

CULTURAL STANDARDS



Cover artwork

The image, designed by Cheryl Newton of The Wollotuka Institute, represents the lands and places covered by the five nations within the footprint area of The Wollotuka Institute – Awabakal, Darkinung, Biripai, Worimi, Wonnarua – the mountains, rivers, forests, beaches and sea.

Birabahn – Eaglehawk artwork

The eaglehawk artwork used throughout this document was designed by Mandy Davis, Tobwabba Art, Forster.

**The Wollotuka Institute acknowledges
the traditional Aboriginal owners of the
lands within our footprint areas:**

- Awabakal Nation
- Darkinung Nation
- Biripai Nation
- Worimi Nation
- Wonnarua Nation

**We also pay respect to the wisdom
of our Elders past and present.**

Developed by:

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NGURAKI WIYELLIKO¹

As stated elsewhere in this document the role of Elders and Cultural Mentors is essential as we are responsible to guiding the teaching of LORE and our diverse ways of life and its governance structures and this is vital to our Cultural survival and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal Elders and Cultural Mentors were and still are the authority on Cultural mentoring which taught, showed leadership, were decision makers, were respected and showed respect which lead to our next generation of Elders and Cultural Mentors.

Aboriginal Elders and Cultural Mentors have wisdom and are knowledge holders of certain aspects of our culture. It was and still is a responsibility of the Elder and Cultural Mentor to share this knowledge with our students, staff and the broader community.

Cultural safety will be ensured by providing guidance around discussion relating to Cultural matters and business for our people.

All of us who have been privileged to be invited to serve as Elders and Cultural Mentors with The Wollotuka Institute are committed to the creation of a learning space within which our young can learn from the teachings of the Western world but also within which they can remain proud of and grounded in their cultural identity.

We understand the need to grow and adapt to the changing world and we celebrate the emergence of a new group of young educated and gifted leaders who are committed to doing what they can to address the ongoing struggle of our people for our rights and freedoms as the First Australians.

There is much to be achieved and our role of Elders and Cultural Mentors will hopefully assist with “dreaming” our future and being part of The Wollotuka Institute family who are dedicated to creating a better world for all who share the wonderful gift with all of its challenges and rewards.

We have experienced broken promises and the continuing denial of our place as the First Australians. We are hopeful that the new generations will commit to righting the wrongs and that they will join with us as we strive to acknowledge and celebrate our cultural diversity and difference and also embrace our common humanity.

We are proud to endorse The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards because they speak to our identity and celebrate our cultures. We are committed to working with The Wollotuka Institute and with the University of Newcastle to ensure that the principles contained in the Cultural Standards are embraced by all stakeholders.

We commend all those who have contributed to the development of the Cultural Standards and pledge that as Elders and Cultural Mentors we will do what we can to achieve the ideals upon which the standards are based.

¹ In the language of the Hunter River Lake Macquarie/Awabakal people meaning “wise person speak”

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The Wollotuka Institute Honours and Respects the role of Elders and Cultural Mentors

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Staff of The Wollotuka Institute

Cultural Standards Working Group

- Aunty Bronwyn Chambers (Darkinung), Elder in Residence, The Wollotuka Institute
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The guidance and encouragement of the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium Accreditation Board members in the development of The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards

The development of The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards has been endorsed by:

- The University of Newcastle's Board of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Training (BATSJET)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Higher Education Consortium (NATSHEC)
- The Wollotuka Institute Elders, Cultural Mentors
- Local Aboriginal Land Councils – Darkinjung, Worimi, Biripai, Wonnarua
- Awabakal Newcastle Aboriginal Co-operative
- Hunter Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- Central Coast Regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Special thanks to Cheryl Newton of The Wollotuka Institute for overseeing the process leading to the development of The Cultural Standards.



The Wollotuka Institute Elders, Cultural Mentors L-R: Uncle Ronnie Gordon, Aunty Sandra Griffin, Aunty Colleen Perry, Aunty Bronwyn Chambers, Professor Bob Morgan

PREFACE

Since its inception as a student support centre in 1983, Wollotuka² has continuously evolved and adapted to community expectations and institutional obligations. In 2012 Wollotuka advocated for a change of status and was accepted by the University of Newcastle as an Institute. Wollotuka in all its guises has played a pivotal role in respect to pursuit of the principle of self determination and social and restorative justice. Wollotuka has provided unparalleled leadership and has consistently championed the need for academically enriching and culturally affirming education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at a local, national and international level. Wollotuka has been able to continue its strong advocacy role by drawing on the strength derived from cultural survival, the communities and people it is connected to and on the commitment and transforming achievements of past struggles and journeys.

