

July 2023

INNOVATE RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN ANNUAL REPORT 2023





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.



Overview

CQUniversity's second *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) July 2022 – July 2024* reaffirms our broader social commitment to offer a range of opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples to lead, participate in, and benefit from tertiary education. The RAP was developed following extensive engagement with staff and external stakeholders, providing an impetus for meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with Elders, leaders and community from across the University's footprint.

This RAP builds on a series of sector-leading programs underway at CQUniversity, combined with a suite of new initiatives designed to advance student, staff and community outcomes. Many of the programs align with commitments outlined in the *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025*, and with other strategic priorities.

The Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan Annual Report 2023 marks the halfway point for implementation, providing an overview of progress towards important milestones, as well as identifying areas that require further work over the remaining RAP timeframe. The Report outlines the significant commitment by the University's senior leadership to delivering all actions and deliverables, witnessed by increasing engagement by staff and students in various activities. Highlights of actions and programs delivered over the first 12 months of the RAP are provided below.

It is clear that significant work still remains to fully embed reconciliation across the CQUniversity learning, teaching and research environment. There is a strong commitment to these activities at both the senior leadership and grassroots levels, but there is also a need to commit to ongoing resourcing in a post-pandemic environment. The next phase of RAP planning will commence in December 2023.



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 cover 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 are also featured. To date, key outcomes under this domain have included:

- *Release of the CQUniversity First Nations Community Engagement Industry Guide: Phase 1.* Developed in partnership with industry and community stakeholders, the Guide provides the industry standard for reciprocal engagement and is an online training package.
- *National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.* Events and celebrations were organised across CQUniversity campuses. Two signature events involved panel webinars to launch the RAP during NAIDOC 2022 and the Voice to Parliament discussion for NRW 2023. The latter was chaired by the Chancellor and featured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and alumni.
- *Launch of the RAP Champions Program.* This program engages staff across campuses as leaders in RAP implementation and commits them to work in partnership with communities and Traditional Owners to advance reconciliation outcomes through the delivery of culturally and regionally relevant education, knowledge and events.

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. RAP Actions 4-6 focus on the delivery of cultural competency and anti-racism education, with the following items having already been delivered:

- *First Nations Cultural Competency Framework 2023-2025.* This document provides overarching guidance for cultural competency education and staff professional development across CQUniversity.
- *First Nations Cultural Competency for Students: It starts with understanding.* This is a new online module available to all students, offering an introduction to the cultures and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The module covers topics such as colonialism, segregation and assimilation and progress towards citizenship, land rights and self-determination. It also covers skills in cross-cultural cultural safety and communication.
- *Phase 2 Cultural Competency Program.* This program is funded through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program and delivers a range of advanced workshops and short courses aimed at building workforce capabilities and strong performance management that meets student needs and industry standards.
- *Acknowledgement of Country videos.* A suite of high-quality productions have been made available for all staff and have become a regular feature at major events and presentations.



Curriculum development

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

- *First Nations Curriculum Framework*. This provides best practice guidance on the sequencing of learning outcomes, activities and assessment into successive units in a course.
- *First Nations Curriculum Program*. CQU has moved to employ dedicated academic staff to lead embedding cultural content in the curriculum, who now work closely with the Schools and Colleges on designing suitable course content. A series of staff training workshops will be presented during June - December 2023.
- *Professional Certificate in First Nations Learning, History and Cultures*. This certificate has been specifically developed by CQU and offers professional development for academic staff in First Nations education, knowledge and perspectives, and engages in critical perspectives on cultural hegemony and national identity.

Cultural safety across campuses

CQUniversity aims 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 include:

- *Establishment of Cultural Safe Space and Place at multiple campuses*. A Yarning Circle and Cultural Gardens co-designed with Yuwi Traditional owners was installed at Mackay Ooralea Campus, as well as a mural.
- *Installation of dual language signage*. Streets have been signposted and buildings named in Darumbal language at the Rockhampton North Campus, with more to follow.

Workforce and leadership

CQUniversity's *First Nations Workforce Strategy 2020-2025* aims to deliver parity across the geographic catchments of the University, to be achieved through 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. Highlights over the first year of the RAP period include:

- *Development of the First Nations Talent Pool*. This is a database that enables First Nations applicants to be directly targeted into new positions that match their skillsets.
- *First Nations Great Start Onboarding Program*. This program provides cultural support, workplace guidance and professional development opportunities following appointment to positions.



