Building bridges and creating understanding: the experiences of non-Indigenous learning advisors employed to assist Indigenous tertiary students under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme

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Declaration

This work contained in this dissertation has not been previously submitted either in whole or in part for a degree at CQUniversity or any other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the material presented in this dissertation is original except for the contribution of narratives by research participants, and where due reference is made in the text.

Joanne Payne

Signed:  
Date: 20-10-2009
Copyright Statement

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Joanne Payne

Signed: [Signature]
Date: 20-10-2009
Abstract

This dissertation, first and foremost signifies the learning journey of the writer/researcher as a student social worker undertaking Honours in the final stages of the degree at CQUniversity; and as a non-Indigenous learning advisor employed by Nulloo Yumbah Learning Spirituality and Research Centre to assist Indigenous tertiary students in their undergraduate study. A feminist post-structural methodology using comparative reflexive practice is employed to explore the experiences and challenges of non-Indigenous Learning Advisors in their work giving assistance to Indigenous Students. Using a reflective narrative writing style, the collective experiences of the research partners are allowed to emerge in order to make the most of an opportunity for the small collective voice to be heard. As such, the emergence of patterns in stories of shared experience permits a powerful contribution to the growing pool of research in the area of teaching and learning from Indigenous perspectives.

The stories of shared experience of research partners are set against the background of Australia’s oppressive colonial history; and include the examination of social policy both at the governmental level and CQUniversity’s own agreement with Nulloo Yumbah. This statement of agreement aims to provide appropriate and cultural support to Indigenous tertiary students in line with the stipulations outlined in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989, which are to increase the outcomes for Indigenous tertiary students to reflect the same standard of achievement as other Australians.

The objective of the research project is made possible by the use of reflexive practice, where the writer/researcher challenges the efficacy of university support systems by taking the stance of an insider, deeply embedded in the dominant colonial educational discourse present in Australia. Additionally, this approach enables not only an understanding of the experiences of the actors, being non-Indigenous learning advisors and Indigenous tertiary students, within educational support systems, but also depicts how these experiences might compare with broader social expectations and intent for the functions of the existing education system.
Acknowledgement

I wish to thank my research partners both learning advisors and students for your very valuable contribution to this study. Without your contribution this story could not be told.

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I especially wish to thank my wonderful family for their never-ending support. Special thanks go to my partner Frank, my superman, for reminding me to eat breakfast in the morning and other things. Thanks to my beautiful girls, Theresa, Karly and Melissa who have cheered me all the way to the finish line. Thanks to my sister Peta for sharing her passion for Uncle Harry’s story. Big, huge thanks to my mum, for sharing our family history with me, and for taking holidays and offering her home in the most peaceful place on earth, to get this dissertation done (as long as I baby sat the cat). Thanks also Finn the cat. I love you all you are my life.

Last but never least, I wish to show respect to the Indigenous peoples of Australia, past and present. Your past is painful, our future is hopeful. Your great strength and resilience continues to inspire me. I am dedicated to being an advocate for reconciliation.
Private Henry (Harry) Burrows
(Actual name: Heinrich Wühlen)
Enlisted: 28 March 1915
Died: 31 March 1918

His official age at time of death is recorded in the War Memorial records as 20 years. However, his actual age was 17 years (only we his family know this fact).
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Linda, my dear 'sissy' and friend.
Famous for the saying - 'I've got a backbone not a wishbone' - yes, you have!
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Preamble

The colour of my skin yours eyes do see
Pain dwelling deep within
Afflictions to experience is a mere dream
Walk with me for a day.
Souls of black Australia drifting in the sea of mankind
Neither here nor there
Memories lost of tribal care
Walk with me for a day.
Share my dreaming of this great land
Grassroots problems where did they begin?
Please don’t criticises my countryman
Walk with me for a day.
History’s footprints linger within the depths of time
As its path of destruction lays a snare
Walk with me for a day.
Torn and battered weary souls fight on
Equity beats to the sound of progress roar
Reconcile and together we’ll learn
Walk with me for a day.

Tania Con-Goo (2005 cited in Eckerman et al. 2006)

The colour of my skin is very fair. My eyes are blue. My hair is blonde. I am a white
Australian of German descent; and despite the fact that I am a woman, and that my
German immigrant ancestors experienced persecution during WWI, the features of my
outward appearance and my family’s ability to quickly assimilate during the years of the
White Australia Policy, afford me a highly ranked status according to the dominant western
construct within contemporary Australian society. ‘The colour of my skin your eyes do
see’ (Con-Goo 2005, cited in Eckerman et al. 2006).
In March 2008, I accepted a position as a Learning Advisor (LA) for Indigenous tertiary students undertaking their undergraduate study in the field of social work. I first saw this as a way of earning a good income while I was studying. I anticipated that this would be 'easy money' as I would be tutoring students on topics in which I had accumulated considerable knowledge. I considered myself to have a good understanding of the course content which was evident by my own success as a student. It quickly became apparent, however, that I was going to need more than just knowledge of social work theory to be successful at my job. I had not accounted entirely for the cultural barriers I would come up against. I had not thought deeply enough about how these challenges could be overcome. Therefore, I realised that I was going to have to adapt my techniques and I would need to adapt quickly if I was going to be successful at my job. I needed to understand and become attuned to the different learning styles of the students I was tutoring. I also realised that if I was marginally successful that I would be developing cultural knowledge that would be invaluable in my future practice as a social worker.

After some preliminary research of literature about different learning styles and Indigenous ways of learning (Lynn 2001; Hughes, More & Williams 2004), I found that the students I tutored learned well from scenarios and stories. My research had led me to several pieces of useful literature which advocated the use of metaphors and narratives as learning techniques (Witherell & Noddings 1991; Lynn 2001; Sandelowski 1991; King 2003; Galloway & Moylan 2005). I found that if I used these techniques to describe and explain the course content, the students were able to connect the dots more completely and easily than if I simply explained the concepts as I understood them. After putting these adjustments into practice, as well as other techniques I learned from my continued in depth personal research, we began to make headway. As I shared stories about my life as ways of teaching the concepts, I experienced a connectedness with the students as they shared
their personal stories with me about their own lives. I found that I was learning from them about their cultural ways and the absolute importance they placed on being cultural as part of their identity. I considered this sharing to be a gift because I had read that usually Indigenous peoples do not share personal stories until they develop considerable trust with a non-Indigenous person (Eckerman et al. 2006). However, one of the side effects of hearing their stories was that the content was having an emotional affect on me.

I had always seen myself as an open-minded, out of the box thinker, and my social work study had taught me that commonsense thinking was relational to people’s world views (Healy 2005; Maidment & Egan 2004; Freier 1999). However, I was beginning to realise that I was only open-minded about my own world as a non-Indigenous person. Although, I had some knowledge of the terrible things that the Aboriginal peoples had endured at the hands of European invaders, I had never really thought deeply about these issues, or that the dark history of European colonisation of Australia could still affect Indigenous people in their lives in the present (Eckerman et al. 2006; King 2003; Lynn 2001). The more they shared with me the more I began to reflect on previous research that found that tertiary study for these students was more than gaining the necessary qualifications to obtain a job as a social worker, a teacher or a nurse (Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003). For them it was about stepping out of their identity to try to understand a non-Indigenous way of thinking and being, so that they could eventually help their own people to have a better understanding of the non-Indigenous world and its oppressive systems that in many ways, they are still forced to live within (Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003; King 2003).

An awaking had begun in me and had quickly taken root. Although I would never have admitted to being racist, I felt supreme guilt about my previous unawareness of my own intolerance. As these waves of sorrow washed over every part of my being, I felt the
overwhelming need to take up the banner and do my part in the promotion of reconciliation for the Australian Indigenous peoples. Not just as a token, but as a necessity to find a way forward towards a more equitable future for Indigenous students within a current system of education which fails to address, even at the most fundamental level, issues of understanding and the need for a different way of seeing, doing, being and knowing, inherent within Australian Indigenous cultures. The passion, therefore, for my Honours research subject, ‘Building bridges and creating understanding – the experiences of non-Indigenous Learning Advisors assisting Indigenous students’, was born.

‘Walk with me for a day’
(Con-Goo 2005 cited in Eckerman et al. 2006).
Chapter One

Introduction

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Every story has a beginning

The experiences explored in this dissertation may be likened to a journey; a journey of learning which may have a beginning in history, or in more recent times. With these beginning thoughts in mind this dissertation explores the experiences of both non-Indigenous Learning Advisors and Indigenous tertiary Students within the context of the dominantly western educational discourse. As the writer and primary researcher of this dissertation, I acknowledge that I am deeply embedded in this same system of education; as a social work student nearing the final stages of the degree, and as a non-Indigenous Learning Advisor employed by this system to assist Indigenous students who are trying to negotiate a learning pathway within this same system. As such my view is as an insider. Therefore, my perspective is based on reflexive practice which enables not only an understanding of the experiences of the actors within this educational discourse, being non-Indigenous Learning Advisors and Indigenous tertiary students, but also how the experiences of these actors might compare with broader social expectations. For the purpose of this study, these broader social expectations, as well as the intent for the functions of the existing educational discourse, include social policy directives implemented with the intent to support Indigenous students.

The theoretical methodology employed for the purpose of this research project is primarily feminist post-structural qualitative inquiry. However, the use of statistical findings are also employed as a means of establishing a picture of the background history of Indigenous peoples after colonisation and educational social policy provision which has been implemented with the intent to increase outcomes for Indigenous students within the context of the current educational discourse.
To a greater extent this dissertation is written as a reflective narrative. The reader may feel a sense, at times, throughout the dissertation that the narrative is significantly reflects my own learning journey within the context of non-Indigenous Learning Advisor experience. This ‘sense’ would be entirely correct; however, the contributions of the research partners also have a significant part to play in validating any assumptions I may unconsciously make. Furthermore, it is not my primary intent to make assumptions or to draw conclusions as I wish to allow the narratives to tell their own stories. However, I acknowledge that it is impossible, no matter what precautions I take, to remain entirely impartial or unbiased because of my positioning within the research as an insider. I am therefore, an advocate within a reflective process embedded in post-structuralist feminism. Importantly, this approach upholds its validity because it involves the recognition that power shapes human interactions and systems; and as such, and for all intense purposes, the research challenges the ‘taken-for-granted’ grand narrative of the dominant western educational discourse within Australian contemporary society. Consequently, I acknowledge that in order to lay the epistemological groundwork for this exploration, and for me to engage with the narratives contributed by the research partners I will draw significantly on my own narrative memories of social injustice as set in the normative expectations of my own worldview established through lived experiences as a ‘white’ Australian; having been educated within the dominant colonial education system.

Rationale

*Our struggle today does not mean that we will necessarily achieve change but, without our struggle today, perhaps future generations would have to struggle much more. History does not finish with us; it goes beyond* (Freire 1999, cited in Denborough 2008, p. xi).

There is very limited previous research specifically written from the Indigenous perspective about Indigenous students’ experiences in mainstream tertiary education.
However, much of the currently available research literature suggests that there exists a significant amount of misunderstanding and misconception surrounding the difficulties and barriers facing these students, because of conflicting ideas about ‘learning to be professional’, in the dominant western sense, while still keeping a firm grasp on their cultural identity and heritage (Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003; Lynn 2001). The negotiation of these multiple identities is framed within a ‘historically hostile, denigrating and imposed’ mainstream ‘colonial culture’ (King 2003, p. 1). This framework has been promoted in part by the evolution of social policy created to govern Indigenous issues, such as education, within Australia in a dominant non-Indigenous socially constructed context (Bourke 1996; SAAHP 2005; King 2003). Non-Indigenous Learning Advisors employed under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme face many challenges in their endeavours to assist Indigenous students in their learning journey because of these same constraints. In light of these identified challenges, further research in this specific area is warranted.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this research project is to offer a perspective of these identified challenges, by illustrating that there is intrinsic power in storytelling. Therefore, the foundation of this research is a narrative specifically told from the writer’s own experiences as a non-Indigenous Australian of German decent, a learning advisor for Indigenous tertiary students employed by Nulloo Yumbah Learning Spirituality and Research Centre at CQUniversity, and as a Bachelor of Social Work student approaching the final stages of the degree. In addition, the anecdotal experiences of two other non-Indigenous Learning Advisors will be used in support of, and as a comparison to, my own experiences. Additionally, three Indigenous women currently studying degree programs at CQUniversity, will offer a contribution to the collective Indigenous world views and
experiential challenges facing Indigenous students learning to negotiate a professional system which is in many ways foreign to them, while still keeping a firm grasp on their cultures, histories and heritages.

