

Indigenous Education Statement – 2011

Swinburne University of Technology
Indigenous Education Office

Section 1 Objectives for Indigenous higher education at Swinburne

Swinburne University of Technology is committed to improving educational access, participation and outcomes for Indigenous individuals and communities. In this, the University is guided by the *Swinburne University of Technology Act (1992)*, the *National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)* and other Commonwealth and Victorian Government policies related to social inclusion in tertiary education. These, together with the University's *2011 – 2015 Social Inclusion Action Plan* and *Indigenous Employment Strategy* (Appendix 1) provide the framework for Indigenous engagement, participation and employment at Swinburne.

Swinburne is a 'dual-sector' institution offering a broad range of programs from Certificate to PhD level. In this context, the Indigenous Education Office within the University's School for Sustainable Futures plays a coordinating and support role in furthering the broad Indigenous agenda, across both the VET and higher education sectors. This agenda values:

- ⇒ diversity, inclusiveness of cultures, and pride in Indigenous identity, tradition, knowledge and practice
- ⇒ educational programs, delivery and support models that meet the expectations and needs of Indigenous individuals and communities
- ⇒ appropriate employment, professional development and career opportunities for Indigenous individuals
- ⇒ capacity-building for Indigenous communities

The importance of developing and implementing culturally-appropriate and supportive educational practices is well understood at Swinburne. For Indigenous students, success can be contingent on a learning environment and delivery models that cater to their preferred learning styles as they work to achieve nationally-recognized VET, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

For these reasons, the University implements educational support programs such as the ITAS tutorial scheme and pathway programs. These initiatives ensure that current and prospective Indigenous students have access to both VET and higher education, and that they feel comfortable in the associated transitions. Community consultation is paramount in guiding policy development, to ensure that the needs of Indigenous students remain a focus of curriculum development, and that Swinburne's policies and practices support access, engagement, the successful attainment of academic qualifications, and sound employment, career and further study outcomes. parts

to facilitate this level of engagement

Section 2 Achievement of National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) goals in 2009 and plans for future years

2.1 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Indigenous

2.2 To increase the number of Indigenous people employed as academic and non-academic staff in Higher Education institutions

In 2001, the University Council adopted a *Policy for the Employment of Indigenous Australians* in order to encourage and facilitate the employment of Indigenous people, but the following years saw only moderate success in terms of the Policy objectives. So, in 2007 Swinburne sought and obtained a STEP Grant to analyse performance in Indigenous employment and to re-develop the Policy through an appropriately consultative process. This project was conducted jointly by Swinburne's HR Unit and the Indigenous Education Office in 2008, under the leadership of Indigenous academic Dr Barry Judd. The resultant Indigenous Employment Strategy was approved by the University Executive Group early in 2009 (Appendix 1). It has four strategic goals, viz.:

- ⇒ To increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians via provision of on-the-job training and the establishment of a supportive and diverse culture
- ⇒ To increase Indigenous employees at Swinburne University of Technology
- ⇒ To increase postgraduate educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians
- ⇒ To increase awareness of cross-cultural and Indigenous issues through diversity awareness training

For each of these goals, the Strategy specifies a number of actions. Appendix 1 provides a full list of these, but actions directly related to boosting Indigenous employment include the following:

- ⇒ Develop partnerships with feeder schools to capitalise on work experience programs and encourage Indigenous Australians to undertake work experience at Swinburne.
- ⇒ Attempt to negotiate a more flexible Indigenous Employment clause in the Academic and General Staff Certified Agreement to enable the direct engagement of Indigenous Australians as both employees and students through the use of traineeships.
- ⇒ Appoint a traineeship coordinator to oversee the Indigenous trainees.
- ⇒ Source and support Indigenous school leavers to undertake traineeships in entry level positions in partnership with trainee employers such as MEGT (Australia) Ltd, feeder schools and the Indigenous Education Office.
- ⇒ Contact Indigenous students who have completed study in the past 3 – 4 years in order to use their stories or engage them as role models/mentors – especially in traineeship and apprenticeship areas – and provide scholarships for them to complete “Training and Assessment” qualifications so that they can teach on a flexible basis.
- ⇒ When vacancies arise or more staff are needed, convert trainees to employment positions.
- ⇒ Use Indigenous Education Office networks and community knowledge to assist HR to appoint an Indigenous Australian to oversee the key actions detailed in the Strategy including Indigenous recruitment, the facilitation, coordination and establishment of Indigenous networks, and the provision of advice on the expansion of Indigenous education initiatives.
- ⇒ Engage Indigenous leaders and elders as adjunct appointments within a relevant academic area such as the University's Institute for Social Research.
- ⇒ Review recruitment and appointment processes to remove barriers to Indigenous applicants via more flexible processes, and to collect relevant Indigenous recruitment/appointment data.
- ⇒ Recruit an Indigenous academic to a relevant academic area.

