Equity Issues: Every University’s Concern, Whose Business?

An Exploration of Universities’ Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Interests

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Preface

Australian universities today serve a far more diverse clientele than they have ever done at any time in this nation’s educational history. This diversity is in part due to Commonwealth funding policies for universities which emanate from documents such as *A Fair Chance For All* (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990) and the *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995), which have increased the participation of groups such as Australia’s Indigenous peoples in universities. The ‘opening of the doors’ to universities has been a matter of political commitment to democratically inspired notions of access and equity.

For Indigenous peoples, however, the time has come to reflect upon just how far universities have opened their doors to this diversity, and to ask how far they have changed their practices to become inclusive of this diversity of students and staff. Since the beginning of British colonisation of Australia, Indigenous peoples have been struggling to reclaim space for self-determination of their own outcomes. Higher education can be an important tool in this process (Bin Sallik 1993) or it can be a tool of continuing oppression (Morgan 1992). An Indigenous academic has described her concerns thus:

> Although universities have begun to open their doors to us they have yet to become key players in Aboriginal self-determination. To do this they have to be prepared to change from within and even question some of their traditional pedagogies and practices.

(Bin Sallik 1993)

These words reflect the frustrations experienced by a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995). While Indigenous people may now gain access to tertiary education at a far greater rate than previously, their overall success rate in higher education is still the lowest of all of the so-called ‘equity target groups’ (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996, pp. 27, 50).

The *MCEETYA Draft Final Report* (1995, p. 4) states that

> Ensuring equitable access to education and training services requires more than merely gaining entry to mainstream programs. Indigenous Australians require an education which enables them to achieve their cultural and academic potential in Indigenous terms as well as in mainstream academic and technological skills.

The report warns that ‘providing an education which does not strengthen the identity and cultural values of Indigenous peoples is assimilationist’.
It is within this context that this project attempts to investigate the inclusion of Indigenous interests and perspectives within universities.

The project addresses the following key issues:

- which worthwhile policy initiatives are represented in university strategic plans (or similar policies) with reference to Indigenous Australians;
- what Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of university communities see as key dilemmas arising from policies and practices in this area; and
- how Indigenous leaders in universities regard these policy initiatives and dilemmas.

The focus of this project is not upon the Indigenous students or Indigenous academic/support centres within higher education, but the culture of the universities. Hence the project is focused on initiatives that have found expression outside Indigenous education support units or centres. The principal research strategies adopted for this project were policy analysis, case studies and peer review. Together these strategies provided the basis for an empirical investigation into equity issues in higher education using multiple sources of evidence.

**Structure of the Report**

**Chapter 1** examines the conceptual framework informing the Project’s consideration of equity issues in higher education.

**Chapter 2** details the process by which the research was conducted. The role of the Advisory Committee and the methods for data collection and analysis are explained.

**Chapters 3 through to 11** present the interpretation of the evidence generated through the analysis of university policies and interviews with university staff and students. Specifically, **Chapter 3** presents details relating to the external imperatives that are now posing challenges to the working life of universities, and the place of equity considerations within university cultures and values.

**Chapter 4** addresses issues of institutional management.

**Chapter 5** examines concerns relating to curriculum and teaching.

**Chapter 6** reports on equity considerations in relation to the administration and organisational structure of universities.

**Chapter 7** reviews worthwhile policy initiatives and dilemmas with respect to research issues.

**Chapter 8** considers useful policy directions and tensions regarding student resourcing.
Chapter 9 summarises useful ideas and identifies selected dilemmas concerning university–community relations.

In Chapter 10 anti-racism is shown to have been of little concern in recent university policies, although it has sparked considerable interest among university staff and students.

Chapter 11 reports on policy developments and dilemmas regarding university monitoring and evaluation of equity policies and procedures.

Chapter 12 summarises the views of Indigenous leaders in universities regarding the evidence presented in Chapters 3 to 11 foregrounding Indigenous visions for universities.
Acknowledgements

A national project of the scope endeavoured in this report has been dependent for its completion on a wide range of people who have guided, inspired, assisted, encouraged, and most importantly given of themselves, their time, their knowledges and their energies to assist the project team.

The project advisory team consisting of Professor Joan Cole of Curtin University of Technology, Associate Professor Jeannie Herbert of James Cook University, Ms Penny Tripony of Queensland University of Technology, and Ms Yvette Devlin of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), were especially helpful in sharing their knowledge of current developments in equity and Indigenous higher education.

For the purposes of mapping university policies, we are indebted to those universities which supplied copies of documentation and to the staff of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs for allowing us to access other related documents. We are also indebted to the generosity of those universities who agreed to participate in interviews. The willingness of interviewees from across different sectors of universities to make themselves available and to participate in the interviews contributed significantly to the insights gained into the issues raised in this report.

We are also appreciative of those senior Indigenous academics from across Australia who responded to the early draft materials from which this report was developed and who also commented on how this research project addressed the concerns of Indigenous communities.

For a significant part of the project, Lennette Ryerson spent many hours undertaking a detailed mapping of university policies and liaising with interviewees and the advisory committee. Her courteous manner and unique use of decoration in the presentation of documents was commented upon by many who found it a refreshing change to much research data presentation and communication. Angie Padfield has been a very patient and tolerant administrator in the latter stages of the project, when perhaps some of the more difficult steps were being undertaken to bring this project to fruition.

A sincere thank you also to Sue Bigg, Kaye Hart and Jennifer Edwards for the many hours they contributed to transcribing interview tapes. Thank you also to those administrative personnel in the Capricornia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre and the Faculty of Education, namely Pam Gale, Katie Kiss, Carol Tomlin and Gina Yarrow, who helped in the administration of project funds and collated and the production of draft reports.
Finally our thanks to our families, our colleagues and our students who have patiently endured our distractions and our preoccupation as we struggled to complete this project. We hope that its outcomes will enhance their participation in Australia’s universities.
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AECG</td>
<td>Aboriginal Education Consultative Group</td>
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<td>AESIP</td>
<td>Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATSI</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
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<td>ATSIC</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission</td>
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<td>AV-CC</td>
<td>Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQU</td>
<td>Central Queensland University</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAA</td>
<td>Department of Aboriginal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEET</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEETYA</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEC</td>
<td>Higher Education Council</td>
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<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<td>HEEP</td>
<td>Higher Education Equity Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Committee on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>NAEC</td>
<td>National Aboriginal Education Committee</td>
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<td>NAIDOC</td>
<td>National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration</td>
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<td>NATSIEP</td>
<td>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBEET</td>
<td>National Board for Education, Employment and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English Speaking Background</td>
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<td>OLAA</td>
<td>Open Learning Agency of Australia</td>
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<td>RAI</td>
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Executive Summary

Rethinking the Positioning of Indigenous Peoples

Equity initiatives in higher education are concerned with introducing into universities the voices of groups marginalised under different political agendas, including patriarchy and colonialism. However, the homogenisation of the voices of differing ‘equity groups’ under the banner of ‘disadvantage’ is not without its own problems. Efforts by universities to redress the social and economic ‘disadvantage’ of targeted equity groups presumes that they all share a similar aspiration for parity with some mythical non-Indigenous, able-bodied, well-to-do ‘malestream’.

For Indigenous peoples, seeing their higher education needs as primarily concerned with redressing ‘disadvantage’ is perhaps too simplistic. For a start, the notion of ‘disadvantage’ appears to be an attribute of their ‘Indigenousness’. As such this may imply, and further perpetuate, the mistaken view that Indigenous peoples as a cultural group have inherent characteristics which invariably manifest as ‘disadvantage’ within non-Indigenous contexts.

Redressing ‘disadvantage’ also has the effect of further marginalising the interests and concerns of those very groups. The challenge by Indigenous peoples to equity as a framework for addressing their higher education needs is premised on their assertions of sovereignty. This challenge affirms that as sovereign peoples, Indigenous peoples have the right to be recognised and accepted as equal stakeholders within the decision-making arenas of universities. Essential to this claim is the recognition that Indigenous peoples are obligated to concepts, values and protocols that may not be recognised and appreciated within already established institutions. Therefore a deconstructive analysis of university structures and the interests they serve is essential if Indigenous peoples are to be included as equal stakeholders.

Rhetoric of Commitment

While universities state that they are committed to Indigenous peoples’ aspirations, the responsibility for enacting this commitment is invariably that of the Indigenous academic/support centres. As such all things ‘black’ are referred to the Indigenous centres, with a ‘hands off’ approach by those who actually espouse that commitment. This is very similar to the response of those governments which have legislatively withdrawn infrastructure support such as health and education services to Indigenous communities claiming that because the Aboriginal people have gained land rights they would not want for anything else. Now that Indigenous peoples are wanting self-determination it is assumed that they alone can ensure it.
However, the tension that needs to be addressed in Australian higher education is, what is the balance between Indigenous peoples’ desires for autonomy and self-determination and the overall institutional commitment to ensuring that those efforts are realised within the federated structures of universities. There are people in these institutions who have the ‘keys to the door’, but they are unwilling to open that door to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous people need the key holders to ‘open the door’ or at least manipulate the locks so they can see what is on the other side. Perhaps more importantly, it is necessary for universities to take on the aspirations of Indigenous peoples as their own aspirations, and commit themselves to ensuring that these are entrenched across all policy areas.

**Representation**

The issues of inclusiveness and ownership are imperative to the tensions surrounding Indigenous representation in all aspects of universities. Indigenous peoples are saying that it is not physically possible to be represented on all committees across the university. For one thing, the size of the Indigenous staffing profiles is too small to accommodate this but more importantly it is not sufficient that Indigenous issues are addressed or responded to only when an Indigenous person is present. Universities should have a commitment to ensuring that the ethos of the university is such that every decision-making body within the university ensures that implications for Indigenous people are considered in their discussions and decisions. To achieve this there is a need for collaboration between Indigenous people and the university to ensure that whatever processes are put into place do not inadvertently appropriate Indigenous peoples’ knowledge or misrepresent Indigenous peoples’ interests.

**Reworking the Consultative Mechanisms within the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and Universities**

The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and universities make laudable statements about commitment to Indigenous access, participation, retention and success. However, their processes for translating this commitment are constrained by their own often ideologically limited notions of equity and social justice. Indigenous people in higher education will continue to be marginalised if these notions of equity and social justice prevail. The Department and universities need to engage Indigenous people in dialogue concerning equitable education if marginalisation is to be redressed. These organisations need to work with Indigenous people, through processes of dialogic consultation and negotiation, to reconstruct the current mechanisms of policy development and implementation in order to work towards appropriate educational outcomes that are relevant to Indigenous peoples.
Indigenisation

Universities need to accommodate Indigenous interests and rights across all facets of their operations—teaching, research, administration and community service. This requires more than cross-cultural awareness training, the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum or the employment of Indigenous educators. There is a need to create a space from where efforts can be made to reflect and entrench Indigenous values and protocols across all sectors of the university. No doubt this raises questions about making fundamental changes to the core values and ethos of the university so as to ensure that Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous ways of relating, seeing and doing are included and given legitimacy. This is not only about inclusion, it is also about acknowledging the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples.

While universities should be inclusive and respectful of other groups, such as women, people of non-English speaking background and international students, the sovereign position of Indigenous people should be apart from this and, more importantly, should not be diluted or included in the overall multicultural framework.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That universities make apparent their commitment to meeting the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples within and external to the university by reworking the organisational structures of the university so that Indigenous peoples are included in terms of their position as sovereign peoples.

Recommendation 2

That representation of Indigenous interests be evident across all senior management decision-making committees. In the absence of an Indigenous representative, the terms of reference for university committees to contain an imprimatur to address implications for Indigenous peoples that may arise out of decisions.

Recommendation 3

That the selection, appointment, induction and performance appraisal processes of university senior managers be linked to an expectation of them being responsive to the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples.
Recommendation 4

That universities make explicit in their strategic plans and related policies their commitment to, endorsement of and responsibility for the development and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategy.

Recommendation 5

That universities collaborate with Indigenous peoples to reorganise already established knowledge frameworks so that Indigenous epistemologies, knowledges and pedagogies can be incorporated and reflected within the production and transmission of knowledge across all disciplines of the universities.

Recommendation 6

That universities acknowledge and respect Indigenous peoples’ aspirations to maintain autonomy and self-determination in all matters, particularly Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs funding allocated for Indigenous programs, while at the same time including Indigenous peoples in constructive and strategic ways within the administration and operational structures of the university.

Recommendation 7

That universities collaborate with Indigenous peoples to develop ways in which Indigenous peoples and their interests are linked and networked across the university so that Indigenous rights, interests and aspirations are endorsed and owned by all participants within the university setting.

Recommendation 8

That universities commit to the self-determination efforts of Indigenous peoples by enhancing the employment and training opportunities for Indigenous employees across all areas of the university.

Recommendation 9

That universities undertake an institutional commitment to Indigenous self-determination by facilitating and enhancing research that directly benefits Indigenous communities.
Recommendation 10

That universities make apparent their commitment to facilitating Indigenous research needs by ensuring appropriate, sensitive and beneficial research is conducted in accordance with Indigenous ethics, values, and protocols, and that this commitment is explicitly expressed within university research policies and practices.

Recommendation 11

That universities give due recognition to and acceptance of the epistemological positions of Indigenous postgraduate students and Indigenous researchers in their research endeavours thus creating a space whereby Indigenous peoples may reconstruct and reconceptualise research paradigms that reflect their cultural positions.

Recommendation 12

That universities reflect on their own constructions of what a ‘university student’ is so as to reshape and reconceptualise their processes for the production and transmission of knowledges so that Indigenous students and other students of ‘difference’ can stake their claims in tertiary education.

Recommendation 13

That universities broaden the responsibility for Indigenous students’ access, participation, retention and success to become part of faculties’ processes of accountability, so that Indigenous students rights and interests are endorsed and owned by all participants within the university.

Recommendation 14

That universities actively engage in processes of consulting with Indigenous community groups as part of the universities’ commitment to community. In doing this, the university recognises Indigenous faculties, departments and centres within universities as part of those Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 15

That universities actively commit to an examination of their organisational structures and processes so as to identify and redress factors that reproduce institutional racism and exclude the cultural and sovereign positions of Indigenous peoples.
Recommendation 16

That universities indicate within their strategic plans their own institutional responsibilities to monitor, evaluate and respond to Indigenous access, participation, retention and success.

Recommendation 17

That the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs consult with Indigenous stakeholders to review the appropriateness of the Martin (1994) performance indicators so that they reflect the achievement of relevant and different outcomes for Indigenous peoples.
Universities and Indigenous Peoples

Historical Positioning of Indigenous Peoples

The establishment of a British colony at Sydney Cove on Indigenous lands in 1788 was based on the concept of terra nullius. Central to the application of this doctrine was the non-recognition of Indigenous sovereignty. When it became apparent that Indigenous peoples did in fact exist, policies such as mass genocide, protection, assimilation and integration were implemented over a period of two hundred years to solve the ‘problem’ of their existence. The latter policies of assimilation and integration attempted to effect the disappearance of Indigenous peoples through their incorporation into the already established Anglo-Australian hegemonic structures. By the 1960s, Indigenous peoples within Australia had taken on a more political and public profile as illustrated by the Land Rights movement and the Tent Embassy (Lippman 1994). While these efforts by Indigenous people were about re-assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, and their re-positioning with respect to equal and civil rights, the government responses were anchored to Anglo-centric notions of equity. The outcome was more policies offering ‘more of the same’, providing Indigenous peoples equity to access of what other Australians were entitled to. This presumed that with the promotion and implementation of equity policies, Indigenous ‘problems’ would be rectified and their status in society made ‘equal’. This, once again, was about ensuring that the rights of Indigenous peoples were consistent with the rights of other Australians and more importantly precluded any legal or government recognition of them as sovereign peoples. In essence, the response was to continue the project of assimilating Indigenous peoples, with education being a key tool and site for this policy intervention.

Indigenous Access to Higher Education

In accordance with the progressive social conscience of the early 1970s, universities opened their doors to Indigenous Australians by way of affirmative action programs. The Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme was introduced to provide direct financial assistance for Indigenous peoples wishing to access universities. This was followed in the mid-1970s with direct funding to a small number of colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology to establish programs to provide course and tutorial support for Indigenous students enrolled in what, at the time, were mainly teacher education courses. The National Aboriginal Education Committee’s (NAEC) statement on the Philosophy and Aims of Aboriginal Education argues that these programs provided additional support to those Aboriginal students enrolled in standard courses should be ‘appropriate to their culture, lifestyle and educational background’ (National Aboriginal Education Committee 1985, p. 68). These programs were premised on a deficit model which assumed the need to fill in the gaps in ‘past educational experiences’, as well as
aimed at developing a ‘positive sense of Aboriginal identity’ (Jordan & Howard 1985, p. 6). To a large extent the ‘success’ of such programs was determined by the willingness of the universities to use these support programs to assimilate Indigenous students into their existing structures and operations.

**Inclusion of Indigenous Australians within an Equity Framework**

By 1991, Indigenous peoples access to higher education had marginally increased. This increase, however, was still quite low in relation to per capita representation. Therefore to ensure continued access by Indigenous people to universities and to further broaden universities access for other ‘targeted’ equity groups, the Commonwealth Government introduced the policy *A Fair Chance for All: Higher Education That’s Within Everyone’s Reach* (Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1990). This policy designated Indigenous peoples, along with other groups such as women, as an ‘equity group’ due to their low level of participation in higher education (Gale & McNamee 1994).

This broad inclusion of equity groups and the associated funding structure ensured the mainstreaming’ of Indigenous programs. This inclusion was based on a particular interpretation of equity, one constructed in terms of educational disadvantage (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996, p. 7) and presumed that ‘persons from disadvantaged backgrounds suffered from deficits or gaps in knowledge, skills or appropriate values to participate in higher education’ (Gale & McNamee 1995, p. 440). While this view may have been in accordance with selected but prevailing notions of equity, it posed a dilemma for Indigenous peoples. They were positioned in universities on the basis of having a disadvantage and in this respect constructed in similar terms to other targeted equity groups for whom overcoming socio-economic disadvantage was the primary consideration. Within this framework, the legacy of the unreconciled colonisation process is not ascribed within the equity notion of ‘disadvantage’.

The ‘assimilationist paradigm’ (Shatifan 1994–95, p. 42) provided the focus for the *A Fair Chance For All* policy, which was about changing individuals’ skills, preparedness and attitudes so as to assimilate them into, and not change, established institutions. Therefore while the efforts may have been about equity, the broad inclusion of disadvantaged groups ironically excluded the particular cultural position of Indigenous peoples. Gross (cited in Kymlicka 1995) makes a similar observation regarding Indigenous people in the United States of America that

> where blacks have been forcibly excluded (segregated) from white society by law, Indians—aboriginal peoples with their own cultures, languages, religions and territories—have been forcibly included (integrated) into that society by law . . .
This broad-banded approach to equity perpetuates a ‘blame the victim’, approach and locates the problem in those that the system inadequately services (Gale & McNamee 1995). It also aims to pursue a ‘colour-blind’ approach to redress educational inequities. The ‘colour-blind’ approach assumes that colour and/or race should not be an issue in university strategic planning; however, such a position on equity inherently makes relative comparisons to the myths deployed to generate images of homogeneity and stability concerning the non-Indigenous community and places the responsibility on the individual to adapt themselves to that system through compensatory or remedial programs (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 15). This construction of equity not only ignores the concerns of Indigenous peoples but it also blinds participants to the racialised outcomes of their involvement in that institution. These include, for example, the ongoing high attrition rates, limited participation in postgraduate programs and minimum representation of Indigenous peoples within the employment structure.

There is something of a tension around construing equity initiatives in higher education as a way of providing access to an education intended to make them more competitive in the ‘mainstream’, and the aspirations of Indigenous peoples to become self-determining through ‘getting a fair share’ of the educational dollar for their own educational purposes and outcomes. The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples argues that by treating equity and access as unproblematic, and by using what are supposedly culturally neutral measures to identify this participation, ignores for many Indigenous peoples dilemmas of higher education participation (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 21). Such a view does not challenge the cultural specificity of the institutionalised provision of higher education. Moreover, this view does not acknowledge that for many Indigenous peoples higher education participation is inadequate because it does not provide for their educational aspirations including their desires for self-determination (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 20). The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples also found widespread support for a view of ‘equity’ which was defined in Aboriginal terms and was based on cultural awareness, sensitivity and self-determination (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 15). The view of the National Review was that equity should not be only about relative parity but about achieving outcomes more specifically related to the work, cultures and historical circumstances of Indigenous peoples (Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 17). In light of Indigenous aspirations for education, the Review asks:

Can public educational resources be applied differently to ensure Indigenous peoples have the opportunity both to achieve equitable outcomes and satisfy a right to have education delivered in more culturally appropriate ways?

(Department of Employment, Education and Training 1995, p. 18)
The Role of Universities

In facilitating the achievement of equitable outcomes for Indigenous peoples, universities need to examine their own philosophies, policies and practices so as to reconceptualise and reconstruct the purposes of their existence. According to MacIntyre (cited in Kemmis 1994, p. 6), although universities now more closely mirror the diversity that constitutes Australian society, they are culturally positioned as places where conceptions of and standards of rational justification are elaborated, put to work in the detailed practices of enquiry, and themselves rationally evaluated, so that only from the university can the wider society learn how to conduct its own debates, practical or theoretical, in a rationally defensible way. But that claim itself can be plausibly and justifiably advanced only when and insofar as the university is a place where rival and antagonistic views of rational justification . . . are afforded opportunity to develop.

However, for Indigenous peoples, who are still positioned at the periphery of this cultural position, universities may be seen as places that further perpetuate and legitimate ideologies that sanction or even promote the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges through their rational justifications, practices of enquiry and construction of debates. Universities need to be more attentive to how they can engage Indigenous peoples and their knowledges in that dialogue. Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) argue that it is expected that those ‘coming to’ university will adapt to the cultural setting of the university. However, for Indigenous peoples ‘going to’ university is more than likely about participating from their own cultural knowledge base. Therefore, they need to have their own cultural backgrounds and integrity affirmed within that. To disregard the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples within higher education further perpetuates the compensatory or remedial nature of access and participation programs as well as accelerates assimilation through the focus on standardisation. Consequently, equity as it is applied within the higher education context could become another means for silencing racism and therefore silencing the rights of Indigenous peoples (Cowlishaw 1997).

Facilitating Indigenous Rights and Interests within Higher Education

Universities can facilitate Indigenous interests and rights to ongoing debates such as self-determination and reconciliation by providing and sustaining institutionalised means for their expression and ensuring that their voices are not illegitimately suppressed. In doing this it is critical to examine organisations to see in what ways such organisational structures and practices may reproduce and construct disadvantage (Ramsay 1994–95). The refocusing of efforts to examine
equity issues in higher education to one which examines the culture of the university is in accord with broader social initiatives to renegotiate the positioning of Indigenous peoples within Australian society.

