



# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2011 - 2015



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## Foreword

**The University of Newcastle has a long-standing reputation for producing high quality outcomes in education and research. We are proud to be partnering with Reconciliation Australia as part of its Reconciliation Action Plan program. The University of Newcastle shares Reconciliation Australia's vision and dedication to 'closing the 17 year life expectancy gap' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians, through education, research and employment.**

The Reconciliation Action Plan program, launched by Reconciliation Australia in July 2006, provides a framework for organisations to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop actions and outcomes that will contribute to 'closing the gap' through the key areas of 'relationships, respect and opportunity'.

The University of Newcastle values strong community participation in relation to the University's key directions and priorities. The University has made a commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education one of its strategic priorities. As articulated in the University's strategic plan, we resolve "to be a national and international leader in Indigenous collaboration".

In 2009, the University conducted a review to ensure strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and support. A major outcome of this review was the establishment of the Wollotuka Institute, which consolidates all Indigenous activities of the University into one operational and strategic body.

The University recognises the importance of Indigenous education through high level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff appointments that encourage self determination and self governance. Our Indigenous Employment Strategy aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff numbers; maintain positive and collaborative ongoing relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and provide a culturally sensitive, rewarding work environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The University continues to endeavour to expand its curriculum across all disciplines so that it better reflects the experience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A new degree program has been proposed, that will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students the opportunity to better access professional pathways in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan strengthens our commitment to respectful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities; to leadership in Indigenous collaboration; and to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Professor Nicholas Saunders**

Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Newcastle

## **Our Vision**

***With respect and collaboration, the University of Newcastle embraces a united approach to equality and inclusiveness for all Australian peoples.***

The University of Newcastle is committed to providing an environment that is free from racism and discrimination, and which offers opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access, and succeed in, higher education.

The University of Newcastle's vision for reconciliation includes, but is not limited to:

- Development of an environment fostering mutual respect, social justice and a united voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal Australians;
- Strengthening collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal Australian communities, including provision of culturally responsive education;
- Forging respectful relationships designed to contribute to the ongoing endeavour of closing the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, health, cultures, languages, social justice, employment and empowerment;
- Commitment to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Our Business

The University of Newcastle recognises that education plays an integral role in providing a foundation for the the empowerment of and exercise of self-determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This, in turn, helps to close the gap created by past and present social injustices.

The University of Newcastle has forged a history of continual advancement in its commitment to Indigenous education, research, employment and culture. The following provides an outline of significant contributions over the past five years:

- The University ensures Indigenous participation in high level decision making processes through the Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training and the membership of senior Indigenous staff on key University committees,;
- 2005 – The University celebrated 21 years of Indigenous education at the University of Newcastle through Wollotuka;
- 2007 – The University introduced policies and procedures for ‘Respecting and Acknowledging Country’;
- 2007 – The University released its strategic plan ‘Building Distinction 2007-2011’, with Indigenous Collaboration as a key priority;
- 2008 – The Australian University Quality Agency Report (2008) stated that, “the University can rightfully claim to be a national leader in Indigenous education and collaboration” and provided the University with an affirmation in regards to the outcomes in Indigenous education.
- 2009 – Wollotuka became an Institute to provide consolidated leadership, support and guidance on Indigenous education as a whole of University approach under the strategic oversight of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations).

Currently, across the sector, tertiary education is identified as a priority for achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In particular, attention needs to be strongly focused on the “low enrolment numbers of Indigenous students at all levels, low student retention and completion rates, under representation of Indigenous Australians in general, academic and particularly senior executive staff positions in Universities, and the recognition of the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders in Australia’s universities” (Universities Australia, 2008). Within the context of those debates and claims, the University of Newcastle is performing above the national average; however, the University is aware that there are still large disparities in the comparisons of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that need ongoing attention.

