

February 2025

FINAL REPORT OF THE INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2022-2024

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





Billabong Camp – Water Hole Tracks

Billabong Camp depicts time-worn tracks that lead to a shady place of water, where clans gather under paperbark trees after a long, hot journey. The design places people at its centre – referencing students, researchers, people and community. Tracks to a place by water and paperbark trees symbolises the energising, holistic values of the learning journey.

The motifs depict people, tracks and meeting places; a story that relates to each individual, on a journey that holds limitless pathways of learning, growth and connection.

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn, paying respect to all First Nations peoples and their Elders, past, present and future.



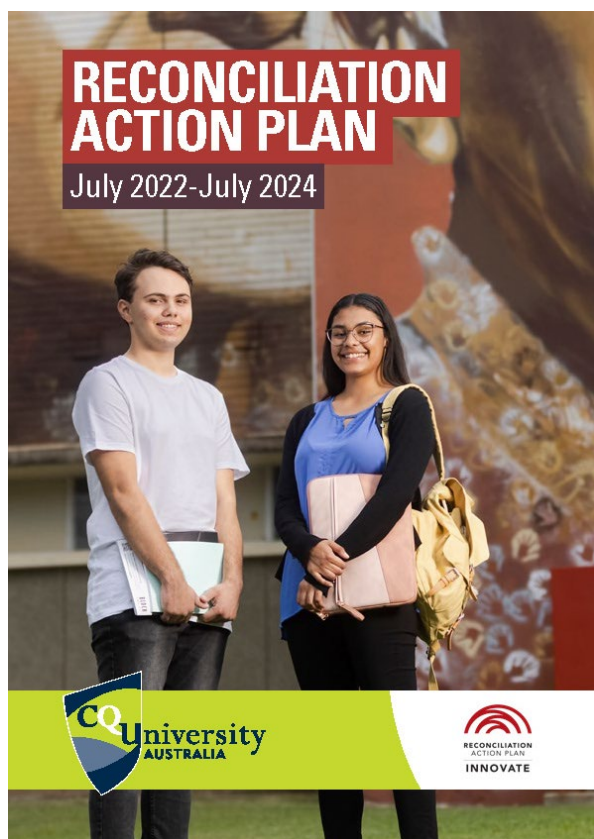
Billabong Camp – Water Hole Tracks

Final Report of the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2022-2024 - Annual Report 2024

CQUniversity's second *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) July 2022 – July 2024* reaffirmed our strategic commitment to support and collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead, participate in, and benefit from tertiary education. The Innovate RAP was developed following extensive engagement with staff and external stakeholders, driving meaningful, respectful and beneficial relationships with Elders, leaders and community from across the University's footprint.

This RAP built on a series of sector-leading programs that were already underway at CQUniversity, as well as incorporating a suite of new initiatives that were designed to advance student, staff and community outcomes. Many of the programs aligned with commitments outlined in the *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025*, and with other strategic priorities.

As the final outcome report on the Innovate RAP 2022-2024, this Annual Report for 2024 marks the completion of implementation of the Innovate RAP, providing an overview of progress achieved on important milestones, as well as identifying areas that will be ongoing into CQUniversity's next RAP. This Report outlines the significant commitment that the University's senior leadership demonstrated to delivering all actions and deliverables, and the increasing engagement of staff and students in various activities. Highlights of actions and programs delivered over the final 18 months of the RAP are provided in the following pages.



Final Summary of Innovate RAP 2022-2024 Deliverables Status

160 Complete

11 Ongoing

1 Incomplete





Strengthening relationships

Relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff and students provide the foundation for reconciliation at CQUniversity. RAP Actions 1-3 and Action 8 covered a range of relationship-building activities, including staging of events and providing resources to support staff to undertake culturally responsive engagement with students and external stakeholders. Communication activities that celebrate reconciliation and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander related programs and achievements were also featured. During 2024, key outcomes under this domain included:

- **CQUniversity Engagement Blueprint:** Development of CQUniversity's new engagement strategy included a University-wide engagement plan for working and engaging authentically with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and organisations. The Engagement Blueprint will serve as a framework for fostering meaningful relationships with key stakeholders, and will ensure best practices in managing the diverse interactions between CQUniversity representatives and our valued internal and external First Nations stakeholders.
- **National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week:** Events and celebrations including morning teas, lunches, trivia events, and Indigenous art workshops were organised across CQUniversity campuses, and the Vice-Chancellor and President also delivered the National Reconciliation Week address. Events were promoted to staff and communities via internal staff communications, student broadcasts and external CQUniversity news articles and social media. Staff attendance at both internal events and external community events was encouraged and facilitated through promotions and communications around events and the availability of engaged services leave. Travelling staff also attended online events such as lectures where unable to attend events in person.



Image: Jay Warcon, CQUniversity NAIDOC Week 2024 Corporate Breakfast, Rockhampton. Photo Credit: CQUniversity.



Image: National Reconciliation Week 2024 Morning Tea, CQUniversity, Brisbane. Photo credit: CQUniversity.

- **Collaborations to advance reconciliation:** Representatives of CQUniversity, led by the Deputy Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, Professor Adrian Miller, continued to collaborate as partners in the Northern Australia University Alliance in planning for the Centre for Indigenous Self-Determination, including the development of study hubs for Northern Australian universities.



Cultural competency and protocols

Education in cultural competency is foundational to student and staff knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and contemporary realities. It also guides development of skills to engage and work effectively with communities and stakeholders. As part of the implementation of the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework 2023-2025, completion of RAP Actions 4-6 during 2024 focused on the delivery of cultural competency and anti-racism education, including:

- **First Nations Cultural Competency for Students - It starts with understanding:** This online module offering an introduction to the cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and covering skills in cross-cultural cultural safety and communication, was presented as a micro-credential and made available for use in learning materials by teaching staff.
- **Essential First Nations Cultural Competency Training for Staff:** The Cultural Competency Micro-credential was released as a mandatory part of essential employment refresher training. Cross-cultural competency was also added to the performance enhancement process for management and leadership staff.
- **Commercialisation of Community Engagement Micro-credentials:** The “First Nations Community Engagement: Industry Guide Phase 1” formed the basis of 2 micro-credentials. “A Guide to First Nations Community Engagement at CQUniversity” was developed and tested both internally and with external industry partners, and is now live and available for CQU Staff and students and BHP partners to undertake as a free service. A fee-for-service version of this micro-credential, the “First Nations Community Engagement Toolkit” was also developed and launched for external enrolments at the 2024 Developing Northern Australia Conference.
- **Masterclasses for professional, research and academic staff** - Offered in:
 - Embedding the First Nations Cultural Competency Framework in Teaching
 - Cultural awareness training (introduction)
- **Enhancing respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Country names:** University systems were updated to include the option to add Country names in address information for online forms and applications from staff, students and external applicants.

Curriculum development

CQUniversity’s commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum across higher education courses continued in 2024. Integrating appropriate content into courses is foundational to achieving student learning outcomes, and to offering graduate capabilities and applied knowledge that is now required in many industries and by many employers. Delivery of RAP Action 7 focused on:

- **First Nations Curriculum Framework.** Preparations for implementation of the First Nations Curriculum Framework progressed further through the establishment of the Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) Course Committee, which has been approved to oversee courses, units and micro-credentials relating to or incorporating Indigenous knowledges and related study areas offered by the OIE.



- **First Nations Curriculum Program:** Embedding First Nations content and perspectives into the curriculum continued to be progressed. Masterclasses in “Embedding First Nations Curriculum” and “Embedding First Nations Research” were developed and made available to all professional, research and academic staff. These masterclasses also formed the basis of development of micro-credential “Embedding First Nations Curriculum”.



Image: Leader of the First Nations Curriculum Program – Dr Gary Fry, Associate Professor - First Nations Studies.
Photo credit: CQUniversity.