To me getting an education is more than learning stuff in books which I struggle to understand most of the time; it’s about learning the ways of ‘whites’ so that I can someday understand enough to become a bridge between the cultures. It’s hard work. I’ve been doing this for seven years now. That’s a long time and I sometimes wonder if I will ever finish. But I’m determined and having a tutor helps me to learn the things about ‘white’ ways that books can’t teach you. It’s a two-fold oneness ... I learn from you and you learn from me ... (Student).

Description of Terms

Throughout this research paper, the term ‘Indigenous’ is used to embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, in using this term I acknowledge that there exists a diversity of Indigenous cultures, histories and heritages among specific Indigenous communities in Australia. More specific terms are included by the various authors in literature used throughout this paper.

The Indigenous women included in this study are aged 30 - 60 years and are thus, all mature aged tertiary students studying different degree programs at CQUUniversity. One is a ‘Koori’ woman who grew up in various communities around the Sydney area in New South Wales. The other two women identify as ‘Murri’ women; one from Beaudesert area, South-east Queensland and the other, from far North Queensland. All identify themselves as displaced from their traditional communities. To ensure confidentiality, all will be denoted as ‘Student’ throughout this dissertation when their narratives are included. The Learning Advisors will be referred to in their sharing as LAs. Moreover, differentiating the research partners from one another as either ‘Student’ or ‘LA’ significantly complements the feminist post-structural collaborative and collective nature of this research. Where the
terms ‘Student[s]’ and ‘Learning Advisor[s]’ or ‘LA’ are used throughout the paper to denote the research partners specifically, they are given ‘capitals’ to signify that these terms are in place of the person’s name. However, when the terms are used to denote the larger community of learning advisors or students the titles are not given ‘capitals’ as they do not represent specific people.

The term ‘learning’ is used in summing up as a noun rather than terms such as ‘assumption’ or ‘conclusion’, principally to underpin the fluid nature of this study as offering stories which are still unfolding and ongoing rather than leading to a definite identifiable or final destination.

Structure, limitations and delimitations

There are several constraints which limit the scope of this research project. Firstly, the time frame for this project has been defined by the fulfilment of requirements as a course of study set out by CQUniversity, as well as, necessarily fitting the timeline set down by the CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). However, these limitations were significantly overcome by taking advantage of the opportunities during the pre-requisite course Qualitative Research Methods (Honours A) to thoroughly plan a research proposal from several different angles, and accordingly begin the arduous process of collecting research literature about Indigenous perspectives on education and learning, as well as professional practice paradigms. Additionally, this preparation period allowed for time to increase my knowledge and learning around qualitative research methods in general, as well as narrative approaches and the complementary feminist post-structural perspectives. The necessity for ethical research practice has required: applying for clearance to collect anecdotal data via conversations, including a thorough application...
process and the drafting of an information sheet and participant consent form; a period of waiting for this clearance after the submission of the application; submitting the necessary amendments after being granted conditional clearance, and finally being granted approval to commence data collection. However, the accumulation of learning from earlier efforts has allowed the natural flow of progression throughout the duration of this project.

Secondly, this study primarily focuses on the experiences of women and is written from a feminist post-structural perspective (refer to Chapter Three - ‘Methodology’). While it is recognised that the male perspective has its own value, it is a statistical fact that Indigenous women are seven times more likely than men to pursue a tertiary qualification (Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2006). It is also recognised that women’s experiences and perspectives are unique as are the challenges they face within the realm of tertiary education, and as such, they warrant attention apart from the male experience.

Thirdly, throughout this dissertation research participants are referred to as research partners. The writer makes this distinction because of the intrinsic interrelatedness between researcher and participant when engaging in the process of storytelling as a means of anecdotal data collection. Moreover, feminist post-structural qualitative research methods are concerned with the deconstruction of power relations which lead to dominant and other binaries. Therefore, by inviting the participants to become partners in the research the possible unwanted and unintentional creation of binaries are effectively removed from the research relationship.

Fourthly, one of the original focuses of this study was to be on the experiences of social work students studying degree programs at CQUniversity as the writer is herself a social work student. However, this focus was expanded to include all tertiary students as the accumulation of learning from earlier efforts has allowed the natural flow of progression throughout the duration of this project.

1 See appendix one for copy of Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form
work student completing Honours in qualitative research methods. However, it was suggested by members of the HREC that there would be a greater chance of participants being identified and thus, disadvantaged because of the small number of Indigenous students studying social work at CQUniversity. Hence, the scope has been widened to encompass a range of human service degree programs which will remain unidentified. Furthermore, since the primary focus is on the experiences of Learning Advisors set against the background of the Indigenous experience and education generally, the programs of study being undertaken by Students become irrelevant to the outcomes of this research.

Finally, while this study represents primarily a ‘here and now’ account of research partners’ anecdotal experiential narratives as either Learning Advisors or Students, the nature of social research is deeply embedded within the broader context of history. Hence, included in this discussion is a broad account of history encompassing the development of social policy governing education specifically with regard to Indigenous peoples (refer to Chapter Two – ‘Literature Review’). Furthermore, individual accounts of histories other than my own are not included due to the limit in opportunities for ongoing discussion and expansion of ideas and arguments, as well as the limited focus of this paper.

The narrative of my history as a white Australian of German descent is shared for several reasons. Firstly, the birth of this project comes from an awaking of consciousness and the influence of my personal learning journey. Secondly, I use my narrative to place myself, the primary subject of the research, within the historical context of Australian colonial history. Finally, I use my own story as an essential example of feminist post-structural methodology as being integrally linked to the interpretive nature of narrative approaches, both within the feminist post-structural landscape and as a powerful form of qualitative
inquiry of lived experience. Moreover, rather than zone in on individual themes I have allowed the collective experiences to emerge in order to make the most of an opportunity for the small collective voice to be heard (refer to Chapter Four – ‘Stories of experience’). As such, the emergence of patterns in stories of shared experience permits a powerful contribution to the growing pool of research in the area of teaching and learning from Indigenous perspectives.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Exploring the past

Stories from the past – scene one – the mighty power of capitalism

Stories from the past – scene two – history speaks of struggles

Statistics tell a story

The story of political correctness – social policy meets CQU policy

Histories under scrutiny
Exploring the past

The truth is a business as usual approach towards Indigenous Australians is not working. Most old approaches are not working. We need a new beginning - a new beginning which contains real measures of policy success or policy failure; a new beginning, a new partnership, on closing the gap with sufficient flexibility not to insist on a one-size-fits-all approach for each of the hundreds of remote and regional Indigenous communities across the country but instead allowing flexible, tailored, local approaches to achieve commonly agreed national objectives that lie at the core of our proposed new partnership; a new beginning that draws intelligently on the experiences of new policy settings across the nation (Rudd 2008).

This Chapter explores the effects of the dominant colonial discourse which exists within contemporary Australian society, particularly with reference to social policy formulations which have historically relegated the Indigenous peoples of Australia to an inferior status; and thus, they remain still today, the most disadvantage peoples within Australian society. Additionally, the gaps between non-Indigenous and Indigenous achievement in education will be most convincingly highlighted, laying the groundwork for further illustration through the sharing of stories by research partners in subsequent chapters.

Stories from the past – scene one – the mighty power of capitalism

Throughout 220 years of Australia’s colonial history, the Indigenous peoples have been denied their unique cultural identity in the wake of white superiority. This denial included their right to true citizenship within Australian society, under the directives of such policies as the White Australia Policy. Furthermore, ideas of full and equal citizenship are implicitly entwined in theories underpinning the welfare state. Historically, early predictions praised the concept of a welfare state as the ultimate political and economic system of fairness and equity in society for all citizens; or as Offe (1984, cited in Jamrozik 2003, p. 310) saw it: ‘the major peace formula of advanced capitalist democracies for the period following the Second World War’. However, as time has passed liberal democracies
have prevailed in western societies, including Australia. Controlled by economic fluctuations and global market forces, the effects of economic rationalism as a political ideology within well established capitalist economies have diminished the state’s responsibility to provide equitable resources and services for all citizens (Bessant & Watts 2002).

Neo-liberal discourses allude to the fact that citizens are responsible for their own success or failure in life; thus any failure to compete and succeed in society is essentially up to the individual (Bessant & Watts 2002). Jamrozik (2003) argued that in Australia there exists a residual post-welfare state; that is ‘an ameliorative social welfare system, entering into play only when the normal institutions [fail] to produce the goods and services the society need[s] or expect[s]’. However, as Indigenous Australians were not afforded citizenship until 1967 they were effectively excluded from any provision of resources offered by social policy formulation, and as such had no power to advance their position within Australian society on their own merit, leaving them a particularly disadvantaged minority group vulnerable to the whims of a residual post welfare state.

Stories from the past – scene two – history speaks of struggles

The 1967 referendum, where 90% of eligible Australians voted to have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders included as Australian citizens, was a definitive turning point for Indigenous Australians (Tavan 2005). However, another nine years passed before a ground breaking document, the Fitzgerald Report (1976) put forward by the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1976, cited in Bourke 1996, p. 132) identified ‘particular and understandable reasons why [Indigenous] people were not achieving educationally’.  

Additionally, in 1985 the Miller Report created by the Committee of Review of Aboriginal
Employment and Training Programs made 160 recommendations which lead to the eventual formulation of *The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989* ‘containing 21 goals which were accepted by all Australian governments’ (Bourke 1996; Australian Government n.d., p. 1 of 3). Hence, the journey from the power to vote and citizenship to social policy provision to improve outcomes in education was an astonishing 21 years. However, even though this brief account of the history leading up to formulation of the stated policy seems to indicate a very drawn out but significant achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in terms of education provision, particularly in higher education to the tune of an increase in Indigenous students from 55 in 1975 to 5105 students in 1993, there is significant evidence to support a definite lack of advancement in other policy areas (Bourke 1996; Jamrozik 2005; Behrendt 2003). Such a situation renders a holistic approach to equitable outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities impossible, and significantly impedes the effectiveness that one policy can have in the sustainability of the overall desired outcome (Behrendt 2003). Hence, it is obvious that issues of identity and citizenship for Indigenous Australians continue to create complex difficulties for policy makers when faced with the task of formulating policies which allow for the implementation of programs, particularly in health and education, permitting Indigenous Australians to at least retain some recognition of their former cultural identity. *The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989* is only one example of the long drawn out process of making social policy which attempts to remedy the thoroughly neglectful attitudes and violation of basic human rights which have been clearly evident throughout Australia’s colonial history.

History depicts stories of inhumane acts of cruelty perpetrated against the Indigenous peoples of Australia in the early days of the colony. The SBS television series, *First*  

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3 See Appendix three for account of the Policy’s 21 long term goals
*Australians* (2008) tells the stories of Aboriginals being herded like animals to the edge of a cliff and consequently falling to their deaths. Legend has it that whole tribes were wiped out by sickness after being given blankets contagious with small pox virus (*First Australians* 2008). These are vivid illustrations of blatant acts of genocide. Moreover, *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) is an Australian drama film based on the autobiographical works, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Doris Pilkington Garimara. This feature films tell the story of yet another stage in colonial history, ‘the stolen generation’, where thousands of ‘mixed breed children’ were taken from their natural mothers and placed with white foster families as a government directive in an effort to ‘breed out’ the Aboriginal races. Worse still, if these children were deemed ‘too black’ they were placed in orphanages isolated from society in remote areas, such as ‘Mission Island’, recently depicted in the motion picture hit, *Australia* (2008). Consequently, it seems that when genocide and ‘breeding out’ of Indigenous races did not work to eradicate them and when assimilation and integration also failed to keep them hidden, governments were faced with the undeniable fact that reconciliation was going to be at some point a necessity (Markus 1988; Mackey 2000; Jamrozik 2005). Jamrozik (2005, p.87) suggests that although the 1967 referendum afforded the Commonwealth government some obligations towards Indigenous Australians, ‘the progress towards regaining their [own] cultural identity and ownership of at least some of their traditional lands has been disappointing’. Jamrozik (2005) also contends that reconciliation has been on the political agenda for decades yet little progress has been made.