A renegotiation of the Indigenous position within universities can framed in what Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991) espouse as the four Rs: Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity and Responsibility. These four basic principles imply that:

- **respect** is afforded Indigenous peoples by recognising their cultural identity and integrity;
- **relevance** of curricula to Indigenous peoples can be brought about through institutional legitimisation and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and skills;
- **reciprocity** is about the shared arrangement in the production of knowledge; and
- **responsibility** is given to Indigenous peoples to take control over what they see as appropriate education.

However, in applying the Kirkness and Barnhardt model, universities must redress the fundamental premise upon which they are constructed. They must acknowledge their own position of privilege and the ways in which they naturalise selected bodies of knowledge and practice at the expense of other knowledges. This will mean that universities must recognise and incorporate the sovereign position of Indigenous peoples whereby they are acknowledge as equal stakeholders in the provision of education for not only Indigenous Australians but for all Australians. However, unpacking the culture that is already embedded within universities is not a simple task. Thus, this research project attempted to identify and examine this ‘culture’ and its implications for Indigenous peoples through the analysis of university policies and debates in arenas such as university cultures and values, institutional leadership and management, administration, curriculum and teaching, student resourcing, anti-racism, and monitoring and evaluation.
Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the five key elements of the research project design; elements which continued to evolve as the project itself developed. Section one outlines the literature which informed the research project as it evolved. The second section provides a brief overview of the seven phases of the research project. Section three summarises the sampling strategy used in this project. An overview of the data collection techniques is provided in section four, with the main techniques being document collection and focused interviews. The final section summarises the procedural and ethical issues the researchers confronted in conducting this study.

Literature Review

How universities can best operate to enhance the achievement of minority students within increasingly diverse institutions has been addressed in a range of national and international literature (Abbott-Chapman et al. 1991; Baumgart et al. 1995; Herbert 1996; Richardson & Skinner 1990; Henry & Nixon 1994; Love 1993; Lukabyo 1995). For the most part, the Australian research literature on Indigenous participation in higher education has focused on the factors affecting the retention and attrition of Indigenous students (e.g. Bourke & Burden 1996; Christensen & Lilley 1997). A study of the inclusion of Australian Indigenous issues in higher education by Gale (1996) explores the construction of Aboriginality in higher education in terms of equity and Indigenous rights.

A number of United States/American studies do, however, draw attention to some of the aspects of organisational culture which are critical to the inclusion of minority participation in the culture of higher education. Richardson and Skinner’s (1990) study of ten universities in the United States of America, which have a solid reputation for higher than average minority (African American, Hispanic and Native American) graduation rates, identified a number of factors which are integral to providing an organisational culture appropriate to these students’ success. These factors included the influence of external policy imperatives on university practices, the importance of internal organisational change across all areas of institutional mission including student support, academic change and the development of outreach programs which aim at developing an increasingly better prepared pool of potential minority students. This study suggests that to achieve high graduation rates of minority students across a diversity of majors, universities must develop a culture that maintains ‘an appropriate balance between achievement and diversity’ (Richardson & Skinner 1990, p. 507). Likewise, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training report (1996, p. 57) makes it clear that there is a ‘strong nexus between quality and equity and that any weakness in one will have implications for the other’. 
A study by Love (1993) of the factors which impact on the success of black minority students in predominantly white higher education institutions in the United States illustrated the significance of organisational culture in the success of students from minority backgrounds. This study concluded that there is a significant gap between the factors which affect the persistence and graduation rates of minority students, and the programs and organisational strategies in some US/American universities which are developed to increase the admission and retention of these students. The study identified seven key factors which affect minority students retention in higher education; namely:

- institutional leadership;
- white racism;
- students financial support;
- students social interaction, cultural dissonance and environmental incongruence;
- interaction with faulty;
- student services; and
- student characteristics.

Love found that many of the programs set up to support these students addressed few of these issues, but focused on remediating the students themselves.

An aspect of Australian university culture and Indigenous inclusion in higher education, to which Lukabyo (1995) draws attention is the issue of institutionalised and direct racism, and its impact on the participation of Indigenous people in Australian higher education. Related research has shown that to deny the reality of racism and discrimination for these students and their families, both in education and in society at large, has the effect of locating the problems ‘in the students themselves, their families and their communities’ (Feagin, Vera & Imani 1996, p. 4). The exploration of racism and attempts to create anti-racist practices within universities is critical to the participation of Indigenous students.

Emanating from this literature and the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 1, this study addressed the following key questions:

- What worthwhile policy initiatives are represented in university strategic plans (or similar policies) in regard to responding to Indigenous Australians?
- What do Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of university communities see as key dilemmas arising from policies and practices in this area?
- How do Indigenous leaders in universities regard these policy initiatives and dilemmas?

**Research Phases**

The research project involved seven major interrelated phases.
**Phase 1: Literature Review**

The project began with a review of the national and international research literature relating to organisational culture and equity issues in higher education, focusing in particular on literature representing Indigenous and minority perspectives on access, equity, participation, success and inclusivity.

**Phase 2: Collection of Relevant University Strategic Plans**

So as to identify how universities currently represent their stake in Indigenous higher education, all public Australian universities were invited to participate in this project. They were asked to provide copies of the following:

- the university’s strategic plan or similar documentation;
- documents relating to the university’s Equity plan and any related policies; and
- their current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education strategic plan.

**Phase 3: Mapping of University Strategic Plans**

The Project team undertook a mapping of all the strategic plans and related policy documents supplied by those universities which responded to our request. The documentation of twenty universities was examined during the mapping phase. The purpose of this phase of the Project was to identify the ways in which such documents represented the university as having a stake in equity issues and practices, particularly with regard to Indigenous students. The Project team developed matrices for each university mapping the systematic inclusions in the nine dimensions of university culture identified below.

**Phase 4: Case Study Visits**

Using the base-line data generated in Phase 3, the Project team undertook a series of individual and small groups interviews in three universities. These institutions were selected because they represent a diversity of criteria (see below) and have established through their practices, a reputation for success in relation to Indigenous higher education. Using the nine key issues identified in the research questions below, these interviews explored the ways in which key stakeholders saw the universities as having developed good equity practices as well as identifying outstanding issues for further consideration. Interviews were conducted with senior university management (both administrative and academic), Indigenous tertiary staff, students and community personnel, and academics who have responsibility for the major subjects in which these students are enrolled (e.g. arts, education and health). Approximately sixty interviews were conducted across the three universities.

**Phase 5: Mapping Possibilities for Indigenous Higher Education**

Data collected from Phases 3 and 4 were analysed, with reference to the literature review (Phase 1), to generate a series of draft chapters focusing on worthwhile
policy initiatives and dilemmas. These draft chapters, which indicated that universities had adopted a range of approaches to institutionalising equity issues, as well as identifying points of unresolved tensions, were subjected to a validation test by senior Indigenous academic staff across a number of universities in Phase 6 of the Project.

**Phase 6: Conducting Interviews for Validation Purposes**

The Indigenous academic/support centres at all Australian universities, including those at the three case study universities, were contacted and invited to provide feedback on selected sections of this report while in early draft form. This involved the use of individual and small group telephone interviews. Nine universities participated in this peer review process.

**Phase 7: Report Writing**

Data from Phase 6 were analysed and the final report was prepared to show the range of practical ways in which universities can be inclusive of equity issues as well as the nature of the dilemmas key stakeholders have identified.

**Specific Dimensions of Research**

Based on the literature review and the analysis of university strategic plans and policies, the research team developed a contextual chart to highlight those aspects of university organisational culture which are critically related to meeting the needs and interests of Indigenous peoples. This was used to guide the development of interview questions and to identify areas where evidence was needed (see Figure 2.1). The aspects of university culture examined and the relevant research questions were as follows:

- **Culture and Values**
  How are Indigenous interests reflected in this university’s culture and values?

- **Institutional Management**
  Are the university’s leaders responsive to Indigenous interests in their practices? How do they demonstrate this?

- **Curriculum and Teaching**
  In what ways are Indigenous peoples’ interests and perspectives given a legitimate place in the university’s production, transmission and dissemination of knowledge?

- **Administration and Organisational Structure**
  How does the university’s organisational and administrative structures demonstrate its responsiveness to Indigenous peoples?
‘External’ Imperatives

Culture and Values of Higher Education

- Anti-racism
- Curriculum and teaching
- Postgraduate initiatives
- Delivery modes
- Administration and organisational structure
- University–community relations
- Alternative entry
- Student resourcing
- Research
- Evaluation and monitoring

Figure 2.1 Equity Issues in Higher Education
• **Research and Development**
  How inclusive are the university’s research and development processes of Indigenous interests and participation?

• **Student Resourcing**
  How does this university demonstrate through its resourcing of Indigenous students its commitment to achieving equality of access and also an equality of outcomes?

• **University–Community Relations and Liaison**
  How does the university through its policies and practices demonstrate a sound understanding of Indigenous communities, their needs and interests? How does the university advocate for and support these interests and needs?

• **Racism and Anti-racism**
  Do Indigenous students, staff and community regard this as a racist or non-racist university environment? How do you know this?

• **Monitoring and Evaluation**
  What processes are there within the university for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the university’s programs and practices so to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students?

### Data Collection and Analysis

#### Mapping University Policies

The strategic plans, equity plans and Indigenous education strategies of twenty universities were analysed to identify the ways and means by which Indigenous interests in the university were represented in each of these policies. The documents came from universities in every state and territory, as well as most of the institutions with large numbers of Indigenous students.

A number of matrices were developed which covered the key areas in Figure 2.1. An initial analysis was conducted for each university and then an overview of each key area was compiled to examine the practices across universities within key areas. In accordance with the primary focus of this investigative project in this aspect of the data collection was to survey how far Indigenous issues were represented in the university strategic plans and their equity plans. The research team was mindful in this regard of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs instructions to universities to not include Indigenous matters in their equity plans, but rather that these should be recorded in their Indigenous education strategies (see DEETYA Guidelines for the Completion of Equity Plans and Aboriginal Education Strategies, 1997).
Using the data from the policies a series of matrices were prepared for each key area to identify the extent of the representation of Indigenous issues across the three plans. In addition the university policies were summarised to acknowledge instances of worthwhile policy initiatives, with particular reference to university strategic plans and equity plans, and not the Indigenous education strategy.

Case Study Universities

Sampling Strategy

Three universities representing regional and urban locations were selected for visits to conduct interviews. These universities were selected and invited to participate on the basis of the following criteria:

- variations in the size of the Indigenous student population;
- number of the Indigenous academic and general staff of the university;
- existence of an Indigenous Academic/Support Centre within the university;
- the range of courses offered to which Indigenous students have access at each university, including TAFE–university link courses;
- Indigenous student population within the university as representative of a diversity of lifestyles that would reflect the background experiences of students attending universities; and
- universities which reflect a diversity of urban, regional provincial institutions.

Data Collection Techniques

Individual/Small Group Interviews

Although difficult to conduct and time-consuming, the primary technique for collecting data was the self-reporting strategy of face-to-face interviews with individuals or small groups of university staff and students. The purposes of these interviews were to find out what people knew about developments in their institutions for Indigenous participation; what they, or others, have done to enhance Indigenous participation in university education; what they think about the success or otherwise of these endeavours, and what they feel should be done. To achieve these purposes semi-structured interviews were used to allow for flexibility in the wording and presentation of interview questions and to allow for extensive exploration of responses. The research team developed a set of questions prior to the interviews, and the interviewers modified these according to the particular context.

There were approximately sixty interviews, involving eighty people, conducted across the three universities. See Appendix 8 for an overview of those interviewed. Each interview was approximately one to one and half hours. All interview material was transcribed and copies of the interview transcriptions were forwarded to interviewees for validation prior to their analysis.
Data Analysis Techniques

Dilemma analysis (Altrichter, Posch & Somekh 1993) was chosen as the tool to analyse the interviews because of its value in revealing people’s awareness of the tensions and contradictions in their social reality. The purpose of dilemma analysis is practical—to help clarify and establish potential sources of action for improving the (e)quality of university services. There is no generalisable way of dealing with the dilemmas identified in this report; each university has to develop and test out solutions that seem appropriate to its social, economic and historical context. Dilemma analysis is based on the acknowledgment that universities are increasingly faced with difficult choices between competing social goods, and that this requires careful, reflective decision-making. This Project report names a series of dilemmas which represent tensions and decision points for universities. Naming these dilemmas may be a useful way of stimulating ideas and actions oriented to solving them.

Some dilemmas arise from the contradictory demands and unavoidable pressures on universities; others result from the need for universities to undertake actions in a context where there is a lack of information or clarity about the many issues involved. Dilemmas may also give rise to work-related stress, where university staff have to take a particular course of action which they would otherwise prefer not to take. Dilemmas therefore may exist within university staff, within the organisation and between the organisation and its communities and broader societal context.

Validation Telephone Interviews

Senior and experienced staff from Indigenous academic/support centres in universities from each state and territory were invited to critically respond to early drafts of selected sections of this report. Where possible, some of these interviews were conducted as teleconferences involving participants from a number of universities so as to develop a breadth of response to the issues. In other instances they were individual telephone interviews. Interviewees were then forwarded a transcript of the interviews for their comment before the interviews were used as data for the report. The outcomes of these validation interviews are presented in Chapter 12 of the report as ‘Indigenous Visions for Universities’.

Procedural Issues and Research Ethics

The Project team sought to establish an approach to this research which was rigorous and systematic.

Credibility

To ensure that the subject of this investigation was appropriately identified and described, and thereby enhance the Project’s credibility, several key techniques were used. The study was conducted over a prolonged period of approximately fifteen months in order to give a reasonably adequate time for the team to learn
about the issues involved, to test the evidence it collected and to identify key elements of the evidence of most relevance to the issues under investigation. In order to triangulate evidence, the Project team used interviews and policy documents as difference sources of evidence, different methods for collecting data and different investigators for doing so. ‘Member checks’ were another important means for enhancing the credibility of the research data: interviewees were able to review their own interview transcript and amend these as needed. The process of member checking meant that further time was taken up in sending the interview transcripts back to informants for review and obtaining these back again so that analysis could then proceed.

Project Advisory Team

‘Peer debriefing’ through the use of a Project Advisory Committee, involved exposing the Project’s analysis and conclusions to peer review during the course of the investigation. This was important in assisting in the development of the design of the study, the analysis of the data and the preparation of this research report. The purpose of the Project’s Advisory Committee was to provide a consultative mechanism for the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and the Project team, and to ensure that the quality of both the Project’s conduct and outcomes were of a high standard. The Advisory Committee performed an important role for the Project team, providing advice on issues such as the scope and methodology, as well as providing feedback on the progress of the Project. Through the Advisory Committee, the Project team was able to keep in touch with key players in the field and to seek their advice about the possible implementation of recommendations arising from the Project’s report. The Advisory Committee comprised:

- Professor Joan Cole (Head, School of Physiotherapy, Curtin University of Technology), as the representative for the Higher Education Council;
- Ms Yvette Devlin, Director of Quality and Equity, Higher Education Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs; and
- two Indigenous academics with expertise in the area of study; namely, Associate Professor Jeannie Herbert (James Cook University) and Ms Penny Tripcony (Queensland University of Technology).

Principles of Procedure

The development of fair, valid and principled procedures for research is important because the results can, and do, affect people’s lives, as well as the projects on which they are working, the institutions in which they work, and the agencies sponsoring their project work. This Project was conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Human Ethics Research Review Panel, Central Queensland University (Clearance No. 96/11–348). The Project’s request for ethical clearance gave due consideration to those factors that would ensure that:

- the Project was performed with minimal risk to participants;
- the nature of the project was made clear to all participants;
• the informed consent of participants was sought;
• those involved received appropriate recognition for their efforts;
• the results of research are not suppressed; and
• adequate steps are taken beyond the life of the research project to protect sensitive material.

The participants in this study included Indigenous higher education workers and students, personnel in university equity offices, staff associated with university chancelleries, and faculty staff. Informed, written consent was obtained from these participants using a consent form (see Appendix 3) and an information statement (see Appendix 4). All interviewees were informed about the Project via a written information sheet describing its nature and purposes, and their consent to participate in this research was obtained. They were advised that they could withdraw at anytime during the course of the study.

The confidentiality of records collected or otherwise generated during the course of this Project have been protected by various means. The confidentiality of the records of this study was protected during the study by ensuring that the researchers were the only people with access to the accumulated evidentiary archive. This report preserves the confidentiality of informants, their work sites and employers by maintaining the anonymity of all texts and the removal of all references to particular universities; the foci of this report are university policies and practices, and not the personalities or particular institutions involved.

Presentation of the Data in the Report

Chapters 3 through 11 of this report contain the evidentiary materials in relation to the report’s findings, focused around the nine key research issues:
• university culture and values in changing times;
• institutional management and leadership;
• curriculum and teaching;
• administration and organisational structures;
• research in universities;
• student resourcing;
• university–community relations;
• anti-racism; and
• monitoring and evaluation.

Each chapter is set out in a similar way:
• introductory comments placing the issue into a context of previous research;
• an overview of the representation of Indigenous matters in relation to the key area as demonstrated in the university strategic plan, the equity plan and the Indigenous education strategy
this section is accompanied by a dot matrix which illustrates instances of representation in these plans to a number of sub-categories;

- citation of some examples of worthwhile policy initiatives for the key area as demonstrated in the university strategic plan and equity plan;

- analysis of some of the dilemmas confronting universities based on the interview data; and

- concluding comments, and recommendations for practice.

Throughout the report, the term Indigenous academic/support centre is used to refer to the Indigenous education facilities which exists in all universities. In each university, the facility may be known as a unit, a centre, an institute, a college, a faculty, or a school. While the diversity among these facilities needs to be recognised, the one term has been used to describe them all to preserve anonymity and confidentiality.
University Culture and Values in Changing Times

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training report identified culture and values of universities as critical to the ways in which they operate and develop (1996, p. x). It stated that universities have to examine their culture and values to see how they affect the success and retention of equity groups. Critical to the socio-economic and cultural context of universities are the changes in government which are creating new challenges for universities, including the legislative and policy requirements framing the provision of higher education, with particular reference to the development and effective provision of equity initiatives in tertiary education.

Central to liberal notions of increased access to university by diverse groups of students are understandings of education as providing some form of social improvement and access to opportunities for increased power and economic well-being (Taylor et al. 1997, p. 126). Integral to these conceptions of the transformative aspects of education are varying concepts and traditions of social justice. Taylor et al. (1997, p. 128) suggest that while such concepts do not have an essential meaning they do emanate from a number of traditions of thinking which have come to characterise responses to issues of social justice. They identify three main traditions of thinking in relation to social justice: ‘liberal-individualism’, ‘market-individualism’, and ‘social-democratic’ (1997, p. 128). Each of these elements of social justice are illustrated within the ways in which government funding is prioritised for Indigenous higher education and in the ways in which universities respond to social justice in university strategic and equity plans. In addition Taylor et al. challenge those who parallel equity and social justice, as they see equity as a narrower element of social justice, which is primarily concerned with the allocation of resources (1997, p. 129).

However, the National Review into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education challenges the views of social justice and equity which are about maintaining a form of ‘level playing field’ as this is seen to be assimilatory (1995, p. 14). Such a view of social justice does not acknowledge the validity for Indigenous peoples of recognition of different but equal outcomes which enable the maintenance of and regard for Indigenous cultures, aspirations and lifestyles.

In relation to those elements of social justice which universities respond to in their strategic planning, the major influence is the legislative enactments and/or recommendations of Commonwealth policies and initiatives. These influence universities’ consideration and adoption of particular policies, objectives and targets for equity priority groups in tertiary education. In their policy development and strategic planning processes, universities acknowledge the external environment and its exigencies assist in directing their accountability and planning for equity groups such as Indigenous people. In addition, universities are accountable to the Commonwealth Government through the Department of
Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs both for the receipt of public funds and because the Commonwealth is responsible for setting national goals and priorities in higher education.

Commonwealth policies and documents in the area of equal opportunity which have been influential on universities include *A Fair Chance For All*, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, *National Report of the Royal Commission Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, National Aboriginal Higher Education Association policies, State Aboriginal Higher Education Network policies, the report of the Caro Committee, the *Equity and General Performance Indicators* (Martin 1994), the *Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act* (1975), and state anti-discrimination and freedom of information legislation.

**Representation of the Culture and Values of Universities in University Policies**

Statements about the culture and values of higher education found in university strategic plans and equity plans typically address broad equity issues and do not necessarily specify Indigenous participation.

As sub-category one in Table 1 on page 32 illustrates, 14 out of 20 universities have incorporated social justice and equity among the values enumerated within their strategic plans. The expression of these particular values is generally couched in terms of being just and fair in ways which are socially valuable and beneficial to the diversity of groups within society. They usually include some notion of disadvantage and the need for equity in the allocation of educational resources. A number of the statements about social justice in university strategic plans are framed in terms of key words such as values, guiding values, core values, key objectives, justice, social justice, ethical practices, general operating principles, operational goals, educational principles and wisdom. These key words and their defining statements are used in a number of ways:

- they mark the approach to social justice taken by each particular university;
- they form the values and actions to which universities give commitments;
- they may be used as objectives for university staff, students and graduates; and/or
- they are presented as actions to be taken by the universities to promote or ensure social justice.

Many of the statements about social justice and equity in university equity plans are very similar in design and conceptualisation to those in university strategic plans. A distinguishing characteristic of equity plans is that they tend to focus much less on philosophical issues than they do on pragmatic strategies. A few
equity plans greatly reduce the number of philosophical statements that appear within the university strategic plans, while some concentrate almost exclusively on specific initiatives.

Universities have made strategic plans for the development of equity programs for the disadvantaged; the provision and improvement of learning support and student services for equity programs; and ensuring that policies, procedures and education programs are inclusive of equity considerations. For example, one university’s major strategies for developing its commitment and performance to equity include the embedding of equity programs and policies within the university’s faculties, and the annual placement of innovative, targeted programs and research in areas of performance weakness.

Some universities have strategic plans for encouraging, attracting and supporting minority and disadvantaged groups in higher education, including Aboriginal students. Nine out of the 20 universities explicitly indicate a recognition of Indigenous participation through making provisions for the educational, employment and research needs of Indigenous people. Most of these initiatives concern the inclusion of Aboriginal content and experiential learning in the curriculum; establishment of new graduate courses in areas such as Aboriginal Public Policy, and support programs for Indigenous people.

