

# Indigenous Education Statement 2016

May 2017

A graphic element consisting of a black rectangle on top and a red rectangle on the bottom. The black rectangle contains the text 'SWINBURNE' in white, with a small flower icon on either side of the 'NE'. The red rectangle contains the text 'SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY' in white.

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SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY  
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# INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STATEMENT 2016

## Swinburne University of Technology

### Section 1: Achievement of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) Goals in 2016 and plans for future years

#### 1.1 To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making

Swinburne University of Technology is committed to improving educational access, participation and outcomes for Indigenous individuals and communities. The University is guided by the *Swinburne University of Technology Act 2010*, 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 *2025 Strategic Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan* - and other targeted University-wide strategies provide the framework for Indigenous engagement, participation and employment at Swinburne.

Swinburne prides itself as an institution focused on high-impact global research, high-quality teaching and active engagement with both industry and the community, offering a broad range of educational programs from Certificate to PhD level. Led by the Vice Chancellor, senior leaders within the University are responsible for furthering the broad Indigenous agenda, across pathways, vocational, higher education and research sectors. As outlined in Swinburne's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2014–16 (see Attachment 1), our Vision for Swinburne and its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities is for:

- An inclusive and welcoming University culture and learning environment, that values Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's identity, cultures and traditions, and that appreciates 'two-ways' knowledge and learning
- Increased levels of participation and achievement across all areas of the University
- Educational programs that meet the expectations and needs of individuals and communities, with appropriate delivery models and support services
- Relevant research across a broad range of domains, conducted consultatively and in a culturally appropriate manner
- Attractive employment, professional development and career opportunities
- Capacity building at community and regional levels in line with the aspirations of individuals and communities.

The RAP steering committee provides governance and oversight of RAP development and strategic direction. This group is chaired by Ian Hamm, a Yorta Yorta man who has been actively involved in the Victorian Indigenous community in a personal and professional capacity for many years. He currently holds a senior role in the Victorian Government. The RAP steering committee has five member positions identified specifically for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation: industry, community, and internal representation from teaching and research. This committee reports directly to the Vice Chancellor and provides a yearly report to University Council.

In order to achieve the RAP vision, a RAP working group has also been established. Membership includes key stakeholders across the University, from faculties, research areas, pathways and vocational education, the multi-faith centre and student representatives. This working group is chaired by an Aboriginal academic – Andrew Peters – and three other members are Aboriginal. This group monitors the achievement of all RAP actions, develops strategies to achieve objectives, develops reports and presentations to inform senior management and the RAP steering committee, and promotes achievements.

In 2016, both the RAP steering group and working group actively worked on the development of a new RAP for 2017-2019. This RAP will be launched in 2017.

## 1.2 To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed as academic and non-academic staff in Higher Education institutions

Swinburne's 2009 Indigenous Employment Strategy was redeveloped as part of the RAP and approved by the University Executive Group in 2015. The strategy was launched during Reconciliation Week 2016 (See Attachment 2).

As outlined in the RAP, the strategy's objective is to *Increase recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at Swinburne in accordance with the organisational People Strategy*. The key goals of this strategy are to close employment gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, to develop the cultural capability of the organisation, and to ensure Indigenous staff have access to sufficient and appropriate professional development to allow for career progression at the same rate as non-Indigenous employees.

Some of the key initiatives implemented in 2016 to support the strategy are:

- Development of the Indigenous Employment training module, which is currently being rolled out across the university. The training examines issues such as historical context, detriment, closing the gap. This is a face-to-face training is aimed at Managers and staff who have recruiting responsibilities and aims to improve the capacity of existing Swinburne staff to recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Implementation of a strategy to ensure employment opportunities are more visible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria. There has been targeted advertising of positions in Indigenous specific publications such as National Indigenous Times, and the Koorie Mail amongst others.
- Offering of specific professional development for staff and students such as "Walk-About around the Yarra river"
- Development and roll out of the E-learning Cultural Awareness training module completed by all staff as part of professional development and induction requirements.
- Improved HR data collection systems so we can better identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait staff and measure success and provide appropriate support.

