



Australian Government

INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Report to the Minister for Education, Science and Training

Improving Indigenous Outcomes and Enhancing Indigenous Culture and Knowledge in Australian Higher Education

Including

THE IHEAC CONFERENCE REPORT 2005

Education led recovery of Indigenous capacity: reshaping the policy agenda

and

THE IHEAC STRATEGIC PLAN 2006-2008

March 2006

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The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council was appointed by the former Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon. Dr Brendan Nelson, MP, to provide policy advice on the issues concerning Indigenous Australians in higher education. This report responds to the Terms of Reference of the Council.

The Report provides feedback on the inaugural Indigenous Higher Education Conference, *Education led Recovery of Indigenous Capacity: reshaping the policy agenda* held in November 2005 and presents seven key priority areas for collaborative action which forms the basis for the Council's Strategic Plan 2006-208.

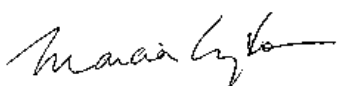
The vision of the Council is for a higher education system in which Indigenous Australians share equally in the life and career opportunities that a university education can provide.

The Council considers higher education to be central to the aspirations of Indigenous people for a rightful place in Australian society and believes that Australian universities must play a leadership role in the nation's recognition of Indigenous people and culture.

On behalf of the Indigenous Higher Education Council, I thank both Dr Brendan Nelson and yourself for the enthusiasm and support offered to Council in its pursuit of improved educational outcomes for the future of Indigenous Australians.

I am pleased to present to you the first Report of the Indigenous Higher Education Council, for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Professor Marcia Langton AM

INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Inaugural meeting 16 March 2005



Front row (L-R):

Professor Jeannie Herbert, Professor John Lester,
Professor Roger Thomas, The Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP,
Professor Marcia Langton AM,
Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik Ed D (Harvard)

Middle Rows:

Mr Fred Maher, Associate Professor Tracey Bunda,
Ms Jill Milroy, Dr Maggie Walter, Mr Gary Shipp,
Ms Berice Anning, Dr Mark Rose, Ms Veronica Arbon

Back Row:

Mr Samuel Nona, Ms Clair Andersen,
Ms Vicki-Ann Speechley-Golden

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This document was prepared for the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council by Professor Richard James and Marcia Devlin of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne.

HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS AT MARCH 2006

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Professor Roger Thomas (Deputy Chair), Director, Wilto Yerlo, Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies, University of Adelaide, South Australia

Ms Clair Andersen, Director, Indigenous Higher Education, Riawunna, University of Tasmania

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Ms Veronica Arbon, Indigenous Educator and undertaking PhD research

Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik Ed D (Harvard), Dean, Indigenous Research and Education, Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory

Associate Professor Tracey Bunda, Flinders University, South Australia

Dr Jeannie Herbert, Director, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory

Professor John Lester, Aboriginal Education and Training, NSW Department of Education

Mr Fred Maher, Aboriginal Community Support Officer, Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority NSW

Ms Jill Milroy, Head, School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia

Mr Sam Nona, Students Association, University of Adelaide

Dr Mark Rose, Assistant General Manager, Koori Strategy, Victorian Dept. Education and Training

Mr Gary Shipp, Head, Jabal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre, Australian National University

Ms Vicki-Ann Speechley-Golden, Postgraduate student

Dr Maggie Walter, Department of Sociology and Social Work, University Tasmania

Observer: Mr Joel Wright, National Tertiary Education Union.

Absent are Mr Fred Maher, Prof John Lester, Dr Mark Rose and Dr Maggie Walter



Front row (L-R):

Ms Clair Andersen, Dr Jeannie Herbert,
Ms Jill Milroy, Mr Sam Nona,
Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik Ed D (Harvard)

Back Row:

Ms Berice Anning, Ms Veronica Arbon, Mr Gary Shipp,
Professor Roger Thomas (Deputy Chair),
Professor Marcia Langton AM (Chair),
Ms Vicki-Ann Speechley-Golden,
Associate Professor Tracey Bunda

IHEAC members at the Conference *Education led Recovery of Indigenous Capacity: reshaping the policy agenda* held in November 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document includes an overview of the 2005 inaugural Indigenous Higher Education Conference, *Education led Recovery of Indigenous Capacity: reshaping the policy agenda* and presents the first strategic plan of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC).

The core issues discussed at the 2005 Indigenous Higher Education Conference were the continuing under-representation of Indigenous people in higher education and the low rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students. Conference participants also noted the interrelated and ongoing problems associated with:

- the uneven quality of Indigenous research programs and the limited number of active Indigenous researchers;
- the poor recognition given to Indigenous studies and the lack of visibility of Indigenous culture and knowledge on campus;
- the small number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities, especially in senior roles; and
- the low levels of participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management.

The IHEAC considers higher education to be central to the aspiration of Indigenous people for a rightful place in Australian society and believes that Australian universities must play a leadership role in the nation's recognition of Indigenous people and culture. The vision of the IHEAC is for a higher education system in which Indigenous Australians share equally in the life and career opportunities that a university education can provide. This means creating a higher education system in which:

- Indigenous people and their culture and knowledge are visible and valued on campus;
- Indigenous research is of high quality and high status;
- Indigenous studies are a prominent and vibrant part of the curriculum;
- Indigenous knowledge and culture are developed and preserved;
- Indigenous leaders are trained; and
- Indigenous people are active in university governance, leadership and management.

The IHEAC believes that policy for Indigenous higher education should be underpinned by the goal of the social, cultural and economic development of the whole Indigenous community. While there has been progress towards achieving equity in Australian higher education for Indigenous people, there are still significant shortfalls, the rate of progress is inadequate and there is a risk of a decline in the progress made to date. A commitment is now needed to making major advances.

SUMMARY OF PRIORITY AREAS

The IHEAC identifies seven priority areas:

- Priority 1:** Encourage universities to work with schools and TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build pathways and raise levels of aspiration and confidence of Indigenous students.
- Priority 2:** Develop a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolment.
- Priority 3:** Improve the level of Indigenous postgraduate enrolment, enhance Indigenous research and increase the number of Indigenous researchers.
- Priority 4:** Improve the rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students.
- Priority 5:** Enhance the prominence and status of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies on campus.
- Priority 6:** Increase the number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities.
- Priority 7:** Improve the participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management.

In addition, the IHEAC believes it is appropriate to undertake a major national project to investigate and report on the Indigenous education initiatives and strategies in higher education that are presently effective. The project should examine the institutional policy framework, the role of management and other staff, the allocation of resources, the nature and characteristics of the programs and activities being undertaken, and the evidence of the outcomes in terms of improving access and the rates of retention and completion. The dissemination of the findings of this research project has the potential to significantly advance effective policies and practices.

REPORT OF THE INAUGURAL IHEAC CONFERENCE, 1-2 NOVEMBER 2005

The inaugural Indigenous Higher Education Conference, *Education led Recovery of Indigenous Capacity: reshaping the policy agenda* was held at Old Parliament House, Canberra, on 1-2 November 2005. The conference discussed critical issues in Indigenous higher education and explored new possibilities.

The conference participants, comprising many of the Indigenous leaders in Australian universities, agreed that it is time to urge the government and universities to take a major step forward in advancing Indigenous higher education. The low levels of Indigenous participation in many facets of university life are unacceptable in a modern nation in which education is the key to successful community participation and development. Conference participants expressed frustration at the ongoing disadvantage of Indigenous people in Australian universities, the marginalisation of Indigenous people and Indigenous programs, and the continuing racism on-campus.

THE DISTINCTIVE INDIGENOUS CONTRIBUTION TO HIGHER EDUCATION

It was strikingly evident from the papers presented and the conference deliberations that Australian universities would be lesser places of learning without the presence and leadership of Indigenous people. Many analyses of Indigenous higher education focus only on gaps and deficiencies, and the unresolved issues of access, retention and success. Clearly, there are problems in these areas, which must be acknowledged and addressed. But if the focus is only on the problems, there is a risk that successes will be ignored and the contribution Indigenous people make to higher education and to the character of universities will be overlooked. Celebrating the successful initiatives and acknowledging the Indigenous leadership role in Australian universities, and nurturing and encouraging both, should be central to policies and programs. Thus it is important to avoid the trap of 'deficiency' thinking, through which Indigenous higher education issues are seen exclusively in terms of narrowing gaps and remediation, denying the positive and distinctive contributions that Indigenous people are making.