## Our Plan

The University of Newcastle's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has been developed under the direction of a RAP Working Party. The Working Party consisted of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous staff including: Director, The Wollotuka Institute, Elder in Residence, President Academic Senate, Indigenous Curriculum Development Co-ordinator, Academic and Global Relations Division Executive Officer, Equity and Diversity and President Academic Senate. The draft and final plans were presented to the Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training (BATSJET) for its ongoing input and support. BATSJET's membership is wholly Indigenous, including community representatives with skills and experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational and community matters, and provides advice directly to the Vice-Chancellor. Genuine consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders is integral to the University's approach to supporting Indigenous education; ensuring Indigenous input on critical academic decisions has been the foundation of the University's successes in this area.

Important influences on the formulation of the Reconciliation Action Plan have been The Institutional Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011 *Building Distinction*

- Indigenous Collaboration Implementation Plan
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)
- The Australian 2020 Summit 'The Productivity Agenda - education, skills, training, science and innovation'
- 'Options for the future of Indigenous Australians'
- Review of the Australian Higher Education Report (Bradley Report).

Consultation occurred with both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal communities, internal and external to the University, over a six month period.

The 2007-2011 Strategic Plan highlights Indigenous Collaboration as a University priority, resolving that the University will be 'a national and international leader in Indigenous collaboration' that actively supports the aspirations of Indigenous peoples by providing study and employment opportunities.

The current strategic plan makes a commitment to the following strategic goals:

- We will encourage Indigenous peoples to aspire to complete higher education degrees by creating additional pathways for entry to University.
- We will nurture and support Indigenous students throughout their studies with the aim of increasing the number of Indigenous graduates at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

- We will be internationally recognised for the quality of our Indigenous research activities and we will link research outcomes to our teaching curricula.
- We will attract Indigenous academic and general staff to the University on the basis of the quality of our work environment.

The 2007-2011 Indigenous Collaboration Implementation Plan reinforces these commitments with plans to introduce additional entry pathways to higher education for Indigenous students. Strategies are identified to increase and improve access, participation, retention and success rates for Indigenous students through collaboration, partnerships and targeted programs. The plan also highlights the importance of increasing the Indigenous research profile and implementing an inclusive Indigenous curriculum across the University. The Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan are also in line with, and support the goals of, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

'Building Distinction' is currently being reviewed to develop a revised plan for the next five years. The University's Reconciliation Action Plan will form a basis to further strengthen its commitment to the identified priority of Indigenous Collaboration.

Another key influence on the current proposal is the summary of discussion arising from the Australian 2020 Summit, which highlighted the importance of collaboration, striving for excellence and developing strong foundations for Indigenous students to achieve positive outcomes and success in a business and professional environment. Some of the key outcomes of the summit focused on:

- Creating an environment of aspiration for continual innovation in learning.
- Creating new connections and collaborations across our education, business and innovation systems.
- Encouraging a new form of engagement that harnesses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ability, knowledge and leadership.
- Changing the policy language associated with Indigenous matters. For example, moving from words and concepts focused on disadvantage and dysfunction to strength-based words and concepts such as 'development' and 'capacity building'.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan reflects the visions highlighted in the above documents and provides a framework for the University community to share the journey and outcomes of Reconciliation.

All staff of the University, led by Senior Executive, will play a fundamental role in driving, supporting and assisting in the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan. In all cases the responsibility for the outcomes within the Reconciliation Action Plan will be a collaborative approach between the Wollotuka Institute and the responsible area outlined in the plan. The outcomes of the Reconciliation Action Plan must become a "business as usual" proposition for the University of Newcastle, and the plan will provide a pathway for this to occur.