Through The Wollotuka Institute all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activities of The University of Newcastle are consolidated into one operational and strategic body providing high level advice and leadership in respect to the strategic priority and commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training by the University. The operational functions of The Wollotuka Institute incorporates Teaching and Learning; Research and Innovation; Student Engagement and Experience; Community Engagement; and Staff Employment and Development.

The Wollotuka Institute has developed its cultural standards to reflect and embrace the cultural essence to which our goals are directed and to help define and guide how we operate. The standards will inform the Institute's relationships with students, the community and the University. They also provide a set of principle and standards against which the cultural integrity of our institution can be monitored, reviewed and assessed.

The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards are structured to recognise and respectfully acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. However, in recognising this diversity The Wollotuka Institute wishes to specifically acknowledge the traditional peoples of the following nations whose land the University and the Institute is situated on:

- Awabakal Nation – The main campus of the University is situated on the lands of the Pambalong clan of the Awabakal Nation with the main office of Wollotuka housed in a uniquely designed learning space, the Birabahn³ building.
- Darkinung Nation – The University also has a campus within this Country where Wollotuka has an office located in the Gibalee⁴ Centre.
- Biripai Nation – A smaller campus of the University is located within this Country in the mid north coast of NSW. Wollotuka also has an office on this campus.
- Worimi Nation
- Wonnarua Nation

The Wollotuka Institute also wishes to acknowledge and pay respect to the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations from which its students and staff are drawn.

Although The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards are locally defined and orientated they are not intended to be exclusive and restrictive. The Cultural Standards aim to position the Institute so that it can continue to play a leading role in the growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher education locally, nationally and internationally. The Cultural Standards are designed to enhance and improve the quality of education and learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and their communities. The Cultural Standards serve to define and direct the ever increasing role of higher education and research aspirations that the Institute has and is committed to further continue to growing its profile and reputation both in Australia and internationally.

The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards are clustered under five discreet and distinct domains: – Cultural Celebration; Community Responsiveness; Academic and Research; Respect and Honouring; Inter-Institutional Relationships. The domains are not listed in any particular priority order and each domain is underpinned by a set of defined strategies. The Wollotuka Institute stresses that the Cultural Standards should be viewed as a “living” document that will be adapted and which will evolve with time and new and emerging cultural knowledge and circumstance.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **culture, in all of its manifestations**, is central to and guides the way in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live their lives. It also defines the way in which we relate to each other as individuals and as nations. Culture and the values and traditions that defines it, has helped to shape the life journey and worldview of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander peoples since the dawn of time. Culture, based as it is on the period of creation referred to as the Dreaming, is what our ancestors drew upon to guide and define how people interacted with each other and with all living things.

In our belief systems the Dreaming is continuous through our past, present and future, a cycle of life without beginning or end, a parallel and universal reality. Our beliefs, learnt from our Elders who learnt their knowledges from their Elders, explain the creation of the world as we know it. We believe our place in this land has been constructed by the Dreaming and dates back to the first dawn. Structure, order and purpose are present in our rituals that maintain life, giving meaning to our cosmos and in turn provide rules for respectful human behaviour. Our great ancestors who shaped the land and waterways are embedded in it. After their works of creation were completed they returned to the land, over the sea or ascended into the sky.

As is the case with all Indigenous peoples and cultures, Elders are venerated as the custodians of cultural wisdom and serve as key decision makers and knowledge holders.

Through cultural practice and norms their role is pivotal to protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in accordance with the directions of the teachings passed down from the Dreaming. The traditional role of Elders and Cultural Mentors and their knowledge and guiding wisdom continues to define and inform the manner in which we live our lives in the modern world.

Aboriginal Australians celebrate being the oldest continuous culture in existence in the world. However, it is important to point out that our label as Aboriginal Australians misrepresents our understanding of ourselves as a multiple of cultures showing cultural diversity across language, customs and traditions.

Our Dreaming Stories also pass on important knowledge, cultural values and belief systems to later generations. Through song, dance, painting and storytelling which express these Dreaming stories, Aboriginal people have maintained a link with the Dreaming from ancient times to today, creating a rich cultural heritage.