THE CORE ISSUE OF THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While the issues discussed at the conference were wide-ranging, participants returned to some common concerns. These are summarised below and have formed the base for the IHEAC's Seven Priority Areas described later in the document.

The core issues discussed at the conference were the continuing under-representation of Indigenous people in undergraduate programs and the low rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students. In addition, conference participants noted the interrelated and ongoing problems associated with:

- the relatively low levels of Indigenous postgraduate enrolment, the uneven quality of Indigenous research programs and the limited number of active Indigenous researchers;
- the poor recognition given to Indigenous studies and the lack of visibility of Indigenous culture and knowledge on campus;

- the small number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities, especially in senior roles; and
- the low levels of participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management.

THE IMPERATIVE FOR INTEGRATED POLICIES

An integrated policy approach is needed to advance Indigenous higher education, for the issues are systemic. It was noted by conference participants that universities acting alone cannot address the root causes of Indigenous educational disadvantage - this requires action by all educational sectors. Further, there was consensus among the conference participants that the current issues in Indigenous higher education must be tackled through a suite of integrated initiatives, for equal attention must be given to, among other things, the recruitment and support of Indigenous students, the recruitment, support and promotion of Indigenous staff, and the building and strengthening of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Research. Urgent action is needed in *all* of these areas if a positive cycle of participation in higher education, which breeds further participation in higher education, is to be established. There is no single policy initiative that will be able to achieve the ‘snowball’ effect that is desperately needed.

The IHEAC acknowledges the success of policies and programs such as the *Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme*, *Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme* and *Dare to Lead* — programs such as these need to be developed, extended in scale and replicated.

THE UNDERPINNING GOAL OF COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Conference participants strongly believed that policy for Indigenous higher education must be underpinned by the goal of the social, cultural and economic development of the whole Indigenous community. A distinguishing feature of Indigenous people’s participation in higher education is that the public good is as important as the private good. In the present times, the participation of Indigenous people in higher education is not only important for the development of the individuals concerned but also important for Indigenous community capacity building. The higher education sector, in preparing educated people for leadership roles, has a vital role to play in raising the health, education and economic outcomes for the Indigenous community overall. This important benefit can be readily overlooked, however it provides a powerful justification for the allocation of adequate resources to educate and train the next generation of Indigenous leaders. Resources devoted to raising the number of Indigenous graduates will be resources spent on essential community development.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP IN UNIVERSITIES

Few things are more critical to the long-term advancement of Indigenous people than increasing the number of Indigenous people in university leadership roles. Universities have much to benefit from the contribution of Indigenous people in such roles. The conference noted that in New Zealand universities there are a number of Pro Vice-Chancellor positions, or their equivalent, with designated responsibilities for Maori students. It is essential to devise ways to encourage universities to focus on institutional leadership and the creation of a critical mass of Indigenous academic leaders. Equally, much needs to be done to raise awareness of Indigenous perspectives and issues among senior



university leaders and managers. Indigenous people need powerful advocates in universities and will benefit from greater commitment from University councils to the issues surrounding Indigenous higher education. Similarly, Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors need to be called on to exert greater influence. The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee also has responsibilities here, as does the federal government.

THE NEED FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The advancement of Indigenous higher education must have a strong empirical dimension. There are many rich and important stories to be told about Indigenous people in universities. At the same time, solid evidence of what works (and what does not) must provide the basis for strengthening policies and programs. Progress will be made if there are authentic monitoring, reporting mechanisms and accountability, to help avoid the possibility of 'counterfeiting' success. It was suggested that future Australian University Quality Assurance (AUQA) audits might more actively examine institutional attention to programs for Indigenous higher education and the quality assurance associated with these, in particular DEST guidelines for Indigenous support programs. The expansion of examples in the AUQA Good Practice database would also assist, as would an increase in the number of AUQA auditors who are Indigenous people.

THE ROLE, STATUS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF INDIGENOUS UNITS AND CENTRES

Indigenous education and support centres and units of various kinds have been a major strategy for the integration of Indigenous students, providing a range of services, including academic and personal support as well as a culturally sensitive meeting place. It was noted that the staff of these units have demanding roles and that some of the Indigenous units are marginalised within the policy, reporting and planning frameworks of their institutions. As with all central units and activities in large universities, there are ongoing issues surrounding how best to integrate and connect with the work with faculties, which in many ways are the academic heartland for teaching and learning. These issues arise for Indigenous centres, too. It is important that such centres do not dilute or compromise their distinctive missions. At the same time, such centres must examine new and more diverse directions that might be beneficial. The work of the Centres is intensive and requires both financial and personal commitment.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Effective student support, in its various forms including financial, social and academic support, is integral to unlocking the problems of Indigenous access and participation. There is an undeniable argument that Indigenous students require direct and indirect support at levels that may not be necessary for other students due to the former's backgrounds, the pathways through which they have entered university and the context in which they are studying. For prospective Indigenous students there is often a convergence of the social and economic factors well known to be associated with low rates of access to higher education and lower rates of retention and success. Indigenous students are often from low socio-economic backgrounds and from rural or isolated areas. Many Indigenous students study under economic pressure, often because they are of mature age and have partners and families. The removal or reduction in financial barriers to participation in higher education is a highly essential element in widening Indigenous participation.

The IHEAC conference participants agreed that the financial support of Indigenous students needs a thorough re-examination. At present, there are issues surrounding, for example, the eligibility for support for students undertaking enabling studies — a highly important pathway for Indigenous people — and the timing points for selection for Commonwealth Learning Scholarships that might disadvantage or discourage Indigenous participation. It is urgent to conduct a thorough assessment of the effectiveness of the current mechanisms for financial assistance for Indigenous students and to investigate the level of incentive and possible unintended disincentives. Such an examination should consider the levels of support provided and the required conditions, the relationships between federal initiatives and institutional initiatives such as scholarships, and the possibilities for the cancellation of student debt. The conference participants were in agreement that the removal of financial uncertainty is a precursor to enrolment and successful participation and completion.

THE POTENCY OF SYMBOLISM

There is an important symbolic framework through which to create advances in Indigenous higher education. Indigenous knowledge and culture are not highly visible in many Australian universities. It was convincingly argued at the conference that the presence and acceptance of Indigenous people on campus requires a symbolic dimension that is far more than tokenism. Making Indigenous knowledge and culture far more prominent on campus is a vital symbolic step — including, for example, the location of Indigenous centres, and one that can be achieved relatively in various ways. Simple steps, such as including Indigenous staff on teaching awards selection panels or confirmation and promotion panels, can communicate much.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE ‘INDIGENOUS ACADEMY’

There is a national network, largely informal, of Indigenous scholars, researchers and university staff. Many Indigenous staff in teaching, support and administrative roles carry the burden of additional role expectations that might not be appropriately acknowledged in workload models. Much more could be done to recognise and assist this informal academy, through professional development opportunities and career pathways, researcher networks, administrative support and so on.

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCHERS

Enhanced Indigenous research training is desperately needed. There are numerous issues surrounding Indigenous research, including definitional problems (various interpretations of Indigenous research were used at the conference, such as research conducted by Indigenous people or research into Indigenous issues), the unevenness of the quality of Indigenous research, the small number of Indigenous researchers and Indigenous people with PhDs, concerns about the *Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme* and the dwindling number of applications, and fears about the possible impact of the Research Quality Framework if it fails to appropriately recognise Indigenous research. The Research Quality Framework leans towards a ‘science’ model and there are known difficulties with the current approaches to research funding — it is difficult, for example, to get Indigenous research published in international journals. It was evident from the conference that a distinctive policy framework must be developed if Indigenous research is to be appropriately recognised and developed. One aspect of such a framework might be a clearer definition of what constitutes good or excellent Indigenous research — this would assist in finding ways to value

Indigenous research and discriminate good research from poorer or less significant research. The need for more benchmarking of Indigenous research against appropriate overseas reference points was noted.