Cultural safety across campuses

CQUniversity strives to provide a culturally safe and supportive workplace, and a learning and teaching environment that enhances learning experiences and encourages positive interactions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. Outcomes from RAP Action 9 in 2024 included:

- **Social and Emotional Wellbeing of First Nations students:**
 - Support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enhanced through the inclusion of First Nations students in Mindwaves, the University’s Mental Health Strategy. As Mindwaves Connectors, these students will provide peer support and assist with Social and Emotional Wellbeing initiatives for First Nations students.
 - Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid Training and Talking about Suicide Training was delivered to 30 staff, 61 students and 31 community members.
 - The provision of Social and Emotional Wellbeing support to First Nations students was enhanced through the recruitment of dedicated First Nations Therapeutic Case Workers.
- **First Nations signage and artwork:** The incorporation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork, languages and design elements continued to be a priority. An audit was completed of the University’s artwork as part of increasing visibility of artworks by First Nations artists through placement on appropriate campuses. Dual language signage continued to be installed across campuses and incorporated into the planning and design works for new infrastructure projects.



- **Cultural Safe Space and Place Guidelines:** These Guidelines were developed to acknowledge and work in respectful partnership with the Traditional Owners of the lands hosting CQU campuses, and will assist in the creation of culturally safe spaces and places that improve the access, participation, retention, and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.



Image: YUWI Traditional Owner and Elder Uncle Philip with Indigenous Student Wellbeing Officer Mellisa Taggart.



Image: Associate Vice-President Professor Rob Brown contributing to the creation of the cultural safe space garden.

Official unveiling of Cultural Safe Space and Yarning Circle on Mackay Ooralea campus, National Reconciliation Week 2024.
Photos credit: Bill Jewel

Workforce and leadership

CQUniversity's *First Nations Workforce Strategy 2020-2025* aims to increase employment across the geographic footprint of the University, to be achieved through increased availability of Identified positions, as well as culturally responsive recruitment, career development and peer support at all employment levels. The University also strives towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in governance and decision-making, encouraging staff to contribute beyond their immediate responsibilities, and to be recognised for their efforts. Achievements and highlights under Actions 10 and 11 over the final year of the RAP included:

- **First Nations Workforce priorities:** Actions to support implementation of the First Nations Workforce Strategy and increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the University's workforce included pre-employment training, recruitment strategies, professional development opportunities, and collaborations with Divisional leadership and recruitment teams.
- **Dare to Be Deadly First Nations Employee Group:** A network for informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees about HR updates, professional development opportunities, vacancies within the University, and study options for pursuing further education. Regular meetings were conducted with First Nations employees to discuss topics relating to the First Nations Workforce Strategy, as well as sharing information and networking.
- **Enhanced Pathways into University positions:** As part of the expansion of employment pathways and traineeships, recruitment policy was updated to facilitate applications for internal positions from external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates. In addition, two First



Nations trainees commenced under the First Nations Traineeship and Studentship Program (*Binbi Waga* - Darumbal language for 'Good Work'). CQUniversity's Recruitment and Selection Procedures were also enhanced to support the transition of trainees and apprentices into other positions within the University.

- **First Nations employment outcomes:** Increasing Identified positions and the employment of First Nations staff in leadership positions continued to be a priority in 2024, including through the appointment of the new Identified position of Director, Office of Indigenous Engagement. At the conclusion of the Innovate RAP, CQUniversity had surpassed the employment target of 3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within the University's workforce.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STAFF – DECEMBER 2024			
TYPE	TERM	FULL TIME	PART TIME
Academic	Continuing	6	3
	Fixed Term	5	4
Professional	Continuing	23	1
	Fixed Term	16	5
VET Educator	Continuing	7	2
	Fixed Term	0	0
		57	15
		72	
All continuing and Fixed Term Staff		2023	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff		3.56%	

- **Indigenous Engagement Division:** In recognition of the strength of CQUniversity's commitment to reconciliation and the promotion of First Nations education, training and research, this Innovate RAP culminated in the creation of a new position within the University's executive, that of Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, and the establishment of the Indigenous Engagement Division.