- ⇒ Define the Indigenous field in the personal details form in Alesco (the core University HR system) to align with DEEWR reporting requirements.
- ⇒ Adopt employment conditions that better accommodate the specific cultural needs of Indigenous employees, such as the inclusion of cultural or extended family leave provisions.
- ⇒ In collaboration with educational leaders, identify areas of teaching and research where Indigenous Australian expertise can make a valuable contribution.
- ⇒ Establish a recruitment pool of Indigenous Australians including past and current students, and students from feeder scho1(ude)-12.2(nty <</MCID 14y f)-13.2(r)-6.3(om)-24.5()12(f)-8(<</MCID 14 >>BDC

2.3 To ensure equitable access for Indigenous students to higher education

Swinburne facilitates access for Indigenous students through modified entry requirements via the Indigenous Special Admissions Scheme (ISAS), coupled with ongoing consultation to ensure that courses are relevant to community and individual needs. The ISAS allows Indigenous students to apply for special consideration of circumstances that include location, educational history, health and/or socio-economic disadvantage. (Students provide community and family contact details for the purposes of confirming Aboriginality.)

In 2010, 14 Indigenous students commenced study in higher education at Swinburne, a significant rise on 2009 (Table 3). Of these, 13 began study at undergraduate level.

Table 3 Students commencing in higher education at Swinburne, onshore, 2009 and 2010

	2009	2010
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	8	14
Other domestic students	4,636	5,688
International students	3,148	2,588
Totals	7,792	8,290

The University has developed a niche, within the TAFE Division, offering higher level (AQF5)

Notwithstanding the increased number of Indigenous student commencements in 2010 compared with in 2009, access and participation rates at Swinburne remain low by Victorian and Australian standards (Table 6).

Table 6 Access and participation, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students in higher education at Swinburne, onshore, by broad field of education, 2006 – 2010

Access & participation at Swinburne¹	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Access rate² (%)</i>	0.24	0.39	0.28	0.17	0.25
<i>Participation rate³ (%)</i>	0.20	0.26	0.27	0.22	0.22
<i>Participation ratio⁴</i>	0.36	0.46	0.48	n/a	n/a

¹ Data for undergraduate and postgraduate students are combined.

² Access rate = % *commencing* Indigenous students in the *commencing* domestic student population.

³ Participation rate = % Indigenous students in the *total* domestic student population.

⁴ Participation ratio = the participation rate of Indigenous students ÷ the proportion of Indigenous students in the relevant population.

As noted, Indigenous students participate in a range of mainstream programs delivered across the Swinburne TAFE Division, as well as in accredited programs offered through the Indigenous Education Office that are designed specifically to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians. In 2010, this training was provided in areas including community development, community services, training and assessment, youth work, sport and recreation, financial services, business administration and business governance – in addition to Certificate I, II and III in Mumgu-Dahl Tyama-Tyit foundation studies. T fo f nalt2(i)3.2(on,)-122d l. ess.002 Tw -36.614 -1.68[(-6.3 [(-8(t)-1.1(upp(k)-20.1 f)-13.2.001 -.301 T)-17.5

2.5 To enable Indigenous students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in Higher Education as for other Australians

At Swinburne, the Indigenous Education Office works with the higher education faculties and TAFE schools to support Indigenous students via several support programs. These include advice and assistance at the time of course selection and enrolment, and tutoring through the ITAS tutorial scheme. As a result of these initiatives, Indigenous students feel more 'at ease' in their learning environment and better prepared to undertake and complete their studies. Thus, tutoring and mentoring programs are vital tools for the success of Indigenous students at Swinburne and in the wider community. The employment of Indigenous academics is also

Retention rates for Indigenous students at Swinburne are consistently above the national average, but below those of the University's other domestic students (Table 10). Degree completions remain very low at just 4 – 6 each year (Table 11).

Table 10 % retention, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander students in higher education at Swinburne, 2006 – 2009

2.6 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of, and respect for, traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultures

Swinburne is committed to the teaching of Indigenous studies and cultures, as evidenced by the development and delivery of Indigenous-specific programs and units. These units include LIN101 *Indigenous Australian Studies* and two new units developed in 2010 for delivery in 2011 and beyond – LIN200 *Indigenous Representations* and LIN201 *International Indigenous Perspectives*. Other Indigenous-specific units will be developed in 2011, ready for delivery 2012, as part of the minor study sequence already available through the Faculty of Higher Education Lilydale.

