

## **Developing the University of Melbourne Indigenous Research Agenda.**

This paper was developed to provide a background context for the discussion at the Murrup Barak Associates Forum in October 2011. The objective of the discussion was to identify strategies for action from 2012 onwards to:

- Enhance productivity and impact of research carried out in the field of Indigenous Studies.
- And provide effective support for Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students undertaking training in the field of Indigenous studies

## **The University of Melbourne Reconciliation Action Plan**

The University Reconciliation Action Plan provides the framework for the development of our institutional research agenda. The development of the University of Melbourne Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was aligned to the method and framework developed by Reconciliation Australia. This framework groups activities and actions into the following themes: strong and positive relationships; respect for the special contribution of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples; working together to ensure all Australians have the same life opportunities.

The following principles underpin the RAP:

- The Reconciliation Action Plan represents a University wide commitment. Accordingly, the responsibilities outlined in the plan are aligned with existing accountability structures.
- The activities in the Reconciliation Action Plan build and extend on core business activities.
- The implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan will be, as much as possible, integrated within the University planning cycle.

Within these broad categories we have committed to six focus areas for action:

- Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities,
- Cultural Recognition
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Recruitment and Retention
- Teaching and Learning,
- Research, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff Employment.

Research undertaken at the University of Melbourne research has the potential to produce the knowledge and innovation that can add to the national effort close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life opportunities. Research also enhances our understanding of the Indigenous past, our long ecological history cultural and linguistic development and contribution to Australian society and beyond.

Our University-wide efforts in this regard are not insignificant but it would be worthwhile exploring how we can build and extend our research and strengthen our role with respect to research training and early career development.

Our approach to development of research should also be mindful of our commitment under the RAP to the development of genuine and effective partnerships between the University and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Genuinely reciprocal and sustained partnerships require respect (Action Area 2) and a commitment to inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all facets of University life.

In the program of activity that we outlined in the 2011 RAP within the Research Action Areas we committed to take steps to:

- Enhance productivity and impact of research carried out in the field of Indigenous Studies. Steps to include:
  - Assessment of research quantum
  - Audit of RHD training and load
  - Agreed strategies and targets to enhance quality, productivity and impact.
- Implement strategies to support RHD students in Indigenous Studies to foster effective supervision.
- Develop Graduate Certificate Indigenous Research Leadership building on the Professional Certificate of Indigenous Research Training and Practice piloted in 2011.

### **University of Melbourne Research Commission.**

At the Planning and Budget Committee Conference 2010 it was agreed that the Vice-Chancellor, in collaboration with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Research, would establish a Research Commission. The Research Commission has been charged with examining the University's current research and research training (RRT) strategy, and facilitating the development of a 10-15 year strategic vision for RRT.

An emphasis of the Research Commission is to consider methods to most effectively support the University's research mission, in particular via the acquisition of external resources, and appropriately balanced with the University's learning and teaching and engagement agendas.

The Commission will make recommendations on:

- Research Strategy - The University's 2025 strategic vision
- Research Workforce - Further alignment of our workforce with the research strategy and continuing to strengthen an environment where our researchers can flourish
- Research Infrastructure - Planning and managing needs most effectively for the future
- Research Partnerships - The role of partnerships and the strategies for enabling them

- Internationalisation - Enabling aspirations with regards to international research
- Precincts - Fostering existing or proposed precincts
- Research Training - Recruiting, managing and supporting RHD students to maximise outcomes
- Assessing Research Performance - Effective and efficient use of performance measurements to enable better research management and to demonstrate impact.
- Enablers and Governance - Optimising management processes and structures, incentives, rewarding excellence and long term strategic investment choices, including reference to the Government's Sustainable Research Excellence initiative.

The focus of the Research Commission is on the broad institutional platform – a level higher than some of the considerations in this forum. However, a discussion paper will be available towards the end of October. There will be window of opportunity to raise issues relevant to the development of the Indigenous research agenda up until mid November.

## **Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Research and Leadership**

### **Background**

In August 2010, an anonymous donor made a generous gift of \$1.1million to the Murrup Barak Institute to establish the Indigenous Researchers and Graduate Students Fund at the University of Melbourne, with the stated purpose:

- The gift is for the purpose of funding a residential, intensive, development program for Indigenous researchers, including, but not limited to, the travel, accommodation and course delivery costs associated with attendance by research higher degree students and further program development.
- The Fund is established as a non-perpetual trust with the gift, including any income generated by investment of the gift, to be entirely expended by the University for the stated purpose within 5-10 years from August 2010. A trust account has been established within the University under the oversight of the Office of the Provost, with the Murrup Barak Institute applying to the Office of the Provost for access to funds.