Student success

Supporting the access, participation, completion, and workforce transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students is a national priority. At CQUniversity, the Innovate RAP aimed to increase enrolments across all qualification levels and improve student engagement, retention and success through dedicated programs and innovative learning and teaching practices. Achievements under Action 12 during 2024 included:

- **First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy (FNESSS) 2024-2028:** As a key deliverable of the Innovate RAP, the FNESSS was developed to address issues highlighted in the *Australian Universities Accord-Final Report 2024* relating to completion rates for First Nations students (among other equity groups). The FNESSS was approved in October 2024 and



its implementation in the coming years will provide strategic guidance to achieve improved completion rates by focusing on the learning and teaching exchange embedded within CQUniversity's RAP commitments, and the Student Success Division's retention and equity strategic vision.

- **First Nations Teaching Symposium: The Nunbal Wayu: Teaching to Change and Transform** Symposium was held in Rockhampton in November 2024, as a professional learning opportunity which focused on the key drivers and restrictions on First Nations student success in CQUniversity. The Symposium identified and presented practical, sustainable pathways and key steps toward strengthening the University's educational services and supports for First Nations students.



Image: Doug Harris presenting to Nunbal Wayu: Teaching to Change and Transform Symposium, Rockhampton, November 2024. Photo credit: CQUniversity

- **Scholarships, bursaries and academic prizes:** Scholarships were provided to First Nations students to cover the financial commitments involved in university study, including technology requirements, accommodation whilst studying away from home, industry placements, graduation registration, professional registrations, and general study resources. The University Council also initiated an academic prize exclusively for First Nations students.
- **Enabling entry to Higher Education courses:** Under the Dare to Be Deadly Scholarships program, two enabling scholarships were offered for First Nations students undertaking the Diploma of Nursing and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care, to increase support for progression into higher education courses.



- **Strengthening pathways to Vocational Education and Training:** CQUniversity continued to work collaboratively with regional secondary schools and Queensland Department of Education representatives to ensure strengthened Start TAFE Now pathways for students. The Department's Rural and Remote Pilot initiative commenced delivery of courses to local residents seeking face-to-face study options across a number of locations in the Central Queensland Region. Courses offered as part of the pilot included Certificate III in Community Services, Certificate III in Individual Support, Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health, and Certificate III in Health Services Assistance. Training was also offered in skills for work and vocational pathways.



Image: Student Maydina Munns, VET teacher Recheal Daley, Minister for Training and Skills Development Lance McCallum and student Shawn Doak at the Rockhampton announcement of the Rural and Remote delivery pilot, July 2024.

Photo credit: CQUniversity.

- **Indigenous Girls Academy:** Philanthropic funding was secured from key industry and community partners to support future First Nations students, including continuation of the Indigenous Girls Academy. In partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), QCoal Foundation and the Matana Foundation for Young People, Academies were established at the Mount Morgan State High School and Baralaba State School on Gangulu Country. The Future Students team worked closely with local community Elders on cultural activities and as role models for Academy students.

Research

CQUniversity aspires to embed a culture and practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and informed research excellence across our various Institutes, Centres and Schools. The University's research endeavour is framed by principles that align with the ethical conduct of research, delivers benefits and impacts that respond to community priorities, and supports the careers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. Outcomes from RAP Action 13 during 2024 included:



- **Ethics for First Nations research:** Codes of ethics central to First Nations research were highlighted on the University's Ethics website and referred to in relevant research ethics applications. Those codes included:
 - the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and related Guide;
 - the National Health and Medical Research Council Ethical Conduct in Research (NHMRC) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities: Guidelines for Researchers and Stakeholders; and
 - NHMRC Keeping Research on Track II.
- **Expansion of the Jilbay Research Higher Degree (RHD) Academy:** The Jilbay RHD Academy provided research training and mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. At the end of 2024, there were 16 HDR Jilbaybili (research candidates) enrolled, and 3 Graduate Certificate in Research students. The capacity of supervisors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR candidates was also increased through the completion of an Indigenous HDR Supervisor training micro-credential from University of Technology Sydney by 5 members of Jilbaymali (supervisor program).
- **Supporting First Nations Research Higher Degree students:** Jilbay RHD Academy hosted the *Guwal Jilbay Yarning First Nations Research Conference* in Rockhampton in July, 2024. The three-day event focused on supporting First Nations Research Higher Degree students and their supervisors.