The apology given on behalf of all Australian governments by Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Wednesday, 13 February 2008 is to date the largest breakthrough in taking some serious steps toward change since the Mabo High Court judgement almost a decade ago which symbolically removed terra nullius supposedly giving Indigenous peoples claim to
native land title. However, the previous Liberal government’s policies in the interim, significantly diminished opportunities for Indigenous people to identify cultural links through the reclaiming of tribal lands (Jamozik 2005; Singleton et al. 2006; Behrendt 2003; Dalton et al. 1996). Consequently, Indigenous issues continue to cause difficulties which can no longer be ignored by governments and policy makers.

Statistics tell a story

As we consider the plight of those students usually assumed to be ‘at risk’, we might well begin by recognising that what put many of them in jeopardy are not just circumstances of birth or environment, but the school itself. They are at risk of failing not because they can’t learn but because the school has not adequately engaged them ... when we make needed improvements in the way we educate all students, we won’t need special programs for some students. (Lounsbury 2005, cited in MCEETYA 2005, p.16)

Historically, the policies and practices of Australian governments were predicted on supposed inferiority of Indigenous Australians (Bourke 1996). This has contributed to a tendency for systems and schools to devalue the educational potential of Indigenous students and to overlook the cultural, linguistic and social capital they bring to the classroom (Hughes 2004; Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training & Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] 2006). While this deficit view is now contested, the perception that Indigenous students are to blame for their poor educational outcomes lingers on (Hughes 2004; Jamrozik 2005). Disparity in education outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has come to be viewed as ‘normal’ and incremental change seen as acceptable (MCEETYA 2006). While Indigenous specific intervention programs that supplement mainstream efforts, such as the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, have had significant success, statistical information about the learning outcomes of

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4 See Appendix four Prime Minister Rudd’s opening statement - apology speech
5 See Appendix five for a definition of terra nullius.
particular Indigenous student sectors suggest that programs implemented to stimulate increased learning outcomes need to be continually evaluated and refined in order to attain the long term goals stipulated in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989.

Social policy pertinent to Indigenous peoples seems to require an adaption to fit an apparent dominant colonial discourse in an already well established education system. For example, one of the goals outlined in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989 (cited in Bourke 1996, p. 136), states 'to enable Aboriginal students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians'. This statement contains within its language an obvious binary comparison: ‘Aboriginal students to attain the same … as … other Australians …’ (emphasis added). The policy also suggests making alterations to a system which already exists rather than creating a new system which addresses unique needs. Hughes (2004) gives emphasis to these ideas positing that:

[Education systems have failed to encourage and reinforce in Australian students positive feelings of pride in their heritage and cultural identity. Education systems have not yet produced significant numbers of Aboriginal students with the necessary skills to succeed in the mainstream society. The theories and methodologies used in education are designed by and for middle class Australians of Anglo-Saxon extraction. Education has failed to recognize that Aboriginal society is significantly different from western non-Aboriginal society ...]

Thus, while there has been an increase in the number of Indigenous students completing year 12, significant numbers are still leaving school before or at year 10 level, ill equipped to enter employment, or to enter into the pursuit of further education (Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee [AVCC] 2006). However, recent research suggests that although the rate of Indigenous students completing Year 12 is still much less than that of non-
Indigenous students (less than half), there was an 8% decrease in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students finishing Year 12 between 1998 and 2007 (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare [AIHW] 2008). Nevertheless, of those students completing Year 12, only a small number are obtaining scores high enough to gain university entry; and as a result many are opting for courses which do not depend on tertiary entrance scores for acceptance, such as, vocational training (VET) courses or bridging courses. Those commencing university tend to do so through alternate methods of entry, and are on average five years older, and seven times more likely to be women (MCEETYA 2006, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs [DETYA] 2000).

Alarmingly, figures recently published by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR 2008) estimated that in 2007 Indigenous students made up less than 1% of all commencing higher education students (DEEWR 2008). It is, therefore, suggested that programs such as the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme need to be built-into the core business of education institutions rather than just being added on.

Statistics can be scary ... but how true; I’m one of less than 1% of my people who are at uni ... When I look around a classroom of 50 or so students and I’m the only black woman that’s not hard to believe. I feel very lonely and sad, but also very brave and strong ... We need to be an example for our kids. Our kids are our future. I have to do this for my son (Student).

The story of political correctness – social policy meets CQU policy

The Mission Statement of Nulloo Yumbah Learning Spirituality and Research Centre which is attached to CQUUniversity states the goal to encourage faculty, school and division to walk with the rich diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lived experience and assist in the provision of programs that will equip students to be
responsible custodians of the place and kin' (Nulloo Yumbah n.d (b)). Similarly, the

Central Queensland University Indigenous Education Statement 2007, the official

agreement between Nulloo Yumbah and the University, outlines the institutional vision,

mission and goals, with the objective of developing strategies for the years 2007 – 2011, in

line with those presented in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

Policy 1998, to improve higher education outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The

statement incorporates strategies to promote the use of Indigenous ways of learning;

‘targeting non-traditional learners with higher education that enables them to achieve their

aspirations’ (Nulloo Yumbah 2007, p. 1). The statement also suggests that:

CQU is passionate about providing the opportunity for all to embark on a learning
journey. Students from CQU’s regional areas ... are provided quality learning
opportunities with personalised support, delivered by enthusiastic staff ...

Furthermore, the statement speaks of the many partnerships that are being made between

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives both in their communities and within

various organisations and committees. There is no doubt that such partnerships are very

valuable in regard to opening doors for future employment opportunities for Indigenous

university graduates, as well as leading to better outcomes overall for Indigenous peoples

and communities. However, within this statement there exists the identification of

significant constraints to achieving many of the objectives set out in the document\textsuperscript{6}. Consequently, it is difficult to identify the here and now benefits at ground level for

Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous Learning Advisors (see Chapter Four –
Stories from experience).

\textsuperscript{6} See Appendix six CQU Indigenous Education Statement 2007
Histories under scrutiny

What do these stories from history and the subsequent attempts to right the wrongs through the process of social policy making tell about the future? Within the dominant colonial socially constructed context, there exist vast amounts of history written down by non-Indigenous authors about the destruction of one society, to make way for another perceivably more superior system. The relatively recent rejection of this ‘divide and conquer mentality’ of a past age in Australia’s shameful colonial history, has led to the realisation and social consciousness that the wrongs perpetrated by the overpowering system necessitated an official governmental apologise (Rudd 2008). However, before ideas of reconciliation, and the ‘writing of a new page in history’ (Australian Government 2008) can truthfully be acknowledged and advanced, the way forward it would seem, is to embrace the uniqueness of the Indigenous knowledges. These unique knowledges and experiences need to be acknowledged for what they truly are. Previous to colonisation the existence of more than 200 separate races facilitated tens of thousands of years of sustainable culture. Progression towards this new beginning will require as Rudd (2008) suggested in the ‘sorry speech’:

... real measures of policy success or policy failure; a new beginning, a new partnership, on closing the gap with sufficient flexibility not to insist on a one-size-fits-all approach ...

However, herein lays the paradox. The histories, cultures and lived realities within a complex society which has been suggested as being the oldest in existence (Rudd 2008), are not written down. They are oral histories, and thus, they remain largely, undocumented. Furthermore, if they were to be written down they would then be open to the scrutiny of the dominant western condition (Foucault 1972). Such scrutiny would quickly render them inferior to the dominantly held views as evidenced by practices of empirical enquiry in the
past. This situation raises questions about the readiness of those who potentially wield the power within the dominant socially constructed Australian context to lay down arms and begin to create policy within a fertile ground in which a ‘new beginning’ can take root and be nurtured.

Chapter three, ‘Methodology’ begins to take apart and examine these ideas of power held up by the dominant western context and its influence over the construction of written histories. As a prelude, it is noteworthy to examine the difference between formal written knowledge as exemplified by the histories conveyed in this chapter, and what Foucault (1977, cited in Florio-Ruane 1991, p. 251) called ‘subjugated knowledges’, such as Indigenous oral histories. Furthermore, Foucault (1977, cited in Florio-Ruane 1991, p. 251) expressed that:

[subjugated knowledges are excluded knowledges ... knowledges whose validity is not dependent on the approval of established regimes of thought, [but which have also] been systematically disqualified from the established hierarchy of knowledge and science.

Olson (1980, cited in Florio-Ruane 1991, p. 251) called this concept of knowledge ‘practical knowledge’, such as the conveying a narratives; and contended that something happens when the spoken word or ‘oral histories’ are written down. Moreover, Olson (1980, cited in Florio-Ruane 1991) observed that ‘truth in oral utterance has to do with truth as wisdom’; however, once oral accounts or narrative are subjected to the dominantly held ideas within written language by being recorded in writing, they become statements which may be observed and scrutinised. Foucault (1977, cited in Florio-Ruane 1991, p. 252) suggests however, that the practical knowledge inherent in narratives contain most of the’ historical knowledge of struggles’ within a community; and, because these narratives remain outside the parameters of scientific discourse [positivism], they ‘provide society with the only viable source of critical reflection’ upon which scientific discourse makes
‘taken-for-granted assumptions.’ These are the vitally important concepts that qualitative methods of research are built on. The observable truths which exist within the fabric of narrated human experience make up the basis of feminist post-structural enquiry as is vividly illustrated in the next chapter of this research study.
Chapter Three

Methodology

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Qualitative Research Methodology

The movement by which, not without effort and uncertainty, dreams and illusions, one detaches oneself from what is accepted as true and seeks other rules – that is philosophy. The displacement and transformation of frameworks of thinking, the changing of received values and all the work that has been done to think otherwise, to do something else, to become other than what one is – that too is philosophy...

(Foucault 1980, cited in Chagani 1998, p. 4)

This quotation by Foucault formulates a picture of the philosopher/researcher standing apart from the social constructs which make up the dominant understanding of a reality and scientific reason, and consequently, accepting that there is no one overarching single or absolute truth or reality in the world that may be objectively proven. By nature, qualitative research utilises such subjective inductive logic, and relies primarily on the collection of data for sorting and interpreting, which usually transpires via the process of in-depth interviews or conversations with research partners, and analysing the meaning of documents and literature from previously research subject matter (Yegidis & Weinbach 2002). Furthermore, Yegidis and Weinbach (2002) advise the interviewing process is likely to be more varied and spontaneous during qualitative research, with the researcher adapting each interview in accordance with the acquisition of knowledge. The researcher is a prime instrument in the collection and analysis of data effectively immersing themselves in the subject of their research (Padgett 2008). These concepts are certainly so when the use of anecdotal experiential narratives is the primary source of data (Sandelowski 1991; White 1980). Furthermore, the analysis of qualitative data has no set rules for extrapolation but rather focuses on interpretation and discovering the significance that people place on their own experiences; a concept which is integral in theories of critical reflection intrinsic in qualitative research processes (Fook 1996; Alston & Bowles 2003).
This research project, therefore, is reliant on the use of such qualitative methods, which have as their motivation the desire to understand the lived experiences of people, as well as the expectation of exploring the reasons why people do what they do (Alston & Bowles 2003; Henn, Weinstein & Foard 2006), with an emphasis on gaining a depth of understanding and the generation of theoretically rich observations (Rubin & Babbie 2005). As such, this research project employs a feminist post-structural framework as an overarching guide to the interpretation of anecdotal research data.

**Feminist Post-structural approaches**

Feminist post-structural ontology as a distinct form of qualitative research may be expressed as a diversity of multiple realities shaped by social, political, economic, gender, race and ethnic factors (Hamilton 1994; Agger 1991). This interpretation is in obvious contrast to the positivist ontological question most commonly investigated in scientific or empirical research methods which focus on a fixed reality or truth, and thus 'what is real' is bound by a dominant set of socially constructed binaries (Guba & Lincoln 1994). In the same way, the epistemological question from a feminist post-structural stance will reach beyond the structured bounds of detached objectivity, and thus, the relationship between the knower (or would be knower) and what can be known, is created within a landscape which allows for multiple realities or truths, encompassing subjective, idealist, relativist and interpretive epistemologies (Hamilton 1994). Finally, the methodology of a feminist post-structural perspective will incorporate a process of deconstruction of the social, political, economic, gender, race and ethnic structures within dominantly held worldviews which contribute to oppression and the construction of binaries which label some groups of people dominant and others, minorities (Tong 1989; Hamilton 1994; Agger 1991; Lynn 2001). Consequently, feminist post-structural methods of inquiry challenge the language and the rules of writing which subsequently contribute to the strongholds of socially
constructed ‘dominant/other’ dichotomies necessary in positivist approaches to humanist scientific inquiry (Tong 1989).

