

# First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL)

## Pilot Project Report

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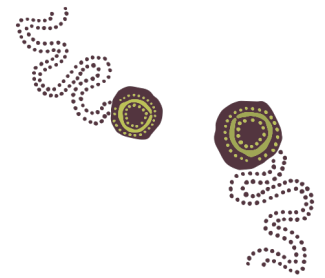




Billabong Camp – Water Hole Tracks

Billabong Camp depicts time-worn tracks that lead to a shady place of water, where clans gather under paperbark trees after a long, hot journey. The design places people at its centre – referencing students, researchers, people and community. Tracks to a place by water and paperbark trees symbolises the energising, holistic values of the learning journey.

The motifs depict people, tracks and meeting places; a story that relates to each individual, on a journey that holds limitless pathways of learning, growth and connection.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an organisation with diverse ambitions, aspirations and purposes, CQUniversity provides for the education and research needs of staff and students and meets the demands of engagement with external industry, government and community stakeholders. Inherent to these obligations is an associated and contemporary expectation of culturally diverse inclusion in all University activities.

The CQUniversity Strategic Plan (Central Queensland University 2019-2023) includes a commitment to collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to strengthen relationships with Traditional Owners and their communities and to increase education opportunities. Pathways to achieving this aspiration are outlined by the Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy (2019-2021) and supported by the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2022-2024 and Universities Australia Indigenous Strategies (2017-2022 & 2022-2025). These documents purport that to meet current cultural expectation, the organisation includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge in the University's various landscapes: governance, research, education and engagement.

A formal process and subsequent mechanism are necessary requirements for effective consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the purpose of obtaining strategic and culturally appropriate advice to support and guide policy, procedure and research. Commonly, specialist committees steer university governance. The First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) was established as a special committee under the governance structure of the University, and initially trialed as a pilot research project. This first iteration of the FNCEL was inaugurated under a Terms of Reference (TOR) and functioned as a special committee made up of nine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, as a First Nations community-based group who sat for six consecutive formal monthly meetings.

For the purposes of this report Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are referred to as First Nations peoples interchangeably.

To evaluate the efficacy and veracity of the chosen model, the pilot trial included the creation of two new policies with input from the members of the FNCEL: *The Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander /First Nations Identity Protocol* and *Engaging and Communicating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/First Nation People Protocol*.



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The pilot trial was conducted as an exploration, in which identifying a beneficial paradigm of practice for the advisory group's function was paramount. It also served as a first iteration of what is intended to be an established body for advising the University on the inclusion of First Nations culture and knowledge in the governance and decision-making process of the University.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement conducted this project and assembled the outcome report with the cultural guidance of Jenuarrie (Judith Warrie).

The researchers acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Country on which the pilot of the First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) was held, the Gimuy-Walubara Yidinji peoples. We pay respect to the Country and Elders of each of the FNCEL members. And we honour Elders of the past and the present, who have made this work possible; and to those who will guide us in the future.

We thank those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people who served this project by their membership on the initial FNCEL for their participation, generosity, patience and dedication.

This project was made possible with funding from the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP).

### Copyright status



### Front Cover Art

#### Billabong Camp

Designed for the CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE)

By **Balarinji**, Sydney, Australia

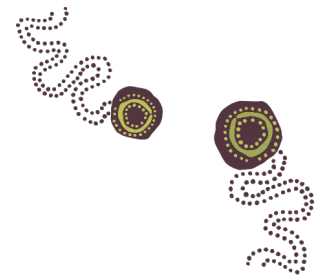


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# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Historically to date, CQUniversity has been without a formalised process for consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for obtaining culturally appropriate advice to support and guide governance matters that affect improved education, employment and engagement opportunities for First Nations peoples. In response to this deficit, Prof Adrian Miller, Deputy Vice President (DVP) Indigenous Engagement, and the members of the Office of Indigenous Engagement (OIE) team designed and developed a plan to include First Nation involvement with the governance and management of the University as a key part of the *Indigenous Leadership and Engagement Strategy* (ILES) 2019-2022.

The ILES was a socially innovative, whole of university approach focused on growing the presence and enhancing the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, faculty and staff. The establishment of the FNCEL was integral to the ILES. The aims and achievements of the ILES strategic plan were incorporated in the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Plan (RAP) 2022-2024. The FNCEL continues as a mandate, under the new CQUniversity RAP, launched in July 2022.

The FNCEL was initiated as a platform to address the lack of a pathway for the advice and participation of First Nations community members in university governance and concedes this participation has vital importance. The process for delivery of the committee guidance and advice on First Nations peoples' interests is that outcomes of meeting considerations will be presented to the university authoritative hierarchy: the University Management Committee and the University Council.

This provides a pathway for appropriate recognition of the societal knowledge systems that are important to university governance and the support of self-determination for First Nation peoples (Moreton, 2021). Conversely, the FNCEL plays a beneficial role in First Nations peoples' understanding of the machinations of the University, provided through the witness of evidentiary outcomes in University's systems and governance.

### The pilot project

The First Nation peoples advisory body lacked precedence. In consultation with senior officers in the governance sector of the University and Elder and First Nations independent cultural consultant Jenuarrie, it was concluded that the most expedient structure for the FNCEL was a formal committee. A TOR was established and approved outlining the function required and expected outcomes.





The FNCEL was established as a pilot project with a research component, to test the goal of functioning as an advisory panel of nine participants, with a chairperson. In order to trial its function, over a six-month period, the council would discuss, plan and advise on the development of two policies identified: a policy that would facilitate confirming First Nations identity in respect to CQUniversity and a protocol to guide University faculty and staff engagement and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and stakeholders.

### **The membership**

Candidates for the FNCEL pilot project were chosen on the basis of their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, who were known to be professionally involved in cross-cultural community practice in non-government, government and First Nations corporate entities. Each candidate received a formal invitation letter and an expression of interest form, to sign and return to the project manager.

In the pilot project members were chosen from the Cairns and Townsville campus catchment areas for a number of reasons: areas of high First Nations demographic representation; members were known to Prof Miller and his team; logistically and financially, this was a manageable plan to arrange meetings.

### **The objects and aims of the pilot trial**

The aim of the research project was to test the efficacy of the FNCE. The pilot project provided the opportunity for the FNCEL to function temporarily as a functioning advisory committee. It also provided a platform for gathering empirical input from participants to inform an in-depth understanding of how the committee performed, to establish foundational criteria for its occupation as a permanent part of CQUniversity's governance systems.