As a result, in 2016 there were at least 2 positions successfully appointed that were identified for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

**Table 1 Indigenous staff members, continuing and fixed term positions, 2016**

Organisational unit	Indigenous academic staff (n)	Indigenous professional staff (n)	Indigenous staff total (n)
Higher Education	2		2
Corporate and Student Services		2	2
Pathways and Vocational Education	2	3	5
Totals	1	5	9

Additional opportunities for employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also provided through the partnerships developed as part of Swinburne's Indigenous Futures Collaboration Project. This project was funded by the Commonwealth Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Programme (HEPPP). Its aim was to increase participation in, and successful completion of, higher education studies by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The project supported Indigenous people living in varied settings to further their education by raising awareness of study options online and mapping clear vocational pathways to higher education. A further 13

Indigenous staff were employed either directly by Swinburne or one of its partners through this project. These included roles as Project Managers (2), Project Officer – Community and Industry Engagement (1), Trainers (4), Learner Support Workers (2), administration officer (1) and developers of digital course materials (3).

Further to this, Swinburne created an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellowship in 2016. Under this scheme, a three-year fellowship will be awarded annually. The inaugural fellowship was awarded in 2017.

Data on Swinburne’s casual employment is much less reliable, largely because the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status of the individuals employed on a casual basis is often unknown. Data is also incomplete for short-term casual work of various types undertaken in connection with research projects in remote parts of Australia.

Swinburne’s commitment to boosting employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people will be further consolidated with the launch of the new RAP in 2017

### 1.3 To ensure equitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to higher education

Swinburne facilitates access for Indigenous students through modified entry requirements using VTAC’s umbrella program, the Special Entry Access Scheme (SEAS), and direct entry special consideration processes. The SEAS and special consideration scheme allow 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 2016, 149 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students commenced study in higher education at Swinburne – an increase on the previous 3 years enrolments (Table 2).

Swinburne’s online course delivery greatly contributes towards the University’s equity agenda as it facilitates access to higher education for under-represented groups by virtue of the flexibility it offers learners to control the place, time and pace of their study.

**Table 2 Students commencing in higher education at Swinburne, onshore, 2013 – 2016**

	Commencements in higher education (n)			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	62	44	88	149
Other domestic students	10,947	11,291	11,768	11,446
Totals	11,009	11,335	11,856	11,595

A range of scholarships is also actively promoted to current and prospective Indigenous students at Swinburne including Commonwealth scholarships such as the Indigenous Access Scholarship and the Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarship (Table 3).

**Table 3 Indigenous Commonwealth Scholarship allocations at Swinburne, 2016**

Scholarship Details	Funded	No. awarded	Value per semester	Annual value	Annual Funding provided
Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships (I-CECS)	Government	3	\$1,271.50	\$2,599	\$7797
ICECS continuing from previous year(s)	Government	4	\$1,271.50	\$2,599	\$10396
Indigenous Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships (I-CAS)	Government	2	\$2,599.50	\$5199	\$10398
ICAS continuing from previous year(s)	Government	1	\$2,599.50	\$5199	\$5199
Indigenous Access Scholarships (IAS)	Government	5	2452	\$4904	24520
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>			<b>\$58310</b>

In 2016, the University also provided scholarships linked with the Indigenous Futures Collaboration Project. As noted earlier, this Project is raising awareness of higher education opportunities in Indigenous communities, particularly in rural and remote areas, and providing pathways and access to mainstream tertiary courses for people from across the country through collaborative partnerships. It is also fostering a new whole-of-University approach to Indigenous education, based on the principles of educational excellence and access to high quality mainstream courses in science, technology and innovation. Through this project, Swinburne offered 13 Indigenous 'Try Online Learning' scholarships in 2016 to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander existing workers. The format is that Swinburne initially pays the student's fees for up to two subjects to encourage and support them to commence online learning through Swinburne Online. On successful completion of these two subjects, a further scholarship is available to the student for the next two subjects (and so on). This has been very successful. One advantage of this approach is that students can commit to learning in what they see as more achievable steps without a major upfront commitment. Further funding has been secured to continue to support the current students, and offer further scholarships to students in 2017.

