscious, covert and overt racism. The Student Support programs therefore become their place of safety. It does not impair their progression to have such safe havens. It does provide them with the strength and skills to adjust to university life and to manage their lives to reach their goals.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous employees who work within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support programs or centres are the first point of contact for the students. The Centres are where they first encounter the university as a place of learning and a bureaucracy. The support personnel are essential in ensuring that the students learn educational and life management skills to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Wollongong University's AUQA report noted that; *"A sense of community and support services for Indigenous students are provided by the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, which is a safe and valued home base for Indigenous students. The Centre, on the main campus, offers 24/7 access to a student computer laboratory, kitchen and lounge. It runs an Indigenous Orientation Program. The Audit Panel notes the positive, family atmosphere at the Centre. The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme appears to be operating well at [U.O.W], and Centre staff noted recent improvements in student pass rates. A recent review of Indigenous services proposes a restructure to relocate the Centre's academic activities to mainstream academic areas, to allow the Centre to focus on recruitment of Indigenous students and their ongoing support at UOW."* Australian Universities Quality Agency 2011. Report of an Audit of University of Wollongong. AUQA Audit Report Number 116. p.21

Funding Models:

The Gillard government has allocated \$505 million from 2010-13 for boosting the participation of low socio-economic status students that should capture much of the indigenous cohort. But the bulk of that is being paid as a loading for low SES enrolments rather than for school outreach. Andrew Trounson. 2011. Support centre can hold back indigenous (sic) students. The Australian. 20/04/2011.

The Federal government funding compacts, which were introduced in 2009, arose out of the government's *Transforming Australia's Higher Education* reform agenda. They set defined targets for improvement in higher education. The compacts with the universities in teaching and learning were intended to improve the participation of low socio-economic students. However, in some instances it has complicated the potential for Indigenous students' enrolments to increase. Universities that did not identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as the focus of their compacts meant that they were rolled into the general low socio-economic classifications, such as rural students. It affected the potential for Indigenous students to gain places in the university system. The majority of students who enrol under such compacts are not Indigenous Australians. Rural and regional low socio-economic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in some states/territories where the Indigenous population is situated in urban and metropolitan locations are less likely to gain entry under the compacts. Indigenous students who are widely spread across rural locations and not identified as benefiting from the programs under the compacts results in little improvement in their participation in universities. It is imperative that Indigenous Support programs are able to have input into such compacts as Indigenous students of low-socio-economic status constitute the largest percentage of potential Indigenous enrolments. By subsuming Indigenous students within a general classification does not provide sufficient focus and service delivery to bring them into higher education.

Funding for Student Support Centres is based on enrolments from the previous year. For centres that are successful in increasing enrolments the funding for the majority of the study period falls short in meeting program and support needs for those additional students. This is especially challenging for smaller centres. When actual student numbers are recognised by DEEWR towards the end of the study periods and additional funds are released the centres are winding up their study period, and support as well as program activities are decreased. This funding model means that any strategic program planning cannot make the most efficient use of the actual EFTSL entitlement.

In addition, University financial calendars can run from January to December, at which time accounts are closed off and do not roll over. Thus, the majority of Indigenous Support Centres are disadvantaged at the end of each reporting period by having to return funds or seek to have their income for support adjusted. It would be useful if payments were made in advance based on the centres' projected enrolments for the forthcoming year. By introducing such a change the centre's planning would be able to make the best use of the support funds.

The ITAS (Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme) is a key program for all Centres. This one program has made a difference for Indigenous students over several decades. The funding model does not align with the policy and guidelines and the majority of Centres are again put in the situation of returning funds or seeking an adjustment. When students and staff are saying they need more tutoring in some areas but are prohibited to do so by policy or guidelines, and funds are then returned, change is clearly needed.

It would be helpful if ITAS guidelines were less prescriptive and allowed Centres to use the funds to best suit their cohort of students.

The officers at DEEWR provide advice to the support programs to meet their reporting requirements; however, it would benefit all parties if a consultation was held with the support centres in all universities to ascertain how the reporting requirements could be made more workable and still meet the needs of both government and the support centres.

Training for DEEWR employees that are new to positions in this division of the department should be comprehensive so that they have an understanding of the requirements and of the roles and responsibilities of the university Indigenous Support Centres. This would give greater clarity in responding to queries and requests in relation to funding from the centres. The universities are also on different calendars to that of the department. Some universities starts in February, e.g. University of Canberra, while others commence at the beginning of March, e.g. University of Sydney. The reporting on funding then places the support centres and the department in an extremely difficult position. The provision of the acquittals is distorted given the variations in each sector's financial timelines.