### **Research question**

The research poses the questions:

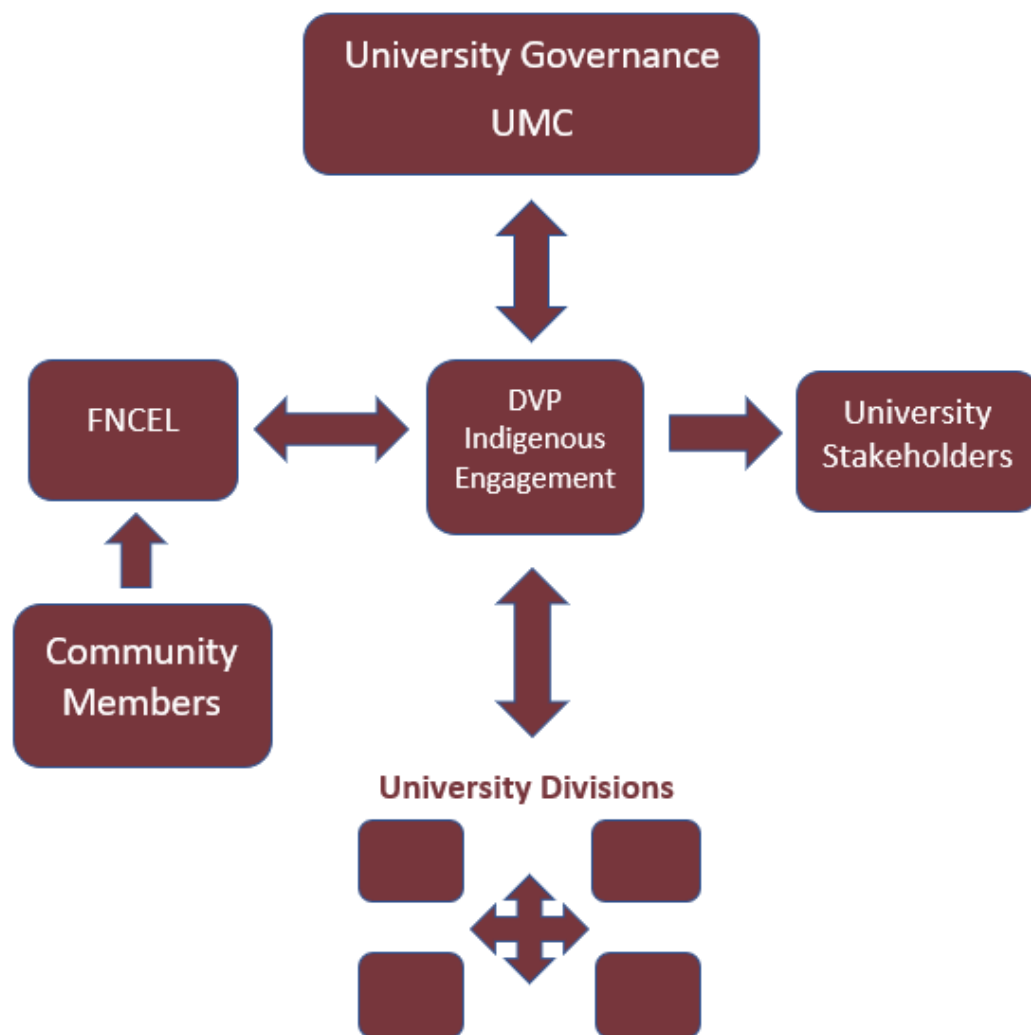
Does the model offer a foundation for establishing a sustainable process for effective production, receipt and use of counsel on matters and policies that directly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Is the model suitable to provide effective interface between First Nations community representatives and the University?





## THE FNCEL MODEL



The FNCEL process tested by the pilot research project is demonstrated in this flow chart (above). FNCEL membership originates in the communities served by the University. Issues arising from University divisions to be considered by the FNCEL are facilitated by the DVP Indigenous Engagement, with outcomes presented to the University Management



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Committee (UMC) for consideration and acceptance. Ultimately those divisions and University stakeholders are affected by changes to policy and procedures.

## SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The research project investigates whether the form taken by the FNCEL during a trial period can serve CQUniversity in the form of a university committee and whether First Nations members are comfortable to contribute cultural knowledges in policy making and governance.

The test is based on the study of a singular case that depends on the participation of those people who are active in the case. It does not seek to compare this advisory formula with those instituted or in use by other universities.

For the Australian research community, as this project will be the subject of published articles, it offers a case for new perspective on the phenomenon of fulfilling “clear institutional responsibilities” (Pidgeon, 2014, p.12), to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through higher education and aid in “understanding how why and how universities are responsible” (p.12).

This project may contribute to a leading position for CQUniversity in serving First Nations people to “build and nurture strategic partnerships for improved outcomes” and “foster relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities” (Macquarie University Indigenous Strategy, 2016-2025).

## ETHICS

### Human ethics application 0000022152

Ethics approval for the FNCEL pilot project was sought through the formal application process of submission of documents to the CQUniversity Human Ethics Committee and based on the precepts of National Statement on Ethical Conduct on Human Research.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of existing literature was led by the “preliminary notions” (Yin, 2015, p.71) underpinning the research question and the project’s purposeful design to advance knowledge in the understanding of the value and application of First Nations cultural knowledges and skills in higher education governance, policy making and management. It includes the methods and mechanisms by which this cultural knowledge is garnered and applied. The review also sought to give insight and perspective on the way in which FNCEL participants could participate in culturally safe ways with confidence in the leadership provided.

That organisational governance, First Nation cultural awareness and the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff are foundationally intertwined and exist is a challenging complex issues for Australian universities, is undeniable and widely acknowledged. The aim in seeking out prior scholarly works was to give foundation to our aim “to push the knowledge frontier” (Xiao and Watson, 2017, p.93) with this project. To do this it is required to discern where that frontline currently exists. The prescriptive and selective category of the review held sought to collate and examine the state of the current literature as it pertains to the query posed by the research project (Xiao and Watson, 2017). Publications and reports concerning First Nations people and higher education, with which researchers were already familiar were included in the list of publications for review. Methodological research was assisted by academic publications on qualitative research and research design.

### Current literature

Australian higher education has a lack of provident processes and policies that support and address the place and presence of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives according to a study by Gunstone (2013) and fails to address First Nations aspirations by way of non-inclusion in leadership and governance. His study examines the use of traditional approaches for inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in committees, ethics and board member participation and senior management positions. McGregor(2021) points out that Indigenous knowledge (IK) is not an objective concept or represented by a noun in First Nations Peoples perspectives; it is active and a way of life. Therefore, it is “inseparable from the people who hold and live this knowledge” (p.2). It (IK) cannot be extracted and packaged as a specific set of information. Thus, the perspective and attendant knowledge required by universities to engage with and serve First Nations peoples, can be provided only by continuous contribution by those who hold and experience the knowledges in relation to their social systems . Further, the national



reconciliation movement as recounted by Reconciliation Australia's *2021 State of Reconciliation Report: Moving from Safe to Brave* states that 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 91% of the non-Indigenous populace feel that the relationship between First Nations peoples demographics and universities is vital to sustaining an equitable future in the national society (Reconciliation Australia, 2021, p.8).

The concept and expected outcomes of the FNCEL are aligned in principle with the research conducted by Wise, Dickinson, Katan and Gallegos (2020) focused on the premise that an Indigenous advisory council is necessary to higher education governance, as a fundamental element to empower Indigenous leaders in impacting higher education. Undeniably, power is retained at university council levels and organisations “commonly incorporate advisory councils to address specialized purposes” (p.240). Those universities that incorporate or seek to serve sizeable numbers of Indigenous students, communities and stakeholders are enabled to recognise and authorise those social spheres through the mechanism of an advisory council. Pidgeon (2014) states that the cycle of exclusion of First Nations peoples from universities can be overcome by the inclusion of the “lived realities” (p.14) of Aboriginal peoples and that this process would involve “challenging current structures and processes” (p.14) that hinder those realities becoming part of university structures.