INDIGENOUS HISTORY AND CULTURE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Related to the issue of Indigenous research is that of Indigenous studies, for robust Indigenous research must underpin Indigenous studies, as with any other field in higher education. Like the expression 'Indigenous research', 'Indigenous Studies' was used in various ways throughout the conference (including as synonymous with 'Indigenous Knowledge', with research and teaching undertaken by Indigenous academics and with studies that take Indigenous people and matters as the objects of study). Universities have a major role in preserving, nurturing and disseminating Indigenous culture, yet it is widely agreed that knowledge of Indigenous history and culture is very low in white Australia — possibly even at a trivial level. While most white Australians would be able to name Indigenous sporting people, fewer would be able to name historical Indigenous leaders — pointing to a failure in the nation's education systems and suggesting it would be timely to consider a national examination of the place of Indigenous studies in the higher education curriculum.

THE LESSONS FROM THE MAORI EXPERIENCE

The conference benefited greatly from the wisdom and experience of Professor Mason Durie, from Massey University, New Zealand, who presented a keynote paper on the Maori experience. Clearly, Australian higher education has a good deal to learn from the success of New Zealand universities in recognising and supporting Maori in tertiary education.

Professor Durie noted that the basis for Government policies recognising Indigeneity in New Zealand stems from two sources: equity or social justice perspectives; and the Treaty of Waitangi, with a corresponding sense of responsibility to Maori as an Indigenous people. Prior to 1984, the inclusion of Maori specific items in the curriculum or within the culture of the school was the exception rather than the norm. Kohanga Reo, Maori language immersion early childhood centres, were the first major transformations in Maori education. Soon after, kura kaupapa Maori (Maori speaking primary schools) were launched. Kohanga and kura flourished and gave rise to whare kura (Maori speaking secondary schools), wānanga (Maori tertiary educational centres) and a range of tribal and community educational initiatives. The Tertiary Education Commission, which funds tertiary education institutions, requires some demonstration that each institution will have developed initiatives to address the Treaty of Waitangi principles and expects institutions to report against Maori enrolments, course completions by Maori students, and staffing profiles. Durie pointed out that 'responding to Maori is no longer an optional exercise or a question of goodwill but is closely linked to funding agreements'.

Durie argued that institutional reforms were as important as political support. He identified these factors:

1. *Affirmative action*, through active recruitment in schools and in communities by Maori liaison officers, and other marketing efforts. He argued that:

While it is important to ensure that students accepted into a programme are going to be able to meet the required academic standards, it may be more meritorious to admit students who will help institutions achieve their public goals and meet charter obligations to provide for future societal leadership. It is short-sighted to define merit solely on the academic merits of individual students in isolation of other students or the institution's broader social goals. The profile of the total student population must be considered so that the institution as a whole can foster academic advancement, contribute positively to the campus learning experience, and provide society with leadership for the future. Taking account of race helps institutions achieve their mission of promoting academic advancement, having diversity on the campus, and attending to long term societal needs.

2. The establishment of *Communities of Learning*, through various programmes established to foster a sense of whānau (family) and maximise the positive effects of peer support for Maori students.
3. *Campus Innovation*, with the objective of creating a culturally-relevant environment, many institutions have developed cultural centres on campus. Of particular note has been the establishment of marae (cultural meeting places).
4. *Collaboration*, whereby institutions have created active links with Maori communities to attract Maori students. Formal agreements with tribes have been important at governance and operational levels.

Durie reported that the Maori tertiary education framework is based on four high level principles. These are:

- i) The principle of Indigeneity, referring to the recognition of Indigenous peoples and their culture, language and knowledge. At institutional levels, Indigeneity is reflected through the campus culture, the curriculum, communities of learning, and leadership at academic and governance levels.
- ii) Academic success, for while access to the tertiary sector is an important starting point, of greater importance is academic success.
- iii) Participation, referring to student participation, staff participation, and participation in management, governance and policy making.
- iv) Futures orientation, as a reminder that planning for full and effective involvement in tertiary education needs to take a long term perspective.

Finally, Durie made the following observation that seems particularly pertinent to the work of the IHEAC:

The Maori experience is that gains occur incrementally over time and a long term vision is a necessary precursor. Otherwise there is the risk that a series of fragmented and unconnected initiatives will occur with little impact and a loss of confidence by Indigenous communities. But typically planning occurs for relatively short terms – three to five years – and often in response to a crisis rather than as part of a strategic direction that is relevant to the next generation of learners.

IHEAC STRATEGIC PLAN 2006 -2008: BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The IHEAC considers higher education is central to the aspiration of Indigenous people for a rightful place in Australian society and that Australian universities must play a leadership role in the nation's recognition of Indigenous people and culture. The IHEAC Strategic Plan is based on the belief that while there has been progress towards achieving equity in Australian higher education for Indigenous people, the rate of progress is inadequate and there is a risk of a decline in the progress made towards equity. It is time therefore to make a commitment to major advances. This will require bold policies based on high aspirations.

The vision of the IHEAC is for a higher education system in which Indigenous Australians share equally in the life and career opportunities that a university education can provide. This means creating a higher education system in which:

- Indigenous people and their culture and knowledge are visible and valued on campus;
- Indigenous research is of high quality and high status;
- Indigenous studies are a prominent and vibrant part of the curriculum;
- Indigenous knowledge and culture are developed and preserved;
- Indigenous leaders are trained; and
- Indigenous people are active in university governance, leadership and management.

The IHEAC Strategic Plan is based on five principles:

1. respect for Indigenous people, knowledge and culture;
2. mutual obligation for universities, government and Indigenous people;
3. integrated, cross-sectoral policies and programs;
4. high expectations; and
5. clear goals.

The IHEAC Strategic Plan is a working document to help frame the priorities and activities of the IHEAC in fulfilling its Terms of Reference and in developing its advice to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. It is not the purpose of this plan to trace a history of the policies for Indigenous higher education and the successes and failures. The focus is on the major contemporary issues and the key areas for action.

As with most complex social issues, further progress in achieving better educational and employment outcomes for Indigenous people requires a combination of the political will of government and the commitment of universities to developing and sustaining new policies and programs. The IHEAC believes many stakeholders share obligations for the development of Indigenous higher education. The plan recognises the particular roles and responsibilities of the federal government, state government, university leaders, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council and Indigenous people themselves.

Little will be achieved without the allocation of additional resources to Indigenous higher education. Many of the objectives identified in the IHEAC's Seven Priority Areas require government and universities to commit further resources to addressing the areas of disadvantage.

The gaps between Indigenous Australians and other Australians in key areas of higher education are unacceptable. The Council notes that substantial gains were made in the higher education access rate for Indigenous people during the 1990s. However, in the 2000s, the growth in participation has plateaued, with inexplicable fluctuations. The relatively low retention and completion rates of Indigenous students are major issues. *Achieving equitable and appropriate outcomes* (DEST 2002), the discussion paper on Indigenous higher education prepared for the national higher education review in 2002, identified certain improvements in the higher education participation of Indigenous people during the 1990s, but concluded nonetheless that:

...these achievements are no reason for complacency. Educational outcomes are of profound importance to the future of Indigenous Australians. The good news is that Indigenous students who graduate experience employment rates comparable with those for all graduates. The bad news is that the rising numbers of Indigenous Australians who gain access to higher education experience lower progress and completion rates than their non-Indigenous peers. Improving access of Indigenous students to higher education is important but providing support at university to increase retention rates is even more vital (DEST 2002: x, emphasis added)

HIGH EXPECTATIONS, CLEAR GOALS: IHEAC'S SEVEN PRIORITY AREAS

The IHEAC has identified seven key areas on which to focus in the next three years. These areas are closely interrelated and an integrated approach to policies and programs is required. The IHEAC is seeking the support and commitment of the federal government, state governments and universities and bodies such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Australian Research Council and Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to put in place policies and programs to:

1. encourage universities to work with schools, TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build pathways and raise levels of aspiration and confidence of Indigenous students;
2. develop a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolments;
3. improve the level of Indigenous postgraduate enrolment, enhance Indigenous research and increase the number of Indigenous researchers;
4. improve the rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students;
5. enhance the status on campus of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies;
6. increase the number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities; and
7. improve the participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management.