Narrative approaches in qualitative research methodology are particularly in tune with feminist post-structural perspectives simply because human beings are by nature the narrators of their own lived experiences; and although all human beings may share collective realities, our own lived experiences are many and varied, but nevertheless true and real to us. Furthermore, there is no set pattern to the telling of stories about people’s lived experience as the stories are as fluid in nature as life itself. White (1980, p. 5) suggests that in a marked turn away from positivism and toward interpretation in the social sciences, there has been a renewed attention to the human ‘impulse to narrate’.

Methods of data collection and interpretation used in the current study

The collection of research partner’s stories followed no set strict pattern. Each conversation was digitally recorded, and I simply asked the partners to share with me there experiences and challenges as either non-Indigenous Learning Advisors or as Indigenous tertiary Students, allowing them to speak freely. I wanted to allow their stories to naturally evolve and I wanted to see if any distinct patterns might emerge from their sharing. I used minimal prompts throughout our conversations; however, one subject I asked them to elaborate on was how they perceived issues of support from the university community in their roles as either learning advisor or student. Interestingly, it was not necessary to significantly prompt any of the research partners, who freely shared their feelings of considerable isolation; and for Learning Advisors, the lack of collaborative information sharing between themselves and faculty staff concerned them. These are the stories I zoned in on when choosing which stories to share for the purpose of this research project. Subsequently, I was particularly interested in the stories they shared about these subjects,
and the natural pattern which emerged. In interpreting the collection of stories I focused on these patterns as one of the aims of this research was to examine social policy at the governmental level, as well as CQU's own policy governing support arrangements, and whether or not these policies are achieving their stated objectives of increasing outcomes for Indigenous students in tertiary education. I wanted also to explore some of the written literature about alternatives to the current western educational discourse; and whether there is evidence which points towards a needed change in the direction of educational provision in order to give Indigenous students a unique educational experience, and the best chance of achieving successful outcomes educationally.

**Telling Stories: Narrative approaches in Qualitative Research**

I begin the process of exploring narrative approaches in qualitative research by offering an example of my own narrative written from a feminist post-structural perspective as a prelude to the stories shared by my research partners in Chapter Four – ‘Stories of experience’. Additionally, I begin to weave the existing supporting literature between the subsequent pieces of my narrative as a means of starting the process of creating a platform of meaning on which to respectfully present the stories shared by the research partners. My narrative also positions me securely within my research; and as the primary subject of my research.

This narrative importantly shares a story which explores and tracks the history of my ancestry and thus, my identity as a non-Indigenous Australian. It also constitutes an expression of my learning journey and my subsequent awaking to the world of Indigenous experience. Furthermore, my narrative exemplifies how the language used in writing, can either promote or reject the power relations present within a dominant discourse which
selects what is acceptable within dominant socially constructed culture, and what falls outside the realm of acceptance. Nevertheless, once these words contained in my narrative become prose, they are open to the scrutiny of observation where assumptions can be made about the interpretation of their meaning. Simply put, I share my stories as an expression of my lived experiences and histories. The reader, on the other hand, reads these stories within the context of their understanding and world view; hence, their assumptions, or expressions of learning about this research project will be made accordingly. As the researcher, and as the primary subject within my own research, I have established my concept about what the research means to me in my learning journey. Consequently, the reader at this point is still negotiating their learning journey, and according processing ideas and pictures which reflect or contradict their own lived experiences. These notions facilitate and validate the existence of multiple realities which are an essential component in feminist post-structural approaches to qualitative research. The relevance of my story will become clear in its telling.

When I was 10 years old my grandma died. To my conscious knowledge I had never lost anyone or anything I had loved so much. I can remember exactly where I was and what I was doing when my mother told me that grandma had died. Life as I had known it with my grandma in it had come to an end. No more cuddling up cozy and warm in her big feather bed. No more visits to grandma's house on Sundays for a big Sunday lunch. No more carefully counting out the one and two cent pieces between me and my sister and brother that grandma saved for us every week in the little china jewelry box so that we could buy lollies at the corner shop on our way home. She was gone and I was devastated. But even now, 33 years later, I still have the memories. In a way these memories and the stories which define them have become a part of my identity. As I reflect on and share this small piece of my history I admit that I have emotions welling inside; and I wonder if those who read this brief personal history will also feel something of the pain of that 10 year old child in having loved and lost someone very special. It is probable that you might even have a memory triggered of a time that you loved and lost someone very special to you. Thus, we have shared together a moment of an individual, yet collective memory evoking an expression of universal human emotion ...
The language I have used to tell my story may be perceived in a feminist post-structural sense, as a narrative which, although personal, evokes human emotion. This kind of language use transcends all boundaries of time, gender, race, ethnicity, political beliefs and socio-economic status (Sarantakos 2002; Agger 1991; Denborough 2008). This assumption may be validated by the truth or reality that all human beings will at some stage in their lives experience the loss of a loved one. Thus, these experiences will be accompanied by the expression of universal human emotions, such as sadness, sorrow, loss and grief.

Furthermore, the history of the world is made up of people just as their stories make up the history of the world (Foucault 1972). This is the basic premise of feminist post-structural social inquiry (Hamilton 1994; Agger 1991; Foucault 1970). These stories carry a certain level of uniqueness and individualism. However, no two people will tell the exact same story about an event that they both witnessed or experienced. Yet, it does not mean that one story is any less valid or true in comparison to the other. In so many ways we share the richness of human experience and collective narratives with everyone in the world (Denborough 2008). However, from a feminist post-structural perspective, the language used to convey these narratives can create a sense of unity by accepting that all humanity, no matter how diverse, encounter a shared human experience apart from the dominantly held ideas which contribute to a pedagogy of oppression within socially constructed societies (Freire 1991). On the other hand, language can contribute to the oppressive power structures, creating a dichotomy of the acceptable, dominant and the unacceptable, ‘other’ (Tong 1989; Lynn 2001).

The concept of using language that gives credence to the most dominant form of ideology, maintains a system which disseminates the existence of ‘meta narratives’ (Lynn 2001, p. 905), in which ‘people everywhere are taught to accept a socially constructed world ‘as it is’ (Agger 1991, p. 109). This concept exemplifies how people ‘unthinkingly perpetuate’
ideas of ‘difference’ as existing outside of the accepted socially constructed ‘norms’ within societies. Lyotard (1979, cited in Agger 1991, p. 109; Lynn 2001, p. 905) called these ‘meta narratives’, ‘grand narratives’. As the reader of my personal story, you may feel that you now know something about my life; and that my personal story fits comfortably into a dominant discourse, ‘grand narrative’ of collective human experience (Lyotard 1979 cited in Agger 1991; Sandelowski 1991). You may think without my suggestion that I shared closeness and a bond of love with my grandma, as have countless others in the world.

However, what if I was to share something more? For example:

I could tell you that my grandma was German and that we called her ‘Oma’ (German for grandma); and that her parents immigrated with seven of their eight children to Australia before the First World War. I could tell you that they were forced to live in closed internment communities in South Australia with other German families during the war; and that they suffered considerable persecution because they represented an example of a minority ‘other’ within dominant Australian society at the time of the First World War. I could tell you that my great uncle, the youngest child in the family, who was born in Australia, ran away from home at the age of 15 and changed his name from the German, Heinrich Wühlen (which means to dig), to the Anglo Saxon, Henry (Harry) Burrows, so that he could go to war to fight for his country, despite the way many people treated his family with hostility because they were German. I could tell you that in a bizarre twist of events my great uncle Harry become a translator because he could speak fluent German, and in doing so, he won a Medal of Honour posthumously for his bravery in defending the colonial empire in the ‘great war to end all wars’.  

Following the ideas of modernity (Lynn 2001), within the dominant discourse of a ‘grand narrative’ (Agger 1991; Lynn 2001) or the image of Australian colonial history, my German ancestors were quite obviously a socially constructed example of what Lynn (2001) and Agger (1999) would define as outsiders, or the ‘other’. In order to fit into an Australian colonial ‘grand narrative’, my great uncle Heinrich (Henry/Harry) needed to change his name, abandon his German identity and embrace an Australian colonial

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7 See Appendix seven for brief immigration history of German born Australians.
identity, so that he could fight in a war against the Germans, who were, in an Australian colonial 'grand narrative' context of the war, an example of what Lynn (2001) and Agger (1999) would define as the outsiders, or the 'other'.

However, in direct contrast to this constant organising and reorganising involved in sustaining the dominant 'status quo' within socially constructed ideas of acceptable society, or a 'grand narrative', the deconstructive processes inherent in feminist post-structural and post-modern thought, are an example of the fluidity which exists in all societies, where both unity and difference are acknowledged as valid and rational; and additionally, a multiplicity of truths can co-exist (Sandelowski 1991; Agger 1991; Lynn 2001).

The story of my ancestral history adds depth and another worldview to my original story. This narrative is not my own personal story but it is a narrative of the historic events which my family has handed down from one generation to the next; and hence, it is my history and makes up an important part of my inward identity. The next chapter of the narrative, however, I express with a certain level of sadness.

Although my parents are both of German descent, their parents having lived within predominantly German communities in Australia, the next generation show little sign of our German heritage as a part of our outward identities; and our children show no signs at all. Thus, apart from the stories I have shared with my children of their German ancestry, we are a perfect example of a family who assimilated, and in many ways not by choice but by necessity; and because social policy in the form of the White Australia Policy demanded it. So by all accounts, we are Australian. But what does being Australian mean to me in a contemporary Australian society sense of the word? The answer to that question is not a simple one. I could suggest that I adhere to an Australian way of life. But what does living an Australian way of life mean? At the time of the First World War being Australian for my great uncle meant not identifying with being German. However, what does being Australian mean to me? I don't think anyone cares very much anymore about my German ancestry. It certainly does not impact on my life today. I am just one
person of millions that have an historical heritage which began in a country other than Australia.

Today, Australian social identity is promoted as Multiculturalism. However, I ask myself the question, if it took only two generations and less than 100 years for my family to assimilate to the point of no recognisable German past, what does viewing Australian society as Multicultural mean in terms of a unique place and/or an understanding of uniquely Aboriginal cultural identities? Australia's dark past with regard to the treatment of the original Australians continues to have a huge impact on the collective Australian cultural identity. So much so that on February 13, 2008, Prime Minister Rudd made a public apology on behalf of all Australian Governments, past and present, for the inhumane treatment of Aboriginals by the European invading settlers. As a non-Indigenous Australian, I admit to feeling great sadness about this history and the scars of hurt which still affect my Indigenous brothers and sisters to this day. I am dedicated to do my part in promoting reconciliation ... because this is what being Australian means to me ...

Indigenous writer Natalie Walker (2004) shares:

*On a perfect day my Australia would be a place where my people can freely exercise the same rights as our non-Indigenous brothers and sisters. On this perfect day all Australians are proud of our Indigenous cultures and all Australians acknowledge my peoples’ unique and rightful place in society. And on this perfect day, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians acknowledge our scarred past but choose to walk alongside one another into a mutually respectful future.*

I ask myself, how can I, in some small way, contribute to this dream? As Denborough (2008, p. xi) ponders, 'how can we look for hope in the right places?' This research project signifies to me a way of contributing; offering hope in the right place.
Chapter Four

Stories of experience: a discussion of research findings

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Narrative is simply there like life itself ... international, transhistorical, transcultural ... Narrative might well be considered a solution to a problem of human concern ... the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific (White 1980, p, 5).

‘Learning Advisors’ speak

It is the intention of the first part of this chapter that the narrative sharing by non- Indigenous Learning Advisors will be allowed to speak freely with minimal input other than my own contribution to the collective voice. I have not attempted to change the words of these narratives other than to transpose them from their original audio recorded form. Nor has it been my wish to alter them in anyway. However, I am also very aware that the simple act of transcribing spoken words into prose changes them from the expression of truth in oral form as wisdom to a truth which is open to observation and possible scrutiny.

Not every part of every conversation can be fully included for the obvious reason that each of the conversations took place over a period of several hours and some parts of the conversations were deemed not relevant to the subject matter, either because they constituted ‘small talk’, or alternately, because of the limitations of the study. The conversations included in this discussion are those which explored the experiences of support from the university community and specific challenges facing the learning advisors when conveying understanding of course content which is often very foreign to the widely held Indigenous perspectives held by the students. However, the excluded material is sufficient enough to warrant further investigation outside the scope of this study, requiring wider ranging experiences of both learning advisors and students. Consequently, great care has been taken in the interpretive practices, and meticulous critical reflective practices have been drawn upon to extract the most relevant contributions of each of the narratives shared.
During the engagement of extensive research of literature, there was nothing that stood out in practice as a particular source of comparison that mirrored the uniqueness of the learning advisor experience. However, one of the issues the Learning Advisors were asked to reflect upon is the content of the *CQU Indigenous Education Statement 2007*. They were subsequently asked to reflect on the content and express how they felt the statement related to their experiences as Learning Advisors.