### Gap in Literature

Beyond literature that outlines the lack of procedure or organisational success in facilitating direct input into governance practice, there is a dearth of publications in Australia on what has been done or recommended to address the absence. According to the *Nyiyannang wuunggalu* Event Report (AIATSIS, 2019) policymakers need to be prepared to work with community challenges, listen carefully to perspectives and recognise that negotiation and compromise are essential for change.

Kennedy (2003) states the way higher education organisations are governed and the values they espouse, “send clear signals” (p.57) about the role they [universities] play and intend to future occupy, in relation to First Nations peoples involvement. As new financial scrutiny and shifting societal attitudes emerge, universities are required to “develop strategies in order to retain traditional values while responding to new priorities” (p.55). One of the shifting outlooks in contemporary Australian society and expressed in CQUniversity's published strategic plans is a recognition, understanding and inclusion of First Nations knowledges in the governance of universities in a way the benefits all stakeholders involved.



There are few publications available, including government and government commissioned reports, to suggest that universities across the nation have been innovative in their approach to the involvement of First Nations ideologies in governance and management of academic systems. Gunstone's (2013) survey focused on to what extent First Nations peoples were involved in strategic planning or governance systems in Australian universities demonstrated a low level of planned or exercised inclusion.

This literature search attempts to establish what currently exists in Australia, the need for a model of governance, and the level of First Nations peoples engagement sought and utilised by other higher education institutions. The websites of some Australian (24) and Canadian (10) universities with well-publicized First Nations focused programs for engagement, education and research were visited and canvassed, resulting in the compilation of two tables (Appendixes A and B). Few of the universities canvassed had established First Nations advisory bodies. In the case where universities are taking the advice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there proved a lack of published material focused on their establishment, function and effect on governance and management.

## INTRINSIC CASE STUDY AND PAR

Recognised literature was used to support the occasion for a qualitative research project that incorporates the dynamics of combination of blending of case study with elements of participatory action research (PAR).

The paradigm set up by assessing the FNCEL advisory group model as a pilot project offered the investigators a situation that Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as an intrinsic case study. It is an in-depth analysis of the bounded system [structure] of the FNCEL, "described and defined by particular parameters" (p.97) including place, membership criteria and continuity, university committee configurations, the material under consideration and its discussion by participants. An intrinsic case provides for a holistic and profound investigation (Tellis, 1997) of the singular constructed pathway to fulfilling a specified goal of the former ILES and the current RAP. The research evaluated the FNCEL function and structure as a distinctive and unusual circumstance, a process for the establishment the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in a pedagogical landscape, rather than compare or create a theory about Elders and leaders' groups in general (Ang et al, 2016).

The project focused on research with the purpose of facilitating change through strategically planned action; action that leads to an iterative cycle of reflection and further action (Baum et al, 2006). The FNCEL presented a situational approach that sought to



solve issues of practical concerns. At the same time, it offered new understandings and ways forward in the areas of the study involved. This provides circumstance is defined as PAR (O'Brien, 1998). The determinants of PAR are the creation of knowledge and purposeful action that results in change (Walter 2009) and is “used in real life situations since its primary focus is on solving real problems” (O'Brien, 1998, p.9). These crucial elements gave a distinctive formulation to the approach of the pilot.

The OIE team and the members of the FNCEL worked together to consider issues and create policies designed to increase benefits to and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and stakeholders. A pluralistic qualitative methodology was applied to this research project in that it is a “strategy of action that shapes the choice and use of methods, linking them to desired outcomes” (Baum, MacDougall et al, 2006, p.854). As a result, the methods are focused on a case study approach combined with elements of participatory action research (PAR).

The case study explores a complex phenomenon within a specific context over a specific period (Baxter & Jack, 2008): that of an organised, recognised and sanctioned [by CQUniversity] group of First Nation community Elders and leaders who have direct and recognised input into University policy and procedure. The six meetings, held monthly, of the trial allowed for observations to be made based on accumulated knowledge from each meeting.

According to Altrichter et al (2002), PAR is a broad movement, not well described by “one neat widely accepted definition” (p.125), as it is difficult to confine its axiomatic and empirical parameters. However, the authors do theorise that the purpose of action research is to develop practical situations where people are given the opportunity to reflect upon and “improve practice and publish their findings for the benefit of others who are interested in the particular practice” (p.128). FNCEL members took part in post-meeting surveys.

In the context of improving or creating a new paradigm that changes current organisational systems the two elements that are important to PAR: research that comprises an “action component that seeks to engender positive change” and includes in its design the “involvement of the community of interest to the research” (Walter, 2013, par 5, Ch. 21) were considered throughout the research pilot timespan.

The pilot project committee participants were aware of the focus and intention of the research trial. They were interactive contributors to the outcomes of the project by way of their attendance and contribution to discussions and policy creation.



## Exchange with researcher in survey questioning

In answering questions posed by the survey, participants had the opportunity to express ideas and thoughts that were partially formulated during meetings, and in the retrospective opportunity provided by the survey, could become fully formulated upon reflection and expression. The other condition offered by the survey was one-on-one confidential exchange in which the participant was aware of their protect anonymity. Interviewees appeared relaxed and more inclined to share ideas that may not have been shared at meetings for cultural or reprisal reasons. The third characteristic was that of dynamics of exchange during meetings. Often a participant may have wanted to express a thought or contribute and did not have the opportunity before the agenda discussion shifted in another direction.

In short participants had opportunity to recap agenda item discussions in the survey space – which was not the original intention of the survey. However, the informative nature of those thoughts were recorded in the transcripts. Therefore, the survey process became an integral part of the participatory process.

## METHOD

### Creating protocols

As a trial for establishing a formalised university committee, the FNCEL pilot project required the establishment of a TOR, a meeting format and schedule, a list of appropriate First Nations focused agenda items for discussion and action, support by OIE staff and the means and administrative infrastructure to action outcomes.

Tasks were set for the committee's consideration by Prof Miller, who based the initial choice for the commissions on fulfilling strategic outcomes outlined under the mandate of the ILES [currently the RAP]. Chairperson, Jenuarrie had input into each agenda. The formation of two new protocols were set as goals for the pilot: a method and process for confirming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and a protocol for engaging with First Nations communities and stakeholders.

### Impacts of the COVID-19 virus

State and local COVID health directives were imposed in the preliminary stages of the meeting schedule, resulting in the induction meeting being held through a Zoom





connection. In the first meeting in May 2020, also held through Zoom, restrictions were changed to allow people to meet in person while maintaining a safe social distance.

### **Extending the timeline**

After three meetings in May, June and July 2020, participants were canvassed as to thoughts about extending the pilot project from four to six meetings. All participants agreed that to accomplish the goals set out in the agendas, this was a necessary step for success. The meeting schedule was extended, with the last meeting held 20 October 2020.

### **Data collection**

Data collated and examined in this study is sourced from monthly post-meeting interviews conducted with individual participants, observations by the researcher taken during meetings, pre-project research on how other universities seek, receive and utilise cultural input from First Nations Elders and leaders.

### **Longitudinal factor**

The timeline of the project had an effect on participants responses to the survey. As participant familiarity with the meeting process, each other and the university governance structure, confidence grew in responding to survey questions.

## **PRIMARY DATA – THE SURVEY**

The sole source for primary data was formed by the answers to a series of questions asked of individual participants during post-meeting monthly interviews. Questions were designed to inquire about member participatory experience. and opinions and thoughts on efficacy of the meeting structures, discussions and outcomes. (See Appendices A). Foundational questions remained identical month to month, with additional questions were changed added to reflect the agenda of the particular monthly meeting.