Our Dreaming stories provide the philosophical basis for The Wollotuka Institute Cultural Standards with stories from our footprint area countries presented to give meaning to each of the five domains of the Standards.

The story on the following page, Baiame the Creator, tells how this ancestral being developed the landscape within these areas giving life and law to man. This law, which has been passed down today, guided the development of and supports the implementation of these Standards.

² In the language of the Awabakal people “Wollotuka” means “eating and meeting place”

³ In the language of the Awabakal people “Birabahn” means “eaglehawk”

⁴ In the language of the Dharug & Guringai people “Gibalee” means “come along”

BAIAME THE CREATOR

Baiame is one of the great ancestral beings of the Creation period. His presence is felt throughout many South-Eastern Aboriginal communities including the Awabakal, Darkinung, Biripai, Worimi and Wonnarua. His journeys are recorded in song, dance, art, oral histories and Dreaming sites. During the creation period he moved across the land, helping develop the landscape and giving life and law to man and other aspects of the environment. When his journey was complete Baiame returned to the sky but appears at different times to remind Aboriginal peoples of the law.

The Worimi people speak of Baiame or Baayama as the creator and one of the greatest supernatural beings. He was recognised as a sky God (spirit) meaning he came from the sky to create the world who had the greatest power of all the supernatural beings.

Baiame is reputed to take many forms when appearing to humans but was recognisable to the Worimi because he was said to be made entirely of crystal quartz.

The Wonnarua people also tell how Baiame created Kawal (Ka-wal), to watch over them. The spirit of Kawal is embodied in the wedge tailed eagle, found throughout the Hunter Valley. When the Wonnarua see the wedge tailed eagle, they know Kawal is looking over them, protecting them.

There is an art representation of Baiame in a cave on the lands of the Wonnarua, while Mt. Yengo (pictured), in Darkinung country is one of the sites where Baiame descended from and ascended back into the sky.

CULTURAL STANDARDS



TITTALIK NGARTUN KAKO-AI TOE COQUON BUGKULLIKO KAKILLIKO (TITTALIK AND HOW THE HUNTER RIVER CAME TO BE)



This is a story passed down by the Awabakal people and surrounding nations as a firm lesson in highlighting the evil of greed and selfishness.

This was a time in the Dreaming when there were no rivers, lakes or rain. The water bubbled up from within the ground collecting in small pools and this was where all the animals came to drink. Tittalik through his greed decided to drink all the water in the pool. He began drinking and did not stop until the pool was completely dry, not caring for the needs of others. The result was that he was full to the point where his tummy was near bursting and he could only move a short way away from what had now become an empty, dry stream.

The other animals quickly became alarmed at the loss of water and realised that they would have to get Tittalik to bring some of the water back up. If he didn't they knew that all the living creatures would die. They got together and eventually made Tittalik laugh. The water he had drunk burst from his mouth in great torrents and roared from his mouth and cascaded down the hill. The power and torrent of the water gouged a deep furrow across the landscape and when the water finally came to a halt and subsided it had formed a deep gully filled with the running water which became known to the Awabakal people as Coquon, now known as the Hunter River. All the living creatures could now survive and enjoy life once more.

Tittalik was punished for his greed. He was turned into stone to remind all those that followed of his mistake. This photo shows where Tittalik still sits today – on top of a hill in Wonnarua Country.

Remember that greed, and neglecting the needs of others, can lead us to suffer in the same way that Tittalik still does... respect and honouring underpins our Standards.

NGARRALIN MARRUNG⁵ (RESPECT AND HONOURING)

Respect and honouring through knowing our histories, honouring contributions, respecting traditions and valuing culturally responsive practices underpins these cultural standards.

The Wollotuka Institute Ngarralin marrung standard will ensure that:

- The role and the contributions of Elders, Cultural Mentors and knowledge keepers are honoured and respected
- The role and the contributions of those who have walked before us is honoured and respected
- Students and staff are deeply respectful of their own cultural identity and those of other cultural backgrounds
- All languages and cultures of the world are honoured and respected
- Students and staff are respectful of artistic expression and traditions – including art and artefacts, dance and song and story telling
- The Nations upon whose traditional lands the University of Newcastle and The Wollotuka Institute are located is respected and honoured thereby maintaining a pride in place and custodian responsibilities and obligations
- Past cultural practices are embraced to guide our future journeys
- There is mutual respect and honour for each other's beliefs and values
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, cultures and philosophies are known and respected