Students have been able to invite their supervisors to accompany them to the Summer School and several have done so, although supervisors pay their own way. The students' experiences and responses to the course have been evaluated in detail over time (satisfaction and completion rates are very high) but we have not collected data on supervisors' experiences or development

### **Development of the award course**

For 10 years the UoM has run a Summer School for Indigenous Postgraduate Students (SSIPS) to help them develop their research skills in the culturally safe environment of an all-Indigenous cohort. RHD students have come from all over

Australia for the 5-day residential intensive course held at Trinity College, usually in early February. Course fees have been waived by MDHS (the course is housed in Pop Health) and students' travel and accommodation costs are all covered. Teaching has been done through a 'Faculty' of contributors from the University of Melbourne and other colleagues.

In 2010 the Summer School Program was transformed into an award program which was approved by Academic Programs Committee as a University Award course now named 'Professional Certificate in Indigenous Research' (ProfCertIR). Two other major changes have recently (2011) been approved by the University, to take effect in 2012:

- Completion of the ProfCertIR will mean graduates are eligible to enrol in a new course, the 'Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Research and Leadership' (GradCertIRL) which has been approved and will run in 2012 for the first time, as a Winter School in July. In this course students will build on the first course to learn how to develop leadership skills in research including its application in university, policy and other contexts. This course will also be an intensive residential and will run biennially.
- Applications by non-Indigenous students will be accepted for the first time, with the proviso that at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the places in any intake will be reserved for Indigenous students. This will apply to both courses. The maximum intake will now be 20. No costs will be covered for non-Indigenous students, and the course fees are around \$5000. No accommodation is provided for such students.

### **Indigenous Graduate Students Association**

The Indigenous Graduate Students Association was formed in early March/April 2009 with the aim of holding regular forums for Graduate Students with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and was an association formed under the Graduate Students Association. The aims of the Indigenous Graduate Students Association (IGSA) are to:

- maintain regular forums for graduate presentations on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research
- encourage social and cultural interactions of all graduate students with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research
- enhance the academic and professional life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduate students.

For the last three years the IGSA has held regular forums for the graduate students to present their research. Graduate students have different needs than undergraduates and these seminars provide a way of connecting with other graduate Indigenous students but others graduate students in a safe and friendly environment.

These are held during lunch times 1-2pm once a month during semester and include students as well as the occasional guest presenter. The forums are hosted by Murrup

Barak and follow a lunch which is open to all students Many graduate students have used the forums for a 'trial run' before other more formal presentations they maybe undertaking as part of their PhD / Masters research program, such as before a confirmation seminar or completion seminar. Forums are followed by questions and discussion.

The IGSA forums are open to anyone with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research. Since the formation of the IGSA in 2009, the graduate student group have asked for a broader forum/symposium to highlight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research across The University of Melbourne.

In 2011 a symposium initiated by the IGSA that provides an opportunity for graduate students to network with other University researchers and meet with University researchers in their field. The inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Symposium will be held on 3 November 2011, with over 30 presentations on Indigenous research scheduled. The IGSA has actively encouraged all students undertaking and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research topic to be involved in our forums and now the symposium.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are the issues that impact on the ability of researchers to undertake research on Indigenous issues? What needs to happen to address these issues?
2. What are the issues that need to be addressed in order to attract and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students into RHD programs?
3. What are the issues that need to be addressed in order to attract and support students to undertake RHD programs in Indigenous studies?
4. What are the issues that need to be addressed in order to enhance the impact of our research on policy and service delivery?
5. What are the issues the need to be addressed in order to develop robust partnership with: Indigenous communities and organisations; other agencies?

## Appendix

### Research Quantum and RHD training and load in Indigenous Studies

The following sets of tables are presented in draft form having been prepared from the analysis of Themis and Merlin data sets. Revised tables will be presented in the final version of this report with an outline of method including search terms.

#### Publications on Indigenous issues by category 2005-2010 (Keyword and code search)

DESCRIPTION	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total 2005-2010
Authored Research Books	1	1	1	5	1	2	11
Edited Books	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
Revised Books				1			1
Authored Books Other		1	1				2
Book Chapters		1					1
Research Book Chapters	6	13	17	17	18	11	82
Book Chapters Other	5	4	7	8	4	9	37
Journal Articles					1		1
Journal Articles Refereed	28	47	41	45	37	29	227
Journal Articles Unrefereed	11	10	11	13	1	4	50
Journal Articles Unrefereed Letters or Notes	6	17	6	9	4		42
Other Refereed Contribution to Refereed Journals	6	2	6	2	9	7	32
Major Reference Works		3	1	2	2	1	9
Conference Proceedings			1				1
Full Written Papers Refereed	2		8	9	3	4	26
Full Written Papers Unrefereed	5	3	1	2			11
Reports and Working Papers				1			1
Major Reports and Working Papers	8	6	12	9	4	2	41
Minor Reports and Working Papers			1	1	3		5
Major Recorded Works	1						1
Minor Published Works	1		1	2			4
Curatorship of Exhibition/Event				1			1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>598</b>