The development of pathways from vocational education to higher education is also important in improving access to further educational opportunities. Swinburne makes use of its dual sector status in this regard, successfully delivering vocational education courses for Indigenous cohorts in areas including education support, alcohol and other drugs, community services, trades and multimedia. Swinburne takes an active role in partnering with Indigenous organisations to build workforce skills that will contribute significantly to community capacity. In 2016, there were 353 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who self-identified at enrolment in Swinburne's pathways and vocational education courses.

#### 1.4 To achieve participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher education at rates commensurate with those of other Australians

Swinburne is committed to building the participation of Indigenous students in tertiary education via ongoing community consultation. Indigenous student enrolments in higher education courses at Swinburne increased significantly in 2016: from 160 enrolments in 2015 to 260 in 2016 (Table 4). In 2016, 85% of the 260 Indigenous students at Swinburne were enrolled in higher education online.

**Table 4 Student enrolments in higher education at Swinburne, onshore, 2013 – 2016**

	Student enrolments (n)			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	99	81	160	260
Other domestic students	22,413	25,543	28,644	30,293
Totals	22,512	25,624	28,804	30,553

Most enrolments in recent years have been in the Society and Culture, Education, and Management and Culture broad fields of education (Table 5).

An important challenge for Swinburne in the future will be to attract more Indigenous students into courses in Natural and Physical Sciences, Engineering, Information Technology and Health fields. These are primary areas of strength at Swinburne, but historically have had low Indigenous participation rates.

**Table 5 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander enrolments in higher education at Swinburne, onshore, by broad field of education, 2013 – 2016**

	2013	2014	2015	2016
Creative Arts	8	7	15	20
Engineering	6	1	1	4
Education	17	19	45	84
Health		1		1
Information Technology		2	2	4
Management & Commerce	28	18	37	54
Natural & Physical Sciences	1		2	2
Society & Culture	39	33	58	90
Total	99	81	160	259

At Swinburne, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participate in mainstream vocational education courses as well as in accredited courses specifically designed and delivered to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians. The participation of Indigenous students in all these courses is cultivated via ongoing community consultation with Indigenous Elders, academics and teachers, and through collaborative partnerships. Continued development of pathways into vocational education courses, and from vocational education to higher education courses, will further enable Indigenous students to choose options that offer potential for ongoing, meaningful employment. Swinburne is committed to developing education-to-employment pathways, and the career-related benefits of tertiary education are widely promoted. This work is complemented by the development and promotion of industry engaged learning and other programs.

For example, as part of the Indigenous Futures Collaboration Project, three demonstrator projects were conducted in partnership with organisations working with Indigenous communities in low socio-economic status regions. These projects focused on increasing awareness, participation and achievement for Indigenous students, and they can be summarised as follows:

- a health and community services partnership with the Human Services Training Advisory Council NT, Carpentaria Disability Services, NT Carers and the Council for Aboriginal Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS) Aboriginal Corporation to develop new training techniques and resources using digital methodologies to maximise enrolments and completions in certificate and diploma course in community services and health in Indigenous communities
- a creative industries partnership with Goolarri Media Enterprises to adapt existing Goolarri certificate level and Swinburne higher level courses to provide pathways for students into Swinburne degree courses that they can complete while living in the Kimberley region
- an education partnership with Australian Catholic University and NAHRI Inc which worked with the Queensland Education Department and others to develop digital delivery and gap training in the Certificate IV in Education Support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, liaison and support workers in schools and pre-schools. As well as building the capacity and interest of these workers in undertaking higher education, their increased and recognised skills are expected to have an impact on the young people and communities they work with

There is also a desire to increase Indigenous participation at postgraduate study level. As articulated in the RAP, Swinburne is committed to improving Indigenous participation in research and HDR study and an Indigenous Education & Research Committee is working with Indigenous leaders to address barriers to participation.