Student Scholarships:

The scholarships provided by the federal government for Indigenous students are critical, in some instances, for the students to be able to afford enrolling in the universities. All universities face the ever increasing issue of student accommodation needs. Affordability of housing and relocation costs for students is apparent in all states and territories. There is a necessity for co-ordination of the time at which the various government scholarships are open for application and the timing of the payments.

Students who have been successful in obtaining university controlled housing may not be able to move into their accommodation if the funds are not made available at the beginning of the semester. Alternatively, if students are seeking to live off-campus they are in desperate need of funds to pay bonds and rent well before they receive their payments. Indigenous students generally do not have families who can afford to assist them and they rely on the support centres and charities to help them. This creates additional stress on Indigenous students who are facing the challenges of entering university study while also struggling with the fundamental need for housing.

Some universities have found that in these situations students will forego their education until they feel able to afford further study. This can mean a permanent separation from the university system.

"Victoria has relatively few rural/remote schools and a relatively low level of Indigenous enrolments. It has a comparatively large percentage of students in secondary non-government schools, and it has tended to be at the forefront of the devolution of management and budgetary responsibility to the school level." Annett, P., Burke, G., Keating, J and O'Hanlon, C. 2011. Mapping Funding and Regulatory Arrangements across The Commonwealth and States and Territories. University of Melbourne. Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Administration:

The administration of Indigenous student support is not consistent across all Australian universities. Support programs may only be based on the delivery of the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme commonly referred to as ITAS. Some universities focus on teaching and research with an emphasis on enrolling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who may only require the provision of ITAS.

Indigenous tertiary preparation or academic skills development programs are not offered by all Australian universities. Those that do provide such courses and also take a holistic approach to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' needs go beyond the basics of academic educational development and emphasize cultural, social and life skills, as well as, academic development.

The administration of the Indigenous student support is dependent on meeting government requirements and regulations but is also affected by the university's own systems. Administration systems vary between universities and government

departments. It can be a complex operation to manage the reporting requirements to government and internally within the institutions of Indigenous student support data. Competing timelines, data collection, and complexity of reporting mechanisms can be frustrating and time consuming.

Staffing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support programs relies to a great degree on a small pool of Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers in universities. The variations in levels of experience, qualifications and skills can have a very positive result in, for example, retention. Those workers who are not as qualified may need professional development training, especially when they have a strong connection and affinity with Indigenous students' needs but lack the certification. Support workers who excel at their job generally require an ability to understand bureaucracies and the systems of administration within higher education. Their greatest skill is in being able to communicate with the students and with diverse groups of people. This can range from landlords, senior academics, financial services, public servants, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to name just a few. They also need to be able to manage the competing roles that the positions require. It is not necessary for all support staff to have a degree, but to have the assistance to gain professional training and recognition of the vital role they play in Indigenous higher education. The salary levels for support staff is not the same across the sector. The variations in salaries between teaching and administration positions lead to some experienced and capable staff being driven out of the higher education system and into the public or private sector in order to receive better salaries and conditions.

Structure of Student Support:

Indigenous student support operates differently across the universities in Australia. In some cases student support is within a larger Indigenous teaching, research and support centre, while other institutions may place the support program within a division of the university's administration, and a few universities separate the Indigenous academic teaching and research centre from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support unit.

There is no easy answer to where the Indigenous student support units should be placed. However, if the support centres are partnered with or a division of the Indigenous teaching and research arm then the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will be able to mix with both Indigenous academic staff, other students, while having the support program to aide them in planning their studies.

Participation

“expand partnerships between secondary schools, higher education institutions and Indigenous communities to develop strategies to attract, retain and successfully graduate Indigenous students across a broad spectrum of higher education courses” Fordham, Adrian M. and Schwab, RG (Jerry). 2007:61. Education, Training and Indigenous Futures CAEPR Policy Research: 1990–2007. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research. The Australian National University

In 2007 Fordham and Schwab called for partnerships between secondary schools, universities and Indigenous communities. This was taken up by some universities and has proven successful in addressing Indigenous student participation rates. For example, in the ACT, universities receive Principals’ recommendations from the local Senior High Schools/Colleges and these are an avenue for increasing Indigenous student participation in higher education. As many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not made aware of some of the opportunities available to assist them into universities there is a need to ensure that Indigenous students are at the forefront of student recruitment programs across all universities.