These stories are not intended to stand alone as complete and inclusive records of experience. They are instead offered as anecdotal data that can be added to the growing pool of related research which has already emerged, or is likely to emerge in the future. Hence, these stories constitute the fluid nature of the current research project and its ultimate objective which is to make a contribution.

Both of the Learning Advisors are non-Indigenous white Australians with their own stories and ancestral backgrounds. Their stories are different from mine, yet both similarly agreed that assimilation policy has played a major part in rendering their respective histories invisible within the Australian colonial experience. Before offering themselves as Learning Advisors neither of them had been significantly involved with Indigenous cultures or communities, and as such, their ability to adapt techniques by way of trial and error, and as a result of their personal learning, has played a major part in their work.

Non-Indigenous Learning Advisors speak about the challenges they face when tutoring Indigenous students, particularly when they first commenced their employment with Nuloo Yumbah and CQUniversity:

*Sometimes I feel so completely out of my depth ... it's like we are both fumbling around in the dark, both reaching out but not quite finding the light switch ... but then, there are moments of illumination when something becomes so stupidly clear*
to both of us and I wonder why didn’t I just explain it that way in the first place ... (LA)

I often struggle with what to do when a concept is simple to me but I just don’t know how to explain it in a way that [the Student] will be able to grasp ... But, then I’m a student too and there are things that I struggle with, so I guess we are not that different ... (LA)

LAs came up with these suggestions as ways to overcome some of the challenges facing them:

I’ve needed to adjust to a different way of thinking and seeing things ... I’m finding things easier the more I get to know [the Student]. A certain amount of familiarity about [the Student’s] life and the things that are important to her has given me ‘hooks’ to hang the learning on ... For example, she plays netball and likes to go running, so I can use metaphors about sport and fitness and she seems to better understand what I’m on about ... (LA)

There are definitely challenges to overcome at the beginning when you are first getting to know each other. I find that no matter how well I know the subject in my own terms this doesn’t necessarily mean that [the Student] will understand it in the same way ... sometimes it’s like there is a mile wide canyon between us ... I have found that building trust is an advantage ... unless you mesh with the student it’s never going to work out ... I have tutored quite a few students. When we fit each other things seem to workout ... it takes work but it is worth the effort ... (LA)

The LAs shared their thoughts on how they perceived training would be helpful:

I don’t think I realised in the beginning how hard this would be [talking about tutoring] ... I have training in adult instruction, but there is something missing here. It’s almost like I’ve been trained in a certain way which is a polar opposite to the needs of [the Student] ... completely inappropriate, and in many ways I have had to unlearn a lot of my learning. I find myself thinking too often, why can’t I make the connections? I am left feeling like I have not only failed [the student] but that I have also failed myself in some way. I’m still not sure what the answer is but I’m thinking some basic training in Indigenous ways of learning from the outset, as well as some ongoing professional development wouldn’t go a stray ... (LA)
I don't know whether there is this assumption that we should automatically know how best to work with students. I often find when I'm explaining something that I think is simple that there is this blank face looking back at me... then I worry that I have caused her to feel inadequate when really it is me who is inadequate... Yes I feel that some professional development workshops would be a great advantage in learning how to best meet the needs of students... (LA)

When asked whether they felt supported by the university community in their role as LAs something interesting happened. Although they spoke about support for themselves they were also concerned about issues of support for the students:

Ummm... It's all a bit academic really (laughs)... the government says they want to raise the standards of Indigenous student's outcomes by giving them culturally appropriate learning opportunities and they (the students) get people like me who really have very limited knowledge about the Indigenous way of life and doing things. But, I suppose it's a start isn't it. I mean, and I'm not patting myself on the back here... but I often wonder where [the Student] would be without my help... There seems to be so little support from the university and very little of the curriculum they are expected to understand has any culturally appropriate content except for the token course in cross cultural studies here and there... (LA)

Support from the university? There certainly isn't any from my experience. We [LAs] seem to be the fifth wheel in the equation. I'm never quite sure what is going on or what is really expected of [the Student]. I often feel quite isolated to tell you the truth. [The Student] is studying externally and her circumstances are such that she has no access to the Internet at home. This situation creates all sorts of problems particularly when external study relies so much on learning support such as black board on-line courses. She only has a mobile phone which often has no credit. If I'm feeling isolated, I can't begin to imagine how she feels... There seems to be a lot of pressure on LAs to be all things to them (the students) in their academic journey... I think we need to work hard to promote inclusion in university life for the students... so that they can feel a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves, but that's not always easy... (LA)

The final topic discussed with the other Learning Advisors during our conversations was with regard to their opinions about the CQU Indigenous Education Statement 2007 which is available on the Nulloo Yumbah (2007) website. Unlike the other issues talked about, this topic was necessarily guided, to gain more than just a yes or no response. The reason for this approach was that I first needed to establish whether they had read the statement
and if they had not read it before, I provided them with a copy asking them to reflect on it and then give an open ended opinion on its content. The first two statements are made by the same person. The first was an immediate response after reading the statement for the first time. The second response was made a day later after some time of reflection on its content.

*I've never read the statement until you gave it to me just before. Am I showing how new I am to all of this? ... It concerns me that there seem to be so many constraints to putting these objectives into practice. These [speaking about constraints] seem to cancel out any good that could be done ... (LA)*

*When I read the statement for the first time I was a bit shocked. Now I've had time to think about it I'm still a bit shocked (laughs). I know I need to be honest about this so I will try to be. There is all this talk of great support, multiple paths to learning, enthusiastic staff ... It leaves me wondering whether it's talking about the same university as [the Student] attends or I attend for that matter. But I'm not Indigenous and this is about giving Indigenous students something unique ... How do they put it ... (pauses then reads directly from the statement) “Targeting non-traditional learners with higher education that enables them to achieve their aspirations”. As I've already said before, the university says that they will offer something unique, and the student gets me? I've only been tutoring for a short time but in that time I haven't witnessed any of these things ... I'm not painting a very positive picture am I ... I mean some of the lecturers are just brilliant, but they are brilliant to all students not just to people needing special attention. Others are invisible names on the blackboard site ... Of course that's another subject all of its own isn't it (talking about black board on-line courses and lecturer input) What use is it as a form of support if [the Student] struggles with Internet access and only uses it when she absolutely has to ... I think it leads to more isolation for external students ... that's one constraint this statement has gotten right ... (LA)*

*The statement ... yes I have read the statement ... funny how you don't think about these things until it is brought to your attention. I can hear my own cogs turning. Just bare with me while I refresh my memory and think about how to word this in a professional manner (pause) ... There certainly sounds like there is a lot of advocacy going on within the University community, meaning Nuloo Yambah staff and faculty, as well as involvement with the different committees, potential employers and the like. However, I'm not sure how that is being translated at the ground level for students, particularly external students, or for us (LAs)' ... Sure, Nuloo Yambah staff are there to advise us (LAs) when we are in need of help, but I*
rarely have much luck when I seek advice about a student’s needs or the requirements of a particular course from faculty or academic staff. They really on the whole seem pretty uninterested. I'm not sure whether that is just [this faculty] or whether it is the same in other faculties as well. I remember thinking when I read something about ‘enthusiastic staff’ and the different mechanisms of support that are supposably available to the students that, yes it all sounds good on paper but I've never really witnessed it in any kind of a concrete way ... (LA)

This collective of narratives mirrored many of my own experiences as a learning advisor, and as such they speak for themselves about the obvious gaps between the ideal and the actual. Are social policy implementations making a difference? I'm not prepared to make an assumption or offer any conclusion. Such an answer is not in the scope of this study; although, our shared experiences do seem to suggest a lack of support for Learning Advisors in a professional capacity from the University community. The fact that Indigenous students are succeeding in mainstream study is itself a testament to the wonderful work being done at the ground level between student and learning advisor.

‘Doing’ education the indigenous way

All of the stories shared by my Learning Advisor colleagues reflect my own concerns about issues of support both for ourselves as Learning Advisors and for the Indigenous Student’s we are assisting. I have shared in the preamble to this paper my own journey from naive to enlightened, elaborating on my need to adapt and change my own ways of thinking in order to find new ways to connect with the students I tutor on a level that works best and is most advantageous for them in their learning journey. I am very aware that the fact that I am non-Indigenous, and because I understand the non-Indigenous systems at work in Australian society, that this information becomes an interesting commodity for them in their learning. One Student was more than happy to share about the tutoring techniques of her learning advisor as she sees them:
I really appreciate the way we sit and talk about the stuff which is coming up for me in my study guides and readings. It's like [the learning advisor's] secret way into my head. The more we talk about it, the more I understanding, from all kinds of different angles ... that is the best part of having [the learning advisor] as my tutor ... [She doesn't] just sit me in front of a computer and say to me, 'Just ask me if you need my help' ... and [she] always listen[s] to my ideas and gives me examples that come from my ideas and in my own words ... I can sit in front of a computer any old time, but my couple of hours tutes with [the learning advisor] ... yeah... they really work on getting my head around the world and how it all fits together ... I can still remember the day the pennies started dropping ... [I] remember ... I got really emotional ... and so did [she] ...

This Student’s contribution signifies not only the acquisition of appropriate knowledge of Indigenous ways of learning provided by her learning advisor, but also the Student’s achievements when offered another alternative to ‘doing’ education. Additionally, I have included her story to illustrate an effective way of working as a learning advisor.

Furthermore, for this student, talking about issues and they way they fit into the world as she understands it was obviously the key to success. The Student shared that the accumulation of knowledge has increased her ability to contribute and story ideas for herself, flowing over into her written work. Similarly, in my experience, I attribute most of the success, with the students I have tutored, to our ability to connect with them. I think there is a mutual respect for where we both come from as people. The rest of the success we have experienced might be attributed to tapping into the ideas about the Indigenous experience and proven teaching and learning techniques mainly posited by Paul Hughes (2004, cited in Hughes, More & Williams 2004) and Robyn Lynn (2001). Other research offering perspectives on Indigenous frameworks in social work from Christine King (2003) has also been extremely helpful.

The call for greater knowledge is certainly one of the identified issues which affect learning advisors including myself, and one highlighted in the contributions of Learning
Advisor's stories of experience. Directly related to these issues of Indigenous ways of learning identified by non-Indigenous Learning Advisors is an exploration of ideas for a new way of ‘doing’ education (Hughes, More & Williams 2004). These ideas are reflected in literature as well as by the sharing of Indigenous student’s experiential narratives.

Hughes (2004, cited in Hughes, More & Williams 2004) particularly, has been canvassing for new ways of ‘doing’ education for over two decades. Much of his work has lead to incremental change within policy settings both at government and institutional levels.

Other writers on Indigenous issues in education have also called for a new way of ‘doing’ education which is unique to the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities. Hughes (2004, cited in Hughes, More & Williams 2004) strongly suggests that although there are many races of Indigenous peoples in Australia, having different languages and different cultural approaches within their communities, there is a common thread of ways of learning which runs through all Australian Indigenous cultures. Hughes (cited in Hughes, More & Williams 2004) also makes comment that the dominant western education system within Australian society neglects and negates Indigenous ways of learning. Furthermore, Hughes (cited in Hughes, More & Williams 2004, p. 200) states:

> Current theories and methodologies are therefore largely inappropriate and this also contributes to a lack of success of Aboriginal students. The end result is institutionalised racism and assimilation, albeit unintentional and unconscious.

Lynn (2001), researcher and university lecturer in cross cultural studies and social welfare, contends education from an Indigenous perspective is not only beneficial for Indigenous Australians, but for all Australians. Under the modernist project of education, Indigenous approaches have been silenced and relegated to the periphery as deficit theory and practice (Lynn 2001). Lynn (2001) also suggests that this positioning has promoted the belief that Indigenous expertise and culture is only of relevance for culturally sensitive practice. Lynn
(2001) rejects this view most critically suggesting that mainstream welfare practice and education has much to learn from the interpersonal helping process which is inherent in Indigenous theories of practice. Although Lynn (2001) is speaking from the perspective of social welfare studies and practice, these ideas translate just as well to issues of broader educational provision.