One university’s vision statement expresses its desire to have a national and international reputation for quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and research, while another has set itself the task of establishing benchmarks for universities working to empower Indigenous peoples. Eight universities have strategic plans for acknowledging their regional locations, and the need to serve their regions through excellence, national and international reputation for quality, and intellectual leadership. One university’s mission is to provide educational opportunities for groups which have been denied participation in higher education in proportion to their significance within its regional community. It acknowledges itself as being in an area of strong growth for Indigenous peoples and is keen to embrace this distinctive feature in its programs.

Government legislation, policy and funding changes are quite influential in the development of universities’ strategic plans. Four universities have strategic plans concerning Commonwealth and state policies, laws and recommendations. These can negatively and positively influence universities’ adoption of particular policies and procedures for equity priority groups. University strategic plans typically acknowledge the role of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and its predecessors in setting national goals and priorities in higher education, for definitions recommended for equity groups, for funding of equity initiatives, and for its recognition of university initiatives. Three university strategic plans also acknowledge the external environment in directing their financial accountability and planning for minority groups such as Indigenous people in higher education. Commonwealth and national agencies and policies are recorded as being a directing force or influence upon universities. These include the Commonwealth, the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, A Fair Chance for All, the Australian Research Council, the National
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, the *National Report of the Royal Commission Inquiry into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, National Aboriginal Higher Education Association policies, state-based Aboriginal Higher Education Network policies, and other state-based inquiries such as the Caro Committee.

**Policy Overview**

This section contains some of the major achievements of universities as represented in their university strategic plans and equity plans, in relation to those contextual matters which are impacting upon university culture and values, and challenging their policies and practices.

**Social Justice, Equity and Fairness**

In most instances statements in relation to social justice and equity are more broadly applied across the culture of the university than with specific reference to Indigenous peoples.

**Statements of Values**

Universities acknowledge values of equity and social justice, fairness and nurturing, based on principles of equal opportunity for students and staff and affirmative action for minority and disadvantaged groups.

**Commitment to Social Justice**

This is expressed in terms such as:

- the right of all people to have fair access to the services of society, to be treated in caring and equitable ways and to live with dignity in an environment free from bias, prejudice and discrimination;
- commitment to equity and social justice in pursuit of excellence, and the cultivation of responsive and responsible links with the wider community;
- commitment to equal opportunity within a caring and humane environment; and
- commitment to provide people with equitable access and continuing support in tertiary education as a means of realising individual potential.

**Objectives and Action Initiatives in Social Justice**

These to be achieved through:

- improved learning support and student services in equity programs;
- developing attributes in graduates which include an appreciation of other cultures and a commitment to social justice for all, as well as the ability to accept responsibilities and obligations and assert the rights of oneself and others;
• integrate principles of equity and social justice into all university structures, policies, procedures and plans;
• the absence of all forms of discrimination (including race) for students and for staff in selection, promotions and conditions of appointment; and
• one university has ‘mainstreamed’ its equity program in order to increase the participation rate of all disadvantaged groups.

**Equity**

Universities make general and comprehensive statements referring to equity, which include statements:

• of support for equity principles;
• that equity objectives are included in university administrative structures and practices; and
• that equity programs, policies and initiatives are being integrated university-wide as part of the development of their organisational culture.

**Acknowledgement and Recognition**

• The impact of past inequities on participation in the present.
• Recognition that the benefits of participation are not equitably distributed throughout the community.

**Environmental and Contextual Variables**

*Cultural Diversity*

• Social and cultural diversity of their environment relates to changing global relations as much as the changing Australian environment.
• Foregrounding of issues of importance to Indigenous peoples such as respect, advancement, and reconciliation.
• Some universities use the word ‘diversity’ and others use the word ‘multi-cultural’ to describe their environment or even emphasise these features as part of their strengths.
• Emphasis on students developing an international outlook as citizens of the world.
• Recognition of the increasing complexities in policy formulation on changes taking place within Australia, including Aboriginal reconciliation and the implications of Native Title.
• Policy of openness and access related to quality outcomes.
**Socio-economic**

One university’s perception is that its special entry scheme is not addressing able students who have not considered university study, and thus there is continued commitment to developing a specific relationship with its catchment area which is largely characterised as low socio-economic status.

**Geographic and Issues of Regionalism**

- Some universities are geographically distant from any sizeable Aboriginal community. However, through flexible delivery modes and the development of courses specifically targeting rural Aboriginal community needs, some metropolitan universities have been able to substantially increase enrolment of Aboriginal students.

- One university includes in a vision statement that its regional endeavours will assist in increasing participation in tertiary education in its city catchment municipalities which have traditionally experienced low levels of university study access.

- Another states that it has a strong commitment to its region, which is a metropolitan regional area with traditionally little direct access to university education. This catchment area has the second largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia. The university’s total catchment area has nearly two million people, contains nearly 10 per cent of Australia’s total population, and one-third of all the state’s schools.

- The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the state is commonly used as equity indicators by universities.

**Commonwealth Policies and Requirements**

*University Objectives for Equity Groups Identified by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs*

Universities aim to address the causes of traditional low access, participation and outcomes of equity groups identified in *A Fair Chance for All* through the provision of educational opportunities for groups within their community which have been identified as under-represented in higher education. Universities’ access and equity policies for students reflect the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs policy and their own commitment to increasing the successful participation of people previously under-represented in tertiary education. These include:

- adoption of definitions of equity groups as recommended by the Department
  - however, some universities have reservations about the suitability of the Department’s equity definitions;
• one university’s equity planning has involved a review of its achievements for the Department’s nominated categories of disadvantaged students;

• establishment of six Indigenous Higher Education Centres;

• a university’s criterion for the identification of Aboriginal people is that of self-identification at enrolment, consistent with the Commonwealth definition, plus confirmation of Aboriginality by subsequent survey;

• one university notes that the Martin indicators do not furnish direct or unequivocal evidence of particular equity and access strategies, but provide a base for the monitoring of new initiatives and allow meaningful comparisons between institutions and an opportunity for benchmarking across the sector; and

• one university has undertaken extensive testing of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs – Martin software program of equity and general performance indicators and translated the information into forms suitable for internal distribution, with feedback on the information requested from faculties.

Acknowledgment of Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Imperatives

• One university’s equity plan combines two parts of the profiles documentation submitted each year to the Department.

• Another university’s review of its organisational equity activities led to more centralised strategic planning due to increasing requirements to report to the Department on equity matters, which it is able to do in both student and staff matters.

State Policies and Initiatives

• The legislative enactments and/or recommendations of Australian state and territory policies and initiatives also influence universities’ consideration and adoption of particular policies and objectives for equity priority groups.

• Some of those state government initiatives across various states which influence university equal opportunity and anti-discrimination policies include:
  – a Charter of Principles for a Culturally Diverse Society;
  – individual university acts of the states; and
  – state anti-discrimination and freedom of information legislation.
Funding Sources and Policies

Funding to universities for various equity and Indigenous student educational and support programs and activities comes through external sources. Most universities have the opportunity to access Commonwealth introduced initiatives for funding—for example, Australian Research Council Researchers Development Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, in the area of Indigenous Higher Education Policy—but most now have as their objective to reduce their overall dependence on the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Operating Grant.

- Higher Education Equity Programme grants funded one university’s publication of guidelines to counter racism and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategies.
- Equity grants received by one university from the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs enable it to undertake projects to improve access for targeted groups, including Indigenous students.
- At another university, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who qualify for postgraduate fee-paying courses are offered a Department-funded place.
- One university’s faculty of commerce and administration awarded equity scholarships, which included an Indigenous student. An equity scholarship was awarded by another university for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student in the form of Higher Education Contribution Scheme payment for the course.

Dilemmas of University Culture and Values

This section highlights the tensions in university culture and values from internal and external sources that affect commitments to Indigenous interests within universities.

Historical Evolution of Inclusiveness in University Culture and Values

Interviewees suggested that the environmental context of universities and their historical development have been significant in shaping their institutions’ responses to equity issues. These influence the extent to which universities acknowledge the Indigenous population in their strategic planning processes and profile documents. In one university, because of the geographic location and the substantial proportion of Indigenous people in its catchment areas, an academic saw that Aboriginal people ‘have a much higher profile in the community in general in terms of numbers of people and that certainly has influenced the university’ (Interview 63, p. 3). Another Indigenous academic working at the same university, felt far more comfortable in this particular institution than the university where she undertook her undergraduate degree: ‘this environment is much more cultural overall’ (Interview 58, p. 2). In this institution there is a high
Indigenous visibility and institutional acknowledgment of Indigenous matters through a specialist faculty and a senior academic appointment occupied by an Indigenous academic.

It is the Indigenous staff in this same university which is most publicly up-front in demonstrating the university’s acknowledgment of Indigenous matters. For example, during NAIDOC Week these staff put on an open day, with ‘a big display and . . . dancers and singing in the general university’ (Interview 54, p. 3). Another senior administrator in the institution, who has long supported the legitimisation of Indigenous knowledges through collecting resources and establishing a special Indigenous collection in the University Library, said that the university ‘is still predominantly an institution for the white person’ (Interview 46, p. 16). However, he said that innovations such as the establishment of the Aboriginal garden in the university ‘are really important since it changes the way we present ourselves, the ways in which we think about ourselves’ (Interview 46, p. 16). While praising the strong commitment and interest in the university to Indigenous matters, he said that as an institution

we do predominantly come out of the European, and particularly, the British European university tradition as its evolved in Australia over the last one hundred and fifty years . . . in terms of inherited values, the cultural baggage that we carry with us, I think we’re predominantly representative of mainstream Australian tertiary education.

(Interview 46, p. 1)

In another university, an executive administrator responsible for university research, said that his university is interested in creating ‘degree courses that will allow our students to become employed in vocational areas’ (Interview 4, p. 1). He is aware of the forty Aboriginal nations that comprise the region in which the university is situated but notes that in many respects his institution never saw itself as serving this region. He acknowledges that in the university’s origins ‘if we had been dictated by the region more, then perhaps we would be much more Indigenously aware’ (Interview 4, p. 2). Nonetheless, there have been a number of actions which have been undertaken over the years whereby the university is attempting to reflect Indigenous interests. Some examples include the vice-chancellor’s acknowledgment of local Indigenous elders during orientation week and his public statements that the university is situated on Aboriginal land, along with the use of Indigenous names for buildings and landmarks and the flying of the Aboriginal flag on a daily basis (Interview 14, p. 1). On the other hand, and despite these manifestations of a symbolic response to the significance of Indigenous cultures within the university, another senior academic said that the university was:

embedded very firmly in a western cultural view and I don’t think there has been a lot of thought given to being inclusive, except perhaps in the last few years . . . But I see that as emerging more from external pressures and from the fact that we have more international students and that has raised consciousness.

(Interview 10, p. 2)
Universities have many pressures to respond to in order to accommodate a diversity of interests. Its decision to fly the Aboriginal flag was a response to a specific request:

The then director was asked by some Aboriginal students why we don’t fly the Aboriginal flag and the response was ‘we don’t fly it because no-one has ever asked us to’. And so they said ‘Well, alright will you?’ and he said ‘Yes’ but it was in response rather than initiation.

(Interview 10, p. 10)

In another university, one interviewee said that there is ‘exotic value attached to the fact that the child care centre . . . has got an Aboriginal name, but I haven’t seen any Aboriginal kids there’ (Interview 37, p. 2). The university does not celebrate the presence of a former Olympian amongst its staff, one of the first Aboriginal Olympians (Interview 39, pp. 21, 23). In this university, one faculty has sought to foster the affirmation of Indigenous cultures through its research centre and through its development of courses for Indigenous people and units in Indigenous Studies (Interview 37, p. 3). The visibility of Indigenous people on the university campus is related to the meetings and classes they teach (Interview 37, p. 2).

A senior non-Indigenous academic within this institution argues that the attitude to Indigenous students and their community is ‘no more less welcoming than it would be to other groups in the community which don’t have a tradition of coming to university’ (Interview 31, p. 1). He said that universities are generally places which are not ‘welcoming’ to any group that does not have a ‘tradition of being involved’ (Interview 31, p. 1). He saw the university as a place in which ‘the onus is on the individual to make the change’ (Interview 31, p. 2). However, he said that universities ‘are now different places to what they were twenty to thirty years ago’, and that they ‘are now actively going out to make ourselves “user friendly” to all sorts of groups who didn’t have a tradition [of university attendance]’ (Interview 31, p. 3). In the context of reduced government funding, the pragmatic position is that ‘we’ve got to go out and make ourselves friendly to them otherwise we die’ (Interview 31, p. 3).

**Strategic Planning—Rhetoric or Action**

In one university, the strategic plan and mission statement acknowledges its ‘special responsibility for and values its commitment to Indigenous education and the Indigenous peoples [of its region]’ (Interview 43, p. 1). However, one senior researcher in the institution expressed concern that government policy and funding shifts have meant that universities have a perpetually changing and complex array of challenges which preoccupy management at all levels (Interview 27, p. 3). She stated that the
University has a very confined and rigid, old academic tradition which is only just coming to terms with the fact that there are thousands, literally thousands, of students out there that we provide educational programs for who are not the first ten or whatever percent of the HSC [Higher School Certificate].

(Interview 27, p. 3)

Interviewees indicated that the incorporation of Indigenous issues into universities’ strategic plans was both a significant gain and a source of concern where it merely serves as window-dressing. A female equity manager commented that while her university’s ‘culture and values’ are ‘embedded in that strategic plan’ this is only rhetoric if it is not filtered down effectively (Interview 60, p. 1). In another institution, a non-Indigenous academic who is involved in the teaching of Indigenous studies subjects, observed that ‘the university would be able to demonstrate on paper that it had certain policies in place and had certain structures in place, but in practice there’s a hell of a lot more that the university could be doing’ (Interview 30, p. 3). He believes that ‘what drives senior management is largely external forces, which are related to the politics of funding’ (Interview 30, p. 5).

**Funding Policies and Institutional Inclusiveness**

The impact of Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs funding for Indigenous higher education on changes in universities was raised by a number of interviewees. A female non-Indigenous academic believes that ‘with the current leadership and management of this university it is entirely DEETYA’s agenda.’ (Interview 27, p. 5). She said that it was not always like that, and that historically within universities ‘there was a different driving force rather than the money or the expectations of the government’ (Interview 27, p. 6). She now is of the opinion that the major influence over Indigenous policies in universities is the Department and that ‘the money is the thing that’s driving it’ (Interview 27, pp. 5–6).

A senior non-Indigenous administrator expressed the view that his university does not understand ‘the culture of the Indigenous people in the community or on campus and have, for a long time I believe, not been overly interested in developing what I would perceive as being a meaningful integration between the university and those cultures’ (Interview 17, p. 1). Likewise, another person argued that the university’s involvement with Indigenous peoples was largely tied to government funding without an appropriate regard and understanding of the needs of Indigenous peoples (Interview 31, p. 1). Recognition of Indigenous needs by the university occurs during annual Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs Profiles consultations, such that:
if we had funding for 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which was specific government funding and we actively had 150, they would give us accolades. They would pull the unit in, hold it up to DEET[YA] and say look what we’ve done, we’re doing a good thing, and DEET[YA] would pat them on the back and off they’d go again, with [the Indigenous unit] back into its reclusive unit.

(Interview 17, p. 5)

This administrator argues this inability to respond to Indigenous issues was related to a lack of ‘consultation with Indigenous academic leaders elsewhere in Australia to start a unit like this, or within the community’ (Interview 17, p. 2). Another dean in the same university commented that the reflection of Indigenous interests in the university’s cultures and values is something in which ‘I don’t believe that we have really made any headway’ (Interview 16, p. 1). This dean said, ‘We should have a vision to be the best equity university in Australia . . . we have a long way to go’ (Interview 16, p. 6). Speaking of the changes occurring in universities, one academic said: ‘I think a lot of what happens in this university is economically driven rather than driven by social justice and equity perspectives and priorities . . . ’ (Interview 37, p. 4). Similarly another senior administration officer believes that the motivation for increased inclusiveness is caught in a tension between financial imperatives and ensuring that Indigenous Australians have full access to and participation in a tertiary institution (Interview 5, p. 5). The effect, she suggests, has been for university management to adopt an approach that places responsibility for their support in the sole care of the Indigenous support units. She argues that this tendency is compounded by the university management’s concern not to be seen as interfering in Indigenous matters (Interview 5, p. 5).

**Cultural Awareness and Staff Understanding**

Related to this issue of a ‘hands-off’ management approach to Indigenous matters in the university sector is the limited awareness of Indigenous culture and issues by some university staff. In no case study interview was any respondent able to cite the experience in their university of regular and structured cultural awareness programs for staff, including senior staff. Where such programs had been conducted, they were ad hoc and unlikely to be ongoing. Those who had participated in such programs were generally positive and receptive to the learning which they gained. This lack of cultural awareness training for staff, particularly senior staff, was seen in some instances to be associated with the omission of Indigenous interests in university policies. A senior female administration officer suggests that managers do not ‘deliberately avoid dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues . . . but there is an ignorance in terms of dealing with the needs of Aboriginal and Islander people’ (Interview 5, p. 5). Such lack of knowledge may lead to omission through ignorance, as in the instance of a senior research manager who did not include Indigenous matters in his original draft university research plan. He did not see this as a ‘deliberate omission’ but rather as an outcome of ‘ignorance’ (Interview 5, p. 9). The onus is on Indigenous people in universities to ensure that this form of awareness training occurs. One executive administrator compared Indigenous efforts in promoting their issues to the
university with the efforts of a women’s research group, which he argued had done much to change their position in the university research culture by their submissions and creation of alliances; he sees that Indigenous peoples should be more saying, ‘come on, come on, where’s the Indigenous side of this’ (Interview 4, p. 5).

Conclusion

Universities are struggling with a range of challenges arising from changes to their political and economic operations; changes in the knowledge base they are now expected to provide students, businesses and other interest groups; and changes in the nature of the student population they are expected to work with, one much more representative of Australian society generally. Despite the pressures impacting on university operations they still number among their commitments the valuing of social justice and equity at both the level of policy and practice. Moreover, university communities are now engaged in some significant debates over the dilemmas arising from the pressures on their commitments to meet the needs and interests on Indigenous peoples, working to make their best hopes for Indigenous students a reality.

Recommendation 1

That universities make apparent their commitment to meeting the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples within and external to the university by reworking the organisational structures of the university so that Indigenous peoples are included in terms of their position as sovereign peoples.

Recommended Practice

• Collaborate with Indigenous stakeholders for purposes of developing appropriate models of inclusion and representation at a senior management and advisory levels.

• Collaborate with Indigenous people to include them as stakeholders in the institutional strategic planning and development.
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SP = University Strategic Plan  
EP = Equity Plan  
IP = University Indigenous Education Plan

* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

Sub-categories

1. Statements of values in relation to social justice and equity.
2. Commitment to enhance participation of groups on the basis of achieving equity and social justice for these groups.
3. Specific commitment to enhance the participation of Indigenous peoples.
4. Acknowledgement and recognition of the inequities which Indigenous peoples have experienced in the past.
5. Statement of environment/contextual variables which influence universities’ responses to Indigenous peoples.
7. Acknowledgement of state/other policies which influence universities’ responses to Indigenous peoples.
8. Relationship between government funding policies and the universities’ commitment to social justice and equity for Indigenous peoples.
9. Monitoring and reviewing the appropriateness of universities’ responses to Indigenous peoples.
Institutional Management and Leadership

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training report (1996, p. x) suggests that ‘good equity practice’ exists when

- equity has senior advocacy in the institution; and
- there are sufficient numbers of dedicated staff suitably placed or with the skills necessary to influence senior management effectively.

A recent report on funding of Indigenous programs in higher education (Higher Education Council 1997) concluded that the depth and extent of Indigenous activities in an institution is closely related to the institutional leadership and structural support for Indigenous matters and the manner in which this is advocated for and acknowledged at senior management level, as well as the extent to which the Indigenous programs are inclusive within the overall structure of the university (Higher Education Council 1997). The report suggests that best practice is exemplified when, staff at senior management level of the university promote and support Indigenous education as evidence of ‘its commitment to supporting higher education for Indigenous Australians’ (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 32).

The significance of institutional senior advocacy of equity and minority interests as demonstrated through active and visible institutional leadership and commitment is well-recognised in the literature relating to minority student participation in higher education (e.g. Love 1993; Richardson & Skinner 1990; Lukabyo 1995). Love (1993) argues that such personnel must understand the climate, what creates it and gets in the way of student success. In addition, Love (1993, p. 29) suggests that ‘Black students do not fare well on pre-dominantly white campuses where the leadership lacks an understanding of racism in its individual and institutional manifestations and is unwilling to take a public position advocating its elimination’. Instead he asserts that ‘Institutional leaders who acknowledge the problem and understand that racism affects the mission and goals of the institution as well as its capacity to meet those missions and goals appears to contribute to a climate of inclusion that allows for greater rates of persistence among Black College students’ (1993, p. 29).

Representation of Institutional Management and Leadership in University Policies

Increasingly, senior university managers are expected to provide appropriate leadership in Indigenous matter, while simultaneously allowing for a self-determining Indigenous presence within the institution. As sub-category three in Table illustrates, eight out of the 20 university plans surveyed have strategies wherein leadership in Indigenous issues is a key component of their university’s policies. However, strategies relating to the operational and structural aspects of
leadership in Indigenous matters is to be found in the Indigenous education plans of the institutions. Two universities have strategic plans for enhancing the representation of the Indigenous voice to senior management, and the implications of this for participation in the administrative structure of the university. Typically, the head of the Indigenous academic/support centre is responsible to a member of the senior university management team for policy and financial matters. In one university, the equity plan describes the relationship between the university administrative personnel and the Indigenous centres within the institution.

In two universities their Indigenous policy and advisory committee is part of their university strategic plan for consolidating the link between the university and the Indigenous community. While other universities acknowledge this link and the work of these committees, operational details are provided in the university’s Indigenous education plan rather than the university strategic plan. ‘Indigenisation’ is a concept which has only recently entered the debates about Indigenous inclusion within universities, as indicated by its absence from university strategic and equity plans. The strategic plans of some universities acknowledge and give commitment to taking on a role of leadership in Indigenous education. One university’s Indigenous education plan does speak of ‘Aboriginalisation’ of the functions and operations of the Aboriginal centre.

**Policy Overview**

The following are examples of inclusive institutional management and leadership practices as cited within university strategic and equity plans.

**Links with Indigenous Communities**

- One university appointed an Aboriginal liaison officer to develop links between community and university.
- In one university, an Aboriginal policy development committee has responsibility for consolidating the links which provides advice to senior management.