In addition to these priority areas, the IHEAC will monitor and provide advice on policy directions for higher education that may directly or indirectly influence the development of Indigenous higher education. The IHEAC will seek to monitor the effects, if any, of:

- the Research Quality Framework on Indigenous research and Indigenous researchers;
- FEE-HELP on access to higher education for Indigenous students;
- the VSU legislation on services and support for Indigenous students;
- the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) on institutional priorities and the allocation of resources; and
- the likely diversification of higher education institutions, including the possible growth in the number of intensive teaching institutions, the emergence of less comprehensive, smaller institutions and the entry to the sector of new private and overseas providers on Indigenous student access.

PRIORITY 1:

Encourage universities to work with schools and TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build pathways and raise levels of aspiration and confidence of Indigenous students

The IHEAC believes policies and incentives are needed to encourage Australian universities to build stronger relationships with Indigenous students in schools, TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations.

Increasing the levels of school achievement, personal aspirations and self-confidence of Indigenous people are key steps in improving university participation and successful completion. The efforts of the higher education sector to improve Indigenous education are strongly affected by the educational disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people in all sectors of education. In particular, lower levels of secondary school completion and achievement are a major obstacle to higher education participation:

- the Year 12 retention rate for Indigenous school students in 2005 was 39.5 per cent compared with 76.6 per cent for non-Indigenous (ABS 4221.0 Schools, Australia 2005);
- only 57 per cent of Indigenous people who entered university in 2001 had completed secondary schooling, compared with 90 per cent of non-Indigenous entrants. (DEST 2002: 3);
- a much higher proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous higher education students have entered university through special entry or enabling programs, and the number and type of access programs increased in the late 1990s, with around 70 per cent of Indigenous students gaining entry to higher education through special entry programs.

Enabling programs have slowly decreased in importance as the basis of admission of Indigenous students tended across 2001–2004 to become more like those of non-Indigenous students. Fewer than half gained entry in 2004 through special entry programs. One in six Indigenous students commencing a bachelors degree in 2004 was admitted on the basis of Year 12 studies (compared with almost one in two non-Indigenous), and one in five on the basis of complete or incomplete higher education studies (compared with one in four non-Indigenous). The proportion of Indigenous students with some experience of vocational training and education commencing higher education in 2001–2004 remained reasonably steady (around 30%, compared with 22% for non-Indigenous).

Special entry programs are valuable but further work needs to be done *earlier* to raise the levels of educational achievement and aspirations of Indigenous people. It remains the case that many Indigenous people who would benefit from higher education do not feel they are capable of achieving it or the possibility of university study has not entered their horizons. Universities have a role here, in working with schools and TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build Indigenous students' confidence and raise perceptions of the relevance and attainability of higher education. The early success of the Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE) in Shepparton, Victoria, an initiative of the Rumbalara Football and Netball Club and the University of Melbourne, illustrates that partnerships with communities can be highly effective.

Internationally, there is a growing focus on the value of universities working directly with disadvantaged school communities. There are presently no policy mechanisms or incentives for driving relationships of this kind in Australia. The IHEAC seeks policies that will create cross-sectoral collaborations and partnerships, encouraging universities to undertake greater responsibility for 'reaching back' into schools and communities to widen Indigenous people's horizons and boost their perceptions of attainability and relevance of higher education. The aim of such policies must be to create long-term change rather than short-term effects.

Current research indicates that linkages across the education sectors are critical. The IHEAC supports increasing the number of formal university programs for linkages with schools and TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations. IHEAC therefore supports the establishment a national '*Going to uni*' program, involving all universities in increasing the number of formal cross-sectoral partnerships and programs for Indigenous students. The IHEAC supports the notion that universities should report annually on program objectives, approaches and outcomes.

IHEAC supports the establishment of three innovative 'lighthouse' ventures during 2006-2008, involving schools, TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations and universities, to offer models for cross-sectoral collaboration, including guaranteed pathways and recognition of prior learning as appropriate for Indigenous people.

IHEAC proposes that highlighting and promoting successful school-training-university partnerships may enhance further collaboration and promulgate good practice between the sectors. IHEAC therefore will recognise an outstanding partnership program at its annual conference and publicise this program widely.

PRIORITY 2:

Develop a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolment

Despite some advances, Indigenous people remain significantly under-represented in Australian higher education. In 2003, Indigenous students represented 1.5 per cent of the commencing domestic student population and 1.2 per cent of the total domestic student population. These figures are well below the population reference point. On the basis of the 2001 Census, 1.9 per cent of the Australian population were Indigenous people, however if this figure is adjusted for the age distribution of Indigenous people a more realistic percentage for benchmark purposes is estimated to be 2.5 per cent (DEST 2005).

The number of Indigenous students commencing higher education rose steadily throughout the 1990s but dropped significantly in 2000 and has fluctuated since. In 2003, the number of commencing Indigenous students dropped by 3.2 per cent — whether this is due to regional issues or systemic effects is not clear. The decline was largely due to a drop in the number of commencing males. Indigenous males make up only 39 per cent of Indigenous enrolments.

The aggregate access and participation figures mask imbalances in the nature of course enrolments. Indigenous students in higher education are far more likely than non-Indigenous students to be enrolled in sub-degree programs and less likely to be enrolled in Bachelor degree or postgraduate courses. In 2001, 12.6 per cent of Indigenous higher education students were enrolled in enabling programs compared with 1.7 per cent of domestic students overall; 72.9 per cent of Indigenous students were enrolled in Bachelors or postgraduate programs compared with 96.5 per cent of all domestic students (DEST 2002: 12). The flattening in the growth in Indigenous access to higher education throughout the 2000s and the decline in male commencing students are serious issues. The IHEAC asks the federal government and universities to develop a concerted strategy to raise the overall level of undergraduate participation, especially in the higher status institutions and fields of study.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Scheme (ABSTUDY) provides a means-tested living allowance and other supplementary benefits to eligible primary, secondary and tertiary students. Changes to ABSTUDY with the aim of aligning the means tests and payment rates with those of Youth Allowance and Newstart took effect from 1 January 2000. There was a sharp decline in higher education Indigenous enrolments in 2000 and ABSTUDY recipient numbers in higher education declined significantly in 2002 and 2003 (DEST, 2004). It is likely that both the means test and the payment rates need urgent reconsideration.

The IHEAC has consulted a number of individuals and groups experienced in Indigenous education. It considered at its February 2006 meeting an analysis of recent Indigenous student commencements and completions, including projections for 2010 based on recent Indigenous enrolment trends in higher education and vocational education and training. A summary of the analysis is at Appendix 2.

The IHEAC proposes the following as *per annum* targets to increase Indigenous completions in higher education by 2010:

- 1,500 Bachelor Degree students
- 120 Associate Degree students
- 5,000 TAFE Certificate IV and 1,500 Diploma students

Consideration must be given to increasing the flow into higher education of adequately prepared and motivated Indigenous students with a full secondary education. Too many young Indigenous people with potential to succeed in higher education are failing to complete Year 12, and many lack the confidence and motivation to engage in higher education across the range of disciplines and levels of study.

IHEAC recognises the need to increase the overall level of Indigenous enrolment in Bachelors level programmes and supports the establishment of national undergraduate enrolment targets on the basis of the advice from Council, indexed to population growth trends. In addition, universities should set specific targets for increasing Indigenous enrolments in professional fields of study, and be required to report annually on their strategies for recruiting and selecting Indigenous students for courses in high demand at Australian Universities.

In order to increase the number of Indigenous males undertaking undergraduate education, IHEAC supports that a national study be undertaken to identify the factors inhibiting the entry to higher education of Indigenous males and proposes that universities develop specific recruitment strategies to attract Indigenous males.

In order to improve the financial support available to Indigenous students, IHEAC supports any examination of the existing supplementary programs, including federal and institutional programs, or the development of such supplementary programs, to increase the financial support for Indigenous students with the objective of expanding the levels of support available. In addition IHEAC supports that universities expand the number of scholarships provided for Indigenous students.