## 1.5 To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in higher education as for other Australians

Fourteen Indigenous students completed a higher education course at Swinburne in 2016, including four graduating from postgraduate and higher degree study (Table 6). We would expect this figure to continue the upward trend of recent years, with the increase in enrolments in 2016 (see table 4 and table 6), and the engagement strategies and RAP initiatives implemented.

**Table 6 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander student completions, Swinburne, 2013 – 2016**

Higher education courses	Completions (n)			
	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students</b>				
➤ Undergraduate	8	5	6	10
➤ Higher Degree	0			1
➤ Other Postgraduate	3	1	5	3
➤ Total	11	6	11	14
<b>Other domestic students</b>				
➤ Undergraduate	2,039	2,705	2,717	2,863
➤ Higher Degree	58	63	38	67
➤ Other Postgraduate	679	902	1,056	1,152
➤ Total	2,776	3,670	3,811	4,082

To further strengthen participation and academic achievement for all student cohorts, particularly Indigenous students, the University's *Learning & Teaching Strategy* articulates and emphasises initiatives and targets to provide opportunities for students to develop their level of knowledge and skills required for success as self-directed learners and graduates.

Swinburne's Indigenous Education Office works with the higher education faculties and pathways and vocational education departments to support Indigenous students via several support programs. These include advice and assistance at the time of course selection and enrolment, and study and academic skills support (tutoring) and ongoing mentoring, as required. 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. These are vital tools for the success of Indigenous students at Swinburne and in the wider community.

With the implementation of the University's first RAP in 2014–16, the redevelopment of the RAP for launch in 2017 and through targeted University-wide initiatives, the University is progressing towards achieving its target of increasing participation and educational attainment for Indigenous people and communities.

## 1.6 To provide all Australian students with an understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures

### Teaching

Swinburne is committed to the teaching of Indigenous studies and cultures, as evidenced by the development and delivery of Indigenous-specific units.

Swinburne's Faculty of Health, Arts and Design (FHAD) currently offers a minor higher education study sequence in Indigenous studies:

- Indigenous Australian Experiences
- Indigenous Representations
- International Indigenous Perspectives
- Indigenous Enterprise & Entrepreneurship

FHAD also offers an Indigenous education unit that is compulsory for all Education students:

- Indigenous Education and Perspectives

Further work was undertaken during 2016 to develop a major in Indigenous Studies.

There are also many other units at Swinburne, across higher education and pathways and vocational education, that engage with Indigenous knowledge, pedagogies and curriculum.

Using the skills of Indigenous Elders, academics and teachers, the promotion of culture within the University's courses 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 Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

### Research and Engagement

The University has also continued to build on its international reputation for innovative social research and engagement. Work in this area extends to community-engaged research and consultancy. Previous and current examples of engagement include:

- ARC Linkage funded project led by Professor Andrew Gunstone, in collaboration with seven Partner Organisations, to study the history and impact of Stolen Wages policies in Victoria.
- NCSEHE funded project led by Professor Andrew Gunstone and Dr Katya Pechenkina, along with CDU colleagues, into identifying strategies for improving vocation to higher education transitions for Indigenous learners.
- Research conducted by Dr Karen Hughes exploring the social contexts and interplays of gender and race in the extremities of wartime. This is an ARC Indigenous Discovery project led by the University of Sydney.
- ARC Linkage funded project led by Associate Professor Ellie Rennie and Professor Julian Thomas, with the Centre for Appropriate Technology (an Indigenous owned research centre in Alice Springs) and the Central Land Council, to study home internet and computing in remote Aboriginal communities in Central Australia.
- Research conducted by Associate Professor Kurt Seemann on Indigenous Participation in a Low-Carbon Economy – an ARC Linkage funded project led by Curtin University of Technology.