**External Collaboration, Partnership and Networking Arrangements**

There are examples of:

- collaboration between university and community to develop Indigenous programs;
- collaboration with government agencies for purposes of raising awareness about Indigenous issues;
- Indigenous agencies represented on university’s Indigenous orientation committee;
- cross-institutional collaboration and interaction for networking and sharing programs;
• collaboration with land councils;
• university representation through its Indigenous education centre on all local relevant community organisations and committees;
• Indigenous centres represented on state and national indigenous higher education bodies; and
• external promotion and awareness-raising by way of public lectures, seminars to service clubs, schools, churches, cultural and ethnic minority groups and businesses.

Internal Collaborative Initiatives

Examples include:
• consultations with the university’s flexible learning centre to provide staff development programs to all university staff in area of teaching Indigenous students;
• interactions between senior academic university staff and Indigenous staff through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy committee to facilitate teaching and research in Indigenous studies; and
• utilisation of university’s learning assistance centre as a source of expertise in developing inclusive curricula.

University Initiatives

Some examples are:
• university accepting strategic and financial responsibility in establishing an Indigenous community cultural centre;
• Aboriginal Education Policy Committee chaired by pro-vice chancellor;
• university objective to provide academic expertise to Aboriginal associations;
• strategic alliance with the Aboriginal arts community to establish an Aboriginal arts collection;
• marketing analysis is planned to ascertain the feasibility of fee-paying cross-cultural awareness and Aboriginal languages courses; and
• development of research and consulting activities of the Indigenous centre.

Indigenous Representation in Policy and Decision-making

This is represented by acknowledgement of:
• formal and informal consultations and interactions with Aboriginal community groups including elders; and
• Indigenous management/advisory committees and boards which compromise a diversity of representation from the community, relevant government and non-government agencies and the university.
Indigenous Employment Participation Strategies

Some instances are:

- implementation of a strategic plan for the employment, promotion, career development and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff;
- staff development programs in relation to equity matters;
- implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategies across areas of the university;
- policies to employ Aboriginal tutors where possible;
- Indigenous staff representation across multi-campuses;
- review of personnel practices in relation to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a view to establishing guidelines to encourage the employment of Indigenous people;
- employment of Indigenous specialist staff such as a business development manager, curriculum development staff for discipline-based Aboriginal perspectives;
- promote and support programs to increase the research profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff;
- Aboriginal employment affirmative action strategy to increase the number of tenured Indigenous staff;
- cross-cultural awareness programs for non-Indigenous university staff; and
- cross-faculty teaching opportunities to provide experience for Indigenous staff as well as to provide Indigenous perspectives across a diversity of academic programs.

Review, Monitoring and Quality Control

Some university-based examples include:

- monitoring and review of existing programs by specialist Aboriginal community groups; and
- external and internal reviews of all courses, special entry and support programs for Indigenous students, the focus being success and retention.

Leadership in Indigenous Education

Some universities describe their commitment to Indigenous education in the following terms:

- promoting the institution as a ‘supportive provider’ of Indigenous education;
- ‘commitment to the advancement of Indigenous Australians’;
- providing access to high quality education for Indigenous peoples;
• ‘national leader in all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and training’;
• ‘provide empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through education and research’;
• ‘provide culturally appropriate education, employment and research programs’; and
• ‘provide leadership in access, equity and participation in post-secondary programs’.

Dilemmas of Institutional Management and Leadership

A number of key dilemmas in relation to institutional management and leadership in Indigenous matters were identified across the case study universities, although not all were common to each university. First, the case studies demonstrate a desire by various interests for university leaders to express their commitment to and act as advocates for Indigenous Australians through strategic planning processes. However, accompanying this is a concern over who should be speaking for Indigenous matters within the university and on which issues. Second, while the need for change in Indigenous representation in universities is widely acknowledged, efforts to operationalise these changes at the faculty level still have to be addressed. The effect of sustaining the status quo is likely to have minimal impact on Indigenous students’ success rates. The central dilemma as seen by one non-Indigenous senior administrator is, ‘how does the university get terribly excited about less than 2% of its population’ (Interview 17, p. 5).

Historically, Indigenous involvement in higher education in Australian universities has to a large degree followed a generic pattern which encompasses some combination of the following aspects:

• the establishment of an Indigenous student support centre, which has either diversified or evolved into a faculty, a broadly-based academic centre, or a student support unit, or a combination of the foregoing among other developments;
• the introduction of equal employment opportunity principles and practices (sometimes in conjunction with a formal Aboriginal employment strategy);
• the setting up of an Indigenous advisory and management committee and an Indigenous access and participation committee; and
• the provision of alternate entry into the university for Indigenous students.

This generic formula is sometimes complimented by the teaching of Indigenous studies programs across the university, Indigenous research activities, and the operation of the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, directly funded through
Commonwealth funds. For a more complete description of the diversity and specialisations of Indigenous academic and support centres see Ham (1996) and Higher Education Council (1997).

**Institutional Leadership and Inclusiveness**

In one university, the vice-chancellor has stimulated much interest because of his explicit acknowledgment of and public advocacy for Indigenous issues. This has been demonstrated through his publicly stated aim of Indigenising the university’s curriculum, research and administration, and his public acknowledgment of Aboriginal ownership of the land on which the university is located. In addition, he has expressed a commitment to working in partnership with Indigenous peoples in the university (Interview 4, p. 20; Interview 13, p. 8). Most senior academics interviewed within this university indicated that the vice-chancellor had taken a strong stand in this matter and that this would affect university policies and practices, with one seeing the situation thus:

this is the first time that a VC has stood up and said ‘Yes, we will Indigenise the university’. I think that was a fair shock to a lot people. I think those people who are not empathetic towards the Indigenous issues may need to redress their attitudes. And I can see where a lecturer . . . may have to modify in part to accommodate the needs of the university in Indigenising. I think it’s been marvellous but up until this time there has been an absolute silence.

(Interview 17, p. 18)

According to one administrator the source of energy for this initiative should come directly from the university executive and should be maintained at a Senior level (Interview 17, p. 1) until it ‘becomes so embedded people don’t actually think why they do it any more, they just do it’ (Interview 29, p. 5–6). Now that such a strong statement had been made by the vice-chancellor in relation to Indigenising the university, failure to follow through could lead to further tokenism.

It is acknowledged by equity practitioners within these universities that it is crucial for effective institutional leadership and management to become embedded in the overall operations of the university. At the faculty level in each of the case study universities, the institutional strategic planning process was intended to be complemented by faculty plans which addressed the equity issues in the university plan. One administrator stated that the head of these academic units must be prepared to take a stand on Indigenous issues: ‘If we’re going to be fair about it. It just can’t be enunciated by the VC and then let those words go to the wind. The VC then has to come back to the Faculty Dean and say “come on Faculty Dean this is part of our new responsibility, let’s make it work!”’ (Interview 17, p. 18–19). At one university, staff from the Indigenous academic support centre have regular meetings with various deans. One academic reported her dean as saying that ‘Indigenous people’s successful participation in this place is a priority for him and he has encouraged any sort of strategic response to enable that to happen . . . he’s supportive of trying to do something to increase the success of students here’ (Interview 37, p. 4).
An equity administrator spoke of the unwillingness or inability in the case of some deans to take responsibility for equity issues at the faculty level despite it being in their ‘duty statement to consider equal employment opportunity and affirmative action’ (Interview 60, p. 2). She asserts that potentially such non-responsiveness on the part of deans is ‘grounds for poor performance’ but such action had never been taken as you cannot force a manager to include such matters in their planning. This equity manager sees that changing such inaction is not an overnight process but that her job is ‘as a dripping tap against a stone’ (Interview 60, p. 2).

While university personnel may not always be as responsive to matters of equity as some would prefer, another equity administrator said ‘sometimes they are actually genuinely confused as to what they are supposed to respond to. I think that they talk about inclusiveness but I don’t think that they are quite sure what that actually means’ (Interview 14, p. 2). He sees the result as ‘a tension existing between inclusiveness on the one hand, and perhaps ownership on the other’ (Interview 14, p. 2). The tension between ‘inclusiveness’ and ‘Indigenous ownership’, is closely related to the positioning of the Indigenous academic/support centre in the university. Where these centres have had strong ownership of Indigenous issues, attempts by the university to become more inclusive have created the need to renegotiate and redefine roles. This could help to avoid the risk of what one dean referred to as ‘ghettoisation’ of the Indigenous issues and resources in Indigenous academic/support centres (Interview 9, p. 3; Interview 14, p. 2).

One administrator, who has had a long experience with Indigenous issues and staff in his university and who is a member of his institution’s Indigenous advisory committee, said that it is important for Indigenous peoples to make it clear to the university how they wish ‘Indigenisation’ to occur and who should do it (Interview 17, p. 30). Consultation with Indigenous people is central to this process for without it the process will ‘be doomed to failure’ (Interview 17, p. 31):

the Indigenous people must say where we [the Indigenous people] want to fit, where we see the impact, and where we see the reconciliation process happening here. We don’t want the alienation, we don’t want to be left out of Indigenous issues—that’s our proprietary right. Now if the university doesn’t recognise those proprietary rights and give them, then it will fail. It won’t Indigenise.

(Interview 17, pp. 31–32)
Advocacy and Representation

The mechanisms of representation and advocacy are diverse among the universities considered. One Indigenous senior academic said that if ‘Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders are going to have any impact on the university then the infrastructure of the university must be open’ (Interview 62, p. 2). Such openness can be achieved by having Indigenous advisory committees which are sub-committees of university council so that these people have complete access to the whole university (Interview 62, p. 2).

It is important that Indigenous issues be included within the overall infrastructure of the university through mechanisms such as the Indigenous advisory committees, and Indigenous representation on university council and the vice-chancellor’s advisory committees. This Indigenous senior academic and manager said that there should be a recognition by the institution of the separateness of ‘Aboriginal business’, and an acknowledgment that such business is the ‘responsibility of Aboriginal people, not the institution’ (Interview 62, p. 5). Instead he sees the institutional responsibility as being ‘to listen to Aboriginal people and bring under discussion to the university their areas of concern’ (Interview 62, p. 5). In relation to universities advocating for Indigenous matters, his view is that they should limit themselves to responding to what ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lay down as their strategic interests’ and confine themselves to those matters within the educational sphere only (Interview 62, p. 5). He asserts that the university should not be expected to take an advocacy position on behalf of broader matters of concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because it will implicate the university in political matters.

A significant dilemma for non-Indigenous people in this matter of advocacy and representation is the politics of when to speak and on whose behalf. One senior administrator spoke of his long association with the development of the Indigenous unit in his university and how as ‘a migloo’ (white person) he has attempted to listen to Indigenous people, despite calls of ‘you’re a white, what the hell would you know about the Indigenous issues’ (Interview 17, p. 4). He acknowledged that he does not feel free to speak for and represent the interests of Indigenous peoples. This unwillingness to do so, however, creates another dilemma because the Indigenous advisory committee expects that he will use his senior position within the university to access arenas of influence that Indigenous peoples are not able to do so and to speak for Indigenous interests.

Conclusion

Policy initiatives relating to university management and leadership have emerged around collaboration with Indigenous communities, enhancing the representation of Indigenous interests in policy making, and the development of Indigenous employment strategies. At the same time universities are currently engaged in a series of significant debates concerning the role of university leaders acting as advocates for Indigenous interests, and the need to increase the representation of Indigenous interests within faculties.
Recommendation 2

That representation of Indigenous interests is evident across all senior management decision-making committees. In the absence of an Indigenous representative, the terms of reference for university committees to contain an imprimatur to address implications for Indigenous peoples that may arise out of decisions.

Recommendation 3

That the selection, appointment, induction and performance appraisal processes of university senior managers be linked to an expectation of them being committed to the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation 4

That universities make explicit in their strategic plans and related policies their commitment to, endorsement of and responsibility for the development and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy.
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SP = University Strategic Plan  EP = Equity Plan  IP = University Indigenous Education Plan

* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

Sub-categories

1. Line of management between senior management and Indigenous academic/support centre.
2. External collaboration and institutional leadership.
3. Institutional leadership on Indigenous issues.
5. Indigenous representation on institutional policy and decision-making.
6. Relationship between university strategy and Indigenous education strategy.
7. University policy of Indigenisation.
Curriculum and Teaching

Historically the experiences of Indigenous Australians have largely been absent from the curriculum material of universities or have been presented in ways which have constructed them as ‘Other’ (Spivak 1985), through disciplines such as anthropology, which may in some instances have had the effect of misconstruing and damaging aspects of Indigenous cultures and histories (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1991). The histories Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report stresses the importance of change to the culture of educational institutions, including the content of curricula and the teaching methods thereof (as summarised in Reid and Holland 1996, p. 115). As a consequence, Indigenous students are invited or coerced into accepting as natural and normal the dominant group’s interpretations of their world.

The Higher Education Council report suggests that a major concern of many of the Indigenous Australian staff in universities throughout Australia was how to keep their cultural identity separate and distinctive in an institution which is constantly requiring that they adjust to the ‘structures and processes of a non-Indigenous Australian culture’ (1997, p. 21). In addition, a major belief that emerged through the Higher Education Council consultations ‘is the belief of Indigenous Australians in their right to be the interpreters and tellers of their culture and history’ (Higher Education Council 1997). This should be demonstrated by major involvement of Indigenous Australians in the teaching of Indigenous Studies and the conduct of research into Indigenous Australian issues. In some instances it was thought that this involvement should be in the form of control but not in all cases.

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training Report (1996, p. 65) also identified a number of key issues which an effective equity framework must address including the need to change the culture of higher education through addressing the theoretical framework, the curriculum, and the pedagogy used in the teaching process.

Representation of Curriculum and Teaching in University Policies

The inclusion of knowledge about Indigenous peoples and cultures, and to a lesser extent, Indigenous epistemologies, are featured in university strategic plans for the development, design and delivery of new courses for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Apart from description of the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and studies into curricula across the university, any acknowledgment of Indigenous knowledge is to be found in university Indigenous education plans. Six universities have made specific plans to include Indigenous perspectives into programs and curricula. In two of these universities, this is being achieved through the Indigenous academic/support centres which are developing an Indigenous studies strand in degree courses across a number of disciplines and courses for all
university students. Another university has a strategic plan for including Indigenous studies in all aspects of the university’s academic programs. The strategic plan is for each faculty to work collaboratively with the Indigenous academic/support centre to develop programs which include Indigenous knowledge and are appropriate to the needs of Indigenous students.

In addition to the development and design of courses which are available to all students, six universities have strategic plans for the development, design and delivery of courses which are exclusively for Indigenous students. These accredited programs range from diploma to masters levels courses and are available in a variety of delivery modes. These Indigenous programs have been developed in direct response to community needs or where there is expectation that there could be a strong response from communities to enrol in such courses. A significant aspect of the development and delivery of these courses is that they have the strong commitment of the university and there has been extensive collaboration between the university and the Indigenous academic/support centres. Five universities have strategic and equity plans to review and monitor the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge into curricula, and to examine their effectiveness in achieving this objective. The general areas of review include:

- specific courses and programs;
- evaluation of Indigenous studies programs;
- trends in student demands for courses;
- in-service programs; and
- teaching and assessment practices.

Four universities have made strategic plans regarding delivery modes for meeting the needs of Indigenous students and communities. The three key approaches to flexible delivery mode include offerings in the external or distance mode, the block release mode and a combination of these modes. The block release mode in particular gives these universities the capacity to respond innovatively to Indigenous students needs and demands.

**Policy Overview**

Policy initiatives relating to worthwhile practices, in terms of addressing Indigenous needs and interests, in curriculum and teaching in university strategic and equity plans are summarised below.

**Indigenous Perspectives across the Curriculum**

- One university’s objective is to collaborate with Indigenous staff to increase the Aboriginal content across disciplines.
- One university will conduct an audit at the faculty level of the representation of Indigenous perspectives in university curricula.
- One university will review the effectiveness of strategies to develop curricula.
• One university provides fellowships to academic staff to critique their existing curriculum and develop new programs.
• One university involves Indigenous staff as a source of expert assistance in developing curricula.
• One university provides forums for academic staff to exchange information on curriculum design.

Preparatory Programs

• One university has alternative entry and pipelines programs for Indigenous people which act as feed programs to accredited courses.
• A university has Indigenous foundation studies programs which are linked to specific accredited courses such as the bachelor of applied science.
• One university appointed a labour market consultant to market foundation programs to the long-term unemployed.
• A university has articulation arrangements between TAFE and university for Indigenous specific programs.

Special Programs and Courses

• One university has developed and delivered Indigenous studies programs especially in the area of teacher education.
• One university has introduced alternative delivery modes for Indigenous studies programs.
• One university’s objective is to achieve a 15 per cent increase in non-Aboriginal students studying Aboriginal subjects by the end of 1996.
• One university has initiated programs in the arts, the media, open learning, Aboriginal language programs, cross-cultural awareness training and community cohorts of special interests.
• In one university there has been collaboration between the Indigenous centre and the school of architecture and interior design to establish a degree in environment design.
• One university has made Indigenous specific subjects and units available in the areas of education, administration and management and health.
• One university introduced courses for prospective teachers who are experiencing difficulties in the use of standard English.
• One university has initiated cultural studies for isolated students.
Course and Programs in Response to Community Needs

- One university conducted a catchment area needs analysis of the local Aboriginal community in view of developing programs specific to the needs and interests of that community.
- A university has introduced accredited courses based on the community needs including community management, early childhood education and paralegal studies.
- One university has made modifications or additions to already established courses so that they are more appropriate to the needs of the community—e.g. cultural heritage management and Aboriginal education assistance courses.
- One university includes Aboriginal community groups in the process to review and evaluate specific subjects and to contribute to the development of additional courses.
- A university delivers industry specific programs such as short courses for public servants on communicating with Aboriginal people.
- One university has developed and implemented a degree in Indigenous primary health care with the specific intention of improving the quality of health care to Indigenous people as well as to enhance the career prospects for Indigenous health care workers.

Collaboration to Develop and Deliver Programs

- In one university there has been collaboration between an Aboriginal college, Aboriginal community members, a university Indigenous centre and an institute of early childhood to develop programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples.
- In one university there has been collaboration largely for purposes of developing programs, teaching and research.

Teaching Methodology

- One university’s objective is to ensure that the teaching and learning environment is sensitive to a plurality of cultures.
- One university has implemented a staff development program on strategies for teaching Indigenous students.

Delivery Modes

- One university promotes remote area educational opportunities to Aboriginal peoples by offering distance education with on-site support.
- One university has established collaboration between the flexible learning centre and branch campuses and provides a teacher education program on location in Aboriginal communities.
• In one university community tailored courses are being offered through distance mode, including, for example, Aboriginal health, paralegal studies and Aboriginal administration.

• One university has produced a series of thirteen programs in Aboriginal studies for Open Learning Agency Australia television.

• A university has introduced a telecommunication networks to develop a virtual campus.

Review, Monitoring and Assessing

• One university uses inservice programs to implement, monitor and review the university’s code of good practice, particularly in valuing and evaluating teaching and assessment practices.

Review

• An Indigenous centre has established a set of assessment criteria for review of the course content and the lecturing strategies adopted by faculties.

Dilemmas of Curriculum and Teaching

With regard to curriculum and teaching two significant dilemmas emerged from the interview data. The first concerns the familiar tension between curriculum change and stability, while the second explores concerns about university teaching as a reproductive activity or a productive process. Within these two dilemmas a number of micro issues arise which constitute and reinforce the two main dilemmas. However, as a non-Indigenous faculty dean states, a key dilemma is that on the university’s part:

there’s a clash of wanting to be inclusive, to have strong Indigenous representation, but not wanting to shift very rigid academic ways of looking at things which are sort of traditionally white custom.

(Interview 9, p. 30)

Indigenous Students as Recipients and Transmitters of University Knowledges

Some educators argue that for Indigenous students to succeed in universities, such institutions should become more inclusive in their ways of producing and transmitting knowledge, as well as in their recognition of the legitimacy of the knowledge of other cultures (e.g. Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991). In one of the case study universities a senior Indigenous educator believes that the knowledge bases of universities are so firmly entrenched that any possibilities for other knowledge to be recognised and included are ‘pie in the sky’ (Interview 62, p. 9). This educator advocates the preparation of Indigenous students for two knowledge
systems—the Indigenous system and the ‘Western’ system. He believes it is critical that Indigenous students understand the ways ‘Western’ knowledge is produced and encoded in the university, because faculties will not change their ways or bow down to Indigenous students’ needs (Interview 62, p. 9). This perspective poses a dilemma for lecturers and support personnel who are working with Indigenous students in that the more effectively these students can be taught to manage the ‘Western’ educational system, the less pressure there is for universities to reflect critically upon their own ethnocentrism.

A number of students and staff in the case study universities expressed concern about non-Indigenous lecturers failing them in Aboriginal Studies subjects through not recognising the Indigenous knowledge they included in assignments and other assessment tasks. Such knowledge was dismissed as anecdotal and not sufficiently academic. A senior Indigenous academic’s view on this is that these students ‘have not failed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies’ (Interview 62). Instead, he argues these students have failed to decode the ways in which Indigenous knowledge has been appropriated into the ‘Western’ knowledge system, in accordance with the institution’s traditions of knowledge production and teaching:

They have failed the issues related to what I call scholarship coding system about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, coded in the fashion that the way that the people who are organising that particular system are able to accept it.

(Interview 62, p. 15)

This academic suggests that Indigenous students have to recognise that for their knowledge to be legitimised within the university, it must be codified and verified in ways which are acceptable within the university academic tradition, even though these ways of coding may be outside of the Indigenous knowledge base (Interview 62, p. 15). Some, he says, would argue that within the university coding and verification system, Indigenous knowledge looks personal, ‘and the Western system cannot accept anecdote’ (Interview 62, p. 16). One solution to this, he suggests, is for Indigenous Studies to be taught by Indigenous people, so that their knowledge can be constructed, encoded, validated and legitimised within an Indigenous framework, and not be diluted within the university’s academic frames (Interview 62, p. 17).

Given the history of universities and the nature of the majority of the students, Indigenous people are on the margins:

I think that the knowledge disciplines in western culture have evolved in particular ways and they don’t match up very well with Indigenous knowledge because there was never any need for the Indigenous knowledge to evolve in similar ways . . . to bring the two together is not always easy and I think that is one of the biggest struggles for Indigenous people and for people who are teaching.

(Interview 10, p. 8)
Even though Indigenous students are disadvantaged by this approach, the university is seen basically to function within a Western culture and hence ‘we expect you [Indigenous] people to learn how to operate in this culture’ (Interview 10, p. 6). Where Indigenous students have problems dealing with this approach, ‘coming out of the classroom totally confused’ (Interview 17, p. 3), they are referred to the Indigenous student support centre which has to re-teach the materials (Interview 10, p. 18).