The interviews took place within three days of each of the meeting and were conducted face-to-face on Zoom during regular working hours (between 8:30am -5:00pm). Audio

and visual versions of Zoom interviews were recorded and subsequently delivered to a professional transcribing service by uploading files directly to the researcher's secure account at the transcribers platform. Transcribed files were downloaded and saved to a storage supplied by CQUniversity's research division and an encrypted external hard drive.



## SECONDARY DATA

Data included a report by Reconciliation Australia on the outcomes of the CQUniversity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-2018. The outcomes are those from a survey conducted with staff at CQUniversity to evaluate their perceived interaction with Indigenous Australians, knowledge and practices after the implementation of the Innovate RAP and was conducted in 2019 .

### Universities services tabled

Secondary data comprises a set of tables (Appendix A) that collate information on the services offered to First Nations staff, student and stakeholder by more than 25 Australian universities and nine Canadian universities, and the content of two field observation journals written by a researcher and a research assistant. The table gives insight into the current state of engagement and inclusion of First Nations people in Australian higher education. It provides CQUniversity with a notion of its national position in relation to other Higher Education (HE) organisations and insight into possibilities for future iterations of the FNCEL.

### Approach to data: thematic analysis

Data analysis strategies were based on a comprehensive approach (Ellis et al, 2006) as this methodology entailed considering the entire data collection with an immersive approach prior to identifying analysis themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This allowed for initial “intuitive identification” (p.188) of emergent ideas as part of breaking down of the complexity of the issues presented by the project and allowed a “with-in case analysis”(p.100) of the incomparable research circumstance.

In the first instance all transcripts of interview questions and answers were read thoroughly, in an attempt to grasp a sense of the entire body of information. On a second reading, emergent reoccurring ideas and key concepts were noted, in order to break down data into meaningful thematic sections (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This proved an efficient management system for the large amount of data produced from the more than 50 interviews conducted.

### Invivo coding

The data was further reviewed to prioritise segments of text (Yin, 2015) and to group the emerging repetition of concepts and ideas. Individual codes (32) were drawn from the exact wording of material recorded as *invivo* codes (Yin, 2015, p.196). This *invivo* method



was chosen to reflect values and concepts arising from the entire body and language of the data itself, rather than utilizing an *a priori* coding method, which would have imposed structure and preconceived viewpoints on the data, and therefore restricted findings (Creswell, 2016).

### **Thematic framework**

The invivo codes were related to seven broader themes and ideas (Yin, 2016) identified: challenges to contribution; meeting process: pilot project process: reflection on self and future: community commitment and representation; policy creation; university governance and environment.

Broader connections or convergences of ideas were pursued (Yin, 2016) a process of remapping the seven identified themes (O’Leary, 2017) through “intercoder agreement” (Creswell, 2018, p.97). Themes were reassessed and synthesised where possible, four hierarchical or meta-themes were established, giving interpretive foundation for the formation of theories that response to the research question.

Reviewing the original 32 codes and the phrases and ideas that supported those codes provided verification for the meta themes by way of a set of subthemes linked to direct quotes. This was laid out in a table.

The identification of the four meta themes: significance of meeting process to the FNCEL function; factors affecting participant and contribution; process of cultural guidance in policy creation; participant self-reflection, community commitment and representation is the foundation for the discussion of the thematic response to the purpose of the research. The classification of data supporting the four over-arching ideas and the corresponding interpretive discussion of these themes allows for deep insights into the answer to the research project question.

### **Significance of project**

The report on outcomes of the FNCEL pilot research project and subsequent publications, will contribute to the sparse literature on the subject, especially in relation to Australian HE institutions. It is possible that the research could contribute to transformation of current perspectives in higher education.



## DISCUSSIONS

In light of the specific purpose of the FNCEL to function as an advisory committee in matters of advocacy, leadership, engagement and governance, the interpretation of the data discoveries is foundational to the inquiry into whether the FNCEL pilot project presented a plausible framework and meeting format for its intended purposes. This is achieved through examining: the success of the FNCEL as an advisory committee; as an empowering experience for members over the six-month period of the pilot project; and the suitability of the meeting process to achieve goals set by the agendas. Further, it notes and interprets the experiences and cultural challenges of First Nations community members working with university systems and processes and seeks a sustainable approach to any future iterations of the FNCEL.

### Interpretative rationale

From the data analysis process four meta or global themes emerged. In this project the term meta-themes refer to the rhetorical ideas which acquire their meaning through the systematic co-occurrence of two or more other themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These broader themes form the interpretive framework for discussion of data findings and present the major points or indicators of the success of the FNCEL during the pilot project.

The data survey yielded lengthy, complex responses to questions posed in the monthly interview sessions. This type of response, when rendered under the meta-theme and thematic headings, represent the profound consideration given by respondents when answering the questions. They are often not direct answers and regularly articulate the thinking taking place while delivering an extempore response.

### THEME 1. SIGNIFICANCE OF MEETING PROCESS TO THE FNCEL FUNCTION

The meeting process was the primary platform for discussions and interactions between staff and participants, and participant to participant. It is the framework by which governance matters are decided and receipted by the university. The consideration of FNCEL functionality is pivotal in gauging how the council performed and how the advisory body will serve in future.



### Time allotted for preparation and discussion

Responses to questions about the time required for meeting preparation and allotted for in-meeting discussion include disparate opinions, with the reactions noticeably changing over the timeline [longitudinally] of the pilot project. The majority of participant responses about the meeting agenda discussion time allotted and the time between meetings for reading and becoming familiar with the material were positive or offered critique in a positive voice:

*“It is always noticeably clear on what are our expectations, on how we would like our members to contribute to the agenda. So, I’m satisfied that we do everything that we can to be able to encourage that.” M1/MT4*

*“The process is formed to allow for a lot of open discussion, which is what the group has been having a lot of and it’s been really good, robust discussion.” M3/MT3*

### Cultural differences

An issue frequently raised by participants was that of cultural differences between members of the group who are of Aboriginal and those of Torres Strait Islander heritage, or of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Straightforward statements of recognition that there are disparate approaches taken to discussions by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was mentioned often. These distinct dissimilarities were offered in the spirit of critique and appeared to be devoid of malice or negative criticism.

*“Where we need to improve is to take into consideration the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people go about business and think. Unlike western constructs, when and how people offer feedback and comment in forums, takes whatever time it takes. The cultural way is we go away and we think about it...having a response on the spot to issues doesn’t really work.” M8/MT5*

### Meeting format and process

Meetings followed a process as outlined under the CQUniversity standard committee procedure and were governed by a mandatory TOR. In response to the question as to whether the participants found the processes for pre-meeting delivery of materials and the conducting of meetings helpful to their membership work, there were different responses at various points along the timeline of the project. As the participants became increasingly familiar with the University’s governance and management, responses



indicated an increased confidence in understanding and reflecting on how the work of the FNCEL may affect the University as a whole.

*“I was a bit apprehensive at the beginning because I wasn’t quite sure what the purpose, or our purpose, or my purpose, was specifically. The more that I keep talking to you [and] Adrian and in our meetings, I am starting to realise that purpose. Now I realise I can contribute.” M8/MT2.*

### **COVID-19 effects**

National and state-wide COVID-19 restrictions were enforced after the global declaration the pandemic in March 2020. CQUniversity followed Queensland Health State regulations on the Cairns campus for the first meeting. Several members chose not to attend because of the threat of COVID infection.