[Within this tradition [of modernity] social work generates a meta-narrative for universal application. Modernity and the rules of science and professionalism ensure 'the invisibility' of subordinate claims of truth' (Leonard 1997, cited in Lynn 2001, p. 905) and almost erased the Indigenous stories from the landscape (Lynn 2001, p. 905)...

In addition, Lynn (2001) highlights the binaries present in current social constructs such as education, stating that ideas of 'the same as'/‘different from’ (Moore 1996, cited in Lynn 2001, p. 905) which underpins western philosophy works in a pervasive and discriminatory manner to structure forms of representation and knowledge in specific contexts, such as the current education system. Lynn (2001, p. 905) further suggests that 'local knowledges’ of Indigenous peoples are dependent on the rise of postmodernism for any value in the western academic context, despite not being derived from postmodernism. It is the deconstructive nature of postmodern ideas which mirror so well with Indigenous ways of doing education. This poignant statement from a student sums this idea up most effectively:

Who says that we have to do what has always been done? Hasn't that been beaten to death? I often think, they (academics) are telling me, “No you can't do it that way” and “You have to do it this way”. But what if my way works better? I think our lecturers are so set in their ways sometimes that they have forgotten how to be original. What makes their way so right and my way so wrong if they both work? Isn't there room for both? (Student)
Another study entitled ‘Hearing the stories of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social workers’, tells a powerful story about the influence that cultural identity has on the practice framework of Indigenous social workers and social work students. Joanna Zubrzycki is a non-Indigenous Australian of Polish descent, a social worker, a researcher and university lecturer. Zubrzycki (2003, cited in Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003) states that she was particularly sensitive to issues of identity before embarking on this research, and by chance rather than design teamed up with Bindi Bennett, an Aboriginal social worker practicing within community. Bennett (2003, cited in Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003) was also passionate about issues of identity. Together they investigated how Indigenous social workers deal with juggling the multiple identities of social worker and Indigenous person, within the context of a discourse which reflects the dominant colonial culture (Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003). Included in the stories shared throughout this study are important perspectives shared by Indigenous students studying university degrees in social work. One student (cited in Bennett & Zubrzycki 2003, p. 65) shared her story of feeling alienated while listening to a lecture on Indigenous issues being delivered by a non-Indigenous ‘expert’.

She was talking about what Indigenous people say and do. It did not make sense to me. I did not recognize any of the information that I was hearing. This is defining who I am but yet I don’t recognize it so does that mean that I am a lie or that my whole life is a lie? (Jess)

In the same way, one student shared with me a similar story:

*Here I am sitting in this lecture about the Northern Territory Emergency Response. I’m feeling pretty bad because it’s reminding me of bad things from my past. Next thing I’m asked to talk about the Indigenous perspective. I’m thinking: What the...? I’m not from the Northern Territory; how would I know anything about it ... The best thing I could come up with at the time was to answer the question with a question. So I said: “How do you put a band-aid on an invisible man?” The whole*
**place went quite. I think that will go down in history as my most profound statement ever** (laughs) … (Student)

Another student spoke about the feeling that she was expected to know all things Indigenous:

*Whenever there is something being said about Indigenous ways people look at me ... as if I'm some expert of something* (laughs) ... *If I'm such an expert give me my degree right now* (laughs) ... (Student)

Paulo Freire (1991), famous for his very influential works *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, published in 1970, had some importance lessons to give at a conference for social work educators in 1991. During his speech, Freire (1991) talked of his students as aides and stated that he learned so much from these aides, suggesting that just teaching knowledge without having knowledge challenged, creates a situation where change is ignored; and where questions are answered before they are asked. Freire (1991) likened this to the western construct of education suggesting that we are all conditioned by the systems and structures in society. Such a state of conditioning renders us helpless to change. The answer, Freire (1991) said, is to be progressive and not reactionary.

This research project represents these ideas about being progressive and asking the questions of those doing the work and having them give their own answers from their own lives and rich experiences; having them add their voices to the cause; giving them a feeling of contributing to something much bigger than themselves. To me as a researcher the stories shared in this paper represent looking for hope in the right places.
Chapter Five

Summing up

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The stories of the 'learning'

The history of the Indigenous peoples of Australia since European invasion tells a story of a strong and resilient peoples, with a will to survive, to endure and to flourish in spite of a past inflicted with supreme cruelty and human injustice. The wheels of social policy making have been slow moving with regard to Indigenous peoples’ rights to a culturally appropriate education. The year 2009 marks twenty years since the implementation of The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy 1989, which states 21 goals, including the objective of increasing successful outcomes for Indigenous students studying university level degree programs. While rates of Indigenous student retention have significantly increased over the last ten years, they are still extremely low in comparison to non-Indigenous achievement. The movement of Indigenous representatives into positions of influence have lead to continued incremental progress. Consequently, writers, researcher and teachers, such as Hughes, More & Williams 2004, Lynn (2001), Bennett and Zubrzycki (2003), Freire (1999) all posit that the way ahead for the progressive provision of a unique experience in education for not only Indigenous peoples but for all Australians, is a new way of ‘doing’ education.

Much of the research literature in the form of governmental reports offering statistical information suggest that programs implemented to increase outcomes for Indigenous students need to be built-in to the business of education rather than bolted on. The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme, although it has helped to increased outcomes and success rates for students, is one example of a program which is ‘bolted on’ rather than built in to the core business. For example, the CQU Indigenous Education Statement 2007 is an institutional policy which is increasing the influence of Indigenous representatives within the community to create opportunities for increased awareness and equitable outcomes in education and employment for CQUniversity's Indigenous students; however,
whether the objectives of this statement are translated to meet the challenges facing
learning advisors and students on the ground remains unclear primarily because of the
limitations of this research.

Where to from here?

While learning advisors make up the on the ground workers who offer immediate
assistance to students, those who shared their stories face considerable challenges.
However, because this research was undertaken with only a very small number of research
partners, there is a definite need for further investigation with significantly increases
number of Learning Advisors to establish a clearer picture of need. Hence, further inquiry
with larger numbers of learning advisors and students; a group of primary researchers both
non-Indigenous and Indigenous rather than one primary researcher who in the case of this
study is obviously limited by a non-Indigenous worldview; and the study undertaken over
a longer duration, could possibly have the effect of better supporting the narrative sharing
initiated in this study. Such a study as the above mentioned would also work to eliminate
the possibility of bias, thus, offering further validity to the present research study.

However, this small cohort of research partners has cited significant barriers they have
experienced while attempting to offer quality assistance to the student’s they tutor. One of
the issues spoken about was the knowledge gap which exists between the worldviews and
lived experiences of non-Indigenous Learning Advisors and Indigenous students. While it
is possible that this situation is not always the case, Hughes (2004) does support this line of
thought by contending that the non-Aboriginal world is very different, and even alien, to
the Aboriginal experience. These ideas are certainly something that I have experienced
with the greater number of students I have been involved in assisting. I freely admit that
my learning journey continues and I am sure I still have much to learn. I certainly do not
hold myself up as an ‘expert’ in Indigenous ways, and as such, I can only ever base my reflections about the legitimate and unique experiences of Indigenous peoples from the perspective of a non-Indigenous Australian. However, as the primary focus of this research has been on the experiences of non-Indigenous Learning Advisors the focus on our shared experiences through collective narrative reflection, tells our own stories of challenge.

As a soon to be social worker I certainly feel that my continued learning journey positions me is a better place of understanding than if I had never experienced and overcome many of the challenges I have faced when attempting to be a useful tool in the learning journey of the Indigenous students I have tutored. Equally, undertaking this study has further increased my understanding of unique Indigenous perspectives not only involving people’s educational needs, but also involving the interpersonal ways of relating, knowing and being posited by Lynn (2001) and King (2003). These are definitely skills I will be taking into my future social work practice; and I feel privileged to have embarked on this important, insightful and continuing journey.

In summing up this research, I have stated fact, however, I have endeavoured to not make any wide sweeping assumptions or draw any final conclusions regarding the narratives shared; either my own or those of my research partner’s, both Learning Advisors and Students. To do so would be to suppose that there is an ‘end’ point to our shared journey. Hence, the stories contributed in this research speak of lives and experiences which are fluid and ongoing, and as such, are examples of the journey of learning we have all made the choice to take. Our experiences make up an important part of history in the making. Although we are small in number, in the words of Freire (1999, cited in Denborough 2008, p. xi): ‘History does not finish with us ... it goes beyond’...
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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ..................................................................... , give consent to my participation in the
Name (please print)
Research project: 'Building Bridges and Creating Understanding' – ‘Power in Stories'

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained
to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my
satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the
opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the
researcher

3. I understand that my interview/s will be audio taped.

4. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my
relationship with the researcher now or in the future.

5. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about
me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

6. I understand that as a student/employee of CQUniversity free counselling is
available to me at the Student Support Centre if the need arises during or after the
interview process.

7. I would like a copy of the results to be sent to me (please tick) yes [ ] no [ ]

Please send to (address)

Signed: ...........................................................................................................

Name: ...........................................................................................................

Date: ...........................................................................................................
Participant Information Sheet

Building bridges and creating understanding: the experiences of non-Indigenous learning advisors employed to assist Indigenous tertiary students under the Indigenous Tutorial assistance Scheme

Researcher: Joanne Payne 4th Year Honours Student, Bachelor of Social Work, CQUniversity

Contact details: email: c00109078@student.cqu.edu.au or you can contact my supervisor – Ms Davina Taylor - Phone: (07) 4923 2799

Research Supervisor[s]: Ms Davina Taylor & Dr Daniel Teghe, Department of Social Work and Welfare Studies, CQUniversity

Hello,

You are invited to participate in the research project 'Building bridges and creating understanding – power in stories' which I am conducting as part of my Bachelor of Social Work degree at CQUniversity Australia. My proposed research project will involve a narrative of my experiences as a non-Indigenous Learning Advisor working with Indigenous tertiary students, specifically students at CQUniversity. I intend to create a picture of the challenges experienced as a non-Indigenous professional working with Indigenous students by exploring my own experiences and matching these experiences with those of several other Learning Advisors.

I appreciate your participation, but you do not have to take part if you don’t want to.

What’s it about?

My research project is about the experiences of Learning Advisors set against the background of the challenges and barriers to learning experienced by several (maximum of three students due to the constraints of my Honours research) Indigenous tertiary students undertaking programs of study at tertiary level within the mainstream education system. Indigenous student's challenges encompass a range of issues including cultural issues, age barriers, significant levels of disadvantage, as well as the expectations tutors and lecturers have for Indigenous students to perform to a certain level while sometimes lacking an understanding of their true levels of disadvantage. The stories provided by student participants will be compared with previously undertaken research about the learning experiences of Indigenous students. My proposed research will also look at social policy related to Indigenous education both at a governmental level and CQUniversity's own policies related to Indigenous tertiary education. I intend to use a feminist post-structural approach to qualitative research which recognises that reality and truth can be very different depending on individual's life circumstances; and that the language we use to write about people's experiences can either create oppression or promote empowerment.
There is not a lot of writing about this subject. However, there are stories to tell. There is power in stories especially those told by non-Indigenous learning advisors and Indigenous students they assist, about experiences in mainstream educational institutions such as CQUniversity. It is my hope that this project contributes to ‘building bridges and creating understanding’ and the power of stories within the context of these experiences.

What is involved?

Participation in this study will involve having an informal talk for ½ - 2 hours, at a time and place most convenient for you. Our talk will focus upon your experiences as an Aboriginal tertiary student at CQUniversity, the challenges you face ‘bridging the space’ between the expectations of ‘study/work’, and the needs and values of the Aboriginal community.

Our talk/s will be digitally (audio) recorded, and you will be able to review the recording, and add or change contents if you wish. You are welcome to share in more discussion about the research, as it goes along.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you do not have to participate and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without any penalty or trouble. You will be asked to sign a consent form to show you agree to participate.

Your wellbeing is very important to me, and if our talks cause any distress to you, I will stop the interview, and encourage you to contact the counselling services at CQUniversity Student Support Centre.

Privacy / Confidentiality

Your personal information, such as your name, will not be used in the dissertation unless you request it. No personal information about any other person will be sought. All information gathered in the course of the research will be kept in a secure place, and will only be accessed by me. Data from the research will be securely stored for five (5) years in accordance with CQUniversity Code of Conduct for Research, and then destroyed.

Sharing the Results

The research will be included as part of my Honours dissertation presented to CQUniversity, and may be used in journals or conference papers.

If you are interested in reading the results, a summary will be sent to you at the address you nominate.