PRIORITY 3:

Improve the level of Indigenous postgraduate enrolment, enhance Indigenous research and increase the number of Indigenous researchers

The IHEAC believes in research-led teaching and considers high quality Indigenous research to be a cornerstone of Indigenous higher education, underpinning curricula in Indigenous studies programs, informing the education of non-Indigenous people, preserving Indigenous culture and knowledge, and contributing to the overall advancement of Indigenous people. Strengthening Indigenous research culture and capacity within and across universities, as well as better promotion of the funding support available, must be a high priority.

Indigenous research has many forms. It may be research of Indigenous significance carried out by any staff or students. It may be research of Indigenous significance undertaken by Indigenous researchers. It may also be research in a number of fields and disciplines conducted by Indigenous researchers.

The *Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme* aims to encourage participation in and to improve the standard of research conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through developing the research expertise of Indigenous Australian researchers to a level which is competitive with mainstream funding. The scheme supports research across all fields of study and has been in operation since 1996. In the first year, 45 applications were received but there has been a decline in the number of applications during the decade of the Scheme's operation. In 2005, only eight applications were received though the quality of application was high. As well as concerns about this decline in applications, there are some concerns about the Indigenous knowledge base of those assessing applications.

The growth in postgraduate enrolment during the past decade has been significant — between 1992 and 1999, Indigenous Australians' participation in postgraduate degrees increased by 156 per cent. Between 2001 and 2003, Indigenous higher degree enrolments increased by 25.6 per cent with Indigenous males more likely to be enrolled at this level than Indigenous females. The stronger progression from undergraduate to doctoral level studies has been partly attributed by institutions to a strong Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (now the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme) and the provision of scholarships. Due partly to the still small number of Indigenous students in postgraduate study, there are indications that Indigenous students may feel isolated and 'out of their depth' studying in universities at this level.

Taking into account the views and experience of individuals and groups consulted and the statistical analysis summarised at Appendix 2, the IHEAC proposed *per annum* targets to increase Indigenous participation in postgraduate education by 2010, as follows:

- 50 Honours students
- 200 Graduate Diploma/Certificate students
- 300 Masters students
- 50 PhD students

The Australian Research Council could renew its efforts to promote the *Discovery Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme* to ensure appropriately qualified and experienced assessors to review applications. IHEAC also suggests that the Australian Research Council create Centres of Excellence to increase the profile of Indigenous researchers, support Indigenous researchers, and foster research into Indigenous issues.

IHEAC also supports that an independent study be commissioned to identify ways to advance Indigenous research with the terms of reference for this study proposed by the Council.

IHEAC intends to examine how the research interest and activities of Indigenous researchers might be better recognised, celebrated and promoted and proposes to investigate the potential for the establishment of an Academy of Indigenous scholars. Further, in order to support and train early career Indigenous researchers, IHEAC proposes that the Academies jointly sponsor an annual national conference for early career Indigenous researchers. In order to provide international experiences for high potential postgraduate candidates or early career Indigenous researchers, IHEAC supports that six international travel fellowships per annum be awarded on merit to high potential Indigenous academics and/or graduate students.

In order to increase the number of Indigenous postgraduate students, especially in the doctoral programs, IHEAC supports the establishment of a national postgraduate enrolment target, including PhD enrolment target, indexed to population growth trends.

PRIORITY 4:

Improve the rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students

Indigenous higher education students do less well on some of the conventional measures of higher education success. The outcomes for Indigenous students who enter higher education must be improved and this requires attention to their personal, academic and financial well-being.

Low retention and completion rates for Indigenous students are a major concern. The *success rate*, which measures the progression of students through degrees, is lower for Indigenous students than for non-Indigenous students and this lower rate has remained stable over time. DEST figures indicate Indigenous students successfully complete 68 per cent of subjects undertaken compared with 87 per cent for non-Indigenous students (DEST 2002). Fewer than one half of the Indigenous people who enrol in higher education can be expected to complete their program of study (DETYA 1999, DEST 2002). The completion rate for Indigenous students is only two-thirds of the completion rate for other students - estimates suggest relative overall completion rates of close to 42 per cent for Indigenous students and 65 per cent for non-Indigenous students. There is some evidence of an improvement in Indigenous completion rates over time, but the patterns of withdrawal and repeated re-entry make the statistics difficult to calculate and interpret with confidence. Positively, in 2002 there were 1128 award course completions by Indigenous students, which represented a 7.2 per cent increase on completions for 2001. In 2002, completions at bachelor degree level made up 65 per cent of all Indigenous completions and it was at this level where the greatest increase in completions took place (DEST 2005).

Attrition amongst Indigenous students is more severe than for non-Indigenous, particularly in the first year of study. Across 2000-2003, first year attrition rates for Indigenous higher education students were typically around 35%-39%, with the comparable figures for domestic higher education students overall being 22%-23%. If Indigenous students progressed towards completion of their studies at the same rate as non-Indigenous, their higher education completions could be more than double the currently achieved rate. Careful attention to the processes for supporting growth in the numbers of Indigenous people seeking and appropriately prepared to undertake higher education studies, and the arrangements for supporting their involvement in and completion of such studies should clearly be a priority.

The patterns of discontinuation among Indigenous people are associated in part with the demographic characteristics of Indigenous people who enrol in higher education (including age, field of study and enrolment type). Indigenous students who have withdrawn report that the factors in their decision to withdraw include financial pressures, social or cultural alienation, the academic demands of study and insufficient academic support. While non-completion of higher education does not imply that some positive outcomes have not been achieved, it is untenable to accept 'second-best' outcomes for Indigenous people. A key challenge for universities is to embrace and support Indigenous students who may have had disadvantaged educational backgrounds without compromising the academic standards that Indigenous people have a right to expect and aspire to.

The outcomes for Indigenous people who complete their courses appear to be very good. Indigenous graduates enjoy higher levels of employment and higher starting salaries than non-Indigenous graduates.

Data from the Graduate Destination Survey show that the full-time employment rate for Indigenous graduates in 2003 was 83.8 per cent, higher than for non-Indigenous graduates at 80.0 per cent. The average starting salaries for Indigenous bachelor level graduates in 2002 and 2003 were higher than that for non-Indigenous graduates (DEST 2005). These outcomes may be partially explained by the mature age of many Indigenous students, the fact that many are in employment while studying, and the extent to which well-qualified Indigenous people are sought after for leadership roles.

In order to improve the transition to university and first year retention rates IHEAC supports that an independent study should be commissioned to study the first year experiences of Indigenous students. In order to improve Indigenous retention and completion rates, the IHEAC supports establishment of a target, with advice from Council, for Indigenous retention and completion rates with incentives for institutions that meet or exceed those targets.

The IHEAC recognises the need to re-examine the reasons for high Indigenous attrition rates and determine the strategies, including financial, that have proved successful in improving retention. The IHEAC supports that the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education should be encouraged to establish a priority related to the development and dissemination of good practice in Indigenous higher education in the Priority Projects Programme.

PRIORITY 5:

Enhance the prominence and status on campus of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies

Indigenous culture and knowledge do not have an appropriate profile on most Australian campuses. There are many dimensions to this issue, including the place of Indigenous history in the curriculum, the recognition of Indigenous staff and students, and the sheer symbolism of Indigenous culture. The IHEAC considers that the sustained commitment of universities is needed to make Indigenous people and culture more prominent. This priority is closely interwoven with the other priorities, and underpins many of them.

Universities have much opportunity to acknowledge respect and acceptance of Indigenous culture in the vocabulary and imagery associated with, for example, signage, websites, graduation ceremonies, buildings and official documentation. Over time, authentic symbolism will do much to reduce racism and assist in the integration of Indigenous students. The symbolism associated with Indigenous culture is socially significant — even small gestures may count for a lot. Research in the USA has shown clearly that social interaction is central to learning and persistence with university study. Social integration occurs when a student experiences positive and meaningful interactions both inside and outside the classroom with peers and with staff. Where there is a critical mass of Indigenous students, such Indigenous ‘presence’ may help support students. However, where such a critical mass is not available a greater awareness is needed in universities of cultural differences in the ways students interact and are socially integrated if the experiences of Indigenous students are to be improved.