- Research led by Dr Rowan Bedggood with the Marra Worra Aboriginal Corporation to investigate 'Ways of supporting the operations of a remote Indigenous non-government organisation: Designing business processes which suitably uphold local culture and lore'.
- Convening the international Historical Justice and Memory Research Network through Professor Klaus Neumann of Swinburne's Institute for Social Research (ISR).
- PhD project by Andrew Peters that produced an undergraduate textbook on Indigenous studies, focusing on contemporary identity and education.
- PhD research conducted by Ms Sadie Heckenberg on cultural safety and Indigenous research methodologies. Sadie was awarded the sole 2014 Indigenous Fulbright Scholarship.
- PhD research conducted by Ms Skye Krichauff on relations between Indigenous people and settlers in colonial South Australia.
- Research led by Dr Karen Hughes on: 1) cross-cultural exchange and historical agency in the Roper River basin during 1890 – 2010, with the aid of an AIATSIS grant; and 2) Ngarrindjeri and cross-cultural histories, exploring the multiple layers of exchange relationships between Ngarrindjeri and settlers in southern Australia.
- Developing new training techniques and resources using digital technologies to assist delivery and completion of certificate, diploma and advanced diploma training in community services and health in Indigenous communities.
- Adapting existing certificate and diploma level courses to provide pathways for students into Swinburne degree courses that they could complete while living in the Kimberley region.
- Development of digital delivery and gap training in Certificate IV in Education Support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, liaison and support workers.
- Several small internally funded research projects engaging with Wurundjeri Elders, communities and organisations

### **Professor of Indigenous Studies**

The University appointed its inaugural Professor of Indigenous Studies and Executive Director (Reconciliation Strategy and Leadership) in October 2015. He is leading Swinburne's efforts in Indigenous teaching, research and engagement. In 2016, he led the development of a number of strategies and events:

- conducted a university-wide audit to capture Indigenous teaching, research and engagement activities at Swinburne
- created an Indigenous Studies Group to foster Indigenous studies at Swinburne
- held the Swinburne University Inaugural Reconciliation Lecture
- held the Swinburne University Inaugural Barak-Wonga Oration
- held an Indigenous Research and Engagement Symposium
- held an Indigenous Teaching Symposium
- created the annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Fellowship Scheme
- created the annual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander PhD Scholarship Scheme

- In 2016, worked with Human Resources to develop a compulsory online Indigenous cultural competency unit required to be undertaken by all Swinburne staff.

## **Other**

The University provides cultural recognition through staff, student and organisational participation in cultural activities including the Day of Healing, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week. Through involvement in these and other events, Swinburne students and staff become more aware of traditional and contemporary Indigenous concerns, and it is hoped that this heightened awareness will build mutual respect for Indigenous culture and heritage – and a growing respect for the ongoing role of Indigenous communities in Australia today.

The adoption of the *Reconciliation Action Plan* and the implementation of the University's *Indigenous Employment Strategy* means that managers throughout Swinburne are encouraged to employ Indigenous staff in mainstream positions, including in teaching positions. An important by-product of an increasing Indigenous teaching presence should be elevated student awareness of Indigenous cultures and issues, across the disciplines, in both vocational education and higher education.

## **Section 2 Expenditure of Indigenous Support Program Grant**

See Financial Acquittal provided at the end of this report.

## **Section 3 Contact Information**

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## **Section 4 Publication of the statement**

The 2016 Indigenous Education Statement will be placed on Swinburne's Strategy and Initiatives webpage at:

<http://www.swinburne.edu.au/about/our-university/indigenous-matters/education/indigenous-education-statement/>

**Attachments:**

- 1. Reconciliation Action Plan 2014-2016**
- 2. Indigenous Employment Strategy**
- 3. Financial acquittal**