If you have questions...

Please contact the CQUniversity Office of Research should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project

Tel 0749 23 2607 email research-enquiries@cqu.edu.au

This information sheet is for you to keep
Appendix two


The Fitzgerald Report is important because it identified particular and understandable reasons why Aboriginal people were not achieving educationally. Fitzgerald categorised the issues in two ways. First, the extrinsic matters: poverty, health, housing, and a lack of facilities. Second, the intrinsic factors: a lack of self esteem, negative white attitudes, a mixture of ignorance and ethnocentricism in textbooks and children's literature, teacher expectations, cultural differences, conflict of values, school procedures, and a growing feeling of separate identity among Aboriginal people.
Appendix three

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)

Major Goals 1 – Involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in Educational Decision-Making

Long Term Goals

1. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of pre-school, primary and secondary education services for their children.

2. To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people employed as educational administrators, teachers, curriculum advisers, teachers assistances, home school liaison officers and other education workers, including community people engaged in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and contemporary society, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

3. To establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services, including technical and further education colleges and higher education institutes.

4. To increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed as administrators, teachers, research and student services officers in technical and further education colleges and higher education institutions.

5. To provide education and training services to develop the skills of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in educational decision-making.
6. To develop arrangements for the provisions of independent advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities regarding educational decisions at regional, State, Territory and National levels.

**Major Goals 2 – Equity of Access to Education Services**

**Long Term Goals**

7. To ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children of pre-primary school have access to pre-school services on a basis comparable to that available to other Australian children of the same age.

8. To ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have local access to primary and secondary schooling.

9. To ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to post-compulsory secondary schooling, to technical and further education, and to higher education.

**Major Goal 3 – Equity of Educational Participation**

**Long Term Goals**

10. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in pre-school education for a period similar to that for other Australian children.

11. To achieve the participation of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in compulsory schooling.

12. To achieve the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in post-secondary education, in technical and further education, and in higher education, at rates commensurate with those of other Australians in those sectors.

**Major Goals 4 – Equitable and Appropriate Educational Outcomes**
Long Term Goals

13. To provide adequate preparation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through pre-school education for the schooling years ahead.

14. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory schooling years.

15. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the successful completion of Year 12 or equivalent at the same rates as for other Australian students.

16. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in technical and further education, and in higher education, as for other Australians.

17. To develop programs to support the maintenance and continued use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

18. To provide community education services which enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people develop skills to manage the development of their communities.

19. To enable the attainment of proficiency in English language and numeracy competencies by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults with limited or no educational experience.

20. To enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, cultures and identity.

21. To provide all Australians students with an understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary cultures.

Sourced from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)
Appendix four

Wednesday, 13 February 2008

Opening statement - APOLOGY TO AUSTRALIA'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Mr RUDD (Griffith—Prime Minister) (9.00 am)—I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.
We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.
Appendix five


Terra nullius describes a land that is vacant or a land that was without a sovereign. Both premises were incorrect. The Aborigines were certainly there so that negates the first possibility. The issue of there being no sovereign was also one on which the British were (conveniently) misguided. Seeing no chiefs and perceiving a society that was ‘interior’ and ‘uncivilised’, the assumption was made that there was no sovereign. I [Behrendt] don’t believe that the second reason was really a reason why the land was claimed as terra nullius. I [Behrendt] think that the British simply wanted the land. They wanted to claim it before the French claimed it and did it in the most convenient way possible. If anything reveals the ludicrous nature of the claim, it is the fact that planting a flag in Botany Bay claimed the whole continent regardless of whom or what was on it. The claim of terra nullius was deceitful at the time it was made; it was claimed incorrectly under the rules of international law at the time it was made and the British fully understood that.
Appendix six – CQU Indigenous Education Statement 2007

SECTION 1 OBJECTIVES FOR INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION

Objectives to improve higher education outcomes for Indigenous Australians

Following completion of a major external review, Central Queensland University in 2006 continued both strategic and structural changes. These changes included the development of a new strategic plan containing new statements of institutional vision, mission and goals for 2007-2011.

CQU corporate documents provide clear statements of intent that acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) students and their communities, in particular the ‘Reconciliation Statement’ which is current for 2006 and approved by university Council. The reconciliation Statement affirms that:

In working together to create a better future for us all, CQU commits to a just and meaningful partnership of reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the many Australian campuses and their neighbouring local communities. This partnership of reconciliation will stand on:

• Recognition of the environment in which reconciliation will take place;
• Responsibility of education institutions to redress disadvantage and to overcome prejudice;
• Commitment to the way forward; and
• Reciprocity and mutual goodwill in developing partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are values and perspectives embedded in the Strategic Plan that, although not explicitly focused on A&TSI people, cater for the discreteness of A&TSI identity and the diversity of lived experience and learning dispositions found amongst A&TSI peoples. The CQU Strategic Plan 2007-2011 states that:

CQU is passionate about providing the opportunity for all to embark on a learning journey. Students from CQU’s regional areas, Australia and across the world are provided quality learning opportunities with personalised support, delivered by enthusiastic staff....

CQU’s approach to the provision of globally relevant education and research moves beyond existing educational assumptions by:

• Targeting non-traditional learners with higher education that enables them to achieve their aspirations.
• Providing educational career and service solutions for regional, domestic and international students that successfully match their circumstances, based on convenience of access, customised pathways, learning environments and student support.
• Offering well-designed and managed research based on intellectual integrity and innovative approaches
• Fostering the prosperity and sustainability of our regions and communities by providing intellectual leadership and working together to achieve appropriate solutions.

Being ‘regional’ and ‘multi-campus’ makes the delivery of services to A&TSI students challenging. The university perceives itself as a borderless university and this has implications for delivery of A&TSI programs. Nulloo Yumbah, as CQU’s Indigenous Learning, Spirituality and Research Centre, has goals specific to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes:
(a) ensure prospective A&TSI students are given every opportunity to gain access to pre-undergraduate, undergraduate and post graduate courses and programs;
(b) enable pre-undergraduate, undergraduate and postgraduate A&TSI students to participate fully in the life of the university;
(c) provide quality personalised services to students in formal and informal activities, modules, courses and programs;
(d) explore and promote the possibilities of responsible custodianship;
(e) promote Indigenous academic vitality amongst staff and students;
(f) promote an exploration of an Indigenous Australian spirituality;
(g) establish and maintain appropriately focused engagements with relevant communities and organisations in the promotion of CQU and the services the university can provide to address community and organisational interests; and
(h) be the pre-eminent CQU resource on Indigenous learning, spirituality and research.

How the Indigenous Perspective is embedded in CQU’s Strategic Plan

What is the ‘Indigenous Perspective’? Who decides and what is meant by being ‘embedded’?

Our Strategic Plan 2007-2011 outlines broad principles and values relevant to A&TSI students and allows for multiple ‘Indigenous Perspectives’ to flourish in a university context of open dialogue and debate. The academic focus of the university is on learning, teaching, research and scholarship to benefit all students. The teaching and learning strategies are student-centred with the needs of each student being paramount. Cultural competence is required, by both students and staff, in a multi-cultural university and should be evident in all aspects of university life. The Organisational academic focus as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2007-2011 follows:

Organisational Academic Focus

Learning, teaching, research and scholarship are the organisation’s academic focus. This focus incorporates teaching and learning that is both student-centred and is informed by research, scholarship and professional practice. Research is in identified areas and may be pure and applied in nature.

Learning and Teaching Goal Statement: CQU will maximise stakeholder access to learning and provide value-adding for students.

In this area, the University will:
1. Provide multiple pathways to students from a variety of backgrounds.
2. Provide a high quality supportive learning environment and exceptional student support.
3. Position ourselves to benefit from initiatives to support and reward learning and teaching.
4. Ensure the program mix on each of our campuses enhances their strength and uniqueness.
5. Ensure that our teaching is informed by research and innovation.
6. Improve our retention and progression rates.

Research and Innovation Goal Statement: CQU will be a quality research provider undertaking research that is focused to achieve outcomes that are regionally relevant, nationally significant and internationally recognised.

In this area, the University will:
1. Focus research efforts and initiatives into strategic research areas.
2. Position CQU to undertake quality research that has a significant impact.
3. Increase investment in research through increasing engagement with government, industry and other stakeholders.
4. Increase the capacity and capability for research through directing investment into new and rejuvenated resources and infrastructure.
5. Identify and build on the research strengths and opportunities for each of the University’s campuses.
6. Ensure that that research and innovation informs our teaching.

SECTION 2 ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION POLICY (AEP) GOALS, AND PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS

CQU confirms that it complies with the conditions for ISP funding by:
- Improving the access, participation, retention and success of Indigenous Australians students in higher education;
- Increasing the participation of Indigenous people in the higher education provider’s decision making processes; and
- Implementing an Indigenous employment strategy.

as demonstrated in addressing the AEP goals relating to higher education outlined below:

1. Establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision making (Goals 3, 5).

CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006

- A&TSI staff are part of the CQU Council appointed Reconciliation Taskforce and Reconciliation Policy Committee which report to the Vice Chancellor.
- A&TSI people participated in the ‘Indigenous Employment Reference Group’ as part of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement #4 and chaired by the DVC.
- A Nulloo Yumbah academic representative was a full member of the Academic Board 2006, representing all Academic Services of the university.
- An Aboriginal academic was an observer of the Research Committee of Academic Board 2005.
- The Aboriginal Director of Nulloo Yumbah is a full member of the Human Research Ethics Committee.
- The Aboriginal Director of Nulloo Yumbah is the acting Chair as required, of the Human Research Ethics Committee.
- Aboriginal academics are full members of each of the three HREC faculty sub-committees
- Aboriginal representatives are members of the CQU Institute of Sustainable Development Board; the Centre for Environmental Management; the Engineering Undergraduate Programs Industry, Schools and Community Advisory Network (ISCAN); and the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence.
- There is Aboriginal staff and Nulloo Yumbah representation on the Staff Training Committee, the Multicultural Committee, the Orientation Committee and the Teaching and Learning Showcase committee.
- A Nulloo Yumbah representative is a member of the Information Technology Division working group.
- A&TSI community representatives are part of various staff selection committees.
- Aboriginal people, both internal and external, have been enlisted as Advisors and/or
reference group members for Nulloo Yumbah programs, portfolios and associated activities.

- Aboriginal staff and community representatives participated in the review of the A&TSI Plan in the Bachelor of Arts program.
- A&TSI staff are part of Union representation at National forums.
- A&TSI people are able to assist in the supervision of Honours and/or postgraduate students' work, as approved by Academic Board, in particular, when the student involved is focused upon work within a specific cultural area, such as that of an Indigenous nature.

**Constraints on CQU’s ability to achieve this goal in 2006**

- Sourcing community members across a diversity of campuses with relevant knowledge and skill sets to be involved in CQU reference group/committee decision making in faculty and division.
- A lack of awareness of university culture and organisation by the wider A&TSI communities.
- Acceptance by university management of the knowledge and expertise held by A&TSI people who do not have tertiary qualifications.
- The role that stereotypes of Aboriginality play in hindering authentic relationships and partnerships within and between the university and A&TSI people.
- The unhealthy divisions in communities around each campus can make it difficult to choose appropriate people to participate in decision making in the university.

**Plans for future improvements**

- The continued expansion of relevant reference groups involving A&TSI people that are flexible in nature and focused on the core business of university activity.
- Design a 'university cultural competence' for non-university reference group membership.

2. Increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in education and training (Goal 4)

**CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006**

- Designed a university cultural awareness activity for staff.
- The University is committed to ensuring equitable recruitment processes and employment practices for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve this, an Indigenous Employment Reference Group (IERG) has been established to coordinate Central Queensland University's Aboriginal & Islander Employment & Career Development Strategy. The Strategy is aimed at increasing the proportion of Indigenous employees within the University through a range of initiatives including the identification of positions across all parts of the University for which being an Indigenous Australian is a genuine occupational qualification. Membership of the Group includes the Director of Nulloo Yumbah, Equity and Diversity Officer (Indigenous), one (1) indigenous general staff employee, and one (1) Indigenous academic employee.
- An Aboriginal Equity Officer with core responsibilities for increasing A&TSI employment across CQU has been appointed in the Equity and Diversity Office.
- An Aboriginal staff representative is a member of the Staff Training committee.
- An A&TSI Cadetship Officer continued to be employed and located in the Student Services Division.
- An Aboriginal Research Officer has been appointed in the Domestic Violence Research
Centre.