The recent partnership between Charles Darwin University and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education provides a pathway from school through to Vocational Education and Training and University studies. By expanding

Indigenous students' options in accessing higher education and establishing comprehensible mapping of pathways the likelihood of participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is increased.

Participation is a first step for Indigenous students. What are essential for the student's full participation in learning are support mechanisms that enable them to fully engage with their chosen fields of study. Support centres can provide verbal and documented outlines of the available programs of study, what is required in each program, and how to map the field of study to future employment. Unfortunately for some support centres the funding and internal communication within the institutions is not enabling these support activities to progress. One of the biggest obstacles that confronts support centres are the failures by universities to recognise the vital role that they, the centres, have in assisting students to work their way through the maze of paperwork, form filing, comprehension of universities terminology, and program requirements. Indigenous support centres are usually the translation sites for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to acquire an understanding of the systems that operate in the world of higher education.

Retention

Noble and Henderson in their study of transition and retention emphasized the need to *"address transition and retention issues, effective social integration and support has to accompany academic preparedness*. Noble, Karen and Henderson, Robyn (2011) "The Promotion of "Character" and its Relationship to Retention in Higher Education," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 36: Issue. 3, Article 4. Available at: <http://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol36/iss3/4/> accessed 4/1/2012

The retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is not solely dependent upon their ability to progress in their programs of study. As Asmar, Page and Radloff have identified 37% of Indigenous students contemplate leaving

university. It is not uncommon for the students to be near their end of their degree and not complete their units of study to graduate. One of the causes, anecdotally, is the pressure they experience financially, family responsibilities, and/or mental exhaustion from the trying to pursue their studies in an environment where they feel 'on the fringes' of the institution.

Support Centres are where students who are contemplating such action are able to access the encouragement and assistance to resolve their problems. It has been reported in the media that support centres are 'enclaves' where students lack the will to achieve. In reality, the support centres are the key to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving their aspirations.

Indigenous student support goes far beyond the development of academic skills. The staff of the Centres are utilised by students to develop their skills in cross-cultural interactions and to manage their lives so that they are competent and confident future citizens and employees. Generational disaffection with educational practice in schools and other institutions has an ongoing impact on Indigenous students whether they are school leavers or mature age. The Support Centres not only assist students to attain their aspirations but the staff also act as role models and cultural mentors.

Support is necessary to bring Indigenous students who have no generational experience of universities' culture or modes of learning, to have the skills to participate, be retained, and achieve successful outcomes. Support centres have consistently proven that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students need more than tutorial support. It is the Support Centres that provide advice on how to function as a student within the institution and how to manage their social, financial, and welfare concerns. The retention of the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is inextricably tied to the services they can access from their Indigenous Support Centres. As Asmar et al conclude, *"More data is needed on this aspect of Indigenous engagement since most surveys do not ask about Indigenous centres."*

“Around 37 per cent of Indigenous students and 29 per cent of non-Indigenous students report that they plan to or have seriously considered leaving their current institution before finishing their qualification. The authors note that only one in 50 Indigenous students deliberately plan to leave before completing, as opposed to considering leaving. /-Importantly, the analysis found that Indigenous students who report a high level of support from their institutions are significantly less likely to have departure intentions than those who report a low level of support. In one third of students’ comments referring to Indigenous issues, Indigenous centres were rated as among the ‘best aspects’ of how their universities engaged them in learning, leading the authors to conclude that such centres play a vital supporting role.” Asmar, Christine, Page, Susan and Radloff, Ali 'Dispelling myths: Indigenous students' engagement with university', AUSSE Research. Briefings, v.10 April 2011

Indigenous Student Support Models:

Mentoring:

Mentoring is considered by many as an effective means of assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to gain an understanding of university life, feel a part of the student community, and have a specific person or people who they can go to for advice and friendship. The role of mentors is one which requires, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, a period of training so that they can give professional and personable mentorship to the students. Indigenous students will respond to being mentored in a number of different ways. It is for those students who are in need of the one-to-one support so that they can manage their participation in the higher education system.

