



MONASH
University

MONASH
INDIGENOUS
ENGAGEMENT

**MONASH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
FRAMEWORK: 2019–2030**





Monash University proudly acknowledges that its Australian campuses stand on the traditional lands of the people of the Kulin nations.

MONASH IS PROUD OF THE LEGACY THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE ADVANCEMENT AND WELL-BEING OF THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY, HERE IN VICTORIA AND ACROSS THE NATION. WITH OVER 50 YEARS OF INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS AND ENGAGEMENT, AT VARIOUS TIMES MONASH HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN INITIATING CHANGE AND MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE.

We were the first university in Australia to have a dedicated Australian Indigenous Centre – the Monash Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs, established in 1964. The legacy of that Centre continues today, through our Indigenous student support teams, the Indigenous studies program, and through the Indigenous graduates of the Monash Orientation Scheme for Aboriginals (MOSA).

Despite our successes, Monash has not always performed well in all of our endeavours. In recent years, Indigenous student enrolments have been low, and Indigenous staff members have remained relatively few.

There are a myriad of factors that contribute to low enrolments of Indigenous students in universities, and this has been the focus of many a government report, inquiry and policy over the last few decades. Nationally, there have been improvements of Indigenous student enrolments in

Australian universities with figures tracking upwards in recent years. In 2018, there are now 70% more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending universities than there were in 2008, while the overall domestic student population has increased by 37% over the same period. At Monash, in 2000, 88 students were Indigenous compared to 219 in 2018.

National policy drivers for Australian universities benchmark equal parity in the percentage of the Indigenous population enrolled in universities. For Monash, the percentage of Indigenous enrolments should therefore be 3%, and if parity in the Indigenous population of Victoria was to be achieved then 0.8% of the Monash domestic enrolments should be Indigenous students. In 2018, just 0.39% of Monash's domestic enrolments are Indigenous students. But we can and must do more.

Monash has a long way to go to elevate Indigenous access and success in higher education to levels commensurate with other students, and to better draw on the abilities, knowledges and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

The **Monash Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework** establishes our commitment to making a leading national and international contribution to Indigenous advancement over the next 12 years. As the university with the longest history of engagement in Indigenous education in Australia, this Framework once realised in 2030, will represent over 75 years of effort and achievements in Indigenous higher education in Australia.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ADVANCEMENT

MONASH IS COMMITTED TO FOSTERING A SOCIETY THAT RESPECTS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES, CULTURES AND KNOWLEDGES, AND WORKS TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE LEGACIES OF THE PAST.

Through our teaching, research and community engagement, Monash will continue to make a substantial and ongoing contribution to reconciliation by fostering mutually-beneficial partnerships with Indigenous peoples and communities. We will recruit, support and retain Indigenous students and staff, and advance research, knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, cultures and issues.

The **Monash Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework** establishes our ambitions for contributing to Indigenous advancement over the next 12 years.

We aspire to be recognised internationally as a leader in Indigenous higher education, research and student support, and to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to the national Indigenous Agenda. Monash has a rich history of giving life to new ideas and offering new opportunities to those who have had too few. We are ready and committed to spearheading change.

By deepening and enhancing the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Monash will expand our own contributions to:

- reduce the disparity in disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians;

- elevate the visibility of Indigenous expertise, excellence and contributions to society;
- acknowledge and support the rights, languages and cultures of Indigenous communities;
- tackle racism and the impact it has on Indigenous people and communities; and
- promote equal opportunity and outcomes for all Australians.

By creating an inclusive and engaged environment, Monash will support the success of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, and foster contribution to strengthening and improving the life outcomes of their families and communities.

The **Monash Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework** is underpinned by the Monash University Act, 2009. This commits the university to realise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations, safeguarding cultural heritages, and using expertise and resources to involve Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our teaching and learning.

The Framework has been developed to closely align with the University's overarching strategy, **Focus Monash**, and its component education and research agendas, **Focus Education** and **Focus Research**, as well as Monash's **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)**. It is the first of its kind at Monash, pulling together all of our ambitions across the Indigenous space. The **Monash Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework** comprises four framing pillars:

- Increasing the participation of and supporting success in Indigenous students

- Embedding Indigenous perspectives and content into curriculum
- Growing research contributions to address and serve the needs of Indigenous people and communities
- Upholding traditional knowledge and respecting Indigenous students, staff and communities.