⁵ In the language of the Hunter River Lake Macquarie/Awabakal people meaning "listening/learning well"



BIRABAHN – FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE

Story of Birabahn the eaglehawk protecting the culture and traditions of the people within The Wollotuka Institute housed in the Birabahn Building which was built to incorporate aspects of traditional Indigenous practices. Birabahn was also an Aboriginal man of high degree, a leader of the Awabakal people who is recognised today as possibly the greatest Aboriginal scholar of the 19th century. His name translates as the “eaglehawk” a much-revered totem of the Awabakal people.

Birabahn the eagle from high sees our land

Looks over our people

Knows our home and culture

Birabahn... looks after our culture

Keeps our culture

Communicates our culture

Celebrates our culture

THE SPIRIT OF BIRABAHN LIVES HERE

Our culture – celebrated by all

GUTHI WANGGA⁶ (CULTURAL CELEBRATION)

Culture is celebrated through the creation and provision of a culturally affirming and responsive environment. Recognition and celebration of past and present achievements, contributions and advancements defines this and our future environment.

The Wollotuka Institute Guthi Wangga standard ensures that:

- A culturally safe and welcoming environment is created for students, staff and community to share and celebrate knowledge of their language, history, culture, values and goals
- Elders and Cultural Mentors provide guidance and direction for cultural celebrations
- Elders and Cultural Mentors continually reinforce the significance and teachings of our cultures in order to celebrate within the context of the working environment
- Activities and events are designed and implemented that celebrate and provide opportunities for staff, students and community to practise their culture
- Language revitalisation is accessible and celebrated, strengthening a sense of identity, self esteem and links to country
- Students, staff and community share a sense of connectedness and belonging to Country and Place
- Students and staff play a role in local community cultural celebrations
- Students and staff develop strong cultural worldviews to enable the celebration of their culture within other cultural contexts

⁶ In the Gathang language of the Worimi, Gringai and Birpai people meaning "dance a song"



WARGAN THE WADHAYIGAN (CROW)

Our Dreaming stories have been with us for thousands of years and have been passed down to generation to generation by our people and continue today. This is a Darkinung Dreaming Story and the language used is of the Darkinung people.

Wargan was a beautiful and brightly coloured bird. When Wargan would fly through the air his tail and brightly coloured feathers could be seen by all the other birds. Wargan would continually show off and tell the other birds how beautiful he was and that he was better than them. When night came and it was time for all of the birds to settle in the trees they wanted to find a solution to stop Wargan the wadhayigan from doing this.

They thought that they needed to talk to the wise “gunwangung” to give them guidance in how to go about this. Gunwangung was very wise and thought, and decided to talk to “maliyan” the brave eaglehawk of his idea.

Maliyan found Wargan and put a challenge to him. Wargan was taken back to think that someone would challenge him. Wargan was angry and said to him I am the most beautiful bird. Maliyan said you might have the brightest coloured feathers but I fly higher than you.

All of the other birds watched with excitement as they both flew high into the sky. As they flew higher and higher Wargan called to Maliyan and said I can go higher than you and I can fly to “banal” the sun before you.

Baiami the creator had cautioned all of the birds not to go close to banal. Maliyan was worried and called out to Wargan. Wargan ignored Maliyan and he flew higher and higher showing off and flapping his colourful wings. Maliyan began to feel the heat off Banal and turned away from her. He yelled to Wargan and warned him again of the danger of the heat.

Wargan still did not listen and flew away higher again. He got closer and closer to Banal and it became so hot that Wargan's feathers began to scorch. Wargan became worried and looked down at his feathers they were no longer brightly coloured but were becoming “minig” black from the heat of Banal. Wargan descended back down to the earth but it was too late by the time he came back down to the ground his lovely feathers blackened.

All of the birds looked in horror at Wargan and Gunwangung tried to assist Wargan to the Deerubbin (the river) to put his feathers out.

Baiami came to visit Wargan “This is what happens when you do not listen and disobey me. You will always now be Minig (black) as a message to all other animals. Banal is hot and you will get burnt.



This story demonstrates how working together as a Community, not always seeking self promotion, is vital to the survival of our culture.