*“Given the circumstances with COVID - not being able to physically come together, that [Zoom] is the next best option. Obviously, we are people who connect by coming together and having face-to-face yarns, so the importance of relationships is imperative. But it’s the only way that we can possibly connect at the moment, because of COVID and so it seems to be a workable solution.” M5/MT5*

### **Mixing Zoom connections and physical presence**

The access to intermittent and inconsistent internet connection for the participants reduced the chances of clear communication. Although the University provided a corporate form of *Zoom*, connection was often difficult and interrupted. Screen images froze and contributions often required repeating. The majority of CQU lecture spaces are designed for meetings to be led by one person to be at a front-of-room podium, using the digital screens for presentation and that configuration does not support *Zoom* meetings, as people on screens are not seen well by those present and vice versa.

These circumstances proved disadvantageous and negatively affected extempore communication.

*“The balance we have of physical and Zoom interaction is inhibiting. Often something is being said and you’re trying to [speak] and there is no protocol for how to flag that you want to speak. Sometimes I feel like I start saying something and then somebody else says something. I feel like I’m talking over them and it’s really bad and rude. It’s quite difficult when you’re actually on Zoom too.” M4/MT6*



## Future FNCEL

Most participants responded positively on a plan for future iterations of the FNCEL under the current process.

*“What’s encouraging is to hear that they’re keen to look at maybe extending or making it [FNCEL] a permanent setup, as an ongoing thing for the university. That’s very encouraging because then the pilot never ends [laughs]. Whether it’s this pilot project, whether it’s something else, it’s just good to hear that the university wants to continue with the FNCEL.”* M3/MT5

## THEME TWO: FACTORS AFFECTING PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTION

### Cultural hierarchy

The successful functioning of the FNCEL requires members to have equal say, notwithstanding Eldership or leadership positions that may be held in a specific community.

Survey responses included a spectrum of reactions about the cultural circumstances surrounding hierarchy.

Reverence and respect for inclusion in a leadership role.

*It was humbling and a privilege to be with a respected group of people that I had not had dialogue [with] prior, as significant people in community. I was being very mindful and careful and respectful in my contributions to the group.”* M2/MT4

Cultural hierarchy protocols prevailed.

*“Me being one of the younger ones in a way I feel like I should let others talk first.”* M7/MT

And yet cultural hierarchy was as an inhibiting factor to spontaneous contribution.

*“Because a couple [of participants] were politicising it [discussion topic], I don’t think there was any respect given to us who were genuinely trying to stick to the agenda and trying to give constructive feedback. I don’t think any of them are older than me, but because they’re men culturally I thought, well, I really can’t say too much here.”* M4/MT5





Members refrained from open criticism on cultural grounds.

*"[If] we can sense a disrespect [from a member], we all refrain from bringing it out in the open. But we also recognise that that particular person, is having a problem and it should not be brought to the meeting... It's really hard to keep focus on what we're there to do when you have a member like that." M1/MT5*

Cultural differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in relation to the manner by which members of each cultural group contribute to meetings.

*"In general, I've found that when a question is asked in a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Torres Strait Islander people will be the first to respond and be the first to have a point of view and opinion. Indigenous mob tend to sit back and think about stuff and are gentler in response. There might be that kind of pattern happening [here]. I just think that we should never - and we don't - bunch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in as one. Our natures are quite different. . Historically, Torres Strait Islanders are warriors: they've got the fierce fire in their belly." M5/MT4*

An essential factor contributing to the council's success was that the FNCEL was a community in its own right.

*"I come [to this position] not necessarily with the title of leader, but just somebody who can work in a relationally responsive way and a culturally safe way where my input and my contributions are valued as a part of that collective group. It's [FNCEL participation] further identified my place as part of this particular community and not necessarily seeing myself as a leader but more of a role to play in a community collective around pertinent things for the university." M2/MT4*

Cultural respect and safety was maintained amongst members.

*"At this stage, yes, I do. But you know Torres Strait Islander people who are a lot more upfront, stronger in presentation and putting their ideas forth more so than Aboriginal people. Aboriginals tend to sit back and listen to what's going down first. I don't see that as being an issue at the moment because everyone's allowing people some space to talk and identify." M5/MT1*

Cultural safety was extended to non-Indigenous staff.



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*“In environment and the format and the roles of people, cultural safety needs to be a key part. It’s important going forward, whoever’s in that space needs to feel culturally safe.”*  
M6/MT5

### **THEME THREE: GUIDING POLICY CREATION AND THE PROCESS**

One of the functions of the FNCEL pilot project was to trial the process of direct contribution through which the Council could input into governance through policy review and creation. As such the process, as well as the currency, appropriateness and importance of agenda items were of prime importance.

*“As part of the FNCEL having a voice from a First Nations standpoint, really does connect back to what the Uluru Statement from the Heart was trying to convey in 2017. The moment that we take the voices away from authentic voices and authentic dialogue we can’t really continue to be committed in a respectful way to First Nations people. In particular in terms of policy we need to have the voice of the most respected people that is going to create that change.”* M2/MT5

*“With any policy it’s going to need reviewing before it’s endorsed. The technicalities need reviewing, making sure the wording and context is right. With a higher population of Aboriginal and Islander people working and learning in the university, this is where this thing [protocol] will become more pertinent, with more interaction.”* M3/MT5

The creation of new protocols required considering how important the new policies are in affecting university and other communities by building capacity in community members.

*“As [a representative of] one of the traditional owner groups, I think that was a really important issue to address, but the proof of identity of descent is probably something that is here and now that students are facing at the moment. It’s [not having it] stopping them from accessing scholarships.”* (M7/MT2)

External stakeholder communities will also benefit from the leadership of the University.

*“Then they’re looking for confirmation of identity. We worked with that particular document and setting in place what the CQU will accept. I think that’s going to be very helpful to the university, because CQU does not want to be making the decisions on who is Aboriginal and who is not. Really, confirmation of identity is going to be just so important in the future.”* M1/MT6



## THEME 4 PARTICIPANT SELF-REFLECTION, COMMUNITY COMMITMENT AND REPRESENTATION

FNCEL membership offered members a chance to building networks and capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members through direct involvement with university governance. There was consideration given to the work of the FNCEL as a personal beneficial contribution that would make to the way higher education is delivered to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ultimately creating a difference individuals and community.

*“My contribution is trying to make sure that I try to make it [HE] affordable, attainable, achievable and appropriate, like four As of community development, I like to call it”*  
M8/MT5

Knowledge of the higher education governance and delivery of pedagogy would enrich First Nation community understanding of higher education and the interaction between community and the University.

*“I think it will change the whole way we, collectively, First Nations people, as well as non-First Nations people, work together and are able to collaborate on issues. I think it just brings a whole different way of thinking for both sides. Not just for improving the way the university works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or just not from us understanding how the university works.”* M6/MT4

Through creating new protocols and policy, FNCEL members could direct intentions toward an increase in cultural knowledge within the University, affecting non-Indigenous staff and students and the University’s standing in the community.