Some Indigenous students may bring learning styles, expectations and cultural perspectives to higher education that differ from those of non-Indigenous students. Indigenous students are sometimes required to adjust to the norms, systems and structures of university teaching and learning in order to progress through and complete their higher education. As well, Indigenous culture often may be overlooked in the classroom in preference to the values and expectations of the dominant culture.

In their pursuit of academic integration, Indigenous students may find themselves in a difficult emotional struggle between resisting or denying their culture and the pressure of assimilation in higher education (Bourke, Burden & Moore, 1996). Changing the academic content and assessment of courses and subjects to include Indigenous knowledge and culture in order to make it relevant and culturally meaningful requires, as for other areas of university curricula, a genuine research-base, ongoing scholarship and research-informed approaches to teaching.

The roles and relationships between Indigenous Education and Support Centres and the academic curriculum and teaching programs, including Faculty-based programs, may need re-conceptualising. There is the question of how well central support integrates with mainstream learning and teaching and whether it is possible to develop models in which Indigenous support is closely related with the core academic activities of Faculty-based research and teaching.

Universities need to consider how the inclusion of Indigenous content in courses can be best encouraged and facilitated. This requires consideration of how the curriculum can be reformed for

the benefit of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike. A national review of the relationships between Indigenous support initiatives and Indigenous Education and Support Centres, and the development of sequential Indigenous academic curricula, across all education sectors, is likely to be valuable. Such a review might examine the mission of centres, the nomenclature used to describe them, and their reporting lines as well as their contributions to encouraging the success, retention and completion of studies for Indigenous students.

Universities need to increase the levels of support and resourcing for Indigenous students, including personal support, academic support and in-Faculty support.

To strengthen the work of Indigenous units and centres, the IHEAC supports the commission of an independent study of the roles of Indigenous Education and Support Centres to be undertaken with the terms of reference proposed by the IHEAC.

In exploring new possibilities for enhancing the status of Indigenous Studies and awareness of Indigenous knowledge, universities need to review undergraduate curricula and the place of Indigenous studies.

Universities need to support Indigenous Elders by inviting them to accept honorary fellow positions to ensure the enhancement of Indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian universities.

IHEAC supports universities appointing suitably qualified Indigenous people to positions such as professorial appointments and other senior positions to ensure equity, continuing improvement in Indigenous higher education outcomes and the enhancement of Indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian universities.

PRIORITY 6:

Increase the number of Indigenous people working in Australian universities

The number of Indigenous Australians employed in the higher education sector is very small, limiting the number of Indigenous people available for teaching, mentoring and providing role models for Indigenous students and staff alike. Recruiting, developing and supporting greater numbers of Indigenous staff must be a major priority in efforts to advance Indigenous higher education.

The total number of Indigenous staff increased gradually over the period 2001 to 2004 – an increase of 148 people or 27 per cent. This included an increase in Indigenous academic staff numbers (32 or 16 per cent). Whilst this represents noteworthy progress, the number of Indigenous staff continues to be small relative to total staff numbers (0.8 per cent) and the proportion of students who are Indigenous (1.2 per cent in 2004). See Appendix 2.

Even though the number of Indigenous teaching and/or research academic staff as a proportion of the graduate Indigenous population is currently greater than the corresponding proportion for non-Indigenous, there would need to be around 960 Indigenous teaching and/or research academic staff and around 1180 other Indigenous higher education staff to reach parity by 2010.

More positively, more than one-third of Australian higher education institutions report some form of professional career development for Indigenous employees including strategies such as: traineeships; cadetships; job rotation; flexible employment arrangements to allow Indigenous people to meet community and cultural responsibilities; mentor networks; encouraging and supporting further tertiary education; and the employment of project officers to consult with Indigenous staff on issues relevant to recruitment, participation and career development (DEST, 2005). Other strategies aimed at attracting and retaining Indigenous employees include the use of identified positions, policies and kits to assist managers.

The IHEAC recognises that it is a major challenge to increase the number of Indigenous academic and administrative staff from the present low base and that the objectives must be long term. The IHEAC supports the establishment of a national target for the equitable participation of Indigenous people in universities as staff.

The IHEAC also supports greater commitment by universities to improve the recruitment of Indigenous people into employment in higher education, and improve the career progression of Indigenous staff by:

- developing Indigenous recruitment policies and strategies, and to ensure Indigenous people are represented on selection panels;
- following best practice across human resource policies with respect to staff development for Indigenous people, including mentoring schemes; and
- ensuring Indigenous people are represented on promotion and confirmation and academic committees.

In order to broaden Indigenous academic perspectives the IHEAC supports that six travel fellowships per annum be awarded on merit to Indigenous staff with leadership potential, commencing in 2007.

PRIORITY 7:

Improve the participation of Indigenous people in university governance and management

Indigenous people should be involved in the high-level decision-making of Australian universities, including through councils, committees and senior appointments. During recent years, higher education institutions' Indigenous Education Statements have reported increasing Indigenous involvement in university decision-making committees and bodies, including university councils and senates. According to DEST data, one quarter of Australia's institutions had Indigenous involvement in peak decision-making bodies in 2001. By 2002, the figure was one third of institutions, and by 2003, it was close to half (DEST 2005). In 2003, almost all institutions reported having an Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) in place that had input at a policy level and provided leadership and advice to various levels of governance, including the Vice-Chancellor. The IACs variously comprise Indigenous elders, members of the Indigenous community, students, employees, academics and, in some cases, the Vice Chancellor (DEST, 2005). A small number of institutions report the use of mechanisms to help develop the skills of Indigenous people to participate in decision-making in educational settings. These include professional development and training modules and workshops, mentors and teaching release funding (DEST, 2005).

Increasing the number and proportion of Indigenous people on governing councils will mean that Indigenous people are better able to lead reforms, as well as respond to issues, in the higher education sector. Building Indigenous capability in this way will increase the higher education system's capability to offer Indigenous learners, teachers and researchers at all levels the programs, advice and support that they need.

It is of equal significance to raise the number of Indigenous people in academic and administrative leadership roles and the number of Indigenous people with professorial level appointments. New Zealand universities have tagged senior academic positions with responsibilities for Maori learning — similar approaches should be given consideration in Australian higher education.

Chancellors should be informed and influential advocates for Indigenous people, knowledge and culture. Therefore, the IHEAC proposes to invite the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee to jointly convene a national summit for Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors in 2007 to discuss progress in improving Indigenous outcomes in higher education.

University councils need to be more familiar with the contemporary issues in Indigenous higher education and the policies and programs needed to address disadvantage. Thus, universities need to appoint suitable Indigenous people to university councils and other governing bodies. In addition, IHEAC supports the notion of preparing a briefing booklet to inform university councils of contemporary issues in Indigenous higher education.

In order to increase the number of Indigenous people in senior positions, universities need to be encouraged to designate senior Indigenous positions, such as Pro Vice-Chancellor, with responsibilities to ensure equity, continuing improvement in Indigenous higher education outcomes and the enhancement of Indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian universities.

APPENDIX 1: IHEAC TERMS OF REFERENCE

The objective of the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council is to provide policy advice to the Minister for Education, Science and Training aimed at producing successful outcomes for Indigenous students and staff in relation to their participation, progression, and retention in both study and employment in higher education. This advice could extend to identifying enabling strategies such as Indigenous staff and student engagement in university decision-making and with Indigenous communities and stakeholders.

The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council will provide policy advice to the Minister on:

1. Identifying and developing strategies to improve student outcomes including:
 - improving access, progression and completion of Indigenous students through all levels of university study from university based Foundation /Enabling courses to undergraduate and postgraduate courses;
 - articulation from vocational education courses; and
 - institutional support for Indigenous students.
2. Developing an Indigenous research culture for Indigenous academic staff and post graduates including:
 - staff support; and
 - research activity, funding and priorities.
3. Strengthening the institutional responsibility for improving Indigenous students' outcomes and the role of Indigenous Support/Education Units, including best practice in:
 - student support;
 - funding mechanisms;
 - teaching, academic, and research roles; and
 - community, collaboration and partnerships in decision making in universities.
4. Strategies for increasing the employment opportunities and career paths for Indigenous higher education staff that acknowledges:
 - improves conditions of employment, improves long term career prospects and reduces casualisation; and;
 - community workloads within the work profile of Indigenous staff.
5. Identifying and promoting best practice in the education of Indigenous students in areas such as:
 - the course content in all fields particularly education (teaching and learning), the health professions, justice, and social work courses.