NGIYANG NGANGGALIDHI⁷ (COMMUNITY RESPONSIVENESS)

Community responsiveness is valued and respected and is based on the principles of self determination, reciprocity, social and restorative justice, equity and mutual respect. Fostering strong links with community reinforces cultural values and beliefs. **STRONG COMMUNITIES, STRONG CULTURE**

The Wollotuka Institute Ngiyang nganggalidhi standard ensures that:

- There is strong community participation in the setting of key directions and priorities for The Wollotuka Institute
- Input from community is respected and valued acknowledging expertise and skills
- Community Elders and Cultural Mentors are recognised and respected for the wisdom and knowledge they hold which has been passed down through the generations since the time of creation
- Staff and students are strong in their own cultural knowledge, heritage and identity in order to be positive contributing members of the community
- Acknowledgement is given to the cultural diversity amongst local community and the richness of spirit this diversity brings to place
- The teaching and practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures is viewed as a fundamental requirement for nurturing culturally healthy and responsive individuals who can contribute positively to the growth and harmony of the community
- Community are respected as integral and made welcome when attending cultural, academic and ceremonial events
- Staff and students are aware of and respects community and cultural protocols and ensures that they are adhered to at all times
- Staff, students and community work together to ensure that future generations feel pride in their culture in an ever changing and adapting contemporary world environment
- Staff and students will walk together with community to pursue the principles of self determination

⁷ In the language of the Darkinung people meaning "we are talking"

STORY OF THE THREE BROTHERS

The Three Brothers Mountains (pictured) in Biripai Country is a significant place for the local Aboriginal people of that area and acts as an important reference point in the local landscape. It is a place where they feel a connection to their country and their ancestors. The Three Brothers Dreaming story explains the creation of the Three Brothers Mountains and has been passed down through many generations of Aboriginal people. The telling of the story is a creative act so no two tellings are the same, but the general storyline remains unchanged.

There were three brothers who lived near the Camden Haven River near the sea. As part of their initiation, they were required to live alone in the bush for several months before they would be recognised as fully initiated men. After being in the bush for several months they began to worry about their mother and father, so the youngest brother, Dooragan, volunteered to go and check up on them.

Just as Dooragan left the camp he saw an old witch but paid her no attention. He told his parents about her when he reached them, and his father gave him a special boomerang, and told him to quickly return to his brother's camp to warn them that the witch would try to kill them. The youngest brother headed back to his brother's camp but did not make it there by night fall. At first light he continued his

journey but the witch was at the camp when he arrived. He asked the witch what she had done to his two brothers, and she replied that she had eaten them and would eat him too. Before the witch had a chance to do anything, the youngest brother hit her on the head with the boomerang and split her in half. He buried half her body in the river and half in the sea.

Dooragan returned to his brother's camp and gathered up their bones. He buried their bones where the North and Middle Brother mountains now stand, then went to where the South Brother mountain now stands and died. That night a mountain rose up where each body lay to mark the tragedy. The mountains were then named after the Three Brothers with the National Park surrounding the mountains named after the youngest brother – Dooragan.



As initiation is an important part of Aboriginal culture where certain people are expected to attain various stages of knowledge, University students are also expected to progress through various stages during their academic and research journeys.

DJUWAL NGARRALGU⁸ (ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH)

Meaningful and respectful relationships with community are imperative to the design and application of academic and research protocols. The utilisation of cultural values and principles which reflect unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges will contribute to the creation of a culturally safe and healthy learning environment.

The Wollotuka Institute Djuwal Ngarralgu standard will ensure that:

- Knowledge is acquired through a culturally responsive and embedded process
 - The knowledge and wisdom of Elders and Cultural Mentors is incorporated throughout the curriculum and within classroom teaching contexts
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge is applied to privilege and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wisdom
 - Staff and students utilise culturally appropriate and safe methods of practice within the learning environment
 - Connectedness to Country and community is continually promoted and enhanced
 - Standards of excellence are applied by integrating language and culture into our academic programs to strengthen cultural awareness and understanding
- Staff are provided with continued professional development opportunities to maintain the highest levels of teaching and research standards
 - Individual and diverse learning styles are included within epistemologies (knowledges) and pedagogical (teaching) practices
 - Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories are promoted and shared where appropriate
 - All staff are recognised as conduits as well as knowledge creators for cultural based teaching as well as other knowledges appropriate to university context
 - Knowledge is grounded in a philosophy of acentred ideals
 - Research is conducted in a culturally ethical framework based on reciprocity and integrity

⁸ In the Gathang language of the Worimi, Gringai and Birpai people meaning "search for knowledge"

RECONCILIATION STATEMENT

The University of Newcastle declares its commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation: developing a strong community and fostering mutual respect, social justice and a united voice between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The University of Newcastle respects and acknowledges the Aboriginal land on which the Australian campuses of the University are located. We acknowledge the Aboriginal nations on whose traditional lands the University has presence, respecting and acknowledging the traditional peoples and the cultural significance and history of the land.