**Legitimacy of Indigenous Knowledge**

With the growth in Indigenous enrolments in universities and the introduction of Indigenous academic/support centres, the expertise of many university disciplines which have traditionally constructed knowledge about Indigenous people is being challenged by Indigenous people themselves. Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge frameworks are being developed in a diversity of disciplines whereby the knowledge about Indigenous peoples and matters increasingly emanate from an Indigenous world view. Central to this issue of legitimising Indigenous knowledge within the university is the matter of the interests which some sections of the institution have in maintaining their control over the production of knowledge about Indigenous peoples and issues. Some university disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and education are seen by one Indigenous academic to regard themselves as ‘the experts . . . they know everything about Aboriginals’ (Interview 62, p. 10). This academic sees an important distinction between the ways in which these persons construct knowledge about Indigenous peoples through their disciplines and the ways in which Indigenous peoples construct their knowledge bases and teach their knowledge according to ‘the way Aboriginal people view things’ (Interview 62, p. 10). He argues that the dilemma for Indigenous peoples in establishing the legitimacy of their knowledge is that they have to verify their knowledge against these non-Indigenous experts whose knowledges they are contesting (Interview 62).

In one institution, many respondents spoke from diverse positions about the potential a recently established centre in Indigenous knowledges would offer the university. One senior non-Indigenous academic expressed concern about the processes through which the centre was established (Interview 56). While he applauded the establishment of the centre as a definite plus for the university in terms of improving the university’s national profile, he thought that there were a number of people within the university whose research and teaching interests coincided with those of the centre and yet who had been ignored in the development and setting up of the centre (Interview 56).

**The Proprietary Right of Indigenous People to their Knowledge**

The way in which Aboriginal studies had been taught at one university was very much ‘teaching about Aboriginal people’ with little ‘opportunity to explore contemporary colonialisms and other issues that had more to do with relationships between people, dialogues with people rather than talking about people and representing people’ (Interview 37, p. 8). The ‘teaching about’ approach ‘leaves
unproblematised issues of representation and politics, politics of identity and politics of ideology . . . it comes mainly from an uncritical anthropological perspective’ but it does not get into the debates about ‘what constitutes anti-colonial curriculum’ (Interview 37, p. 8).

However, the increased inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in university curricula raises the issue of who should be teaching Indigenous knowledges:

Rightly or wrongly . . . where programs are written on Indigenous issues, that is to be maintained as a proprietary right of those Indigenous people to prepare and present, if not be very much instrumental in it.

(Interview 17, p. 10)

Non-Indigenous academics are aware of and have concerns about the dilemmas they face in teaching Indigenous knowledges, one commenting:

I’m just wondering about the ground under my feet being shifting sand . . . You’ve really got to be able to wherever possible step outside your own value system, at least be really aware of it, when you’re meeting other people whose beliefs and values are completely different to your own.

(Interview 45, p. 19)

Another academic said:

The concerns I have as a white fella teaching the kind of unit that it is, even though I don’t try to put myself forward as someone who represents Aboriginal knowledges in any kind of absolute essential way.

(Interview 30, p. 9)

One academic, conscious of being a ‘white’ lecturer in an Indigenous studies course, attempted to address this issue by using videoed footage of Indigenous peoples as the basis of his course presentation: ‘I give it a context and then say now listen to this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person telling how it is’ (Interview 51, p. 5). Another non-Indigenous lecturer responds to this dilemma by providing the course framework, doing the paperwork associated with the subject and having two Indigenous women actually teach the course (Interview 51, p. 6). However, these approaches need to be made part of a formal university policy on the teaching of Indigenous knowledges.

This is a key dilemma as it places some non-Indigenous academics in situations where they feel themselves unable to respond to students’ questions and believe that they are ‘constantly placed in compromising situations’ as they attempt to represent Indigenous positions (Interview 30, p. 28). This is also compounded by a position among some Indigenous managers of employing the ‘best person black or white to teach’ (Interview 51, p. 6), although all things being equal a ‘black’ person would be appointed over a ‘white’ person (Interview 51, p. 6).
At the same time, other non-Indigenous academics were concerned that as Indigenous people became more involved with the development of curriculum, teaching and research activities, their own interests and expertise were being overlooked.

**Indigenous Perspectives across the Curriculum**

Adding Indigenous perspectives to the curriculum for the benefit of all students was seen as ‘an exciting challenge’ (Interview 16, p. 34). One example cited was that the use of appropriate technologies in Indigenous communities could be worked into the engineering curriculum (Interview 16, p. 15). A senior academic in a technology area said that it would be ‘fabulous’ if engineering graduates had an awareness of Indigenous cultures, structures, history, rights and beliefs that underlie issues like ‘title to land because many of them are going to be working for mining companies’ (Interview 16, p. 2). He went on to say that engineering faculties have to produce graduates who comply with legislative codes and safety requirements and, moreover, that ‘in engineering a lot of stuff is very technically focused and it really doesn’t involve belief systems or value systems,’ basically engineering is ‘very black and white’ (Interview 16, pp. 21, 22, 24, 26). Thus within this context ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues are obviously at least third or fourth priority, but that’s only in the sense that we have been able to identify with people who will work with us, help us to understand the issues, because a failing in that area is a failing of the whole’ (Interview 16, p. 4).

Another academic spoke of the inclusion of the issue of Aboriginal sovereignty in a first year law subject, which is the foundation of all their study, and that this is the starting point from which students learn law. She argued that it ‘gives all of the students the ability to develop a critical approach to law and just to say, ‘well all these presumptions that we’ve had, that it must have been done the right way, can be questioned’ (Interview 52, p. 4). At the same university, in the future all first year students will have to undertake a number of core units including a subject contesting construction of knowledge which is being developed by Indigenous academics.

**Engaging Indigenous People in Curriculum Development and Teaching**

The capacity for inclusion of and recognition of Indigenous knowledges both within and across the curriculum, raises concerns among many non-Indigenous academics about the absence of Indigenous academics within some universities. Respondents spoke of the importance of empowering Indigenous peoples to become their own ‘best advocates’ (Interview 29). These respondents acknowledge and respect the intention of Indigenous people to teach their own issues. However, educational standing and academic expertise is a concern in determining the appropriateness of Indigenous people being involved in the teaching (Interview 17, p. 30).
This then introduces the dilemma of how to draw Indigenous people into universities to construct and reproduce that knowledge in ways which acknowledge and respect Indigenous knowledges that may often be outside of the university’s credentialling processes. One dean whose faculty had developed an Aboriginal Studies program was surprised at the unwillingness of his colleagues to accept the Aboriginal community as key players in the Aboriginal Studies program being developed by his university (Interview 9, pp. 10–11).

Related to the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges into universities is the issue of intellectual property rights and how such rights are regarded by universities with respect to Indigenous community knowledges, particularly as this raises issues about the individual and collective ownership of knowledge. Intellectual property in relation to curriculum is seen as ‘exceptionally important’ by one academic, because the ‘incorporation of Indigenous perspectives in university curriculum is very problematic’ (Interview 37, p. 14). For example, consideration needs to be given to: ‘which Indigenous perspectives? and who has the authority to allow certain knowledge to be incorporated’, especially where this knowledge belongs to a collective rather than an individual (Interview 37, p. 14).

One university faculty has already entered into an agreement with an Aboriginal body for a partnership to teach an Indigenous degree program whereby the intellectual property within the course material is retained by the Aboriginal body. This raised questions among other staff members regarding their own industrial position within the university whereby what knowledge they produce is now said to belong to the university (Interview 13, p. 31).

Conclusion

University plans which have expressed a commitment to addressing Indigenous needs and interests have given legitimacy to the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum; sanctioned the continuing provision of preparatory and other special programs, and supported the development of programs in response to the needs of Indigenous communities. Likewise, these policies have also given impetus to furthering Indigenous participation in collaborative course development, improving teaching methods and securing responsive delivery modes. Among the important debates concerning university curricula and teaching are those relating to the nature, extent and processes for achieving change, and the role of universities in reproducing existing knowledge (which may overlook or stereotype Indigenous peoples and their interests) and the engagement of Indigenous people in the production of knowledge that they find really useful in meeting their needs.
Recommendation 5

That universities collaborate with Indigenous peoples to reorganise already established knowledge frameworks so that Indigenous epistemologies, knowledges and pedagogies can be incorporated and reflected within the production and transmission of knowledge across all disciplines of the universities.
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**SP** = University Strategic Plan  
**EP** = Equity Plan  
**IP** = University Indigenous Education Plan  
* Indigenous Enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

**Sub-Categories**

1. Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum.
2. Development of preparatory and bridging programs.
4. Courses and programs in response to community needs.
5. Collaboration between faculties and Indigenous academic centres to develop courses.
6. Teaching methodology.
7. Developing broader understanding through Indigenous studies.
8. Delivery modes.
Administration and Organisational Structures

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training report (1996) suggests that ‘good equity practice’ exists when there is an effective organisational structure in place for equity in which responsibilities are clearly identified and are linked with the institution’s mainstream planning and decision-making processes. The report describes the two broad categories in universities for providing equity support: the first ‘marginalises equity’, and a second considers equity ‘as part of the central academic and administrative functions’ of the university (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996, p. 16). The operation of the former category is generally characterised by a focus on student access, separation from the academic and corporate policy processes of the institution, and having a minimal role in policy development (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996, p. 16). The second smaller category of institutions have developed equity planning processes which are integrated across the institution and supported by senior management.

This issue of structural inclusion and positioning was also addressed in the Higher Education Council review of funding for Indigenous students in universities (1997, pp. 17–18). The review categorised Indigenous academic/support centres nationally into three broad categories:

• those centres which are strongly placed to influence and participate in the mainstream academic decision-making processes of the institution
  - these centres generally have support and commitment from the management of the institution and are explicitly involved in the university strategic-planning process;

• those centres not fully incorporated into the university’s profile and strategic processes, nor prominent in the strategic plan of the university
  - these centres may have senior management support but there are no formal mechanisms to guarantee their position in the university; or

• those centres which are marginalised and largely excluded from the mainstream academic structure
  - these centres often do not have a direct line of access to senior management and their activities are largely limited to welfare support (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 18).

The significance of the integration of minority issues into the institutional organisational structure is exemplified in an American study by Henry and Nixon (1994) which looked at factors in changing university campuses to be more responsive to the needs of minority groups and women. This study identified the need to address issues of organisational culture as critical to organisational change, as well as the need for awareness and sensitivity to issues at senior administrative and structural levels. The key problem areas identified by Henry and Nixon were at
the administrative/structural level, whereby many administrators lacked the know-how or the interest to involve themselves or their faculty in change process. This impacted both at faculty level and higher up as they represent the conduit for getting issues from the bottom to the top of the management hierarchy. In addition, Henry and Nixon argue that in light of the universities’ staffing profiles, as there are very few representatives of minorities at senior levels, there are accordingly limited opportunities for senior staff to ‘develop an understanding of and sensitivity to individuals from different cultural backgrounds’ (1994).

Other aspects of administrative structure which are critical to changing organisational culture in promoting inclusion of minority issues are a positive campus climate and proactive efforts to increase the representation of minorities in universities through equal employment opportunity strategies (Richardson & Skinner 1990).

**Representation of Administration and Organisational Structures in University Policies**

The development of strategic plans incorporating university policies has, in recent years, become central to the overall processes of university administration. As Table 4 on page 74 shows, only four of the university policies surveyed included a university strategic plan which acknowledged and sought to integrate issues arising from their respective Indigenous education plans. Such entries provide information about the preparation, coordination and implementation of programs and policies in the Indigenous domain as these relate to the university. The final responsibility for the implementation of the strategies appears to rest largely with the Aboriginal policy and advisory committees and the Indigenous education plans.

Indigenous participation in the network and hierarchy of committees which are central to university decision-making is only referred to in three university strategic plans. These references describe the composition, purposes and responsibilities of the committees within the management structure of the university.

Indigenous employment and career development is an important strategy for all the Indigenous education plans. One obvious strategy to increase Indigenous participation in the administration of universities is to increase Indigenous staff numbers. Five university strategic and equity plans indicate strategies for increasing Indigenous employment as both academic and general staff, as well as making provision for programs to enhance the skills and career prospects of these employees. In addition, two universities have strategic plans for developing the cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity of non-Indigenous staff members.
Three universities have strategic plans for appraising courses and subjects, student completion rates, student support systems, Indigenous academic/support centre structures and operations, and the strategic plan outcomes. However, it is generally indicated that it is the responsibility of the Indigenous academic/support centres to conduct these appraisals.

**Policy Overview**

This section highlights the range of good practices in relation to administration and organisational structures that are prominent in university strategic and equity plans.

**Access and Enrolment Targets**

- Some universities have strategic targets to increase Indigenous access and enrolment rates.
- One university acknowledges that success and retention rates of Indigenous students are not at parity with rates of enrolments.
- One university’s strategic direction is to address the quality of outcomes for Indigenous students in relation to the quality of Indigenous student access.
- One university awarded equity grants to improve access for targeted groups such as Indigenous peoples.
- One university has statements pertaining to objectives which ensure the elimination of unlawful discrimination within the university (racism).

**Student Administration Processes**

- Most universities involve the Indigenous centre in the review and updating of the university’s data verification mechanism.
- Indigenous staff screen enrolments for verification purposes.

**Fiscal Administration**

- One university has recurrent funding for an Indigenous research institute.
- One university has contributed funding to establish a key centre in Indigenous Australian studies.
- One university has contributed funding to establish a key centre in teaching, research, vocational education and training.
Line of Management and Administrative Structure

- Indigenous participation in university strategic direction and structural planning can be seen through representation on various university administration and planning committees such as academic board, faculty boards of study, access and equity committees, etc.
- One university has a strategy for the restructuring and development of its Aboriginal research institute.
- One university will redevelop its Indigenous ‘academic/support centre’ into a faculty.
- One university’s Indigenous centre’s managerial arrangements include direct responsibility to the university senior management.
- Some university administrative units have to account for their functional contact with the Indigenous administrative centre.

Program, Policy and Strategy Preparation, Coordination and Implementation

- One university has documented formal guidelines which detail the scope of responsibilities for the preparation, coordination and implementation of programs, policies and strategies.
- In many universities Indigenous centres take leadership in the development and documentation of policies and strategies relating to the Indigenous issues within the university (e.g. the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy).
- In most universities Indigenous centres take the leadership role in the promotion and reporting of Indigenous activities and initiatives.
- Indigenous centres participate in university promotion, particularly in relation to Indigenous programs.

Recording and Maintenance of Indigenous Activities

- Some universities have registers of Indigenous enrolments, participation and graduation rates.
- One university has a register of research activity in relation to the participation of Indigenous staff involvement in research.
- One university is developing an information facility for Indigenous resources on the Internet.
Dilemmas of Administration and Organisational Structures

The key dilemmas in relation to the inclusivity of Indigenous interests in university organisation and administration relate to the tensions arising from maintaining the autonomy and self-determination of Indigenous academic/support centres while at the same time these centres being included in constructive ways within the overall operation of the institution. In some instances, this tension is seen to have resulted in the Indigenous academic/support centre building a wall around itself (Interview 4, p. 11) causing the university to take a ‘hands off’ approach to the management of such centres (Interview 17, p. 14).

The strategic planning process is a vehicle for explicating the key relationship between Indigenous interests and others in the university community. However, in the case study universities, some respondents said they were unaware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy and its relationship to the university strategic plan. The extent to which awareness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy is known and responded to throughout these universities appears to be related to the embeddedness of the strategic planning process into overall university operations. One person described the strategic planning process as follows:

We first of all developed our university strategic plan, and then we developed what we call university strategies. There’s a university strategy in each of a number of key areas; research is one of them, Aboriginal education is another . . . then the faculties develop their operational plans. Those operational plans are supposed to pick up everything in all of those plans . . .

(Interview 47, p. 24)

An executive administrator supported this process in relation:

I don’t think that the university’s commitment to improving the lot of Indigenous Australians for higher education begins or ends with [the Indigenous academic/support centre]. [It] represents a significant structural organisation in the institution but it needs to be linked in and there needs to be thinking across the board. From my previous experience as Dean of a Faculty, I think it fair to say that Deans have a responsibility across their human resources management, and across their academic based management to make sure that the needs of Aboriginal and Indigenous Australians are looked after in a prominent way. So from that point of view, I think there’s a dissemination role for Deans and other senior managers in terms of developing policy or process in their own areas.

(Interview 61, p. 4)

A faculty manager in another institution said that while he was aware of the existence of a university Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy, he did not ‘know whether I have actually seen it to look at and I don’t know if we are actually given one’ (Interview 9, p. 16). Another administrator in the same
institution suggested that ‘I think the strategy is developed and owned by [the Indigenous academic/support centre], not the university. I could stand to be corrected but I have never seen it go outside the Centre’s boundaries for any imprimatur whatsoever’ (Interview 17, p. 14). Similarly an executive administrator in this institution said that while:

Indigenous people have got their way of doing things . . . the plan has got to be owned by all our colleagues right across the university. I think that was a mistake not to get it out to everybody and get everybody to own and endorse it. They [the university] may want to change it and I think if they do want to change it then [the Indigenous academic/support centre] have to be cognisant perhaps.

(Interview 4, p. 12)

A faculty administrator in the institution suggested that this lack of articulation and the separateness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategic Plan was as much linked to the lack of articulation of any plans in the university as it was to the Indigenous strategy in particular. He believes that the university strategic planning process is driven by external matters such as quality assurance and the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs profiles funding (Interview 9, p. 16). In another university, a non-Indigenous academic who has had a long experience in Indigenous education expressed her concern that the effects of the current imperatives which are driving universities to be more competitive and self-funding could result in less diversity within universities, ‘Particularly once they take away the carrot from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which is this percentage of the money and swamp it up into the rest of the money’ (Interview 27, pp. 41–42).

The issue of interrelatedness between the Indigenous academic/support centre and other aspects of the university is problematic for some in that it may dilute Indigenous self-determination and ignore the notion of ‘Aboriginal business’ (Interview 62). However, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous interviewees acknowledged that the Indigenous academic/support centre cannot operate outside the university structures, and that the university must take responsibility ‘to make sure that the needs of Indigenous students are being looked after in a prominent way’ (Interview 61, p. 4). An Indigenous woman, who has had a long involvement with her university as a community leader in issues of Indigenous education, spoke of the dilemmas surrounding the desire for autonomy and inclusivity:

To be able to say we’re part of this university, we still want our autonomy, we still want to be autonomous to the university, but those faculties in there, play the bigger part of where our students are going to end up. They’re going to be within that pathway of education going through. So those universities and any university must be able to identify with the interaction and the integrating of the faculty with the [Indigenous] centre. Not taking away their autonomy, but working with them because they [the university] can’t supply a culturally safe environment. The people themself have to do that within this structure. But at the same time they have to interconnect . . .
by identifying Aboriginal people, having Aboriginal identified within faculties, having positions placed there, having positions interconnecting and finding out how these people are operating within their faculties.

(Interview 23, p. 6)

As a community person she is concerned about the responsibility for all actions for things ‘black’ in the university being placed back on the ‘black centre’:

Now one of the things that I know the university would think, it is a little black centre, so everything to do with little black things becomes an issue for black people themselves... what happened was that any little problem of the blackfellas that would happen, they’d feed it into this poor little... pigeon hole, because it’s a black problem. Now what I would like to see, and this is me talking, is every student that comes into here is the responsibility of the whole of the university... where if we work together as each person... like this is... how would I say it... it’s a multi function, multi facet organisation, the university.

(Interview 23, p. 8)

A non-Indigenous administrator spoke of the need for integration of Indigenous and university interests, but acknowledged that there was a tension between separation and isolation as a response to the self-determination agenda. He described the effects of separate development and isolation:

It [the university] has not recognised them. It has let them go their own way without interference. You might say, ‘well fine, what I am looking for is self determination’. Self determination does not help them and this university because that self determination also has to be integrated. And without that integration they will comply with administrative processes because it’s a requirement. Organisational wise, they’ll organise themselves but if it’s not integrated, the organisational process will not spread within the university for each faculty or division to recognise, ‘yes, they are part’.

(Interview 17, p. 13)

**Equity and Indigenous Desires**

Another related aspect of the strategic planning process is the inclusion/exclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy within the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs equity agenda and the accessing of Indigenous funds through the Department’s profiling processes. The result of this seems to be increasing competition for scarce resources among targeted equity groups, thereby distracting attention from cutbacks in public sector investment in universities.
All case study universities rely heavily on the Department’s funds for supporting Indigenous students and their interests in the university. A senior executive sees his role to seek funds ‘for the whole university and part of that is to argue for funding for Aboriginal students’ (Interview 47, p. 6). Inclusion of Aboriginality as an equity group within the Department’s funding framework is problematic for some Indigenous peoples as ‘they feel that they have a special place in Australia as Indigenous people and for that reason they should not be part of the people in the equity program’ (Interview 14, p. 9). At the same time this creates a tension for equity practitioners who have a good rapport with Indigenous managers and acknowledge their expertise. These practitioners spoke of their difficulties in responding to Indigenous people’s apparently ambivalent desire for separateness and for inclusion. One equity administrator believes that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy should be submitted as part of the equity plan and sent out jointly to the university so as not to marginalise the interests of Indigenous students relative to other equity groups (Interview 29, p. 2):

I think because the ATSI equity issues have such a long way to go . . . it’s appropriate that they do have separate funding, particularly then because they can monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the programs that are funded. But what I think they need to do is pull the things together more. I certainly don’t think we should be putting in separate reports to DEETYA. I think that’s sending the wrong message to the university. I don’t think that we should be producing separate reports in the university. We should be producing reports that are all together. And I think we should be embedding that into quality assurance type things rather than equity.

(Interview 29, p. 31)

Another equity administrator, while acknowledging the political symbolism of having an Indigenous plan separate from another equity plan, commented upon the difficulty he experienced in being able to allocate equity funds to Indigenous matters if they are not part of the university’s Equity Plan. If they were part of this Plan, then equity funds could be provided for Indigenous initiatives, in addition to the operational funds which are currently provided under Indigenous funding (Interview 14, p. 10). Another equity administrator experienced discomfort with the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs requirements for separate reporting as she believes it creates ‘exclusivity’ and ‘division’ (Interview 60, p. 4). She acknowledges that the Indigenous sections of the university know ‘much better what [Indigenous] students’ needs are’ but her concern is to ensure that these students receive support when they participate in all aspects of the university, not only within specified Indigenous programs. She thought this could be achieved through an integration of equity groups (Interview 60, p. 5).