In Indigenous students in the support centres will often gravitate towards a mature age student or a senior student who knows the system and is actively engaged in community and university activities. These are their chosen mentors. It is difficult to direct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students to formally accept a mentor. It is due to many of the students seeing themselves as being independent because they are now studying at university. Mature age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not express a desire to have a mentor, and as one student stated to a support staff member, 'I am old enough to look after myself'. The support centre can ensure that there opportunities are available for the students to meet with others who have been through the experience of university life and enable them to choose their 'mentor' or friend that will support them. Griffith University has *Indigenous Cadetship Mentoring Program* which supports students who wish to gain a cadetship. There are mentors who work with the students to assist them in

achieving and continuing in their cadetships.

<https://app.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/mgmentoring/mentoring.php?pk1=1201> accessed 30.12.2011

Tutoring:

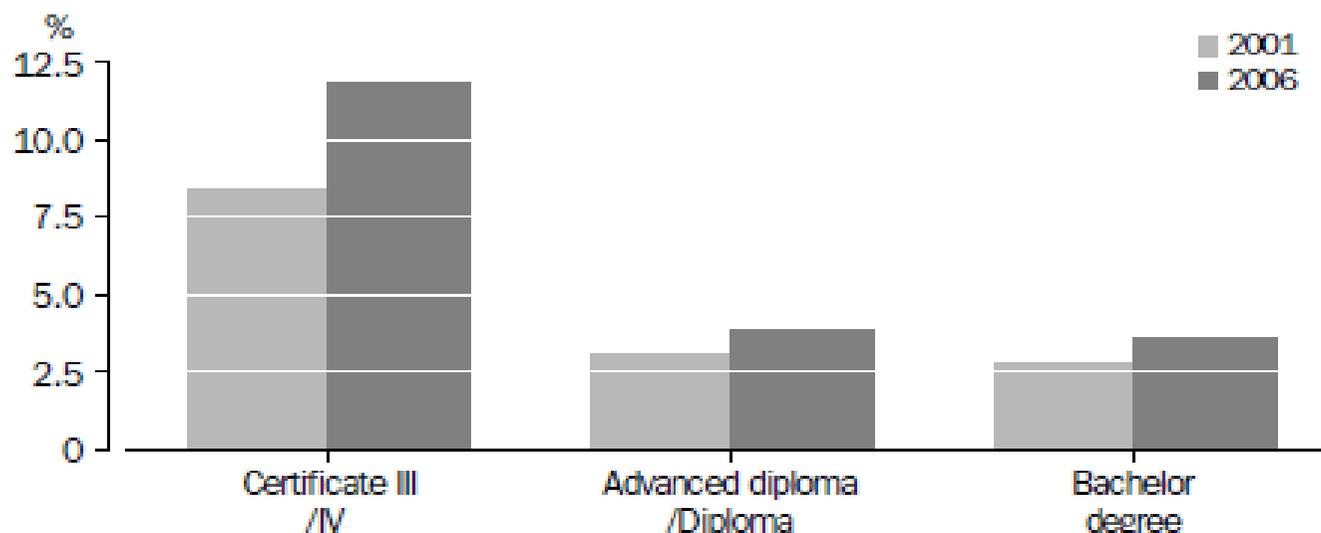
The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) is one of the most effective support tools in Indigenous higher education. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' use of ITAS tutors can be the difference between a student failing a unit of study or course, and achieving grades that they did not believe they could attain. All Indigenous support programs have ITAS tutoring available for their students. Where students may not wish to have a mentor they do want to have the assistance that the tutors provide.

One of the major problems for support programs is finding tutors who have the qualifications, communication skills and availability to undertake tutoring. It is also imperative that tutors are given a preparation course for their role as it is not only being able to teach the students but also not to develop a dependency relationship between themselves and the students.

ITAS tutors come from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and experiences which can be of benefit to the students, especially as they do not wish to be seen as failing in front of their peers. The tutors because they are seen as being separate from the group become both tutor and mentor. Shah and Widin in their study of Indigenous student satisfaction and retention claimed that the expenditure of federal government funds for Indigenous higher education strategies had failed to improve the participation rates of Indigenous students. Included in the strategies they mentioned was the Indigenous tutorial assistance scheme. Mashood Shah & Jacquie Widin. 2010. *Indigenous Students' Voices: Monitoring Indigenous Student Satisfaction and Retention in a Large Australian University*. *Journal of Institutional Research* 15(1), 28–41. 28.