The University is aware of the impact of the alienation and other forms of injustices including the removal of children, the loss of the land, the destruction of languages and culture, and the ongoing struggle for social and restorative justice. Through acknowledging and understanding past losses and injustices and through committing to redressing the social and economic challenges and ongoing racism, we will continue to move forward together to a better future.

The University recognises that education plays an integral role in providing a foundation and platform for the exercise of self-determination and the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Through collaboration and the provision of culturally responsive education the University seeks to educate and contribute to the development of a harmonious community.

The University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have supported the University in ensuring an Aboriginal presence at the University and appropriate and effective levels of consultation and collaboration through the sharing of Aboriginal voices, cultural wisdom and knowledge. These attributes are essential to moving forward to a future of equality and respect in teaching and learning, research, cultural inclusion, celebrating diverse cultures and success. The University acknowledges and appreciates the contribution and support by all communities. We will continue to build on existing partnerships and wherever possible forge respectful relationships designed to contribute to the ongoing endeavour of redressing the circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, health, cultures, languages, social justice, employment and empowerment.

The University of Newcastle is committed to providing an environment that is free from racism and discrimination, developing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access and succeed in higher education. The University embraces the unique and diverse cultures of Aboriginal – the oldest continuing culture in the world – and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to ensure the growth of knowledge for all Australians.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA



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

BULA WIYAWIYELLI⁹ (INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS)

Our relationship with the University is based on the principles of reciprocity, accountability and respect.

The Wollotuka Institute Bula Wiyawiyelli standard will ensure that:

- The recognition of an individual's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage is honoured and respected
- Self determination is a fundamental internationally recognised right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and is incorporated in governance relationships between us and the University of Newcastle
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are recognised as valued staff, knowledge holders, researchers and teachers who are integral contributors to the University environment
- Our culture and worldviews is upheld and respected throughout all facets of university business
- The University continues to support and is committed to improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- The University commits to the principle of reconciliation thereby providing an environment that is free of racism and embraces the diverse cultures present in the broader University community
- We work in partnership with the University to acknowledge and celebrate that Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Western worldviews have legitimacy in a shared higher education space
- All University staff and students are provided with the opportunity to be culturally competent citizens of the world
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, cultures and philosophies are recognised and accepted as critical to creating, sharing and ensuring cultural survival and growth
- The University of Newcastle is committed to providing its students with a diverse academic learning environment within which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledges are embedded in curriculum adding to cultural global citizens

⁹ In the language of the Hunter River Lake Macquarie/Awabakal people meaning "you two converse"

THE WOLLOTUKA STORY

A long time ago during the Dreaming, University Dreaming – 1983, our people hungered for new knowledge and were entering into this alien learning environment. Our mob was restless – there was a government movement to graduate 1,000 teachers by 1990. Our Elders were listening to their spirit ancestors. A culturally safe space was needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Wollotuka was created. It was housed in a small enclave beneath the Huxley Library in the then Newcastle College of Advance Education on the lands of the Pambalong Clan of the Awabakal Nation, then supporting only a handful of Aboriginal students.

The 1988 Australian Bicentenary marked a celebration for some Australians but was a time for protests and unrest for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Wollotuka's expanded role created greater demand for student and staff accommodation. It was proposed that bicentenary funds be used for a new building. The use of this money was boycotted by Aboriginal staff and community. The University met with a handful of Aboriginal students and convinced them that if they did not take the opportunity to use this money there would not be another. The students signed off on the submission and a new Aboriginal Centre was built. The building had controversial beginnings, particularly from our Aboriginal Community.

**Birabahn the eagle
from high sees our land**

Looks over our people

Knows our home and culture



Early 1990's – Knowledge... our way. Our people demanded more. Wollotuka expanded its operations beyond student support and commenced the design and delivery of courses aimed at enhancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and equity at the University. The first course to be offered was the Aboriginal Bridging Program. This program ceased to be offered after 1997 but has since been replaced by the Yapug Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Enabling Program.