*That [approval of the protocols] has reaffirmed and confirmed what we’ve put into it. The committee has imparted knowledge and guidance with this entire process. It made us focus on exactly what the university was looking for or what the university was trying to engage with us to help create to shape that document.”* M3/MT6

## CONCLUSIONS

The First Nations Council of Elders and Leaders (FNCEL) pilot project research established that the experiment was successful, the Council proving to be an effectual aid to organisational governance using the current paradigm of a university committee. The



FNCEL’s efficacy, explored through examining the suitability of the committee paradigm in achieving goals determined by the OIE and outlined in the meeting agendas, was found to be effective. Further, the pilot project research confirmed that the FNCEL plausibility and experiential characteristics were acceptable to participating members. Based on those findings, the research identified potential requirements for future iterations of the FNCEL.

The FNCEL pilot proved that the “need of Indigenous advice and representation in university governance” can be met “despite the difficulty of integration into university systems” (Wise, Dickinson et al, 2020, p. 240). The fact that Indigenous students and staff remain underrepresented in universities in Australia (Berendt et al, 2012) and in another commonwealth country with parallel First Nations people challenges, Canada, (Universities Canada, 2015) is a circumstance that could be addressed by the model trialed in the FNCEL pilot.

As well, the argument posed by Bartlett, Marshall and Marshall (2012) that Indigenous advisory councils made up of enthusiastic, culturally knowledgeable and generous stakeholders gives credence to the axiom that this is an appropriate and working model for institutional response to the undeniable need for “Indigenous stakeholders to be empowered in the delivery of higher education” (Wise, Dickinson et al, 2020, p.240).

### **FNCEL model suitability**

The FNCEL model and the meeting procedure proved efficacious in that over the six meetings held, two important protocols were produced: the *Confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander or First Nations People Identity Protocol* and the *Engaging and Communicating with Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander and First Nations People Protocol*. Both protocols were written by OIE research staff member using the University’s governance guidelines and the input of the FNCEL membership recorded during meetings.

Both protocols have since been adopted formally by the University. This positive contribution to the governance systems of CQUniversity, as an outcome of the FNCEL trial, proved that the committee meeting procedure could work as a platform for utilizing the cultural guidance of First Nations community members to contribute to governance [policy and procedure] in relation to First Nations people.



## **Yarning as a way forward**

The place of cultural practice and expression in the FNCEL advisory meeting process was considered particularly important. Age, traditional seniority, gender, cultural difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the level of individual cultural heritage are issues that have inherent and recognised veracities that proved a challenge to contribution in the meetings' participatory exchanges, affecting the democratic ethic of voluntary participation.

Creating an interim meeting for between formal meetings for informal discussion or 'yarning' could prove an innovative way to assuage feelings of inequality between members and allow for ideas to be accepted to overcome reticence to contribute during formal meetings.

## **First Nations participation in governance**

The special committee structure demonstrated that the format proved a successful interface between First Nations advisors to the university and staff members for several reasons: FNCEL participants were willing to make cultural adjustments demanded by the requirements of the committee process in order to contribute to what they considered to be an opportune paradigm for the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within an organisation that in turn served First Nations people; they were eager to see change facilitated that would support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their goals; and that their interaction ultimately contributed cultural knowledge to the University, as an act of custodial service to their respective and collective cultures.

## **Two distinct cultures**

The effort to adapt Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practice and social norms to committee structure includes incorporating two distinctly distinct cultural approaches to decision making and the advisory process.

## **An empowering experience**

The FNCEL membership gained valuable knowledge about university systems and structures, and demystified governance and pedagogical characteristics of higher education. This proved an important outcome. Interacting in a format that provided cultural safety while supporting the acquisition and comprehension of such knowledge, proved a positive experience. Participants were satisfied and enthusiastic in the



successful creation of two new dynamic protocols; the process of designing those protocols and the recognition that the protocols would be significant to First Nations people and communities. The members conveyed the recognition that being a part of the process was empowering and fulfilling.

FNCEL members were enlightened and enthusiastic with respect to the powerful role universities hold for First Nations people in offering education and employment possibilities to individuals and communities.

Members demonstrated the ability to work together as a team despite cultural disparities, in a respectful collaborative process, empowering and enjoyable. The pilot project created new professional alliances, and a gratifying collaborative encounter with like-minded individuals. It also provided individuals with fresh perceptions on working cross-culturally and organizationally.

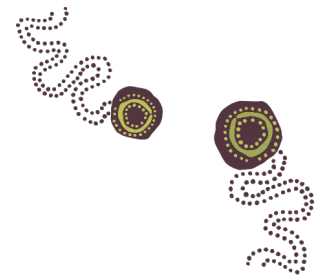
## RECOMMENDATIONS

The FNCEL research project was instigated to achieve understandings of the model used. Implicit to the test paradigm was the inquiry of improvements to the meeting process and participant experience for use in future iterations.

### FNCEL COMMITTEE MODEL

The ultimate success of the FNCEL model satisfies the requirements of the FNCEL members and the CQUniversity governance structure. Initially it was thought that a FNCEL could be established on each of the University campuses. The pilot project proved that the challenges presented by this idea were too vast, both financially and logistically. The model is best retained as Queensland-centric; one that encompasses membership from across the state for the time being. This represents a committee that is manageable and founded in the precepts of the University's genesis as a rurally based Queensland establishment.

This iteration may indeed change, however in the near future this expansion from the membership from Cairns and Townsville to statewide will demonstrate a more inclusive form.



## AGENDA ITEMS

A flexible approach to discussions of agenda items could be instigated to ease cultural tensions between participants, and participants and university staff. It should include a process for discussion of agenda items outside the scheduled meeting times, to be held just prior to meetings or in between meetings in informal discussions. These would be overseen by the FNCEL Chairperson and held in the style of a *yarning* circle. The outcomes of those discussions could be introduced to meeting discussions by the Chairperson or a nominated member. Formal records of conversations could be taken.

A procedure for in-meeting discussions could be employed and include non-seniority contribution by which the Chairperson uses a method of calling upon members for contribution at random, or by some other non-culturally based order. This procedure should include mention of the respect and recognition held for cultural seniority and an explanation of why cultural seniority is not conducive to unfettered contribution in the case of discussions.

## DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR MEETINGS

In order to include members from across the state of Queensland, and to maintain a minimal budget nominated for meetings, a Zoom platform should be used for all FNCEL meetings. This would allow for contributions from those who cannot travel due to budgetary or other reasons.

In the case of Zoom connections, a secretary or staff support person should be in attendance to offer technical and social assistance to everyone involved, should it be required.

## YARNING

To Help in achieve outcomes in formal meetings, intermittent informal meetings should be held in which yarning is the centre of the discussion. The yarning sessions would not have a formal record of discussions and be held for the purpose of stimulating a more informal discussion.





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## ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR CONSULTATION

A formal process for requesting cultural advice or on any matters pertaining to the governance, business, education or social aspects of CQUniversity from the FNCEL by C departments, units and divisions will be established.

The process and protocols will include reciprocal methods for requesting advice and delivery of that advice. This consultative process will have input from the FNCEL as an agenda item of the first order.

## RAP RESPONSIBILITY

As the CQUniversity RAP (2022-2024) has become the overarching document that guides leadership and engagement with First Nations people and the establishment and sustainability of the FNCEL from 2022 and onwards, advisory council members are compelled to understand and utilise the plan in direct relation to their work.