Another issue that arises for equity practitioners in relation to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs grouping of students according to specific criteria, are those cases which represent an intersection or multiplicity of many equity targets and the significance of this for the allocation of resources. There is an increasing awareness of the ‘multi-focus’ equity target. Two
equity administrators spoke of how this was demonstrated in the allocation of the 1997 Higher Education Contribution Scheme exemptions scholarships through their universities. To achieve a scholarship a student needed to meet the equity criteria for a number of areas (Interview 14, p. 10; Interview 60):

The HECS exempt scholarships which we are just doing at the moment are a classical example of where I suspect that not one recipient on those scholarships will be from a single equity group, but will be from more than one group. They will be multi-targeted. And the cross-over has always been there. There are many students who come under two or three of those categories, particularly in our area with the large rural and isolated nature of the catchment area and also we have a larger than average group from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

(Interview 14, p. 10)

The tension for Indigenous people is thus: ‘if they remain within the equity framework, their position is regarded within notions of “disadvantage”, with “low socio-economic status” as a basis for inclusion, and then, if you like, adding on’ (Interview 14, p. 10). An equity administrator believes ‘the current government is quite interested in that notion, because it is something that the population at large tends to accept a lot easier’ (Interview 14, p. 10). It can be located within a liberal charity-based tradition which constructs equity in terms of fairness (Taylor et al. 1997, p. 129). On the other hand, the issue of Indigenousness as being included solely within an equity framework ignores Indigenous efforts to deliberately position themselves as ‘the Indigenous people’ of this nation (Interview 62).

**Indigenous Representation in University Decision-making**

Case study universities recognised the importance of the representation of Indigenous ‘voice’ and interests on university decision-making and planning committees. Such representation varied from informal, *ad hoc* representation to more formal, structured allocation of positions to represent the interests of Indigenous students and community. In one university, an Indigenous person was a member of the university council. However, a non-Indigenous administrator questioned the suitability of the appointment as he understood that that person’s appointment was not as an outcome of community choice but was a matter of political expediency and as a result the person was ‘non-representative of the people here on campus’ (Interview 17, p. 7). He suggested that the Indigenous representation at the level of council ‘should be on a representative basis and not just a cultural basis from the community’ (Interview 17, p. 8). In other instances, Indigenous interests are represented on vice chancellor’s advisory committees, academic boards, faculty boards, equity committees, and other bodies through formally allocated positions to the Indigenous academic/support centre. In one instance, the Indigenous advisory committee chairperson is able to report directly to the university council (Interview 62), and in another, they are negotiating for the chair of the advisory council to report directly to the vice-chancellor (Interview 17, p. 9). In other instances, some Indigenous persons are members of certain boards and committees because their Indigenousness coincides with their position or
status in the university (Interview 56, p. 5). Where the Indigenous academic/support centre occupies formal positions on university committees, it is not always the case that the representative is an Indigenous person but someone employed to represent these interests (Interview 56, p. 6).

Some Indigenous and non-Indigenous interviewees expressed their concern that Indigenous voices may not be acknowledged by other committee members as representative of Indigenous interests. This appeared to be because the person speaking was not being seen by other committee members to be Indigenous, as they did not physically represent the external characteristics of Aboriginality which would identify them as such. On the other hand, Indigenous representation on such committees served to ‘prompt’ other committee members to consider Indigenous issues. One non-Indigenous academic, who works in an Indigenous academic/support centre and who represents that centre on some committees, said that if she had not been present at meetings, then the issues she ‘raised wouldn’t have been raised, just because the other members of the committee would not have had the knowledge base that I had’ (Interview 45, p. 9). A non-Indigenous academic spoke positively of having ‘Indigenous peoples represented at very high structures of committees in the university’ (Interview 13, p. 46). He also saw Indigenous representation on committees as being personally important: ‘how else can I grow and develop and be opened up and be taught that I’m getting a bit old and funny in my ways?’ (Interview 13, p. 46).

A number of non-Indigenous academics and administrators spoke of the absence of an Indigenous voice from committee meetings (e.g. Interview 17; Interview 4):

I have never in all the discussions I’ve ever had and every committee I’ve been on in this University had anybody stand up and say ‘hey the Indigenous Advisory Committee advises this’. I’ve never seen anything come up from that committee to any committee I’ve been on. I don’t know if you have and that surprises me that (name of person) on it but he’s never brought anything up to us whenever we’re talking about anything. So I would say it’s not working and really I’d say hey there needs to be a little bit more stronger spokesperson from that committee bringing up the Indigenous side to this University.

(Interview 4, p. 3)

One senior person interpreted this lack of representation in terms of the fears he believed an inexperienced person may feel in speaking out in front of a committee (Interview 4). Another person said that the university had made a number of places available on committees for Indigenous representation, but that the Indigenous academic/support centre had ‘not undertaken those responsibilities to the best they could have’ (Interview 14, p. 4). However, another academic spoke of the enormous pressure on the small number of Indigenous people within universities to be on a wide range of committees:
When [Indigenous staff member] first came, she got onto the research committee which is very important, she’s just so involved in so many things that something like regular committee meetings would be very difficult for her. I mean this is a common story and you would know it yourself. . . . [Another Indigenous staff member] here used to be very involved in committees—she actually still is but she had a kid a couple of years ago so that’s taken her time a lot and she’s less involved in University committees. [Another Indigenous staff member] of course is on heaps of committees. I guess broadly there are so many committees and so few people practically. (Interview 51, pp. 8–9)

In another university, a senior administrator spoke of the difficulties the university was experiencing in obtaining a suitably qualified and experienced Indigenous person to be on university council. The university had been attempting to fill the position for 12 months, but many of those who they approached were too busy with other matters to allocate the necessary time (Interview 47, p. 8). This absence of an Indigenous person has resulted in many aspects of the university’s Indigenous advisory committee not being effectively reported to council (Interview 47, p. 8).

### Recruitment, Employment and Development of Indigenous Staff

A significant factor in increasing the representation of Indigenous issues in the university is the matter of employment of Indigenous staff. One administrator talked about the barriers which needed to be redressed if there was to be an increase in Indigenous employment within his university:

> I think the more exposure we can put in front of people, whether it’s subtly or not, is part of the breaking down of the barriers, the integration, as starting the reconciliation process. I know with staff I have here, if I mention to them, ‘yes the university is going down the process of an Aboriginal employment strategy’, I have people up in arms, because they know they have very little tolerance for Indigenous people. And I say to them ‘Sorry this is not only a responsibility of us as individuals within the Australian community, it is now a responsibility in the direction of council at this university to surmount that’. I have in view to structure programming with (Indigenous academic/support centre) like an orientation program, an awareness program before we even get any indigenous staff. I’d like to see it, I want us to be pro-active and to show them there’s nothing to be frightened of.

(Interview 17, p. 24)

Some of the universities were in the process of developing a formal Aboriginal employment strategy while others had informal, *ad hoc* policies which meant that Indigenous staff were employed wherever possible. The effectiveness of these programs for recruiting a diversity of employees was questioned:
The University has got a sort of an Indigenous employment policy, I think, that tends to have more effect in hiring gardeners and stuff like that. Does the university encourage the employment of Indigenous people? I know that Human Resources actually encourages, they’ve got programs whereby people come in as trainees from the general staff to train as bureaucrats and so on but it seems to have more impact in increasing the number of gardeners. It’s going to take time, that’s one thing.

(Interview 51, p. 23)

A senior Indigenous academic said that staff ‘must at least have a track record, that, one, indicates the validation of their credentials, and that, two, they’ll be looking to do the job. A lot of Aboriginal people come from behind the eight ball where they can’t succeed. So what we do . . . is we cultivate our own’ (Interview 62, p. 22). This cultivation of Indigenous academics is intended to be achieved, in part, through Indigenous research within the university. This Indigenous academic said that ‘it’s counter-productive for us to say that we’re supposed to be employing specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. I’ve watched that happen in several universities and I believe that it’s counter-productive. I’ve watched it in one and saw it as being very disastrous’ (Interview 62, p. 23). Another senior Indigenous academic said that it was a matter of ‘the best person black or white—the person who knew about that particular area to teach. I know [the centre] in the past has had a policy if there were two people up for a position one was black and one was white and they were more or less similar that the black person would get the job’ (Interview 51, p. 6).

While there is a growing awareness of the need to increase Indigenous employment there is also sensitivity to the issue of employing non-Indigenous people within Indigenous arenas. In one instance a non-Indigenous academic spoke of her experience when she applied for a job:

I did so on the understanding that there would be no suitable Indigenous applicant. . . . Now what steps were taken to ensure that an Indigenous person did apply I don’t know. I don’t know how pro-active they were in finding somebody. It certainly wasn’t a designated Indigenous position.

(Interview 37, p. 5)

For job interviews for academics seeking work in Indigenous studies in one university, the selection panel ‘invited members of the local Aboriginal community to attend and the chairperson of the panel then sought the input of the people in relation to who they wanted to come here and teach Aboriginal Studies’ (Interview 37, p. 1). A senior faculty administrator explained staff recruitment procedures in the following terms:
The colour of skin doesn’t enter into what’s going on. We do abide by personnel policies which do say ‘here are the criteria’. We have a panel and the panel makes an assessment. So certainly race, colour, religion are not included . . . We go for the person who best meets the criteria. If that happens to be an Indigenous person, that person will get the nod. If unfortunately not and somebody else meets it, then you would expect to be ethical and just put up a recommendation who meets the criteria the best. That’s the way the faculty operates.

(Interview 3, p. 9)

When they take up positions, particularly within the academic sphere, many Indigenous staff do not have the usual academic qualifications and are not experienced in research and other academic processes. This raises issues about the importance of training and professional development. One university is actively encouraging Indigenous staff to undertake masters and doctoral studies through the provision of Higher Education Contribution Scheme exemptions for all staff and all research students who are of Indigenous descent. This is being funded through Commonwealth exemptions scholarships. A senior executive who oversees research development says that ‘the context is that we do not have many staff who are Indigenous Australians who are at an advanced stage in their research careers. So it’s a question of how to support their entry into the research area and to become active researchers’ (Interview 61, p. 8). An Indigenous general staff member, who after a quarter of a century of employment has received no opportunity to upgrade his trade qualifications, said to his supervisor, ‘I wonder why they don’t employ more Aboriginal persons . . . They never said nothing. I suppose they were thinking: “Oh well, to them I suppose one is enough”’ (Interview 39, p. 3). A problem that has undermined the efforts of one university to develop Indigenous staff has been the high rate of turnover of key players in the Indigenous academic/support centre (Interview 43, p. 2).

A related aspect to increasing the employment of Indigenous staff within universities is the importance of cultural awareness training for all staff to improve their capacity to work in a cross-cultural setting. One administrator said:

With some of our Aboriginal staff, there’s also an issue of them understanding that just as they have strong family obligations, in many ways working in a team has a similar obligation . . . I don’t think we have been so successful in developing that understanding. It’s tended to be the anonymous, corporate employer whose anonymous demands are seen versus family obligations.

(Interview 46, p. 18)

On the other hand, as the number of Indigenous staff in universities increase through normal recruitment processes and Aboriginal employment strategies, the dilemma for these staff is maintaining their status and credibility as university employees while at the same time not incurring criticism from their own community or alienating themselves from their community and breaking down
community cohesion. A senior Indigenous manager indicated that this issue became particularly obvious at times of deaths and funerals. He described an Indigenous funeral as a time of community solidarity regardless of whether one is a relative or not of the deceased. Being in attendance at a funeral maintains your status in the Indigenous community and at the same time ensures community cohesion. However, in a large Indigenous community, such funerals can occur regularly and may necessitate Indigenous staff taking considerable time off from work. While some Indigenous academic/support centres have worked out informal and off the record ways of responding to these dilemmas for Indigenous staff within their centres, this is not the case for Indigenous staff employed in other sectors of the university. It may also cause problems with work colleagues who do not understand Indigenous cultural matters. An Indigenous senior academic who has worked in professional positions for many years and has had a long experience in a university described the situation thus:

“There are a few of us who have real difficulties because we relate to Western systems as well as adhere to Aboriginal systems. Sometimes those ceremonies [funerals] can be so protracted but we have to attend them whether we want to or not. We can decide not to attend them, but goodbye family, I can tell you that now. But it’s something I don’t want to reject. I’ve been brought up in it, and you live with it all the time.”

(Interview 62, p. 25)

Conclusion

Some universities have, through their strategic planning, indicated a series of worthwhile policy initiatives for making their administration and organisational structures more responsive to and inclusive of Indigenous needs and perspectives. Based on these achievements, such universities are now in a position to carry the debate forward to address issues of:

• self-determination and inclusion;

• the need to see beyond the equity dimension of Indigenous interests; and

• constructing a set of conditions for enhancing Indigenous participation in university decision-making.

Recommendation 6

That universities acknowledge and respect Indigenous peoples’ aspirations to maintain autonomy and self-determination in all matters, particularly Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs funding allocated for Indigenous programs, while at the same time including Indigenous peoples in constructive and strategic ways within the administration and operational structures of the university.
Recommendation 7

That universities collaborate with Indigenous peoples to develop ways in which Indigenous peoples and their interests are linked and networked across the university so that Indigenous rights, interests and aspirations are endorsed and owned by all participants within the university setting.

Recommendation 8

That universities commit to the self-determination efforts of Indigenous peoples by enhancing the employment and training opportunities for Indigenous employees across all areas of the university.

Recommended Practice

- That universities resource and fund cross-cultural awareness programs to be implemented for all staff.
- That Indigenousness be a criterion for appointment to senior management positions within Indigenous centres, units, faculties within universities.
### Table 4  Category—Administration and Organisational Structure

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**SP** = University Strategic Plan  
**EP** = Equity Plan  
**IP** = University Indigenous Education Plan

* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

**Sub-categories**

1. Policy and strategic planning, preparation, coordination and implementation.
2. University committee structure and Indigenous participation.
3. Indigenous policy development process.
4. Fiscal administration.
5. Promotion of university programs and activities for Indigenous peoples.
6. Indigenous employment and recruitment.
7. Staff development for Indigenous peoples.
9. Processes to assess, review and monitor administrative processes.
University Research Policies

It is commonly asserted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are one of the most researched groups in Australia and it is acknowledged that, to a large degree, the greater part of this research has been conducted by non-Indigenous peoples. The majority of research carried out in the past concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and much of present research is based on definitions, by non-Indigenous people, of what are perceived to be Indigenous problems. Coupled with this are non-Indigenous defined solutions. Thus Indigenous peoples become ‘objects’ of research in situations where problems and solutions are defined outside Indigenous frames of reference.

Historically Indigenous people have been subjected to what they consider to be inappropriate, unacceptable, devious and degrading research methodologies. Much of this research has been undertaken by non-Indigenous people for reasons external to Indigenous needs or interests, and has in most instances Indigenous peoples positioned as the subjects of this research. Much of this research has been undertaken by those within universities and has contributed to a body of knowledge about the ‘Aborigine’ which has marginalised Indigenous voices (Gale 1996, p. 82). Many university researchers are now sensitive to these issues and university research ethical clearance processes often have special provisions in relation to ethical research with regard to Indigenous peoples.

The Higher Education Council, as part of its consultations with Indigenous peoples within universities, became aware of the ‘strong convictions’ of Indigenous peoples that researching Indigenous issues ‘should be controlled by, or significantly involve, Indigenous students and staff’ (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 20). However, as the Higher Education Council’s terms of reference did not encompass issues of research, it was not in a position to consult with major research funding and policy bodies, nor discuss matters with researchers and research organisations. However, the Higher Education Council acknowledged the need for training and participation as well as the adoption of protocols (1997, p. 21). To achieve this, it was believed that there was scope for collaborative partnerships to foster the development of skills.

Representation of Research Issues in University Policies

In shifting university research paradigms and profiles, a key goal is to reposition Indigenous peoples and issues away from being objectified by university traditions of research by non-Indigenous researchers. Indigenous peoples have hopes of working in partnership with non-Indigenous peoples and controlling research practices and policies as these relate to Indigenous peoples’ needs and concerns. As Table 5 on page 91 illustrates, only three universities explicitly acknowledged a commitment to the development of Indigenous research in their university strategic
plans. The focus of these plans is meeting the needs of Indigenous peoples by providing culturally appropriate research programs that support the aspirations of Indigenous communities for self-determination. In addition, these universities have strategic plans for developing research paradigms which are based on the diversity of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges, and which also integrate Indigenous research ethics and protocols into university research policies. Another important issue in relation to research is the question of intellectual property rights: this was included in the strategic plan of only one university. Two university strategic plans acknowledge the continuing significance of Indigenous peoples, issues and perspectives to researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. While only two university strategic plans address this matter, 13 out of the 20 Indigenous education plans identify research into Indigenous matters as a key objective linked to their concerns about research that has been, and is being, conducted by non-Indigenous researchers.

**Policy Overview**

Illustrations of good practices in relation to research strategies and programs in university strategic and equity plans are provided in this section.

**Institutional Commitment to Indigenous Research Profile**

- One university’s major goal is to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing culturally appropriate research programs that support the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as enhance understanding among non-Indigenous people about Indigenous issues.
- A university has a strategy for all faculty research management plans to incorporate strategies to recruit and support Indigenous staff and student researchers.
- An Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’ has a strategy to carry out at least five externally funded research projects per year.
- One university is planning the implementation of an Aboriginal research institute.
- One university endeavours to develop research paradigms based on the diversity of Indigenous perspectives.
- One university research management plan includes the development of criteria of accountability and ethics in Indigenous research activities.
- One university promotes a university-wide policy that requires all research relating to Indigenous issues to recognise Indigenous perspectives.
- Some Indigenous centres are expanding their role within both the university and the community through increased contribution to academic teaching and research.
• One university has a commitment to increase the research base relating to Indigenous issues—in particular research on Indigenous issues carried out within its Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’.

• One university acknowledges Indigenous construction and ownership of knowledge, language and intellectual property.

• One university facilitates interactions between Indigenous staff representatives and senior academic staff on matters relating to teaching and research in Indigenous studies.

• One university has a commitment to the process of reconciliation through encouraging cooperative learning and research activities relating to Indigenous issues.

• One university is negotiating for a designated percentage of the university’s research budget to be made available for projects pertaining to Indigenous issues.

**Indigenous Research Profile Enhancement Strategies**

• One university is planning the establishment of a refereed Indigenous higher education journal.

• In one university Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are encouraged to record all research activity in the Research Activities Index.

• One university has established a register of research activity with the aim of encouraging all Indigenous staff to engage in research activities with a view to increasing the number of staff on the register.

• One Indigenous ‘academic/support centre’ has a strategy to increase the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in a range of research positions.

• One university aims to increase Indigenous postgraduate numbers in research higher degrees by providing postgraduate scholarships.

• Some universities are planning to increase the provision of postgraduate programs that may be specifically designed to meet the needs of Indigenous postgraduate students (e.g. postgraduate courses in Aboriginal education and Aboriginal studies).

• One university seeks to improve the promotion and support programs to increase the research profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students by creating a scholarship for Aboriginal research students.

• Aboriginal staff participate in research higher degree programs.

• Aboriginal staff are on the research register.

• One university is developing a faculty research management plan to incorporate strategies to recruit and support Indigenous staff and student researchers.

• One university encourages staff to forge links with external research agencies and organisations.
Ancillary Support Mechanism for Indigenous Researchers

• A university provides higher degrees research scholarships for Indigenous people.

• One university provides assistance for Indigenous academics to reorganise teaching loads and other commitments so that they may undertake and successfully complete higher degrees.

• One university provides assistance for Indigenous staff to acquire professional development to expand their body of knowledge.

• One university has a mentoring scheme to assist beginner researchers.

Research Collaboration

• One university’s objective is to encourage staff to forge links with external research agencies and organisations.

• In one university, research strategies are designed to evaluate and enhance the university’s programs for Indigenous people.

• In some universities there are cooperative research projects between the Indigenous centre and the faculty of health to respond to the issues of Indigenous health.

• One university is consulting with community links, with professional bodies and industry to undertake research (e.g. the background and credentials of consumer products bearing Aboriginal designs which have assisted the establishment of the rights of the Aboriginal artists).

• One university collaborates with Indigenous land organisations in research projects.

Research Issues

• In some universities, research projects focus on higher education issues.

• One university conducted an audit of representation of Indigenous perspectives in the university curricula.

• In one institution, an academy of performing arts has completed research on Aboriginal art.

• There is interest in some universities in projects which pertain to local Aboriginal history with particular relevance to the repatriation of Aboriginal artefacts.

Review, Monitoring and Assessing

• One university is reviewing membership of Aboriginal policy development committee.

• A university has a review of its Aboriginal research institute.
• One university has developed appropriate performance indicators for Indigenous research.
• One university is developing a process for benchmarking the quality of academic teaching and research.

Dilemmas of University Research Policies

A number of dilemmas emerged from interviewees’ accounts of university research. First, there is a tension between the production of knowledge by non-Indigenous staff versus the need for Indigenous Australians to be engaged in the production of the knowledge they see as being relevant and useful. Second, the development of procedures enabling Indigenous participation in deciding the ethics of university research is not fully understood and is resisted by some. Third, efforts to develop the research skills of particular groups of university staff have met with resistance, based on claims of disadvantaging others. Finally, the engagement of Indigenous persons in postgraduate research programs has focused attention on the importance (and surrounding tensions) of destabilising institutionalised knowledges, and the implications for legitimating Indigenous epistemologies.

Knowledge Production/Knowledge Producers

Within one university, a substantial amount of research is conducted in relation to Indigenous interests, particularly in the fields of anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, history, political science, English literature and fine arts (Interview 56, p. 17). In addition, this university has established a number of research centres which incorporate research into areas such as tourism, environment, health, education, and land and resource management (Interview 61, Interview 53). The university’s intent is to use its geographical location to capitalise upon its difference from other universities (Interview 52). Some non-Indigenous researchers involve Aboriginal counterparts in their research projects in one way or another (Interview 56, p. 17). One faculty academic within this university described how the teaching they engaged in concerning appropriate qualitative research underlay their own research:

If there was ever anyone in the faculty who thought of Aboriginal people as subjects, as people about which research is done, and with minimal consultation and to whom very little reporting was required, they would find that that approach would no longer be possible.

(Interview 53, p. 3)
Within another university, research is being undertaken in areas of interest to Indigenous peoples, including studies of Aboriginal music, Aboriginal urban development, gifted Aboriginal children, archaeology, and environmental resource management. Academics are also engaged in consultancies to Aboriginal communities, and in negotiations with mining companies regarding the preservation of sacred sites. In these instances, the parameters of their research are established in their contract with the community (Interview 22, pp. 4, 11).