## University of Newcastle Reconciliation Action Plan 2011-2015

### 1. Relationships

*Forging respectful relationships will contribute to the ongoing endeavour of closing the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, health, cultures, languages, social justice, employment and empowerment*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p><b><i>Elders in Residence</i></b> Develop and extend the 'Elders in Residence' program to contribute to the wider University community</p>	<p>Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors Directors - The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>April 2012</p>	<p>At least two guest lecture appearances per semester by 2012 for each of the five Faculties. By 2013 six guest lecture appearances per semester for each of the five Faculties.</p>
<p><b><i>Community Engagement</i></b> Develop strong working relationships with Aboriginal communities and organisations through initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconciliation Scholarship Dinner Dance</li> <li>• Participation in local and regional AECG meetings</li> <li>• Partnership initiatives with Local Aboriginal Land Councils.</li> </ul>	<p>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations) Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>June 2011</p>	<p>Yearly Reconciliation Scholarship Dinner Dance to attract over 200 participants in 2011 and over 250 in 2013</p> <p>University representative in attendance at least three AECG meetings in each region (Newcastle, Central Coast and Port Macquarie).</p> <p>By the end of 2012, Two productive agreements between the University and State and Local Aboriginal Land Councils that deliver Indigenous education and research outcomes.</p>



<p><b><i>Celebrating Success</i></b>  Profile and promote successes of Indigenous education at the University of Newcastle through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yearly Indigenous Collaboration booklet</li> <li>• Student and Staff Profiles in local and national media and on the University website</li> <li>• Promoting the outcomes of the Reconciliation Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Deputy Vice-Chancellor  (Academic and Global Relations)</p> <p>Director – Marketing and Media</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>June 2011</p>	<p>One student or staff profile per month in the Koori Mail plus two education supplements per year. Yearly Indigenous Collaboration booklet distributed to Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities locally and nationally.</p> <p>Monthly updates on the university website promoting Indigenous education and RAP outcomes.</p>
<p><b><i>Cultural Competency</i></b>  Ensure the participation of staff in the Cultural Competency program</p>	<p>Director – Human Resource Services</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2011</p>	<p>HR and Wollotuka to deliver one workshop per School by the end of 2011.</p> <p>HR &amp; Wollotuka to deliver four workshops per Division (3) by the end of 2011 for general staff. 75% of all staff to participate in cultural competency training by 2015</p>

## 2. Respect

***Demonstrating meaningful respect is an important part of the learning experience at the University of Newcastle because only through respect can we truly work together and learn from each other.***

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p><b><i>Inclusive Indigenous Curriculum</i></b>            Develop and Implement an Indigenous Cultural Competency program that provides 'all' University of Newcastle students with an understanding of Indigenous culture.</p> <p>Indigenous Competency component within the Graduate Certificate of Teaching and Learning – a core program for Academic staff at the University.</p>	<p>Director – Centre for Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>May, 2011</p>	<p>Cultural Competency on-line resource developed by December 2011.</p> <p>Two inclusive Curriculum projects delivered by each Faculty Semester 1, 2011.</p> <p>Indigenous Curriculum development meeting to be held at the end of each semester to ensure the ongoing implementation of Indigenous curriculum.</p> <p>50% of academic staff having completed the Indigenous component of the Graduate Certificate by 2015</p>
<p>Develop and deliver elective courses available to all students of the University that promote reconciliation</p>	<p>Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations)</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> semester 2013</p>	<p>Deliver at least one elective course focusing on reconciliation</p>

<p><b>Indigenous Research</b> Undertake, promote and encourage quality Indigenous research activities which will link research outcomes to our teaching curricula</p> <p>Investigate and undertake research that is driven and requested by the community</p>	<p>Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>May 2011</p>	<p>Provide support for Co-operative Research Centre bid</p> <p>Provide two Indigenous Research Fellowships.</p> <p>Provide one research profile on the website per semester highlighting Indigenous research outcomes from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers at the University</p> <p>Two community research projects per year.</p>
<p><b>Celebrating Cultural Diversity</b> Continue to celebrate cultural diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an award that recognises a contribution towards reconciliation</li> <li>• Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in Harmony Week</li> </ul>	<p>Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations)</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p> <p>Manager – Equity and Diversity</p>	<p>July 2011</p>	<p>Contribute to community NAIDOC Celebrations</p> <p>Presentation of a Reconciliation Award at the University's Reconciliation/Scholarship Dinner Dance</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in the Harmony Week program</p>