6. Encouraging Indigenous content in courses to ensure that all graduates understand Indigenous cultures by
 - identifying strategies to build Indigenous studies across all mainstream professional courses; and
 - ensuring graduates exit with Indigenous studies as a critical component of their professional competencies.
7. The promotion and protection of Indigenous intellectual property within higher education.

To undertake these roles IHEAC will critically monitor student academic outcomes and staff participation, make recommendations to the Minister for awards under the Indigenous Staff Scholarship Programme and convene an annual conference on Indigenous higher education, which will include:

- discussion of policy issues, research developments, sector and institutional achievements, successful innovations and best practice measures;
- presentation of Indigenous staff scholarships; and
- presentation of the Neville Bonner student scholarship.

It is anticipated that the Council will meet up to three times a year and hold an annual conference.

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS FOR IHEAC BY DEST ON 2001 – 2004 INDIGENOUS TERTIARY EDUCATION DATA

HIGHER EDUCATION

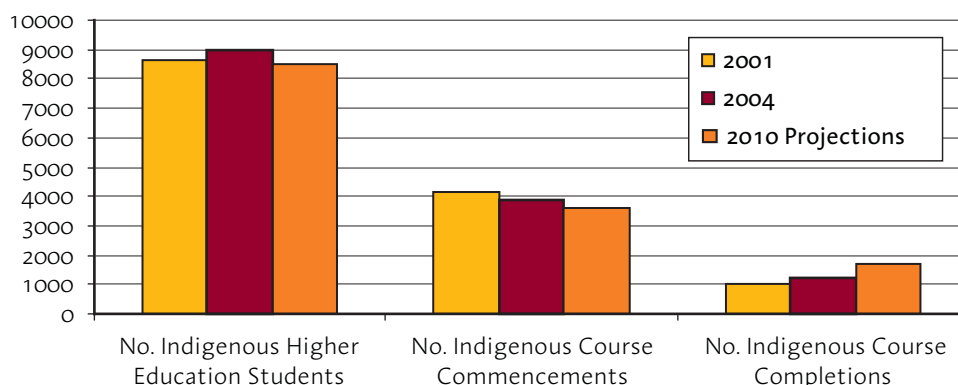
Over the period 2001-2004, total Indigenous higher education student numbers increased slightly from 8661 to 8895 (3%), with course completions growing from 1045 to 1191 (14%), while numbers of Indigenous students commencing higher education courses declined from 4128 to 3865 (6%).

The patterns of growth and decline in total enrolments, commencement and completions over the period, varied by broad level of course, with strong growth at Doctorate, Masters and Associate Degree levels (averaging around 10% *per annum*), substantial declines at Advanced Diploma and Diploma levels (around 7% *per annum*), and generally slight growth at Bachelors and Graduate Diploma levels (averaging around 4-6% *per annum*).

Declines in sub-degree Diploma and preparatory studies enrolments reflect policy decisions to reduce institutional student numbers at these levels, while encouraging more Indigenous enrolments in degree programmes. To 2004, such growth had been limited to Associate Degrees.

A projection to 2010 of Indigenous higher education student numbers, based on patterns of growth and decline over 2001-2004, indicated that, although completions could be expected to continue to grow (and approach 1700 *per annum* by 2010), both commencements and total enrolments by Indigenous students could be expected to decline to around 3600 and 8500 *per annum* respectively. These data are summarised in Figure 1 below and provide, at best, a picture of a plateau in Indigenous higher education participation, or more pessimistically a decline in enrolments and commencements, despite growth in award completions.

Figure 1: Indigenous Higher Education Figures 2001-2004 and Projections for 2010



VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

There was slight growth in Indigenous enrolments at vocational and technical education Certificate and Diploma levels over 2001-2004 from 43,851 to 44,904 (or 2%). The enrolment growth was mainly in higher level Certificate III/IV enrolments (around 3% *per annum*), but a decline in Diploma enrolments (around 5% *per annum*). Diploma completions grew moderately (around 7% *per annum*), but lower level Certificate I/II completions declined (around 4% *per annum*).

A projection to 2010 of Indigenous vocational and technical education student numbers, based on a continuation of patterns of growth and decline over 2001-2004, indicated that completions at Diploma level could be expected to grow to around 550 *per annum* with Diploma enrolments declining to around 2400 *per annum*, while mild growth could be expected in higher level Certificate III/IV client numbers (around 3% *per annum*) and mild declines in lower level Certificate I/II completions (around 4% *per annum*).

An analysis of available data on the articulation of Indigenous students from TAFE to university indicated that around 30% of Indigenous higher education commencers in 2002-2004 (compared with around 22% of non-Indigenous) reported some prior TAFE experience, or an average of approximately 750 a year.

TOWARDS ACHIEVING PARITY IN INDIGENOUS ENROLMENT AND COMPLETION RATES

The higher education and vocational and technical education projections, together, suggest that, on current trends and without further policy changes, annual completions of 1000 Bachelors degrees, 200 Masters degrees, 50 Doctorates, 150 Graduate Diplomas/Certificates, 40 Honours, and 90 Associate Degrees could be reached by 2010, as could some 3000 Certificate III/IV and 550 vocational and technical education Diploma awards annually.

Having noted that a number of the projections were lower than the visionary targets initially set by IHEAC while others were quite consistent with them, IHEAC revised its targets for award completions to those included in Priorities 2 and 3.

It may be appropriate to consider setting “milestone” or “signpost” targets on the pathway towards achievement of some of the more “visionary” targets (i.e. those unlikely to be achieved for some years beyond 2010). This is not to suggest a reduction in the “vision”, but the setting of some additional and more readily observed and encouraging signposts or milestones along the way to parity of participation and outcomes for Indigenous students in both higher education and vocational and technical education.

A comparison of the current levels of Indigenous participation with those that would be achieved if Indigenous students had participation parity with non-Indigenous students provides a stark indication of the progress that need to be made in Indigenous higher education.

The numbers of non-Indigenous and Indigenous students enrolled and those completing their studies in higher education (in 2003) and in vocational training and education (in 2004) are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Indigenous and non-Indigenous higher education participation (enrolments) and completions 2003

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	Enrolments	Completions	Enrolments	Completions
Doctorate	182	12	30 671	4 048
Masters	504	120	78 798	19 590
Honours	94	38	11 627	8 523
Grad Dip/Cert	393	137	36 084	23 929
Bachelors	5 364	698	498 526	95 606
Assoc Degree	206	56	1 907	371
Other	2 245	130	29 148	3 745
Total	8 988	1 191	686 761	155 812

Table 2: Non-Indigenous and Indigenous VTE participation and completions (awards) 2004

	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous	
	Enrolments	Completions	Enrolments	Completions
Diploma +	2 776	534	173 129	37 382
Certificate III/IV	18 006	2 883	579 724	149 868
Certificate I/II	24 122	3 068	306 795	76 406
Total	44 904	6 485	1 059 648	263 656

Parity of participation is defined as the proportion (%) of Australian students that would be expected to be Indigenous, if Indigenous people were represented according to their proportion of the higher education aged population in Australia. (see National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2003. p83). The Indigenous Australian Benchmark for Higher Education, National, State, and Territory, 2004 calculation revised the 2001 figure from 2.5% to 2.73% and the 2004 figure to 2.86%.

As shown in Table 3, if there had been parity of participation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous higher education students in 2003 one could have expected a total of 17,221 Indigenous higher education students to be enrolled, or nearly double the current enrolment of 8988.