#### Publications on Indigenous issues by Faculty 2005-2010

(Keyword and code search)

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Number of publications</b>
Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences	346
Arts	194
Melbourne Graduate School of Education	24
Law	18
Melbourne School of Land and Environment	10
Science	7
VCA and Music	7
Architecture, Building and Planning	6
Engineering	3
Unassigned	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>618</b>

**Contracts on Indigenous issues by faculty 2005-2010**  
(Keyword and code search)

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Number of contracts</b>	<b>Value of contracts</b>
Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences	80	\$22,690,170
Arts	20	\$3,964,248
Law	3	\$382,732
Architecture, Building and Planning	2	\$305,983
Engineering	1	\$295,067
VCA and Music	2	\$255,728
Melbourne Graduate School of Education	2	\$62,370
Unassigned	1	\$25,000
Science	1	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>\$27,986,298</b>

**Contracts on Indigenous issues by funding agency 2005-2010  
(Keyword and code search)**

<b>Funding Agency</b>	<b>Number of contracts</b>	<b>Value of contracts</b>
DEPT OF HEALTH & AGEING	5	\$8,634,006
AUST RESEARCH COUNCIL	35	\$8,063,187
NHMRC	17	\$5,589,866
CRC FOR ABORIGINAL HEALTH	19	\$2,153,639
VIC HEALTH	5	\$1,218,913
DEPT OF HUMAN SERVICES	5	\$705,147
AUSTRALIAN COAL RESEARCH LIMITED	1	\$300,000
BEYONDBLUE	2	\$296,701
ICEUTICA PTY LTD	1	\$295,067
AIATSI	8	\$202,969
UOM COMMERCIAL LTD	1	\$111,547
ROYAL CHILDRENS HOSPITAL	1	\$90,909
COMMITTEE OF PRESIDENTS OF MEDICAL COLLEGES	1	\$74,291
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPT	1	\$70,000
KIMBERLEY TAFE	1	\$43,370
DIABETES AUSTRALIA - VICTORIA	1	\$43,000
CSIRO Collaborative Research Support	1	\$30,000
RACGP	2	\$20,626
THE GRAEME CLARK FOUNDATION	1	\$20,000
DEAFNESS FOUNDATION (VIC)	1	\$9,060
ANZ CHARITABLE TRUSTS	2	\$9,000
THE IAN POTTER FOUNDATION	1	\$5,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>\$27,986,298</b>



**Research Higher Degree Commencements with a focus on Indigenous issues, by  
Faculty Jan 2000-Mar 2010  
(Keyword search)**

<b>Summary Commencements by Faculty</b>	<b>Data: Merlin, Jan 2000 - Mar 2010</b>			
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Masters</b>	<b>PhD</b>	<b>Doc</b>	<b>Total</b>
ABP	1	1		2
Arts	13	14		27
FBE		1		1
Education	4	1	5	10
Engineering	1	2		3
MSLE		1		1
Law		1		1
MDHS	7	25		32
MBS		1		1
Music	1	1		2
Science		1		1
Vet				0
VCA	4	4		8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>89</b>

**Research Higher Degree Commencements with a focus on Indigenous issues, by  
Year, Jan 2000-Mar 2010  
(Keyword search)**

<b>Summary Commencements by Year</b>	<b>Data: Merlin, Jan 2000 - Mar 2010</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Masters</b>	<b>PhD</b>	<b>Doc</b>	<b>Total</b>
2000	6	8		14
2001	5	4		9
2002	4	3		7
2003	5	9	1	15
2004	3	4	1	8
2005	3	5		8
2006	1	5	1	7
2007	0	3	1	4
2008	1	8		9
2009	2	2	1	5
2010	1	2		3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>89</b>

### Completion Rates Indigenous PhD students

Summary: Indigenous PhD			
Year of Commencement	Commenced	Completed	%
2000	6	4	67%
2001	4	3	75%
2002	2	2	100%
2003	7	4	57%
2004	4	2	50%
TOTAL	23	15	65%

### Completion Rates non-Indigenous PhD students

Summary: Non-Indigenous PhD			
Year of Commencement	Commenced	Completed	%
2000	569	421	74%
2001	579	412	71%
2002	587	391	67%
2003	668	447	67%
2004	659	401	61%
TOTAL	3062	2072	68%

### Completion Rates Indigenous Masters by Research Students

Summary: Indigenous Masters			
Year of Commencement	Commenced	Completed	%
2000	1	0	0%
2001	4	3	75%
2002	3	2	67%
2003	4	2	50%
2004	1	1	100%
TOTAL	13	8	62%

### Completion Rates non-Indigenous Masters by Research Students

Summary: Non-Indigenous Masters			
Year of Commencement	Commenced	Completed	%
2000	198	120	61%
2001	248	152	61%
2002	298	173	58%
2003	294	156	53%
2004	271	136	50%
TOTAL	1309	737	56%