Each member requires a full copy of the document and is required to understand and be familiar with its strategies and mechanisms. An induction would be offered to all sitting and potential members.

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A specifically designed suite of documentation brought together in an instruction manual for membership induction and sustainability is required.

The *FNCEL Manual* should include the FNCEL TOR and a description of the scope of membership work. This will require understanding of the FNCEL position in the University as described by the RAP 2022-2024.

It should include information that supports this understanding including lists of and digital links to pertinent material: TORs of other committees such as UMC; services available to First Nations students; policies and procedures that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and stakeholders; a hierarchical explanation of the University's governance and management structures.



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## APPENDIXES

See following documents.

# AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES TABLE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

## Notes

Universities included in this table were chosen on the basis of:

- membership to Regional Universities Network (RUN) a national association to which CQUniversity is a member
- geographical locations/university structures (multi -campus parallel)
- national leadership
- research innovation
- institutional alliances

University of the Sunshine Coast and Monash University currently support committee mechanisms similar to CQUniversity's FNCEL.

## Criteria

*Dedicated physical space and/or Senior Executive*

1. Does this university have a **dedicated physical centre**/department/division for Indigenous education/research/engagement?
2. Does this university have a **dedicated Senior Executive role**? e.g., PVC/DVC/Director or similar position.

*Agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Or in the case of non-Australian universities, is there an equivalent focus on Indigenous students)*

3. Does this university provide/inform **student support** to Indigenous students?
4. Does centre **advise curriculum & pedagogy/learning & teaching** for Indigenous education subjects/degrees/foci?
5. Does the dedicated centre have mechanisms to **advise whole university policy** in regard to Indigenous students, teaching and research?
6. Does this university have **Indigenous research programs**/output?
7. Does centre **engage with community**? Projects planned/strategy?

University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
<b>Australian National University</b>	–							<a href="https://www.anu.edu.au">https://www.anu.edu.au</a>
<b>Charles Darwin University</b> <sup>1</sup>	– Indigenous Leadership and Regional Outreach – Australian Indigenous Languages Institute (short courses)	PVC, ILRO	✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenous-leadership">https://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenous-leadership</a> <a href="https://ailli.cdu.edu.au/">https://ailli.cdu.edu.au/</a>
<b>Charles Sturt University</b> <sup>4</sup>	– Office of First Nations Engagement – School of Indigenous Australian Studies	PVC, First Nations Engagement	✓	✓		✓	✓	+ Vice Chancellor's Chair of Australian-Indigenous Belonging  <a href="https://www.csu.edu.au/division/deputyvc/rdi/indigenous-engagement/home">https://www.csu.edu.au/division/deputyvc/rdi/indigenous-engagement/home</a>
<b>CQUniversity</b> <sup>4, 5</sup>	– Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research – Office of Indigenous Engagement	Deputy Vice President, Indigenous Engagement & BHP Chair of Indigenous Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.cqu.edu.au/">https://www.cqu.edu.au/</a>
<b>Curtin University</b>	– Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS) – Curtin University Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee – Curtin Indigenous Policy Committee – Indigenous Leadership Group	CAS Director reports to DVC, Academic	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence  <a href="https://karda.curtin.edu.au/">https://karda.curtin.edu.au/</a>
<b>Deakin University</b>	– VC's Indigenous Advisory Council (est Jul '21) – National Indigenous Knowledge Education Research Innovation (NIKERI) Institute.	PVC of Indigenous Strategy and Innovation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.deakin.edu.au/study/ways-to-study/nikeri">https://www.deakin.edu.au/study/ways-to-study/nikeri</a>  <a href="https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/deakinlife/2021/07/08/naidoc-week-deakin-announces-the-establishment-of-the-vice-chancellors-indigenous-advisory-council/">https://blogs.deakin.edu.au/deakinlife/2021/07/08/naidoc-week-deakin-announces-the-establishment-of-the-vice-chancellors-indigenous-advisory-council/</a>
<b>Edith Cowan University</b> <sup>5</sup>	– Kurongkurl Katitjin, ECU's Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research	PVC, Equity and Indigenous	✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/overview">https://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/kurongkurl-katitjin/overview</a>
<b>Federation University Australia</b> <sup>4</sup>	– Aboriginal Education Centre (AEC) – Federation University Australia Indigenous Governance Committee (IGC)	AEC is in the Office of the VC's portfolio, and reports to Head of Campus, Ballarat who in turn reports to the DVC (Global and Engagement).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Collaboration with the Victorian Indigenous Art Awards (VIAA)  <a href="https://federation.edu.au/about-us/our-university/indigenous-matters/aboriginal-education-centre/governance">https://federation.edu.au/about-us/our-university/indigenous-matters/aboriginal-education-centre/governance</a>
<b>Griffith University</b> <sup>1</sup>	– Indigenous Advisory Council (Art) – Indigenous Research Unit – GUMURRI Student Success Unit – ARC Indigenous Project	PVC (Indigenous)	✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.griffith.edu.au/gumurri">https://www.griffith.edu.au/gumurri</a>
<b>James Cook University</b> <sup>1</sup>	– Indigenous Education & Research Centre	PVC, Indigenous Education and Strategy	✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.jcu.edu.au/ierc">https://www.jcu.edu.au/ierc</a>

University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
<b>Monash University</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous Advisory Council</li> <li>William Cooper Institute</li> </ul>	PVC (Indigenous) & Head, William Cooper Institute	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence <a href="https://www.monash.edu/indigenous-australians">https://www.monash.edu/indigenous-australians</a>
<b>Murdoch University</b> <sup>1</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre</li> </ul>		✓	?	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.murdoch.edu.au/life-at-murdoch/perth-campus/facilities-services/kulbardi-aboriginal-centre">https://www.murdoch.edu.au/life-at-murdoch/perth-campus/facilities-services/kulbardi-aboriginal-centre</a>
<b>Queensland University of Technology</b> <sup>▲</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carumba Institute (Research only)</li> </ul>	Institute Executive Director PVC (Indigenous Strategy)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.qut.edu.au/about/indigenous">https://www.qut.edu.au/about/indigenous</a>
<b>RMIT University</b> <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngarara Willim Centre</li> </ul>		✓	?	?	?	✓	<a href="https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-students">https://www.rmit.edu.au/students/support-and-facilities/student-support/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-students</a>
<b>University of Adelaide</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wirltu Yarlur</li> <li>Tarrkarri Tarrka (Future Learning) strategy</li> </ul>	PVC (Indigenous Engagement) (Vacant in Sep '21)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.adelaide.edu.au/wirltu-yarlur/">https://www.adelaide.edu.au/wirltu-yarlur/</a>
<b>University of Canberra</b> <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ngunnawal Centre on the Bruce campus</li> <li>Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Strategy</li> <li>Collaborative Indigenous Research Initiative (UC CIRI)</li> </ul>	PVC (Indigenous)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	+ Elder in Residence <a href="https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/office-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-leadership-and-strategy/deans-welcome">https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/office-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-leadership-and-strategy/deans-welcome</a>
<b>University of Melbourne</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous Knowledge Institute</li> <li>Indigenous Law and Justice Hub</li> <li>Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health</li> <li>Murrup Barak Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development</li> <li>Research Unit for Indigenous Arts and Cultures (RUIAC)</li> <li>Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development</li> </ul>	Director, Australian Indigenous Studies	✓	?	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.unimelb.edu.au/">https://www.unimelb.edu.au/</a>
<b>University of New England</b> <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oorala Aboriginal Centre</li> </ul>		✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.une.edu.au/info-for/indigenous-matters/oorala">https://www.une.edu.au/info-for/indigenous-matters/oorala</a>
<b>University of Queensland</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Unit</li> <li>UQ Poche Centre for Indigenous Health</li> </ul>	PVC (Indigenous Engagement)	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://atsis.uq.edu.au/">https://atsis.uq.edu.au/</a>
<b>University of Southern Queensland</b> <sup>4, 5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research</li> </ul>		✓	✓	x	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.usq.edu.au/ciser">https://www.usq.edu.au/ciser</a>
<b>University of Technology Sydney (UTS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five (5) Indigenous Committees under Governance.</li> </ul>	?	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	Committees cover Advisory, Strategies, Research, Teaching & Learning, Employment <a href="https://gsu.uts.edu.au/indigenous/index.html">https://gsu.uts.edu.au/indigenous/index.html</a>