<p><b>Art Exhibition</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinate an annual Art Exhibition that delivers the following outcomes:</li> <li>• Encourage display of community artworks</li> <li>• Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to contribute to the exhibition by entering artworks or being on the working party</li> <li>• Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous community members to the launch to celebrate art, culture and wellbeing</li> <li>• Provide an Art Award and People's Choice Award</li> </ul>	<p>The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>December 2011</p>	<p>Display up to 80 art pieces from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and community Attract 150 visitors to the launch</p>
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### 3. Opportunities

*This goal represents a commitment to improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable Target
<p><b>Indigenous Employment</b> Continual evaluation and redevelopment of the Indigenous Employment Strategy including a clear focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting and retaining Indigenous academic and general staff on the basis of the quality of our work environment.</li> <li>• Develop initiatives that increase the number of Indigenous general and academic staff across the whole of the University</li> </ul>	<p>Director – Human Resource Services  Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>Yearly reporting figures collected each March</p>	<p>Increase Indigenous staff from 2.4% in 2010 to 3.9% of total University staff by 2015</p> <p>Increase number of Indigenous staff employed at levels above an Academic Level B and HEW 5 (see Indigenous Employment Strategy)</p>
<p><b>Further Education Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to develop and build on primary and high school programs that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to provide a greater knowledge and awareness of pathways and University experiences through:</li> <li>• the expansion of the S2U (Indigenous Schools to University Pathways) program, and the introduction of a mentoring initiative into this program.</li> <li>• Increased participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Science, IT and Engineering School programs, including the Girls + Maths + Science = Choices</li> </ul>	<p>Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations)  Manager - Equity and Diversity  Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>Yearly reporting figures collected each March</p>	<p>Increase by 6 per year the number of high schools participating in the S2U program</p> <p>Pilot the S2U mentoring program in five schools in 2011</p> <p>Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from high schools to University by 10% per year.</p> <p>Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in</p>

<p>Summer School and the Engineering Summer School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the Making Educational Goals Sustainable (MEGS) program</li> <li>Establishment of Rural Education Mobile program, visiting rural communities in NSW that have limited access to higher education information, and providing information to schools and wider community on further education options</li> </ul>			<p>the Girls + Maths + Science = Choices Summer School program by 10% per year</p> <p>Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students applying to Engineering, IT and Science programs by 10% per year.</p> <p>Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in Universities 'Widening Participation' activities. e.g. MEGS (Making Educational Goals Sustainable) and Careers through Reading by 10% per year</p> <p>Visit up to six rural communities per year</p>
<p><b>Leadership</b> Encourage student participation in leadership programs through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in the iLead mentoring/leadership program</li> <li>Participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in International cultural and academic student exchange programs</li> </ul>	<p>Director – International Office</p> <p>Directors – The Wollotuka Institute</p>	<p>Yearly reporting with figures collected each March</p>	<p>30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per year participating in the iLead mentoring/leadership program</p> <p>Four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students per year participating in International cultural and academic student exchange programs</p>

<p><b>Education</b> Continue to enhance the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at all campuses of the University of Newcastle</p>	<p>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations)</p>	<p>Reported yearly based on figures collected in March each year</p>	<p>Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from 550 (2010) to 570 in 2011 and up to 600 by 2013</p> <p>Increase the success rates of Indigenous students.</p>
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#### 4. Tracking progress and reporting

The University of Newcastle's Reconciliation Action Plan 2011-2015 will be reported on and evaluated on an annual basis. The plan will be tracked and evaluated by the Senior Executive Committee, the Wollotuka Institute and the RAP Working Party. Ongoing progress and reporting will be overseen by the University's Planning, Quality and Reporting Unit.

The annual RAP report due in 2011 will be accessible via the University of Newcastle and Reconciliation Australia websites. The refreshed RAP for 2011/2012 will also be on the University of Newcastle and Reconciliation Australia websites.

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