Our four framing pillars are complimented through adoption of the recommendations and alignment with the guiding principles of key strategic and policy imperatives including:

- Monash University Act, 2009;
- Focus Monash: Strategic Plan 2015-2020;
- Monash Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP);
- Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy;
- Closing the Gap targets, Council of Australian Governments (COAG) 2008;
- Victorian Government's Marrung Aboriginal Educational Plan 2016-2026;

- National Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Commonwealth of Australia 2012;
- The Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Student Support Program (ISSP);
- The Toorong Marnong Higher Education Accord, jointly auspiced by VAEAI and the Victorian Vice-Chancellors Committee (VCC).

This Framework is a dynamic 12-year phased document. The first phase (2019-20) focuses on the consolidation and establishment of current programs to align with **Focus Monash: Strategic imperatives**. The Framework will be refreshed in 2021 and 2026 to reflect changes in overarching strategy and priority for the University, along with national higher education and Indigenous affairs policy imperatives.



BY CREATING AN INCLUSIVE AND ENGAGED ENVIRONMENT, MONASH WILL SUPPORT THE SUCCESS OF AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS AND STAFF.

THE PILLARS

1 INCREASING THE PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORTING SUCCESS OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

In 2018, there were 219 Indigenous students enrolled at Monash, around 0.4% of total domestic enrolments. In order to achieve Indigenous enrolment numbers that reflect national population parity¹, we would need to enrol a further 420 students.

The access and participation of Indigenous students in higher education is still lagging. School attendance is 10 percentage points lower for Indigenous students, and only 10% of Indigenous students matriculate from Year 12 to university, compared with approximately 52% of all school leavers (ABS). High achieving Indigenous students (those in the top NAPLAN quartile) are less likely to want to attend university – 43% compared to 73% of non-Indigenous students.

Monash is committed to encouraging more Indigenous students to apply to the University. Through our initiatives, we will work to remove some of the identified barriers to study and create clear pathway options for prospective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Monash is also working to improve Indigenous student success. We already boast strong retention and completion rates; however, in 2017, retention rates for Indigenous students (82.2%) were considerably lower than their non-Indigenous counterparts (92.6%). In 2017, 62% of commencing Indigenous students at Monash were classified as first in family – a group with traditionally lower retention rates and greater need for support whilst at university.

Success is not only measured by the number of Indigenous students who enrol but also on the quality of the support and services they receive during their studies. Monash is committed to providing high quality support to our Indigenous students across all facets of University life.

By attracting Indigenous students to follow a university pathway and supporting them once they arrive, Monash will be contributing in a meaningful way to closing the gap of disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and improving education outcomes for all students.

¹ According to ABS estimates, 1.5% of the Australian population aged 15-64 is Indigenous (ABS Cat. Nos. 3238.0; 3222.0).

Strategic priorities

- A. In order to improve access to the University among Indigenous students, Monash commits to:
- develop targeted strategies for increasing the participation of Indigenous students, especially postgraduates and those from regional areas;
 - increase engagement with feeder schools and pipeline programs in a way that aligns with best practice initiatives in Indigenous student participation;
 - provide skills development and leadership programs for Indigenous secondary school students that build capacity/preparedness;
 - work in partnership with Indigenous businesses and business associations to provide postgraduate and professional development opportunities.

- B. We will deliver unparalleled support to our Indigenous students, including:
- a re-design, implementation and ongoing evaluation of academic enhancement and student support programs;
 - an expansion of the Elders in Residence program;
 - boosting the number of Indigenous students living on campus through enhanced scholarship program; and
 - Opportunities to pursue international studies and activities that broaden experiences and perspectives.

Measures

By 2030, Monash will have achieved Indigenous student participation at a rate that is commensurate with national population parity.

The retention and success rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will be equal to those of domestic non-Indigenous students in the same fields of study.