Table 3: Indigenous higher education participation rates – current and at full parity for 2003 population aged 15+

	Current Indigenous participation number	Parity participation number	%increase needed for parity
Doctorate	182	695	282%
Masters	504	2 593	414%
Honours	94	234	144%
Grad Dip/Cert	393	1 293	229%
Bachelors	5 364	11 546	115%
Assoc Degree	206	40	-81%
Other	2 245	821	-63%
Total	8 988	17 221	92%

If Indigenous enrolments had been at the parity estimate of 17,221 in 2003 rather than the actual 8988, one could have expected completions of around 2750 (or 230% of the actual 1191 completions) at the current Indigenous completion rates. Applying the higher (parity) rates of effective completion by non-Indigenous students, one could have expected Indigenous completions of 3750 in 2003, an increase of more than 300% on current completion rates.

Table 4: Estimate of Indigenous higher education completions at full parity for 2003 population aged 15+

	Current Indigenous completion	Completion Estimate			
		At Indigenous completion rate		At non-Indigenous completion rate	
	number	per cent	number	per cent	number
Doctorate	12	6.6%	46	13.2%	92
Masters	120	23.8%	617	24.9%	646
Honours	38	40.4%	94	73.0%	171
Grad Dip/Cert	137	34.9%	451	39.9%	516
Bachelors	698	13.0%	1 501	19.1%	2 205
Assoc Degree	56	27.2%	11	20.2%	8
Other	130	5.8%	48	12.3%	101
Total	1 191	13.3%	2 768	21.8%	3 738

Note: Parity in higher education completions has been estimated here by calculating for each age group in the population aged 15+ years a notional total for Indigenous participation in higher education at the non-Indigenous participation rate. The estimated parity participation total for 2003 is 17,221 (compared to the actual 8,988). Applying the Indigenous and non-Indigenous completion rates gives estimated completions of 2,768 and 3,738 respectively.

Similarly, as Tables 5 and 6 show, with parity of participation, the number of Indigenous students participating in vocational and technical education would have been 46,264 students, or 1360 more than the actual total of 44,904. Under parity of completion estimates, the vocational and technical education total would have been around 11,500 completing Indigenous students rather than actual completion rate 6,281.

Table 5: Indigenous VTE participation numbers – current and at full parity for 2004 population

	Current participation	Parity participation	Change needed to achieve parity
	number	number	per cent
Diploma +	2 776	7 559	172%
Certificate III or IV	18 006	25 311	41%
Certificate I or II	24 122	13 395	-45%
Total	44 904	46 264	3%

Table 6: Estimate of indigenous VTE completions (awards) at full parity for 2004 population

	Current completion	At Indigenous award rate		At non-Indigenous award rate	
	number	per cent	number	Per cent	number
Diploma +	534	19.2%	1 454	21.6%	1 632
Certificate III or IV	2 883	16.0%	4 053	25.9%	6 543
Certificate I or II	3 068	12.7%	1 704	24.9%	3 336
Total	6 485	15.6%	7 210	24.9%	11 511

TOWARDS ACHIEVING PARITY IN INDIGENOUS STUDENTS' FIELDS AND LEVELS OF STUDY

FIELDS OF STUDY

The fields of study in which Indigenous higher education students enrolled (largely society and culture, education, and health) in 2001-2004 tended to be more restricted than those of non-Indigenous students overall and to have lower tertiary entrance score cutoffs except in the more selective higher education institutions. Progress towards full parity of participation would seem to imply that Indigenous students are appropriately represented in admissions across the full range of fields and levels of education. It would seem to be desirable to give further attention to identifying courses in institutions to which Indigenous students may gain entry on the basis of their current qualifications, and to providing appropriate support to Indigenous applicants through advisory/ counselling services at application and selection times.

LEVELS OF STUDY

Although there was strong growth in Indigenous enrolments at Doctorate and Masters levels in 2001-2004 (around 10% *per annum*), commencements and completions at Honours level declined, while overall Honours enrolments showed little change, as Table 7 shows. It is not clear how this pattern occurs, although it may reflect variations on how students can start and exit Honours courses: transferring from bachelors pass degrees and exiting into graduate diplomas or masters, as well as enrolling directly in, and completing, an end-on honours programme.

Table 7: Indigenous higher education enrolments, commencements and completions 2001 and 2004

	Enrolments		Commencements		Completions	
	2001	2004	2001	2004	2001	2004
Doctorate	131	209	29	47	8	12
Master's by Research	124	135	45	51	12	16
Master's by Coursework	289	448	125	202	84	104
Honours	98	96	31	19	41	38

It could also be related to differences in typical patterns of postgraduate enrolment across different fields of education: in the fields in which Indigenous students currently tend to be studying (society and culture, and education), mid-career entry to a Masters course some years after completing a Bachelors pass degree is relatively common (and possibly followed by doctoral study), whereas the honours-doctorate pathway is perhaps more common in the natural sciences.

The net effect at present of having relatively few Indigenous students completing honours courses may be a limited pool of doctoral candidates, and thus a limited potential pool of Indigenous researchers at doctoral or post-doctoral level, with consequential effects, from the relatively limited number of Indigenous mentors, on the size of the pool of Indigenous candidates for postgraduate study. The high number of Indigenous master's students undertaking coursework rather than Masters by research also contributes.

More attention to exploring the reasons for the few honours enrolments over 2001-2004, and to addressing potential implications, would clearly be desirable.

DATA REPORTING CONSIDERATIONS

At various times it has been suggested by researchers that the “standard” national collections of data do not capture sufficient “fine-grained” data on student movement along pathways as they make transitions to higher education studies. One useful approach, without seeking to reconfigure the national collections of essentially administrative data, might be to encourage more systematic storage of, and researcher access to, data from focus groups and surveys including those related to the Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth, ABS collections, or evaluations of government-supported programs. This would be subject to privacy considerations.

INDIGENOUS STAFF IN UNIVERSITIES 2001-2004

As shown in Table 8, (columns 2 – 3) Indigenous higher education staff numbers for 2001-2004, although increasing, are still well below those expected if Indigenous people were employed at the same rates (per proportion of the population) as non-Indigenous staff. In 2004 only 0.67% of higher education teaching and research staff were Indigenous. As shown in column 6, the number of Indigenous teaching and research staff needs to rise to 960 to achieve parity with non-Indigenous academic staff employment rates. The projection to 2010 (5th column) of Indigenous staff rates, if the reasonably linear growth trends over 2001-2004 continue, show a slight increase in both numbers and proportion of staff. However, Indigenous staff levels, academic and general, employed within Australian higher education institutions by 2010 are projected to remain very significantly below parity rates. The limited number of Indigenous higher education staff has negative implications for the enhancement of Indigenous culture and knowledge within universities, the workload expectations placed on those staff, and the role models and support systems available to Indigenous students.

Table 8: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Higher Education Staff 2001-2004, and 2010 estimate at 2001-04 growth rates

	2001	2004	%change 2001-04	2010 estimate	Parity number
Teaching and/or Research					
Indigenous	229	266	16%	350	960
Non-Indigenous	35 447	39 625	12%	47 000	
% Indigenous	0.64%	0.67%		0.74%	
Other					
Indigenous	323	434	34%	640	1180
Non-Indigenous	42 229	47 333	12%	57 000	
% Indigenous	0.76%	0.91%		1.11%	
All staff					
Indigenous	552	700	27%	990	
Non-Indigenous	77 676	86 958	12%	104 000	
% Indigenous	0.71%	0.80%		0.95%	

The potential number of Indigenous academic staff is limited by the much smaller proportion of the Indigenous population holding the base qualification for entry into academic employment. If one were to consider the pool of people for potential academic appointment to be only those whose minimum qualification is at least a bachelor's degree, while only around 3% of the Indigenous population aged 15-64 has a Bachelor's degree or higher qualification, compared with 17% non-Indigenous, the problem with the size of the pool is significant.

To reach parity by 2010, however, there would need to be around 960 Indigenous teaching and/or research academic staff and around 1180 other Indigenous higher education staff. The calculation involves determining the proportion which projected non-Indigenous academic staff constitute of the non-Indigenous 15-64 year age population with a bachelor's degree or higher qualification, and applying that same proportion to the corresponding Indigenous population. For other staff, however, the calculation relates to the 15-64 population irrespective of qualifications held, having regard to the range of roles and skills of "other" higher education staff.

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