One university has a centre which addresses issues of Indigenous research and which is supported by the faculty within which it is located on a budget of $10,000 a year. Sixteen academics who have an interest in Indigenous education and community development work within the centre. However, very few of them actually actively work in Indigenous communities. The centre’s mission statement clearly reflects its philosophy of conducting research within Indigenous communities which is participatory and involves Indigenous people as co-researchers. The participatory research approach is related to a range of issues including ensuring that information returns to the community where the researcher(s) is working; ensuring that any collected information is checked with the people who provided it, not just in terms of accuracy but also in terms of their right to edit what they choose or their right to withdraw that information once they have read their interview transcript. The centre also has an advocacy approach to research which is described as follows:

We also take on the role of advocacy for our client groups and they are not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, they may include all kinds of multicultural communities in Australia. I suppose in that sense some parts of the University would say that we are restricting research because knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the core of all universities and the right of the researcher is upheld as strongly, usually more strongly than the right of the researched, despite ethical considerations. But we don’t do that, we have a different approach.

(Interview 27, pp. 16–17)

One senior manager in research said his university was actively involved in Indigenous-related research and knowledge production. Its leadership and participation in research relating to Indigenous interests has been enhanced by Indigenous representation on its management committee. In addition, the Indigenous academic/support centre is represented on the university research committee which oversees all its research centres (Interview 61, p. 6):

We want to be in there doing research related to Aboriginal issues . . . We are into [name of the research centre] and in that area again it’s Aboriginal-related tourism; we’re the leader in the [name of another research centre within the institution] and that’s all about land management, again making sure that all the land uses across northern Australia are working together for sustainable use of the savannas. Of course one of the major users involved in that, is Aboriginal people, so that research is moving forward.

(Interview 47, p. 19)
On the other hand, a non-Indigenous academic who works in the Indigenous academic/support centre within the same institution spoke of the use of Indigenous knowledges within the institution as a source of research and as a means of attracting funding to the institution. Her concern is that, within such a research and consultancy framework, often the ‘right’ people are not involved in doing the research:

I think a lot of research in this university is directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. They often invite people who don’t have the appropriate links with the community, don’t follow through . . . it’s like this is an area that’s going to attract research money. So they can express it as being part of the [university] culture and their value systems that they want to help Aboriginal people, but without the necessary background and understanding or links with community in relation to actually working alongside Aboriginal people. Thus giving Aboriginal people control of the project and a lot more input and say in terms of what they’re about to do.

(Interview 45, p. 2)

There is an acknowledgment by university research administrators that research has not always been inclusive of Indigenous peoples and has largely been research about Indigenous peoples. A non-Indigenous academic whose field of expertise is Indigenous education commented that ‘Indigenous people are the most watched and researched people on the planet, and I think that something could be done to keep an eye on what people are doing’ (Interview 37, pp. 13–14). Another senior research administrator said, ‘We’ve ignored you in the past but the new strategy is saying that we have to develop you and start to do something’ (Interview 4, p. 13). Ironically, while admitting his university’s exclusion of Indigenous participation from research in the past, this administrator proceeded to then advise the areas of research which he believed would be appropriate for Indigenous researchers:

I think this new Centre should really start to look at historical Indigenous research and focus on developing Indigenous research areas which are of great interest to Indigenous people . . . I think the research areas that you would do would be much more focussed on the Indigenous people rather than anything else and that’s where the strength is.

(Interview 4, p. 13)

However, despite this awareness of the need for Indigenous participation in research, one academic in an Indigenous academic/support centre is concerned that there is no process for formal consultation and prior consideration with Indigenous interests in the university to ensure that the research is conducted appropriately:
Prior collaboration doesn’t always occur. I think it occurs when it suits them and it comes to our attention that something is about to occur, but prior to that the consultation is not at a level I would like . . . It’s no good coming to the [Indigenous academic/support centre] for a discussion on an issue when you’ve made up your mind what you’re going to do. The discussion needs to start at a point where ‘well this is what we’re thinking of doing’, and be involved from the beginning of the development of the project. Not necessarily to do it but just so they can have a bit more information, be guided towards the readings that are going to help them, be guided towards the education principles that are going to be most effective in that situation, or the kind of research that might be most useful.

(Interview 45, p. 5)

According to the academic, if consultation is not undertaken earlier the effect is that the researcher sees Indigenous interests as being ‘difficult because you’re raising all these issues or factors which might complicate their research. But this is not an easy field. We are dealing with people and I think sometimes they’ve lost sight of that and then it becomes a researched group’ (Interview 45, p. 5).

Competing with the need to consult with Indigenous interests in the institution before undertaking research and consultancy with Indigenous people, is the ‘expertise’ of non-Indigenous academics who have long established reputations within Indigenous-related fields. These academics believe the expert reference group from which they would seek ‘approval’ for research would include Aboriginal stakeholders ‘out there’ (i.e. external to the university) (Interview 53, p. 8).

Another senior academic acknowledged his own lack of awareness of Indigenous research issues, but spoke of the influence of another non-Indigenous academic in the university research management committee, who consistently drew the committee’s attention to cultural matters in research, and has raised the committee’s consciousness:

Well [name of person] is certainly consistent in raising issues which sometimes slip past other people. That’s good, that’s necessary to have somebody who is able to do that . . . I think when people are aware of them they respond fine. It’s a positive response—’oh yes we need to do this’. Half the time I think nobody’s thought of it because it’s not always at the front of your mind whereas it’s at the front of [name of person]’s mind. He’s very conscious of cultural issues whereas that’s not necessarily so for a lot of people. In some ways it’s like tunnel vision. You’re in this task and these are the things you do and you forget about everything else.

(Interview 10, p. 11)

The committee has not invited an Indigenous person to become a member due to an efficiency drive by the university to reduce the representation of all equity groups on the committee, these groups are represented by one person.
Hence, several opposing tendencies are present in terms of the existing fields and issues of research into Indigenous interests. First, research in some disciplines, such as engineering, was not represented as being amenable to Aboriginal interests or perspectives, being seen to be technically focused on equations, computer and problem solving (Interview 16, p. 16). However, it was commented that ‘engineers will become dinosaurs if they don’t realise there is a social aspect to their job’ and that potential teaching and research projects should include social and environmental issues in engineering (Interview 16, p. 16). Second, most of this research is driven by Anglo-Australians with one of the recognised weaknesses being that ‘research is not being conducted by Indigenous people themselves’ (Interview 22, p. 5). In addition, another academic observed that research in Indigenous affairs was largely something ‘that non-Indigenous people initiate, rather than there being a very strong Indigenous presence here that directs what needs to happen’ (Interview 37, p. 3).

Research Ethics

One senior university administrator stated that ‘there is a perception amongst certain groups of Aboriginal people that research done in the [the local area] has been done on Aboriginal people, not with Aboriginal people’ (Interview 61, p. 6). His university is ‘becoming increasingly sensitive to ensure that Aboriginal people don’t feel they’re being researched on within research programs’ (Interview 61, p. 6). Hence this university places a strong emphasis on taking Indigenous interests into consideration in relation to research ethics. These interests include consideration of matters that are of current importance in Australia, such as negotiating access to communities, intellectual property rights, the need for cultural sensitivity, and ‘recognising that you’re there as a guest and thus should take account of local customary practices, and not be judgmental - all those kinds of general points’ (Interview 56, p. 19). One university is concerned that while it complies with National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines, these guidelines do not require Indigenous representation on research ethics committees and do not allow for Indigenous ownership of research. Hence the research committee has taken action to seek advice from the Indigenous academic/support centre and an Indigenous research centre. A senior research administrator described the situation thus:

These guidelines don’t require Aboriginal representation on the ethics committees or special procedures relating to research with Indigenous Australians. Although we have Aboriginal representation on our committees we are not satisfied with that. We have written to the heads of the [Indigenous academic/support/research centre] to ask if they could provide us some advice about how to appropriately handle ethical issues and to comment on the notion of a sub-committee made up of Aboriginal people to review all research proposals that are seen to involve interaction with Indigenous Australians.
While at present we have Aboriginal representation on our Human Ethics Committee, we feel that that doesn’t really give enough ownership to Aboriginal people. Rather than impose an alternative, we are asking for advice from staff who are Indigenous Australians. That is one aspect of trying to deal with things.

(Interview 61, p. 7)

In another university ‘a sub-committee was established to deal with matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ‘a fairly recent innovation’ (Interview 22, p. 6).

In the absence of clear Indigenous research ethical guidelines in his university, another non-Indigenous academic raised the question of from whom should research clearance be sought—should it be from the Indigenous academic/support centre or should it be from individuals? For him, this is another ‘grey area’ and in the absence of any advice from his university he explained, ‘I just kind of set my own standards because I couldn’t tell from the university context what was considered ethical or unethical’ (Interview 13, p. 30). However, he was very clear that he would follow guidelines set by Indigenous people.

Personally I would [follow them], because if you put your research database offside you’ve got a problem doing your research. It’s an ethical issue but it’s also a professional issue. If you have an interest in this area, you try to work together collaboratively because it’s not to your benefit to put people offside.

(Interview 13, p. 30)

However, for some academics at least, the need for policy prescriptions governing research in Indigenous communities runs into conflict with the university culture of academic freedom: ‘any attempt to impose protocol or restrictions automatically undercuts academic freedom, [nevertheless] animal ethics is now just accepted as part of the research training process, it is part of learning to do good practice, to do good research’ (Interview 22, pp. 12, 13). Not all university staff are aware of policies in these areas, with one middle manager saying, ‘I don’t know about any specific issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ (Interview 38, p. 4). Given that there is much research relating to Indigenous issues under way in universities, there needs to be a public register of what is happening.

Another dilemma surrounds the issue of intellectual property rights. One university is actively addressing this issue. In most instances intellectual property in relation to Indigenous knowledges is regarded within the context of other university intellectual property guidelines:
We do have a broad intellectual property policy but again my knowledge of it is it has no special reference to Indigenous Australians. It is a potential issue. Locally, research organisations have entered into commercial agreements with private companies like . . . where use of traditional knowledge is involved. I think they’ve entered into commercial agreements where arrangements have been made to acknowledge Indigenous intellectual property. I’m not aware within the university that we’ve done anything special here on that. It’s obviously an area that we might look into in the future.

(Interview 61, pp. 10–11)

Indigenous People as Researchers

One senior research manager acknowledges the need for Indigenous people to be trained in research processes but cautions:

Don’t expect miracles, not just from the Indigenous people who are emerging researchers, but from any person who is an emerging researcher. Those people who’ve never done research have got to be mentored and I just hope that a non-Indigenous person can mentor Indigenous people.

(Interview 4, p. 14)

The issue of training Indigenous staff and postgraduate students in research processes was a key for one person, who said that while a new teaching staff member has often gone through a doctoral program ‘so they arrive here with some kind of research skills and so forth’ (Interview 51, p. 3), this is often not the case for staff working in the Indigenous academic/support centre. The university is assisting the centre with research funding and assisting its staff in preparing grant applications (Interview 51, p. 3), although research involves much more than this—it includes knowledge of data collection, the analysis of evidence, report writing, and collaborative research:

The university has also started to develop position papers, discussion papers on how we might look after the needs of particular equity type groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders . . . and encouragement is being given to staff in this [Indigenous academic/support centre] to do their masters and doctoral studies.

(Interview 61, p. 7)

This will be funded through Higher Education Contribution Scheme exemptions for Indigenous staff and students, as well as by providing equity money to buy out teaching time to allow staff to study and do research. A senior research administrator describes the university’s perspective thus:
The context is that we do not have many staff who are Indigenous Australians who are at an advanced stage in their research careers. So it’s a question of how to support their entry into the research area and to become active researchers . . . I think the general provisions are empathetic towards people upgrading and I think what we are thinking of introducing for Indigenous Australians are additional provisions that can be made available on top of those generally.

(Interview 61, p. 8)

In another university, the question of funding research education for staff raised tensions in terms of the prioritisation of equity groups over other university staff. For one year, the university had a focus on academic women. However:

There was some concern about making provision for [a] specific group . . . [with some arguing that] you do more harm by focusing on these [target equity] groups than just ensuring that everything is open and they have a general access.

(Interview 38, pp. 11–12)

This was despite a report that had identified ‘research as being the key area where academic women at [the university] wanted assistance,’ and that the participation rate of women academics in staff development was high (Interview 38, pp. 13–14, p. 15). The proposal was nearly dropped off the agenda but, after being referred to senior university management and on receipt of advice from the equal employment opportunity coordinator, specific provision was made for it within the staff development plan. An advisory committee for the professional development of academic women organised the distribution of the $10 000 to assist 12 research projects and the development of their career profiles (‘giving them a sort of leg up’) with grants of $500–$1 000 (Interview 38, pp. 12–13). It should be noted that this occurred ‘at a time when we had fairly large amounts of money coming in from Commonwealth staff development funds to support a range of target groups to upgrade their research postgraduate qualifications’ (Interview 38, p. 13). However, because of the cut in funds, and the reaction against its efforts to train women researchers, this university has ‘no provisions at this point which specifically focus on the needs of either students or staff with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds’ (Interview 38, p. 11).

Indigenous Knowledges and Research Higher Degrees

Related to the issue of educating Indigenous people in research processes is the question of recognising and validating Indigenous knowledges and voices in research, particularly in higher degrees, where the number of Indigenous students progressing to higher degrees is small. In one university, a non-Indigenous senior academic spoke of his experience of supervising an Indigenous postgraduate student. While, as a supervisor, he enjoyed the student’s outspokenness, he was concerned by the way in which the student challenged the examiners. He said that the tension which arose between the student and the examiners was due to:
Need to acknowledge and accept some Aboriginal expertise, including a
student finding a voice in a white institution and still being that strong
spokesperson, and on the other hand making certain that quality standards
are met.

(Interview 53, p. 10)

The same university has now established an Indigenous research centre, which
enrols Indigenous masters and doctoral students, and deals ‘in traditional
knowledge . . . and the interfacing of that type of knowledge with Western
knowledge’ (Interview 61, p. 11). A senior research administrator in the university
hopes that the ways in which research proposals and proposals for postgraduate
programs are developed through this centre may provide the university ‘with the
opportunity to have discussions and subsequently change the way that we do
things as an institution’ (Interview 61, pp. 12–13). With respect to the legitimation
of Indigenous knowledges, the university’s research degrees committee is also
interested in recognising Indigenous peoples’ non-academic knowledges:

. . . and to getting them into graduate programs without . . . like normally
you would need basically a first or second Honours degree to get into and
they are very keen to get people without those qualifications . . . that
committee is also interested in developing assessments for indigenous
graduate students that may not be exactly the same as the traditional PhD or
whatever, it may take some other form.

(Interview 51, p. 14)

Alternatively in another institution, it was commented that ‘there is just going to be
no way that certain old white male professors are ever going to countenance a non-
traditional approach to research training. There’s no point in trying to convince
them otherwise’ (Interview 22, p. 7). Hence, in trying to accommodate the
research interests and methods of Indigenous students within the rules for research
higher degrees means that they are dealt with on a case-by-case basis, creating the
problem of a lack of inclusiveness from the beginning (Interview 22, p. 9).

Conclusion

A valuable lead has been provided by those universities which have incorporated
within their own strategic plans Indigenous interests and perspectives. A few
universities have clearly articulated their commitment to researching Indigenous
issues and enhancing the capacity for Indigenous staff and students to engage in
research. These important developments have created the opportunity to
reconsider the role of non-Indigenous researchers in:

• producing knowledge in this area;
• reviewing research ethics policies and procedures in the light of
  Indigenous concerns;
addressing the need for targeting research training efforts within universities to enhance the productive capacity of Indigenous researchers; and
• developing postgraduate research training opportunities for Indigenous students.

Recommendation 9

That universities undertake an institutional commitment to Indigenous self-determination by facilitating and enhancing research that directly benefits Indigenous communities.

Recommendation 10

That universities make apparent their commitment to facilitating Indigenous research needs by ensuring appropriate, sensitive and beneficial research is conducted in accordance with Indigenous ethics, values, and protocols, and that this commitment is explicitly expressed within university research policies and practices.

Recommendation 11

That universities give due recognition to and acceptance of the epistemological positions of Indigenous postgraduate students and Indigenous researchers in their research endeavours, thus creating a space whereby Indigenous peoples may reconstruct and reconceptualise research paradigms that reflect their cultural positions.

Recommended Practices

• University research management plans should include criteria for accountability in Indigenous research activities which are conducted by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.
• Universities should enhance the research profile of Indigenous faculties, departments, centres and individuals by developing strategies which articulate Indigenous peoples to research higher degrees, and by providing incentives by way of ‘seeding grants’ for emerging researchers.
• Universities in their research funding structures should provide appropriate and relevant acknowledgement for Indigenous research within the Research Activity Index (RAI).
Table 5  Category—University Research Policies

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* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

Sub-categories

1. Institutional commitment to Indigenous research.
2. Strategies to enhance Indigenous research profile.
3. Indigenous participation in research.
5. Inclusion of Indigenous issues in broad research.
6. Research skills development.
7. Indigenous postgraduate students as researchers.
8. Indigenous intellectual property.
9. Processes to review and monitor Indigenous research.
Student Resourcing

A key concern for universities in times of greater flexibility and inclusivity in terms of admission to university is the question of how to provide appropriate academic support to ensure success for a diverse student clientele? While Indigenous student access rates to tertiary education are improving, the success rates of these students is the lowest for all of the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs targeted equity groups (National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1996). A major issue for Indigenous groups in higher education is the appropriateness of mainstream university services for Indigenous students. The Higher Education Council report on Indigenous students argues that it is not just a matter of ‘individual preference’ but that ‘mainstream services are often not used by Indigenous Australian students because they do not respond to their needs in ways that are culturally and socially appropriate’ (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 15). Instead Indigenous staff in tertiary institutions believe that they are often filling the gaps in service provision by mainstream services, and that support funding is being used to provide duplicate but more appropriate services, when these services should be provided as part of the overall servicing of students (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 15).

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training report (1996, p. x) suggests that ‘good equity practice’ exists when:

- there is an understanding of the present and potential student population of the university; and
- the university has a student-centred approach to teaching and learning that emphasises the identification of, and response to, students’ needs.

Much of the research on Indigenous student participation both here and overseas has focused on efforts that locate the issues of success in the students themselves. Hence resourcing of students has focused on matters such as better preparation in schools through outreach programs, alternative entry, special bridging programs which do not disturb the status quo of the institution, and extensive counselling and remedial support, as well as life-style and social environmental supports within the university focusing on areas such as accommodation, commuting, and cultural programs (based on Richardson & Skinner 1990). Such programs are usually supported by personnel representative of the same minority groups as the participating students.

However, such programs have been criticised (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991; Malezer 1995; Bin-Sallik 1991; 1993) as they place the onus for success on students. The programs inherently fortify the entrenched nature of the university as an established institution with its own long-standing, deep-rooted policies, practices, programs and standards which are intended to serve the needs of the broader society in which the university is embedded, but not necessarily the needs
of Indigenous peoples. In this regard, these institutions may not readily accept criticisms of their practices in relation to how they resource the diversity of students, and instead focus on the Indigenous student as aberrant, intensifying efforts of socialising them into the university at the expense of their own cultural positions and identities (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991). Malezer (1995) refers to this as the ‘sink or swim’ approach. Malezer argues that in the past, this has led to high Indigenous attrition rates, as those students who wish to maintain their cultural identity, ‘sink’, and those who are willing to abandon their culture for academic success, choose to ‘swim’.

**Representation of Student Resourcing Processes in University Policies**

The representation of Indigenous issues in university policies is most prominent in the area of identifying and resourcing Indigenous students; 12 of the 20 universities have some form of statement to this effect in their university strategic plans (see Table 6 on page 105). Statements referring to efforts to increase Indigenous participation in universities include numerical ‘targets’ as well as general statements regarding the enrolment of Indigenous students. Most universities do identify Indigenous students as a ‘target’ group; the explanation of and responsibility for processes to increase their access, participation, success and retention, are provided within Indigenous education plans.

Six university strategic plans address Indigenous student participation through strategies which include strengthening the Indigenous academic/support centres to enhance their status, providing learning support and collaboration across faculties, administering the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme, counselling and mentoring, and appropriate course development.

Even though the Martin (1994) Performance Indicators is a key mechanism for the monitoring of Indigenous student progress and the distribution of Government funding for Indigenous support programs (see Higher Education Council 1997, p. 2), only three universities actually identify processes for reviewing student progress in their (university) strategic plans. However, the majority of Indigenous education plans acknowledge this as a key component of their activities. Their monitoring of Indigenous students covers:

- the review of retention and completion rates both in general and in specific programs;
- the tracking of particular cohorts of students through their studies; and
- evaluation of student satisfaction with their courses of study.

**Policy Overview**

This section highlights the range of good practices in relation to student resourcing noted in university strategic plans and equity plans.
Overall Institutional Commitment

• University objectives include:
  − enabling Indigenous students to reach their potential, to achieve their aspirations within Australian society;
  − to affirm their cultural integrity;
  − identity and self-confidence; and
  − to accelerate access by Indigenous people to university qualifications.

• University commitment to the indigenous education/support establishment.

• University commitment to the continuation of indigenous education/support centre.

• Establishment and recognition of indigenous students’ association.

• Cultural affirmation for Indigenous students in the development of an Indigenous community cultural centre on campus.

Recruitment and Access Strategies

• Collaboration with community groups such as land councils to promote university programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of community groups.

• Appointment of an Aboriginal liaison officer to promote the university to the community.

• Use of various public avenues such as the media, public lectures and guest lectures at specific forums.

• Examples of schools outreach and visit programs include:
  − Aboriginal awareness workshops using Aboriginal role models and mentoring processes to respond to the educational aspirations of Indigenous people in rural centres; and
  − the development of an information facility for Indigenous students on the Internet.

• Equity grant scheme to enhance the capacity for faculties to increase access, participation, success, and retention for equity students, including Indigenous students, within the faculties.

• Some universities have bridging and preparatory programs.

• University outreach access program through which secondary school students attend campus each week for a one-hour lecture.

• Electronic media is used to develop and broadcast programs for potential tertiary students to enhance skills appropriate for tertiary study.

• Some universities provide intensive student orientation activities.

• Most universities provide alternative and special entry facilities.
• Compulsory study skills program to provide access for Indigenous people to tertiary level courses.
• Annual Aboriginal science summer school.