Monash will rank nationally in the top 5 in satisfaction with the education experience among Indigenous Students (Student Experience Survey).

MONASH IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUCCESS.



2 EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES AND CONTENT INTO CURRICULUM

The majority of students enter a university such as Monash with very little knowledge of the circumstances and history affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Government guidelines require that universities have Indigenous education strategies that include plans to lead to the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in curricula, and include activities that promote the Indigenous cultural competency of students and staff.

Monash is committed to changing views and attitudes through student learning, unpacking themes of racism, disparities, partnership, engagement, reconciliation, native title and treaty. We aspire to enable all graduates to engage analytically in complex and multifaceted discussions relating to Indigenous Australians and the historical and contemporary issues in Australian society and beyond.

Monash is currently the largest university in Australia in terms of student numbers, graduating over 19,500 students in 2017. The post-study career paths of our alumni have great impact globally as they go on to become leaders of industry and academia. Equipping all students with an understanding of Indigenous knowledges, cultures and contemporary issues will allow us to make significant and widespread change to the lives of Indigenous Peoples, both in Australia and globally.

Strategic priorities

In order to strengthen the capacity of graduates to uphold Indigenous knowledges and peoples throughout their professional lives, we will:

- A. Incorporate historical and contemporary issues drawing on Indigenous perspectives in curriculum and learning environments;
- B. Foster Faculty based Indigenous leadership by establishing appointments in Indigenous education;


- C. Continued investment in an Indigenous Academic Development Program; and
- D. Conduct ongoing discipline-based curricula think tanks to articulate the specific context and content about Indigenous Australia that aligns to the professional careers of our graduates.

Measures

All students are exposed to a minimum standard of content that incorporate historical and contemporary issues drawing on Indigenous perspectives in curriculum and learning environments in Monash's curricula.

The number of Indigenous appointments in faculty leadership teams.

The numbers of participants in the Indigenous Academic Development Program.



EQUIPPING ALL STUDENTS WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES, CULTURES AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES WILL ALLOW US TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT AND WIDESPREAD CHANGE TO THE LIVES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

3 GROWING RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO ADDRESS AND SERVE THE NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

With a more than fifty-year legacy of conducting research into contemporary Indigenous affairs in a formalised setting, building effective Indigenous research programs is a University-wide priority at Monash. We recognise the vital importance of Indigenous research as a responsibility to Indigenous Peoples and a key contributor to reconciliation. We also acknowledge the complex tensions and historical abuses that Indigenous people and communities have experienced as the subjects of research that has been conducted on or about them.

Moving forward Monash is committed to creating a culture across our research institutes, centres and faculties where Indigenous peoples are full participants in research projects that concern them, share ownership and accountability in the aims, methods and results of this work. At every stage, research with and about Indigenous peoples must be founded on a process of meaningful engagement and reciprocity between the researcher and Indigenous people, underpinned by national and international best practice and guidelines.

At Monash, we lead by example in conducting research to the highest ethical standards and we have a genuine

commitment to building partnerships and pathways for knowledge exchange. To tackle major Indigenous research challenges we will foster research that leverages the breadth of our expertise, bringing together discipline leaders in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. We will prioritise the advancement of Indigenous research, education, engagement, cultural heritage, and knowledge domestically and internationally to advance Indigenous issues. We will strengthen our research systems and processes to uphold the highest standard of Indigenous research consistent with the national and international best practice standards.

Strategic priorities

Monash commits to developing a research contribution that addresses and serve the needs of Australia's Indigenous people and communities, through:

- A. Targeting investment to support recruitment of Indigenous researchers;
- B. Refining and upholding best practice Indigenous research systems and practices, including developing a partnership program of Indigenous research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations;

- C. Establish and maintain a visiting Indigenous researchers program to encourage new national and international collaborations;
- D. The development of Indigenous research capacity by providing an appropriate environment and resources to encourage Indigenous students to pursue careers in Indigenous research;
- E. Fostering Indigenous research partnerships both within Monash and across universities; and
- F. Ensuring our Indigenous research has meaningful impact both locally and globally.