Given the reliance on the scheme and the extensive use of the scheme to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students it would seem that the funds are contributing significantly to students achieving successful outcomes in their courses of study.

Post-secondary attainment by course level, Indigenous persons aged 20-64 years - 2001 and 2006



Source: ABS data available on request, 2001 and 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing

Tailored support:

Indigenous support programs that want to ensure the best outcomes for students aside from using the ITAS and other formal programs will provide a mixture of assistance to students. These range from seeking specific programs of study outside the host university to ensure that the students have the optimum avenues for completing their courses. It is not uncommon for support staff to communicate with Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics in other institutions to assist students. Support will be sought from individuals or organisations to address the needs of particular students. To ensure completing students are prepared for their graduation the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle, NSW, has

established a support officer for Indigenous students who are about to graduate to assist them as they exit the University. <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/students/stepping-out/get-prepared/indigenous-students.html> accessed 05.01.12

The work-integrated learning initiatives undertaken by universities place Indigenous students in traineeships where they can gain valuable experience and in some universities may be accredited with a unit of study for their time in the traineeship. They are required to complete a report and produce documentation from the organisation in which they were placed as to their achievements. A report on work integrated learning expressed the need for Indigenous Support Units to be recognized for their roles in the universities because they have comprehensive understanding of the issues 'faced by Indigenous students [and] should be consulted in any further investigations, as they are the ones most familiar with the issues faced by Indigenous students' as the Support Centres are also 'providers of WIL experiences'. They gave the example of how the Support programs assist students to gain cadetships and other work related employment. Patrick, Carol J., Peach, Deborah, Pocknee, Catherine, et al. 2009. *The WIL [Work Integrated Learning] report*. Final report to the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC)

Mature age Indigenous students are shown to be more strongly engaged with WIL (work integrated learning) opportunities. Cadetships, traineeships, work experience placements are a way in which students with family responsibilities are able to afford their studies while ensuring they have career options at the end of their course. ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research) reported that a briefing paper from the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE) revealed that Indigenous students are more engaged with WIL than non-Indigenous students. ACER eNews. Australian Council for Educational Research 2012. <http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/2011/05/indigenous-students-highly-engaged-with-university-study> accessed 07.01.2012

Outreach:

The majority of universities have outreach programs for Indigenous students. The University of Western Australia has a comprehensive outreach approach that includes enrolling students and future students. They provide Year 12 seminars as well as Science, Engineering and Health Camps for Years 9 to 11. These offerings are popular with most universities where they provide potential students with the experience of a university education. The success of the outreach programs fluctuates with the changing popularity of fields of study and with the country's economic environment. Indigenous students are conscious of their need for employment after graduating.

At the end of the first year of study in a degree many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will change their major or discipline area. They make these decisions on how they are treated within the course by lecturers, the discipline area and other students. The students will also assess their grades and the difficulties they have faced in completing the units they have undertaken. Indigenous students may also change to another field of study based on what they regard as relevant to the needs of their communities.

Outreach programs through schools can enable Indigenous senior school students to participate in university level units of study to complete their Year 12. These programs can attract the students to their local university. There is, however, no certainty that the students will enrol in that university. Indigenous students may choose a university because of the courses it offers; a member of the family or community has attended the institution; they wish to have the experience of being at a university which is in an urban or regional location; or they have been involved in an outreach program offered by the university and feel comfortable attending that institution. As more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience university and/or attain a degree support centres are seeing the relatives of those former student and present students electing to enrol in a course of study. The reputation of the support centres is a valuable asset to the universities

for many future students will choose a university with a highly regarded support program because they know that they will receive the assistance they require from enrolment to graduation.

Going out to communities to provide tertiary preparation courses is being adopted in a few universities. This enables communities who cannot afford or do not have confidence in university studies to receive the foundations for tertiary studies without the necessity to relocate in order to undertake their chosen field of study. This is especially important for potential students who have family responsibilities or employment.

When these courses are completed the universities can these assist the students through on-line learning. Indigenous students find such programs more attractive as they can continue to live in their community. It also means that they do not have to find accommodation which may be very expensive or be forced to travel long distances for their studies. Affordability of equipment, such as computers and access to texts can, and does preclude, low income Indigenous students from participating in on-line learning. The roll out of notebook computers to Indigenous school children is excellent scheme as they are fully competent in the use of the computer by the time they leave school. For numerous Indigenous students enrolling in university affording a computer is beyond their means which is why, for those students, dedicated support centre computer labs are essential.