Using the skills of Indigenous elders, academics and teachers, the promotion of culture within programs and units is in line with community expectations for Indigenous education. Moreover, it contributes to a rewarding and successful learning experience for cohorts that include a mix of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

The adoption of the *Indigenous Employment Strategy* in 2009 (Section 2.2, Appendix 2) is ensuring that Swinburne managers receive cross-cultural and Indigenous awareness training as part of their mandatory diversity training. Managers, in turn, are encouraged to employ Indigenous staff in mainstream positions, including teaching positions. An important bi-product of an increasing Indigenous teaching presence should be elevated student awareness of Indigenous cultures and issues, across the disciplines, in both TAFE and higher education.

The University's work in this area extends to community-engaged research and consultancy. A noteworthy initiative

Section 6 – Appendices

Appendix 1

Swinburne University of Technology Indigenous Employment Strategy

Background The development of this Strategy was coordinated by Dr Barry Judd in order to provide a framework for improving the involvement of Indigenous Australians in the Higher Education sector of the University. The Strategy focuses on ways to increase and support Indigenous Australians in their educational and employment endeavours.

Goal 1 Increase employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians through provision of on-the-job training and establishment of a supportive and diverse culture

According to 2006 ABS census data, Indigenous Australians are under-represented in the Australian workforce. Though the Indigenous employment rate has improved in recent years, it remains three times higher (14%) than the national rate (5%). The recommendations that follow lay the foundations for Indigenous Australians to engage with Swinburne and increase their skills and future employment prospects. In particular, work experience and traineeship programs support the transition of Indigenous Australians from secondary to post-secondary education and employment.

Recommendations

- ⇒ Develop partnerships with feeder schools to capitalise on work experience programs and encourage Indigenous Australians to undertake work experience at Swinburne.
- ⇒ Attempt to negotiate a more flexible Indigenous Employment clause in the Academic and General Staff Certified Agreement to enable the University to directly engage Indigenous Australians as both employees and students through the use of traineeships.
- ⇒ Appoint a traineeship coordinator to oversee the Indigenous trainees. This position could take responsibility for the coordination of all trainees at Swinburne. This role is currently being informally managed by the Business Manager, TAFE Engineering Business Operations.
- ⇒ Source and support Indigenous school leavers to undertake traineeships in entry level positions, in partnership with trainee employers such as MEGT and feeder schools.
- ⇒ Contact Indigenous students who have completed study over the past three or four years in order to use their stories or engage them as role models or mentors, especially in the areas of traineeships or apprenticeships, as we can provide scholarships for them to complete "Training And Assessment" qualifications and then teach on a flexible basis.
- ⇒ Where vacancies arise or additional staffing is needed, convert trainees to employment at Swinburne.

Goal 2 Increase post graduate educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians

Education is a key to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with many studies showing improved health and socioeconomic status to be directly linked to educational particiio0 Tc 0 Tw 36.831 0 Tdnsand-12.3(d hc)-8(h)-9(ne)-8(er)-24.4(ent)-1.1()TJ 0 Tc 00.001

A range of issues affect participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in education, particularly at post graduate levels, including: access to educational institutions;

Recommendations

- ⇒ Utilise Office of Indigenous Education networks and knowledge of Indigenous communities to assist Human Resources to appoint an Indigenous Australian to oversee the key actions detailed in this strategy including Indigenous recruitment programs, the facilitation, coordination and establishment of Indigenous networks and the provision of advice on the expansion of Indigenous education initiatives.
- ⇒ Recruit an Indigenous academic to a relevant academic area.
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Goal 4 Increase awareness of cross-cultural and Indigenous issues through diversity awareness training

In the 2007 DEEWR Indigenous Education Statements, 25 of 39 Australian universities reported that they have an Indigenous member on the University Council or Senate, 30 out of 39 universities reported that they have an Indigenous advisory committee to advise senior management on Indigenous matters, and almost all universities report Indigenous representation on academic and management committees.

To maximise the opportunities to attract and retain Indigenous staff and students, Swinburne should consider having Indigenous representation in University governance to ensure cross-cultural and Indigenous issues are explored and addressed.

Recommendations

- ⇒ Consider having Indigenous representation in University governance through the use of Cultural Chair (Professorial or Adjunct) appointments.
- ⇒ Ensure all managers receive cross-