- Continued full-time employment of academic and professional administrative staff in the Indigenous Learning, Spirituality and Research Centre (Nulloo Yumbah) including positions of Associate Professor & Director, Student Community Liaison Officer, Enrolment and Promotions Officer, Recruitment and Retention Officer, Administrative Officer, two campus coordinators, three academics.

**Constraints on CQU's ability to achieve this goal in 2006**

- The stop/start nature of short term funding for projects can be an issue with regard to continuity of employment.
- Lack of promotion/career paths for A&TSI staff.
- Increasing opportunities in well paying positions in public and private sectors including local mines.

**Plans for future improvements**

- Increase A&TSI research and publication profile.
- Increase participation and success rates of A&TSI academic and general staff in promotion rounds.
- Increase A&TSI academics within faculties.
- Design a 'university cultural competence' for non-university reference group membership.

3. **Ensure equitable access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to education and training services (Goal 9)**

**CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006**

- In addition to Nulloo Yumbah's Tertiary Entry Program (TEP), A&TSI students have access to the STEPS (Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies) and WIST (Women into Science and Technology) enabling programs.
- TEP has been delivered in the Etna Creek Capricornia Correctional Centre with new enrolments at the Goulburn, Sydney, Townsville & Maryborough Correctional Centres.
- The TEP teaching team were awarded the Vice Chancellor's Teaching Award for their work in the Capricorn Correctional Centre.
- Successful Alternate Access Pathways offered by Nulloo Yumbah include: Recognition of Prior Learning access; Testing & Assessment Days; Enabling and Bridging programs.
- Schools outreach programs see primary and high school students visiting CQU.
- CQU’s promotion and recruitment programs, are borderless activities and are run in collaboration with Nulloo Yumbah. Recruitment and promotion activities cover major centres as well as rural and remote areas of the State including the Torres Strait Islands.
- Promotion uses all forms of regional media including Murrí radio networks.
- Close working relationship with the CQU Office of Research.
- Postgraduate full-time scholarships have been offered to A&TSI students.
- A debt repayment process has been negotiated that will allow progression of students.
- A&TSI Students are seen as resources for promotion; student packs for promotion in their own communities and a recruitment incentive scheme have been approved.
**Constraints on CQU's ability to achieve this goal in 2006**

- Increased popularity of TAFE access.
- A&TSI people's perception that university is not attainable or appropriate.
- School staff, guidance counsellors and others, whose perception is that university is not attainable or appropriate for A&TSI students and refer them to TAFE.
- Some students find community attitudes that denigrate those who try to ‘better themselves’ through study very difficult to handle.
- Pressure from Family (spouse) not to ‘better themselves’ through study.
- Cycle of debt experienced by A&TSI students (both HECS and other debt).
- Increasing insistence by higher education sector that ‘everything is on-line’ despite a lack of computer awareness, internet confidence and availability in A&TSI homes.

**Plans for future improvements**

- Increase access to the TEP program by flexible delivery and in correctional centres in Queensland and beyond.
- Target large urban A&TSI populations, including metropolitan centres across States.
- As part of the borderless university promote CQU nationally for A&TSI enrolments.
- Corporate CQU promotional material to feature A&TSI faces and testimonials.
- CQU utilizing A&TSI media to promote CQU.
- Post-Graduate enabling program for both coursework and research degrees.

4. **Ensure participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education and training (Goal 12)**

**CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006**

- There is considerable emphasis on “contact...contact...contact” with all enrolled A&TSI students, which is important for the retention of these students.
- As the majority of our students are studying in the flexible (distance) mode all A&TSI students are regularly contacted by phone by Nulloo Yumbah staff.
- First Year Experience (FYE) is a focus for retention activities, with a FYE Manual being developed.
- A&TSI student achievers are encouraged and given appropriate recognition, including awards jointly funded by Nulloo Yumbah and Golden Key.
- There is a close working relationship between Student Services and Nulloo Yumbah, with joint student services activities.
- Successful A&TSI third year students have been employed as Nulloo Yumbah Student guides for retention activities.
- Successful running of the ‘Optimism Course’ for MTS’ students.
- The employment of a Recruitment and Retention Officer based in NuUoo Yumbah.
- At-risk students are identified early in the term and given appropriate advice and other services.
- Seven academics have been employed in Nulloo Yumbah to give academic leadership.
- The bulk funded ITAS program coordinated by Nulloo Yumbah is servicing all Central Queensland campuses, internal and external students.
- An ITAS training website for coordinators, tutors and students continues to be developed.
- Flexible delivery of the Bachelor of Learning Management has been approved for students working as Teacher Aides at the Woorabinda (a DOGIT A&TSI community) school.
- Postgraduate student presentations are made to CQU staff and students.
- Postgraduate A&TSI scholarships have been offered.
- All A&TSI higher degree research students are given a Research Training Scheme funded place.
- Students are encouraged and supported in presenting at sector wide conferences.
- All CQU staff inductions now include training in policies and procedures and the university Code of Conduct which addresses non-racist, harassment and bullying behaviours.

**Constraints on CQU's ability to achieve this goal in 2006**
- A market-driven curriculum directing the choices in what will be funded in the university; which limits choice in areas of humanities.
- The requirement for a student to be on three-quarter load minimum to be eligible for Abstudy encourages students to enrol in more than they can handle so that they can gain full Abstudy for living purposes; this increases indebtedness whilst reducing student retention and progress.
- Students' failure to inform university of change of contact details.
- Successful students are being offered positions in the community and some are deferring university study.
- The increasing inflexibility in some academic program design does not allow A&TSI specific elective courses to be utilized.
- There is insufficient funding for innovative pedagogy and other activities.

**Plans for future improvements**
- Increase paper presentations at conferences and published work.
- Petition the Government to consider full Abstudy payments for half load across the year (eg 4 courses in total for the three CQU Terms – not just the ‘main ones’ of Term 1 and Term 2).
- Also give consideration to the HECS levy, which should be lower for the first year so that students ‘opting out’ do not do so with a significant financial burden.
- Continue to explore and promote innovative pedagogy.
- Provision of a family friendly, ‘Encouraging Study’, program for families with university students; who may be Mum and/or Dad studying at CQU.

**CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006**
- Successful A&TSI students are employed as 'Student Guides' to other students.
- Students at Risk are targeted and encouraged to attend programs collaboratively run by Student Services and Nulloo Yumbah.
- The ITAS program is strongly encouraged to all students including regular phone contact especially at the beginning of each term.
- Continue term reviews of the ITAS program including administration to better meet the
needs of the students.

- Postgraduate scholarships have been offered to A&TSI people since 2003.
- Paper presentations by A&TSI students at national conferences.
- Continued recognition of successful A&TSI students in collaboration with Golden Key – an international organization recognizing student academic achievement.

**Constraints on CQU’s ability to achieve this goal in 2006**

- The increasing demands of students to enter the workforce sooner rather than later thus increasing incompletes.
- The dependencies on technology to deliver the learning ‘packages’; doesn’t work in correctional centres nor for most families in community.

**Plans for future improvements**

- Continue the exploration of the use of ‘foundation’ courses to enrich the first year experiences of university students.
- Continue current contact activities in all their many options.
- ITAS training to be reviewed and increased use of web training options.
- The First Year Experience (FYE) manual is to be developed, circulated and expanded.
- The establishment of a Postgraduate Enabling Program (PEP).
- Initiate a student computer scheme, lease or other purchase plan, with the university’s preferred computer provider.
6. Promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures and languages to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Goal 17, 20, 21)

CQU Achievements / Outcomes / Good Practice 2006

- Reconciliation Taskforce finalised proposed policies to implement the Council approved 'Reconciliation Statement' for consideration of the Vice Chancellor.
- Courses run by Nulloo Yumbah and hosted by Faculties continued to attract domestic and international students.
- Incidental lectures by Nulloo Yumbah A&TSI academics in undergraduate courses have continued.
- "Introduction to A&TSI History" continues to be taught in collaboration with Nulloo Yumbah academics.
- "Introduction to A&TSI History" is now a compulsory course in the History Plan of the Bachelor of Arts program.
- Celebration of success by A&TSI CQU students have been held on the campuses and in the Correctional Centre.
- 'Reconciliation in the Workplace and Community' the Academic Board approved compulsory course in the Bachelor of Social Work degree was delivered in term two and is also an elective across the university.
- The development of new A&TSI focused courses (subjects) for 2007/8 academic years.
- Workshops, conferences and seminars on issues relating to domestic violence with A&TSI presenters and community participation.
- Nulloo Yumbah 'Conversational Series' began with topic 'Peace & Reconciliation in an Age of Terrorism'.
- A successful one day symposium titled 'Weaving Peace' delivered with Aboriginal speakers and attracted participants from four States.

Constraints on CQU's ability to achieve this goal in 2006

- No local language speaker expertise or dictionary.
- The 'mind-set' of some staff towards using A&TSI people and content in courses and programs.

Plans for future improvements

- Increase Nulloo Yumbah designed and delivered courses and programs over the next triennium.
- Increase A&TSI focused 'Conversations' and 'Symposiums'.
- Explore postgraduate program and course design targeting A&TSI students.
- Conduct a workshop for local A&TSI people who may be used as guest speakers in faculty courses.
- Further implement the Reconciliation Statement across all campuses.
PART 3  EXPENDITURE OF INDIGENOUS SUPPORT PROGRAMME GRANT

Refer to the tabulation presented in the attached document.

PART 4  HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDER CONTACT INFORMATION

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PART 5  PUBLICATION OF THE STATEMENT

The Statement is published on the CQU Nulloo Yumbah website with appropriate links from other CQU sites.
http://www.cqu.edu.au/nullooyumbah/
Appendix seven

Germany – A Short Immigration History

While the history of German migration to Australia began in the 19th century with the Germans being the first ‘non-British’ ethnic group of influence in the development of a number of Australian colonies, the main period of immigration did not begin until after World War Two.

At the beginning of the 20th century the Germany-born population of Australia was 38,352. Considerable anti-German feeling emerged during World War One and in 1914 immigration from Germany was prohibited and not resumed again until 1925. During the war the Germany-born in Australia were subject to personal, legislative and administrative prejudice including the internment of around 14 per cent of the Germany-born population of Australia. This had a devastating effect on the German community in Australia. After the defeat of Germany in 1918, 696 German citizens were deported, and 4,620 volunteered for repatriation to Germany.

The sharp decline in the Germany-born population in Australia continued until after World War Two. At the 1947 Census, before the post war resettlement process had begun in earnest, the Germany-born population had declined to 14,567, just over a third of the Germany-born population in the country in 1901.

During World War Two 1,500 captured German military personnel, 2,078 ‘Australian-based’ German Nationals and 3,953 Germans formerly held in other British territories were interned in detention camps scattered throughout New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Of all of the German nationals interned, around 60 per cent remained in Australia after their release.

Despite Australia’s involvement in two world wars involving Germany, Australians perceived Germans as highly desirable immigrants and they were included in the post war resettlement program. There was tremendous growth in immigration to Australia from Germany after World War Two. The Germany-born in Australia climbed from a low of 14,567 in 1947 to 109,315 in 1961.

The 1950s saw the height of Germany-born post-war immigration. In 1952 an agreement was reached between West Germany and Australia to provide assisted passage for 3,000 Germans per annum and grant entry permits for a further 1,000 unassisted Germans. Between 1951 and 1962, 84 per cent of German emigrants received assistance.

The total number of Germany-born in Australia remained relatively stable at between 110,000–115,000 from 1961 until 1996, and hence, as other overseas-born groups have grown, they dropped from 6.1 to 2.8 per cent of the overseas-born population.

Towards the end of the century, the Germany-born in Australia are in a slow decline after peaking at 114,790 in 1986 and dropping to 110,332 in 1996. As ageing of the Germany-born population occurs it is not outweighed by net annual migration. Net annual migration of the Germany-born is low, for example in the 1999–00 financial year there were 781 settler arrivals and 259 permanent departures of the Germany-born.
### Germany — Key Population Statistics at Federation and Century’s End

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<tr>
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<th>1901 Census</th>
<th>1996 Census</th>
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<tr>
<td>Population in Australia</td>
<td>38,352</td>
<td>110,332</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Overseas-born</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Total Australian Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio(^a)</td>
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<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age (years)(^b)</td>
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<td>52</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Males per 100 Females.
\(^b\) Median age at the 1911 Census. Median age at the 1901 Census is not available.