University (AU)	Q1	Q2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 5	Q 6	Q 7	Notes
<b>University of the Sunshine Coast</b> <sup>4, 5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous Services (each campus)</li> <li>VC and President's Indigenous Advisory Committee</li> <li>School of Education Indigenous sub committee</li> </ul>	×	✓	?	✓	?	✓	<a href="https://www.usc.edu.au/about/structure/university-committees">https://www.usc.edu.au/about/structure/university-committees</a>
<b>University of Western Australia</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School of Indigenous Studies under Indigenous Portfolio</li> </ul>	PVC Indigenous Education	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.indigenous.uwa.edu.au/">https://www.indigenous.uwa.edu.au/</a>
<b>UNSW Sydney</b> <sup>3</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous Strategy, Education &amp; Research</li> <li>Nura Gili: Centre for Indigenous Programs</li> </ul>	PVC Indigenous	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/">https://www.indigenous.unsw.edu.au/</a>
<b>Victoria University</b> <sup>5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moondani Balluk – Indigenous Academic Unit</li> <li>ARC Discovery Indigenous Program</li> </ul>	Associate Provost Indigenous & Director of Moondani Balluk	✓	✓		✓	✓	<a href="https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/moondani-balluk">https://www.vu.edu.au/about-vu/university-profile/moondani-balluk</a>
<b>Western Sydney University</b> <sup>1, 5</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education</li> <li>Office of the PVC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, Strategy</li> </ul>	DVC Indigenous Leadership	✓	✓	?	✓	✓	<a href="https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/badanami">https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/badanami</a> <a href="https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander">https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander</a>

^ Off-network/other universities

<sup>1</sup> Innovative Research Universities grouping

<sup>2</sup> Australian Technology Network universities

<sup>3</sup> Group of Eight universities

<sup>4</sup> Regional Universities Network grouping

<sup>5</sup> New Generation Universities grouping

ARC – Australian Research Council

DVC – Deputy Vice-Chancellor

PVC – Pro Vice-Chancellor

VC – Vice-Chancellor

× - no evidence found / No

✓ - yes

? – cannot determine

## CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES TABLE OF INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Notes:

The Canadian universities profiled below do not all have dedicated facilities or departments/units that oversee Indigenous education/research/engagement; rather these appear to be embedded within the services/curriculum/pedagogy as a whole-of-university approach.

Dedicated physical space and/or Senior Executive

1. Does this university have a **dedicated physical centre**/department/division for Indigenous education/research/engagement?
2. Does this university have a **dedicated Senior Executive role**? e.g., PVC/DVC/Director or similar position.

Agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Or in the case of non-Australian universities, is there an equivalent focus on Indigenous students)

3. Does this university provide/inform **student support** to Indigenous students?
4. Does this university have mechanisms to **advise curriculum & pedagogy/learning & teaching** for Indigenous education subjects/degrees/foci?
5. Does this university have mechanisms to **advise whole university policy** in regard to Indigenous students, teaching and research?
6. Does this university have **Indigenous research programs**/output?
7. Does centre **engage with community**? Projects planned/strategy?

University (CA)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Notes
<b>First Nations University of Canada</b> Campus/es: Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon (within University of Regina, Saskatchewan)	Not dedicated but embedded in all university activities.	Elders Council All staff support First Nations' activities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• <a href="https://www.fnuniv.ca/about-us/policies/research/">https://www.fnuniv.ca/about-us/policies/research/</a>
<b>Lakehead University</b> Campus/es: Thunder Bay (main campus), Orillia (Ontario)	– Ogimaawin Indigenous Education Council (OIEC)	Vice-Provost, Aboriginal Initiatives	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• <a href="https://www.lakeheadu.ca/about/sg/ogimaawin-indigenous-education-council-oiec-">https://www.lakeheadu.ca/about/sg/ogimaawin-indigenous-education-council-oiec-</a>
<b>McMaster University</b> Campus/es: Hamilton (Ontario)	– McMaster University Indigenous Education Council – McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI)	– Director, of MIRI – Paul R. MacPherson Chair in Indigenous Studies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• <a href="https://www.mcmaster.ca/">https://www.mcmaster.ca/</a>
<b>Simon Fraser University</b> Campus/es: Burnaby (main), Surrey, Vancouver (British Columbia)	– Office for Aboriginal Peoples – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council	Director (acting in Sept '21)	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓	• First Peoples' Gathering House under construction. • <a href="https://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples.html">https://www.sfu.ca/aboriginalpeoples.html</a>
<b>University of British Columbia</b> Campus/es: Vancouver, Kelowna (British Columbia)	– Indigenous Centre – Centre for Excellence in Indigenous Health – Indigenous Strategic Plan Implementation Committee	– ?	✓*	✓	?	✓	✓	• <a href="https://indigenous.ubc.ca/">https://indigenous.ubc.ca/</a> • Australian Leadership Program (UBC Okanagan and St. Catherine's Residential University College, Perth)
<b>University of Saskatchewan</b> Campus/es: Saskatoon (Saskatchewan)	– Department of Indigenous Studies – Office of Indigenous Engagement	Vice Provost, Indigenous Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• <a href="https://www.usask.ca/">https://www.usask.ca/</a>
<b>University of Waterloo</b> Campus/es: Waterloo (Ontario)	– Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre – Indigenous Advisory Circle	– ?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	• <a href="https://uwaterloo.ca/">https://uwaterloo.ca/</a> • <a href="https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/waterloo-indigenous-student-centre/indigenous-advisory-circle">https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/waterloo-indigenous-student-centre/indigenous-advisory-circle</a> • <a href="https://uwaterloo.ca/indigenous-workways/indigenous-education-centres">https://uwaterloo.ca/indigenous-workways/indigenous-education-centres</a>
<b>University of Winnipeg</b> Campus/es: Winnipeg (Manitoba)	– Wii Chiiwaakanak Learning Centre – Indigenous Advisory Circle	– Indigenous Academic Lead – Associate Vice President of Indigenous Engagement	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	• <a href="https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/index.html">https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/index.html</a> • <a href="https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/advisory-circle/index.html">https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/advisory-circle/index.html</a>

ARC – Australian Research Council  
DVC – Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
PVC – Pro Vice-Chancellor  
VC – Vice-Chancellor

✓ - yes  
? – cannot determine