Measures

The numbers of:

- Indigenous Higher Degree by Research enrolments;
- Research grants that support high-value and high-impact research, conducted in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisation; and
- Indigenous led research publications and citations annually.

By 2030, Monash University will have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Degree by Research candidates and leading academics in all faculties and institutes.

Establish across Monash a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career researchers.



WE RECOGNISE THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AS A RESPONSIBILITY TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND A KEY CONTRIBUTOR TO RECONCILIATION.

4 UPHOLDING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND RESPECTING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS, STAFF AND COMMUNITIES

Monash has an opportunity to leverage our experiences and resources to better involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in knowledge-advancement and decision-making activities that will allow us to work towards realising our aspirations around safeguarding our ancient and rich Indigenous cultural heritages.

In order to achieve this, there needs to be a safe and comfortable place to build cultural pride and demonstrate, through education, research, communication and our relationships, the high value placed on Indigenous Peoples, cultures and histories.

It is vital that all University staff recognise the importance of creating inclusive learning environments for all students and working environments for all employees that are respectful and welcoming, and that embed Indigenous views, knowledges and voices.

We will strive to strengthen connections with Indigenous alumni to foster connections between students, past, present and future, and their communities.

Strategic priorities

- A. Uphold the high value that Monash places on Indigenous Peoples, cultures and histories, Monash commits to:
 - Supporting an environment with a tangible Indigenous presence in our spaces, events and activities;
 - Developing reciprocal and purposeful relationships and engagement with Indigenous communities and organisations;
 - Building strong networks and contacts with Indigenous alumni to strengthen to foster connections between students, past, present and future; and
 - Integrate Indigenous perspectives and knowledges into our buildings, gardens and landscaping works in prominent and visible positions
- B. Ensure a strong alignment of strategy and purpose in Indigenous higher education, Monash will:
 - Uphold a strategically focused system of Indigenous governance;
 - Conduct a best practice program of Cultural Awareness as a compulsory program of professional development for all Australian based staff;
 - Align and connect its systems, structures and activities across the organisation to uphold this Framework; and
 - Establish mechanisms of accountability and reporting that is embedded within existing requirements of university's executive.
- C. Deliver a robust and best practice program of Indigenous staff recruitment, development and retention, Monash will:
 - Strengthen the recruitment, development and retention of Indigenous staff;
 - Support Indigenous staff through the provision of a culturally safe workplace, with policies and procedures that embrace Indigenous knowledges, cultures and histories; and
 - Allow new appointments of Indigenous professional staff (including trainees) to be made outside of FTE caps.
- D. Connect research, learning and engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities through the establishment of a hub and spoke model of Indigenous leadership and participation across, and within the university.
- E. Monash will foster relationships that leverage alumni expertise and Indigenous community needs and perspectives, along with industry/community goodwill to pursue opportunities to advance the lives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Measures

Monash will employ Indigenous staff in line with national population parity by 2030.

Each Faculty establishes a champion of Indigenous Education, who is a member of the Faculty Executive and responsible for leading the Indigenous agenda.

Participation numbers and percentage of coverage of staff completing the cultural awareness programs.

Participation and attendance of Indigenous advisory council members at scheduled meetings.

MONASH WILL EMPLOY INDIGENOUS STAFF IN LINE WITH NATIONAL POPULATION PARITY BY 2030.

Through the priorities and initiatives set out in the Monash Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework, the University will be able to advance our involvement towards fostering a society that respects Australia's Indigenous Peoples, cultures and knowledges, and works towards addressing the legacies of the past.

By 2030, we will have worked to reduce the disparities that exist for Indigenous Australians through strengthening and enriching the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and enhancing the visibility of Indigenous knowledges and influences.

These accomplishments will have been enabled by increased participation and success of our Indigenous students; a curriculum that showcases Indigenous perspectives and content; research contributions that address and serve the needs of Indigenous Peoples and communities; and the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in knowledge advancement and decision-making activities.

Together, we can and will achieve lasting change.

Professor Jacinta Elston
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous)



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'Martakulu 2010' artwork by Lydia Balbal Gjinabalyi/Wugubalyi

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