In 1992 Wollotuka also designed and taught into the Diploma in Aboriginal Studies which in 1999 was developed into a Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies degree, with it being reviewed and restructured in 2010 to the Bachelor of Aboriginal Professional Practice, now offering majors in numerous discipline areas across the University.

More and more of our people wanted this knowledge. Our Elders wanted a more equitable access to University for our people. In 1993 the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Special Entry Policy was adopted which addressed selection procedures for entry of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people to the University.

Birabahn... looks after our culture

Keeps our culture

Communicates our culture



The demand for our people to be healed by our own witnessed, parallel to Wollotuka's development in the 1980's, the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Students Program which commenced at the University in 1985 and produced its first graduates by 1990 – the first two in Australia. This program is now renowned nationally for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical graduates.

Late 1990's – pursuing research that Indigenous Communities themselves seek.

In 1996 Wollotuka was successful in obtaining Commonwealth funds to establish an Indigenous Australian Higher Education Research Centre, Umulliko, commencing its operations in 1997 while physically located on another part of the campus. Umulliko being the only one of six national Centres of Excellence established at that time still operating.

Wollotuka's role continued to grow and by the late 1990's Wollotuka had positioned itself as the main provider of Aboriginal Studies courses to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels of

study. In the early 1990's an Aboriginal education elective was offered within the Graduate Diploma in Education and by the late 1990's a mandatory Aboriginal Education unit was included in all primary and secondary education programs within the University, a first for any institution in NSW.

In 1997 a position paper on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Multi Service Centre was submitted to the University which outlined that Wollotuka, Umulliko and the Aboriginal Medical Student Liaison Office merge into one operational body and housed within one building. Meanwhile, an external review of the University's Aboriginal Education and Research Training programs was conducted and amongst its recommendations was that the operations of Wollotuka and Umulliko should be merged.

In 2001 the University underwent a major restructure and resultantly the University began to move towards forming a School of Aboriginal Studies with the newly formed Faculty of Education and Arts resulting in Umulliko and Wollotuka merging. Also at this time building operations commenced for the new Multi Service Centre.

Birabahn, the building named in honour of both the eagle-hawk totem of the Awabakal and the Awabakal scholar by the same name, saw students and staff take up residence in April 2002. This was celebrated as an important milestone in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.

Birabahn... celebrates our culture

THE SPIRIT OF BIRABAHN

LIVES HERE



The building incorporates important cultural aspects of the local area as well as being surrounded by bush tucker landscaped gardens which were constructed by trainee workers engaged through local community organisation, Yarnteen Aboriginal Corporation.

Late in 2002 an official merger took place with Gibalee, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre on the Ourimbah Campus which was established in 1999, becoming part of Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies.

During this period Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic activity at the University continued to increase through the collaborative efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support, Wollotuka's academic area, Umuliko and the Discipline of Aboriginal Health with Wollotuka now having the capacity to offer all levels of programs, on the three major campuses of the University, from enabling through undergraduate programs to postgraduate doctoral programs.

The coming together of the clans. The University undertook a change management process in 2005 which then resulted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Support separating from Wollotuka School of Aboriginal Studies and reporting directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic). With Indigenous Collaboration now being a strategic priority within the University, over the next few years this separation was seen to be disempowering for our people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and in late 2008 discussions between Aboriginal staff of both the Support Unit and School and senior management of the University saw yet again

another change whereby a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit was formed which would sit under the Academic Division and report via three Directors to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Global Relations). This unit saw the merger of the School, Student Support Unit, Employment and Health to form The Wollotuka Institute in early 2009.

The Wollotuka Institute now engages with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (see The Wollotuka Institute Annual Report for up to date statistics) across the three main campuses of the University – Callaghan (Awabakal Country), Ourimbah (Darkinung Country) and Port Macquarie (Biripai Country) as well as making a commitment to Indigenous education within the areas of teaching and learning; research and innovation; community engagement; and staff employment and development.

Wollotuka has been able to continue its strong advocacy role by drawing on the strength derived from cultural survival, the communities and people it is connected to and on the commitment and transforming achievements of past struggles and journeys.

GATHAY NYIIRUN (LET US GO TOGETHER)

OUR SPIRIT
ANCESTORS LOOK
DOWN AND SMILE



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