- *Membership on University Council.* An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member was appointed to Council, with further recruitment of First Nations people onto other committees remaining a priority in the coming months.

Student success

Supporting the access, participation, completion, and workforce transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait students is a national priority. At CQUniversity, the RAP aims to increase enrolments across all qualification levels and improve student engagement, retention and success through dedicated programs and innovative learning and teaching practices.

- *Buraligim Weiber STEM program and Yallarm Monadelphous Indigenous STEM Camp.* These school-based programs engage students to engage in structured STEM activities and fieldwork experiences. For example, students in the STEM camp participated in a series of science, cultural and technology activities that included raft making, shelter building and investigation of ecosystems.
- *Indigenous Girls Academy.* In partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), QCoal Foundation and the Matana Foundation for Young People, Academies have been established at the Mount Morgan State High School and Baralaba State School on Gangulu Country. The Future Students team works closely with local community Elders on cultural activities and as role models for Academy students.
- *See it, Be it marketing campaign.* CQUniversity has rolled out a dedicated recruitment campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prospective students, featuring current graduates and highlighting the specialist support programs made available to those enrolled in study.

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 include:

- *First Nations Research Strategy.* Focuses on the growth and development of First Nations led and informed research across CQUniversity. Features a series of commitments focused on career and capacity development, quality and impact.
- *Expansion of the Jilbay Research Higher Degree Academy.* The Jilbay RHD Academy provides research training and mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and delivers Jilbaymali (supervisor training). As at mid-2023, there were 16 HDR Jilbaybili (research candidates) enrolled, and 33 supervisors had completed training in culturally competent research practice. The Academy also rolled out the 'JilbayJina' research engagement funding pool, designed to support the Academy's candidates to engage directly with community in the design and implementation of research projects.



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 to date includes:

- *A focused strategy.* To form part of the university procurement policies and procedures. Includes training and advice for staff, and accounting updates.
- *Target of 100%.* Increase in procurement spend and gaining membership to Supply Nation.

Learnings, challenges and opportunities

As the University approached the mid-way point of the Innovate RAP, a series of engagement sessions were held to provide a reflection point on implementation activities to date. Discussions amongst senior leaders and other stakeholders from across the University community highlighted key themes and learnings in the University's reconciliation journey, including:

- An increase in understanding amongst staff of the reconciliation journey following the previous RAP, strong awareness and support for the RAP, and an overall positive sentiment towards the reconciliation work being done by the University. There was a strong acknowledgement that for the RAP to be truly successful, university staff need to have the right knowledge and build skills to be able to self-monitor and self-deliver on the action items.
- The acknowledgement that working towards reconciliation should be normalised, to increase the view of reconciliation as part of the general operations of the University.
- Increased cooperation and collaboration across different business units is required to better achieve cross-team deliverables. The Office of Indigenous Engagement was seen as providing support and taking a leading role in encouraging the goals of the RAP.
- Appropriate resourcing, investment and staffing were identified as central to achieving RAP deliverables within the timeframe of the current RAP, and a leading reason for some deliverables being behind target.

More broadly, it was acknowledged that the University needs to reflect on the multiple motivators for the RAP, namely:

- living our values and philosophy on equity, inclusion and reconciliation
- the importance of growing the number of First Nations students at the University
- the role of the RAP in helping deliver on broader goals (e.g. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, enhancing the University's reputation).

Staff agreed that the RAP was clearly enmeshed in the new strategic plan and that the championing of the RAP by the executive (particularly by the Vice-Chancellor and President) was a key ingredient for success.



Conclusion: Embracing Reconciliation, Reflecting Progress

This report reflects a transformative year in CQUniversity’s journey towards genuine and sustainable reconciliation. Many of the initiatives contained within the RAP show an innovation in overcoming challenges and building bridges to meet the objective of unity, understanding, and mutual respect. The period from July 2022 to July 2023 was marked by concerted efforts, meaningful engagements, and significant achievements, all of which are reinforced by the commitment to reconciliation within the CQUniversity community.

The next – and last - year of activities for this Innovate RAP is based on the understanding that our collective journey towards reconciliation is ongoing and ever-evolving. Whilst CQUniversity can celebrate progress made thus far, there is still much that remains to be done. In achieving further milestones towards reconciliation, implementation of the RAP will continue to be guided by the principles of respect, partnership, and shared responsibility. Achievement of each deliverable within the RAP is premised on listening, learning, and collaborating with Indigenous communities, and amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives, university-wide and beyond.