Image: Professor Adrian Miller, Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, presenting at Day 2 of the Guwal Jilbay Yarning First Nations Research Conference, Rockhampton, July 2024. Photo credit: CQUniversity.

- **Research funding, partnerships and collaborations:** Successful research grant applications for collaborative research projects included Australia Research Council Indigenous Grants, Family Wellbeing Research with First Nations communities supported via philanthropic funding, and



Clinical Research oversight with Queensland Health. An agreement with CRC Northern Australia saw funding to support places for First Nations students in the Graduate Certificate of Research.

- **Jawun Research Institute:** Continued growth and success in First Nations research saw the Jawun Research Centre achieve Institute status.

Procurement

With an expansive campus footprint located in regions with a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suppliers, CQUniversity is well placed to increase procurement spending. Building on existing policies and activities, the delivery of RAP Action 14 in 2024 included:

- **Membership of Supply Nation:** Membership of Supply Nation was finalised and specific training and resources made available to all purchasing staff via a dedicated First Nations procurement site on the staff intranet.
- **First Nations suppliers:** The University engaged with 15 new First Nations suppliers during the second year of the RAP, and expenditure with First Nations suppliers increased by over 50% from the first year of the Innovate RAP.

Learnings, challenges and opportunities

The final year of CQUniversity's Innovate RAP saw increased engagement of staff with the purpose and ambitions of the RAP, demonstrated through the escalating achievements of the goals of the Innovate RAP. In addition to working to achieve Innovate RAP deliverables, consultation with staff during the development of CQUniversity's next RAP also illustrated the growth in understanding, awareness and support for the aspirations of the University's reconciliation journey.

Development of the next Stretch RAP provided opportunities for significant discussion and consideration amongst the University executive and senior leadership, and other stakeholders from across the University and externally. Engagement with external First Nations stakeholders, including communities and partner organisations, indicated that whilst support for reconciliation continues, challenges exist in effectively engaging with the breadth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders under pressure from competing demands for their time and resources. Implementation of the next Stretch RAP will provide opportunities for growth and learning as the University seeks to further develop and continue enhancing engagement with First Nations communities and stakeholders across our campus footprints.

At the conclusion of the Innovate RAP, only one (1) deliverable remained incomplete. Despite an increase in dedicated scholarships support available to First Nations students, the number of students accessing such financial support decreased during the life of this RAP. As part of the focus on improving access and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking higher education and training through implementation of the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy, in-depth analysis and research into factors impeding uptake of Indigenous scholarships support has already commenced and will continue to be a priority of the University's Stretch RAP.



Conclusion: Embracing reconciliation, moving forward

This final period of the CQUniversity Innovate RAP 2022-2024 demonstrated the University's significant achievements in working towards embedding reconciliation within the University. Many of the initiatives contained within the Innovate RAP were completed through the dedication of our staff to increasing understanding of reconciliation and how it can be embedded into the University's operations and institution. The period from July 2023 to December 2024 was marked by concerted efforts to achieve the full intentions of the RAP deliverables and the development of innovative and meaningful solutions, all of which were reinforced by the commitment to reconciliation evident within the CQUniversity community.

Whilst the University is proud of its achievements under the Innovate RAP, significant work is ongoing as the University continues to pursue its commitment to fully embed reconciliation across our learning, teaching and research environment. The next phase of the University's reconciliation journey was developed during 2024, with our new Stretch RAP to commence in early 2025. As well as continuing progress towards reconciliation within the University, the Stretch RAP 2025-2028 will see our commitment towards reconciliation expanded across our sphere of influence, as the University promotes reconciliation with our partner organisations, external stakeholders and the wider community.



Image: CQUniversity staff joined with community members to bring their voices together for National Reconciliation Week 2024.
Photo credit: CQUniversity.