Block programs have been very successful in some universities, such as the Koori Centre at the University of Sydney, who offer the Diploma in Education (Aboriginal) and the Bachelor of Education (Secondary: Aboriginal Studies) which has been in place for many years. In a few universities the block programs have been less successful for a number of reasons. In some cases it is because other universities have offered different modes of teaching and learning, there are on-line programs which do not require them to travel, and there are programs of study more relevant to their needs

Conclusion:

Indigenous support programs within universities are affected by the internal assistance and recognition they receive from their university. Successful Indigenous student support is not only based on the number of Indigenous students who enrol but also on the quality of the support the students receive to enable them to graduate. Support staff play a major role in ensuring successful outcomes for students as does the provision of high quality tutors; academic staff who are culturally conscious and aware, administration staff of the university who recognise the expertise and importance of their Indigenous support centres, teaching and research centres, and the role that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have in supporting their local universities and Indigenous higher education units. The majority of Indigenous students who attend universities want to have a qualification that they can be proud of and enables them to achieve their dreams. They want to be health professionals, scientists, artists, ecologists, architects, lawyers, public servants, pharmacists, medical doctors, statisticians, accountants, journalists, and community workers. They achieve that through the programs that the federal government provides, that the universities offer, and the quality of the Indigenous support centres at their chosen university.

Recommendations:

Funding -

- That DEEWR and the University Indigenous Support Centres hold a consultation on addressing the reporting arrangements for Indigenous Student Support and ITAS funding.
- That DEEWR arrange training for new staff on the support funding procedures, and the roles of the Indigenous Support Centres in Australian universities
- Indigenous Student Scholarships be open for application before the beginning of each semester and awarded at the beginning of the university teaching year; and they remain open for late entry Indigenous student applications.

Indigenous Support Staff –

- Indigenous support staff, that do not have qualifications in the key competencies of support positions, be provided with professional development programs so that they can attain certification for the skills needed in Indigenous student support roles.

Administration -

- Australian Universities should ensure the Indigenous support centres are included in the administrative and educational structures and communication networks of the institution.
- Indigenous support centres, in universities, should be included in all Indigenous support deliberations and reporting to ensure that Indigenous students are a focus of Outreach and internal student support initiatives. This applies, in particular, to the Funding Compacts for Low socio-economic students.

Participation –

- Expand the support funding regulations to facilitate Indigenous support initiatives in, alternate modes of support and in addressing the participation of Indigenous students; and in the development of work integrated learning opportunities, provision of support in communities, and addressing the needs of students who do not wish to relocate to attend university.

Retention –

- Indigenous Support Centres do not impair students' progression and retention. Therefore there should be greater provision for the role they have in retaining students. Programs to assist students to continue their study should be funded on the basis of future outcomes, not present levels of enrolment.
- Provide optional programs for Indigenous students in cross-cultural communication so that they can better understand the language and culture of universities.

Indigenous Student Support Models .-.

- Establish an electronic on-line Clearing House for Indigenous higher education research and best practice in teaching, learning and support models.
- Provision of an on-line discussion space for Indigenous support staff to access current trends, initiatives, and problem-solving in relation to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in universities.

ITAS -

- ITAS is one, if not, the most successful program in Indigenous student support in universities. There is a need for it to be more flexible in assisting students from 1st year to graduation, and in postgraduate studies. It cannot be assumed that Indigenous students who go on to further study have the range of skills or experience in research that is required to complete postgraduate studies.
- The current allocation of tutorial hours per student also needs to be more flexible as some students may struggle in some subjects and excel in others. For the students to be limited to given number of hours per subject is not proving useful. This is especially the case when they may only require assistance in one or two of their units of study.
- The pay rates for ITAS tutors should be raised in order to attract skilled people who can find more lucrative employment from other forms of tutoring.

Work Integrated Learning –

- Introduce specific Work Integrated Learning programs for Indigenous students in universities, aside from cadetships in the APS.
- Ensure that universities accredit WIL programs that comply with quality standards.

Outreach -

- Establish Indigenous specific outreach programs that are not subsumed under the low socio-economic classification to enable students to have greater opportunities to enter degree programs.
- Provide competitive grants for Indigenous support programs for innovative approaches to student outreach, recruitment, support, and program delivery.

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