**Participation, Retention and Success Strategies**

• One university advocates the collaboration of the learning development centre with the Indigenous education/support centre.
• There are examples of collaboration across the university to provide support to Indigenous students across all disciplines.
• Also, there are examples of collaboration across the university to develop programs to provide appropriate teaching to Indigenous students.
• The universities support and advocate for the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme.
• Some centres’ programs include academic support in the form of additional tutorials, individual academic advice, special orientation sessions.
• Investigation into the development of appropriate performance indicators.
• Some universities provide mentoring and tutorial assistance for rural students, virtual campus, presentation of academic work and public speaking assistance.
• Indigenous student representation on the Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’s’ management and student welfare committee.
• Most universities have arranged collaboration between the Indigenous education/support centre and the counselling centre to provide a team approach to student development.
• One university has a mentoring scheme for students in the faculty of business and management.
• One university has program strategies which instruct students on the relevance of an Aboriginal and intercultural studies degree in the work place.
• One university has university contribution to the support of Indigenous students by the mathematics learning centre.

**Non-academic Support and Resourcing**

Forms of support (non-academic) provided by universities include:
• accommodation assistance;
• support to acquire funds through ABSTUDY, scholarships and bursaries;
• career advice and counselling for Indigenous students;
• counselling and mentoring initiatives which include discussion groups, networks, referral to other students services and structured liaison with relevant staff;
• establishment of employment positions for Indigenous graduates; and
• provision of part-time and casual employment for Indigenous students at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

Review, Monitoring and Assessing

• Strategies for the review of Indigenous courses, special entry schemes and support programs include:
  - the use of performance indicator rates;
  - evaluation by students of graduate satisfaction; and
  - a review of subject evaluation processes.

• Establish a set of assessment criteria for the review of course content and lecturing strategies.

• Increase in external students’ input in the evaluation process by providing stamped addressed envelopes for their convenience.

Dilemmas of Responding to a Changing and Diverse Student Base

The increased diversity among students attending universities comes at a time when, as one faculty administrator states, university lecturers are stressed by the restructuring of universities and the demands for increased accountability in a context of less resources. A university administrator says that he has ‘probably only ever had one person come to me trying to sort of argue that [a lack of academic standards] was specific to Indigenous students’ (Interview 9, p. 23). This administrator acknowledges that ‘students change over time because they come out of a different culture and not just Indigenous cultures but different global cultures or whatever’, but it is his belief:

That the students are just as bright, they just have different sets of skills, they come from different places . . . and, anyway the students are a lot more sophisticated than I ever was in different ways. So I would be tempted to say in some ways that it’s a perception rather than reality but then perhaps it’s because it’s been predicated on different sorts of judgments of different skills. I just sort of prefer to work with what’s there and try to negotiate more and more in my practices.

(Interview 9, p. 23)

Another academic said that students are more likely to succeed if they adapt to the university culture, but at the same time he acknowledges the need for academics to recognise the changing student clientele:
I’d say two things—first of all at the end of the day if the person’s got an institution they want to be part of, it will be easier if they adapt to the institution. On the other hand, I recognise the realities that things have changed and the universities are now different places to what they were 20 to 30 years ago and we are now actively going out to make ourselves user friendly to all sorts of groups who didn’t have a tradition of university participation.

(Interview 31, p. 3).

An Indigenous student commented that universities seem to be set up to teach people from non-Indigenous backgrounds and expect that Indigenous students are ‘supposed to change to fit into that’, even though he believes ‘we shouldn’t have to’ (Interview 15, p. 33). Commenting further, he said:

those ‘white fellas’ over there, they do their Bachelor of Arts in three years. Well it usually takes us four. That’s because of their learning style. Their whole way of teaching, their whole life experience, is from their perspective and they don’t take into account our life experiences and the way we learn and they should. I mean we’re paying HECS fees eventually, I mean they should be doing something for us like that, we are paying for it.

(Interview 15, p. 33)

The dilemma for Indigenous students in higher education was explained in the following way by one non-Indigenous administrator:

I mean, who cares about the 2 percent? It’s only 195 students. They’re graced by getting in, because they don’t have to have an entry score; they’re graced because they’re interviewed by their own culture (for selection and entry); and they’re graced because they’ve got support when they want it and how much they want it. So who cares? I think it’s a difficult issue where we’ve got to redress that and turn it around and say ‘Yes, we do care, as a university we do care’. And we do need to bring to attention those issues that have to be addressed, and to show that we care.

(Interview 17, p. 18)

**Indigenous Student Resourcing Models**

Most Australian universities have some form of Indigenous academic/support centre, and the importance of these in the lives of many Indigenous students is quite significant. One student described his university’s centre as ‘very helpful, encouraging, open door policy. If we have any problems or questions, they have an open door policy where we can just talk to people, talk to them, lecturers’ (Interview 64, p. 2). In other parts of the university, the student claimed ‘you’re not treated specially, you’re not really important. It’s like survival of the fittest’ (Interview 64, p. 2). A student in another university described his experience thus:
I come from Sydney and if I’d come to this university and, say [the Indigenous academic/support centre] wasn’t here, I probably would have lasted a couple of weeks and dropped out, because I don’t feel that welcome in ‘mainstream’ compared to here [the Indigenous academic/support centre]. Maybe that’s just me.

(Interview 15, p. 2)

Models of Indigenous student resourcing (or, in other words, student support) vary from one university to the next. Within some universities, the support personnel are centrally located within one unit, which then attempts to meet all the needs of students. Other universities, in an attempt to integrate the student support into the workings of the university, have ‘outposted’ support personnel to individual faculties. In a university which uses the latter model, the Indigenous academic/support centre pays the personnel costs and the faculty accepts responsibility for infrastructure costs (Interview 62). In some instances, these support personnel also take on teaching responsibilities within the faculty and across the university in addition to their counselling, advocacy, tutoring and support roles, so as to ensure the provision of quality services to Indigenous students (Interview 63, Interview 53, Interview 56). This latter approach can place stress on the person who is providing support to Indigenous students as well as teaching non-Indigenous students. An Indigenous senior manager in a university where the outposting model is used commented that its success depends on the person and her/his relationship with the particular faculty. He said the model could lead to the person being ‘overused’ in roles such as lecturing, tutoring, and curriculum advising and consequently ‘burning out’ (Interview 62, p. 8).

A non-Indigenous senior manager in a university which used the central unit model was critical of this model, as he believed it led to a ‘cloistered effect’ and that unless it is accompanied by Indigenisation across the university, then Indigenous student attrition ‘will not improve’ (Interview 17, p. 19). He favoured the introduction of the faculty-based model:

It’s impossible, other than you appoint the Indigenous person to support say the Arts faculty and let them work in tandem with the faculty. Let the faculty ask that Indigenous person, is this appropriate? is this where we go? Until that’s done I don’t think there’s going to be much improvement.

(Interview 17, p. 19)

He argued that without such a model, the needs of Indigenous students will be ignored and ‘we will still go down the same track, as a university for teaching all students at the same rate and in the same language, that’s comfortable for the lecturer’ (Interview 17, p. 19).
Responsibility for Indigenous Students’ Success

Currently many Indigenous academic/support centres are attempting to take a more proactive approach to the ways in which they support Indigenous students (e.g. to introduce curriculum and undertake research which may enhance Indigenous students’ success), so as to spread the burden of responsibility for student success to all sectors of the university (see various university Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategies). This effort by some Indigenous academic/support centres to encourage greater university responsibility for Indigenous students’ success is supported by an Indigenous community educational leader who suggests that rather than every ‘little black thing within the university becoming an issue for black people . . . every student that comes in here should be the responsibility of the whole university’ (Interview 23, p. 8). Also, an Indigenous student commented that:

It should be the university’s responsibility, because that’s where we go over there, to our lectures and to our tutorials. Of course we come back here [Indigenous academic/support centre] and we talk with our student advisers and that and go over assignments and that, but it’s those people over there that are doing the teaching and I really think that there should be some sort of cross-cultural communication program that every lecturer and every tutor in this university should be in. It should be compulsory that they have to do that, so they can understand our learning style.

(Interview 15, p. 29)

On the other hand, one senior university administrator suggests that Indigenous academic/support centres may be diverting their attention from what should be their key function, which is to provide direct academic and tutorial assistance to Indigenous students, so they will be able to cope with the academic tasks of the university (Interview 5, p. 7). The most common perspective on the purpose of Indigenous academic/support centres is that of a ‘bridging’ or ‘transit’ service facilitating the access and adjustment of Indigenous students into higher education. Within this context a senior academic said that his ‘university’s approach up to now in pedagogy has by and large been “well if you’ve got problems with the way we’re doing things, [the Indigenous academic/support centre] will help you”’ (Interview 10, p. 8). He sees the Indigenous academic/support centre’s ‘biggest role as acting as a bridge, a cultural bridge’. To him there are many aspects to this role:

One, is just surviving in perhaps a very intimidating cultural thing. But also it’s things like traditions of academic writing, because a lot of things are assignment based and certainly it’s been my experience that a lot of Aboriginal students in particular struggle with accepted academic writing traditions. And that’s another difficulty because we could say that that’s not part of their cultural milieu and we could ask for something different; but if we’re asking people to graduate with a particular award then some sort of grasp of that academic culture is expected. So we’re caught in that sort of nexus and I don’t really know a satisfactory resolution to that.

(Interview 10, p. 8)
One non-Indigenous academic administrator turned to the Indigenous academic/support centre to provide him with a list of Indigenous students in his faculty, details of what they are doing, provide an opportunity for him to meet with these students early in the academic year, and the opportunity to meet with the students towards the end of their courses, so as to ‘get from the horse’s mouth, as it were, their view once they’ve been through the system as to where the system was good and where it was bad’ (Interview 31, p. 23).

The Best Person for the Job?

Another aspect of student resourcing which poses a dilemma for universities is selecting the best person for the job of adviser to Indigenous students. Some universities adopt an approach of employing only Indigenous peoples in these roles, other universities look more towards credentials, skills and the ability of the person to relate to Indigenous students (Interview 51). This means that non-Indigenous persons are also appointed to these student resourcing and advising positions. The difficulty here for these centres is to ensure a process whereby these persons do not become entrenched in these positions, but have a process whereby opportunities are made available for Indigenous peoples to take over these roles as they become qualified. One university has implemented a process to develop Indigenous staff members’ skills and experiences so that they will be able to take on the positions eventually—‘we cultivate academics’ (Interview 62, p. 23).

Responding to Diverse Needs

A major dilemma when considering the provision of appropriate support for the academic success of Indigenous students is the tension between recognising the particular needs of diverse student groups and the rhetoric of equality. A faculty academic and administrator spoke of universities as ‘just wanting to treat everyone equally and fairly and are just glad to see an opportunity to help someone advance in their education’ (Interview 3, p. 3). His position on course entry is:

I always say—and I’m probably a bit hard lined—I always say that’s the entry standard. Anybody who meets the entry standard is more than welcome, so if your friends at [name of an Indigenous community] or wherever meet the entry standard we’d welcome them.

(Interview 3, p. 15)

Similarly, he would expect that if an Indigenous student had a difficulty with his course work or assessment, then the student would approach him as lecturer and make an alternative proposition: ‘If you [the student] can demonstrate that your alternative form of assessment is going to reach the criteria I’d be happy enough to run with it’ (Interview 3, p. 8). He said:
We just say, there’s the standards, here’s the rules we’re playing to. Obviously if you didn’t like the rules, that’s a good issue, but at least you know how we’re playing. To my knowledge I don’t know that they’re unfair on anybody . . . I don’t think it does anybody any favours to get accredited with a course, no matter what culture.

(Interview 3, p.14)

On the other hand, a non-Indigenous lecturer who has worked extensively with Indigenous students spoke of the importance for non-Indigenous staff to understand the historical background of Indigenous students. She says that those persons within the university who have an understanding of Indigenous matters:

Have a responsibility to be constantly challenging people’s ideas and giving them information because a lot of people’s ideas are based on lack of information and ignorance about what really occurred. What is the history and how sensitive it is. But when people don’t have that information, it’s very easy to have misguided opinions and views.

(Interview 45, p. 4)

Such knowledge is important to understanding:

Why the students might respond in particular ways, the kinds of issues that might get them upset, how particular types of behaviour might be viewed as being offensive. A lot of the students are not in a position for a variety of reasons to be able to articulate those things very clearly, and particularly to articulate them to ‘white lecturers’. That takes a great deal of sensitivity.

(Interview 45, p. 3)

A senior administrator believes that the ways in which university staff work with Indigenous students stems from ignorance ‘rather than not wanting to’. He said that ‘people don’t realise that you have to start to cater for these Indigenous people, minority groups. It is ignorance, not vindictive in any way’ (Interview 4, p. 9). Other lecturers spoke of dilemmas students face in the light of family and community commitments which they are not wanting to resist but sometimes ‘are not compatible with being able to keep up to speed in their study’ (Interview 56, p. 23). These pressures are increasing as students seek to maintain their Aboriginal identity and to ‘re-invigorate’ their connections with their community (Interview 56, p. 24).

**Effects of Changes in University Funding**

Another major dilemma for universities is the effort by some to create conflict between various ‘targeted equity groups’ and students from overseas.
A senior administrator from one university seemed to encourage this view:

The university loves to recognise those [Indigenous] students when they graduate . . . and we’re very proud of them when they do graduate, but I’m not sure that we really do push them to ensure they get through that system . . . I don’t think we do know enough about, care enough to ensure we’re up to date with those students . . . we give them special consideration, push them as hard as we can. I think we probably give more support to our non-English speaking background friends from Indonesia and Korea than we do to our Indigenous people. I think that’s because . . . there are certain ethical things we have to do from the AVCC. We give them special counselling, special language training, going home counselling and all those kinds of things. We give them a lot more than we do the Aboriginal people. I mean I might be wrong because I know more about internationalisation than I do about what we give to the Indigenous people. But I think I’m right there.

(Interview 4, p. 7)

On the other hand another academic spoke of the services available to assist Indigenous students and the lack of these services for others:

We’re very well aware of who the contacts are . . . to make sure they get their tutors in place. That’s fine if you’re Aboriginal. If you’re NESB . . . I cannot get her help. If she was Aboriginal I would have a tutor tomorrow. We used to have that help and we can’t get it now.

(Interview 44, p. 20)

Some faculties have student support mechanisms (for dealing with finances, relationships, study, culture or mathematics), such as a students affairs officer, available for all students—females and males, international and Indigenous students alike, while Indigenous students also have access to the Indigenous studies centre which provides pastoral care and other forms of support (Interview 16, pp. 28–30). A safety net, by way of a ‘learning hazards system’, had been instituted in one faculty to enable all its students to lodge expressions of concerns in a non-threatening environment (anonymously if warranted), and get feedback on actions taken in response to their concerns (Interview 16, pp. 41, 43). One university has been particularly responsive to the needs of mature age students because of their large enrolment numbers, while there has also been an increased responsiveness ‘to the needs of students with disabilities because of the Equity and Access Coordinator who’s been fairly vigorous in pursuing things’ (Interview 38, p. 7). Action learning programs have been funded through the staff development unit: ‘we had two action learning projects, one was to do with the identification of students with learning disabilities and the other was to provide support for them’ (Interview 38, p. 8). While one university had previously used its quality assurance funding to provide support for students academic skills development, funds are now taken from cost centres within the university (Interview 38, p. 16). The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs emphasis on student retention led the university to establish an academic skills centre for students although there is a preference for working ‘with academic staff to develop
their skills and knowledge so that they can actually embed the learning skills into the context of the discipline . . . [however] academic staff, typically will not recognise they have a strong need for staff development’ (Interview 38, pp. 16, 17).

In response to the ‘what about the boys backlash’ against gender equity programs, mainstreaming has been promoted to share ‘equity all around’, leading to a watering down of efforts to tackle the really hard equity issues (Interview 16, p. 30). Universities are now responding in terms of ‘client driven demand’ such that: ‘If we don’t have the demand to address [Indigenous] issues they’re simply not being addressed, because of resource constraints you focus on the things where the high demand is’ (Interview 22, p. 7). Given that ‘Indigenous people are under-represented in the client group [then] their views’ can go unheard (Interview 22, p. 8).

**Conclusion**

Universities provide Indigenous students with a wide range of services and resources intended to enhance their chances for academic success. Different strategies for organising and resourcing student support are being tested by universities, with judgements about their success being determined not only by student learning outcomes, but also by the responsiveness of universities to a complex range of Indigenous needs and interests. With changes in the political economy of universities and, in particular the push for the recruitment of full fee-paying students from overseas, university administrators now find themselves having to address antagonisms that arise or are being incited between these students and others, including Indigenous students.

**Recommendation 12**

That universities reflect on their own constructions of what a ‘university student’ is so as to reshape and reconceptualise their processes for the production and transmission of knowledges so that Indigenous students and other students of ‘difference’ can stake their claims in tertiary education.

**Recommendation 13**

That universities broaden the responsibility for Indigenous students’ access, participation, retention and success to become part of faculties’ processes of accountability, so that Indigenous students rights and interests are endorsed and owned by all participants within the university.
Table 6: Category—Student Resourcing

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SP = University Strategic Plan  
EP = Equity Plan  
IP = University Indigenous Education Plan  

* Indigenous Enrolment as a percentage of total University enrolment (1995)

Sub-categories

1. Active identification of Indigenous students as a target group.
2. Diverse forms of personal and welfare resourcing for Indigenous students.
3. Indigenous student learning skills and academic resourcing.
4. Community outreach programs to improve Indigenous student access to university.
5. Alternative entry and bridging and preparatory programs for Indigenous students.
7. University-wide processes to support Indigenous students.
8. Collaboration and consultation with outside agencies to improve student resourcing processes.
9. Processes to review and monitor Indigenous student resourcing.
University–Community Relations

Universities in Australia have a long-established tradition of association with those ‘communities’ of peoples and interests within which they are located and whose interests they serve. Many universities will look to community and economic leaders within their communities as a source of support as well as giving some credibility to the relevance and professional acceptability of the university curriculum. However, university’s construction of its ‘community’ has to a large degree been influenced by the traditionally elitist nature of universities and the economic and social roles they play within the community. Universities have to a large degree generally not established relationships with Indigenous peoples in their catchment areas, or advocated for the broader positioning of Indigenous peoples within this society. A university’s commitment to serving the interests of the technological, agricultural, resource exploitation and business communities may at times be in conflict with the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities.

Another aspect influencing university-community in relation to increased Indigenous participation is the significance to Indigenous peoples attending universities in maintaining direct and effective links with their communities. The Higher Education Council report (1997, p. 22) described the importance of community connections to Indigenous peoples in universities as follows: ‘The establishment and maintenance of strong community consultative mechanisms is considered to be an essential element in the process of providing programs and student support for Indigenous Australians’. However, this may be problematic in higher education institutions which ‘do not always operate in ways which highlight or recognise the significance of community links to this same extent’ (Higher Education Council 1997, p. 22), particularly when those universities’ community links are not to those sections of the community which are seen to be part of universities’ ‘natural’ domains.

Representation of University–Community Relations in University Policies

As Table 7 on page 116 illustrates, those aspects of university-community relations dominant in university strategic plans relate to meeting the broader goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. In particular, there is a desire to increase community participation in educational decision-making and to ensure a cultural partnership between universities and Indigenous communities. Activities include:

- the inclusion of Indigenous community members in the advisory and decision-making functions of the Indigenous academic/support centres;
- developing special courses to address community needs and increase wider access to higher education;
• cultural affirmation and awareness raising activities;
• engaging in collaborative consultancy processes with Indigenous communities; and
• establishing links and networks with other domains of community action.

Some university plans explicitly acknowledge and describe activities intended to enhance their relationships with Indigenous communities; these activities are more generically acknowledged in the strategic plans of others. Explanations of these activities are found in the Indigenous education plans.

Most universities, in response to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs requirements, have established some form of Indigenous policy and advisory committees which invites community participation and representation. These committees often advise senior management through the heads of the Indigenous academic/support centres. The executive support of these committees is mostly provided through the Indigenous academic/support centres and the interests of these committees are closely aligned to the role and functions of these centres. In most universities, these committees do not have any formal links with broader university decision-making processes.

Only one university strategic plan acknowledged its Indigenous policy and advisory committee. This is in an environment where many universities espouse a commitment to ensure an effective institutional response to Indigenous students and their communities. Three universities had strategic plans for activities which affirm Indigenous cultures, particularly activities relating to Indigenous visual arts. Five universities had strategic plans for linking the university and Indigenous communities in research and course development. These consultative mechanisms in relation to Indigenous courses and programs, and promotion of university activities and Indigenous representation are wide ranging in scope covering both formal and informal collaboration. To service Indigenous communities, some universities have strategic plans for:
• acting as a source of advice, information, consultancy and advocacy;
• promoting university services and resources to the community;
• delivering educational and research services for the benefit of the community;
• providing Indigenous resources for the benefit of the community; and
• collaborating with Indigenous communities in cultural matters (e.g. cultural days).

Some aspects of this collaboration include university-wide services to the Indigenous communities, with the majority of these initiatives taking place through the Indigenous academic/support centres.
Policy Overview

In university strategic and equity plans, a number of good practices exist with respect to university-community relations.

Overall Institutional Commitment

• In one university the target of the Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’ is to become a focus for Indigenous community activities.
• In one university the target of the Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’ is to increase the accessibility of the university’s Indigenous resources to the Indigenous community.
• One university’s Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’ aims to increase the public profile of the unit’s services to the Indigenous community through the media and other public forums.
• Many universities endorse formal and informal consultation and advisory mechanisms through their Aboriginal advisory or management committees and policy development committees.
• Many universities’ senior management have leadership roles on their Aboriginal education policy committees in conjunction with representation from various community groups.

Specific Linking Strategies

• One university has a strategy to further develop the research and consulting activity of Aboriginal staff, particularly in collaboration with the Indigenous community.
• One university is establishing programs and mechanisms which consolidate or enable community links, including:
  − policy development committees;
  − a university link program;
  − a community service register for academic staff; and
  − consulting activities on behalf of Indigenous communities.
• One university seeks to market the expertise of the Indigenous ‘academic/support unit’ to the community.
• Indigenous populations see school liaison and student recruitment activities as significant.
• One university publishes a journal in Indigenous education to enhance connections to Indigenous peoples in the community who work in the area of education.
• Some universities seek community input into the development and delivery of programs through course advisory and reference committees.
• Some Indigenous university staff have representation on community organisations such Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

Links to Facilitate Cultural Awareness and Cultural Affirmations Strategies

• One university’s school of visual arts presented a program by a postgraduate student on art therapy with Aboriginal Elders for the Australian Psychological Society.
• One university negotiated with community to establish an Aboriginal community cultural centre.
• One university has Indigenous art displays in key locations within the university.
• One university uses Indigenous art in the teaching of university course.
• One university has murals by Indigenous community artists throughout the university and acknowledges Indigenous arts by honouring them with university honorary award.
• One university has museum and teaching collections relevant to Indigenous cultures.
• One university has engaged in research that assists in the protection of Aboriginal artists’ copyrights.

University–Community Research Links

• A university services the community by providing relevant education and research to support the self-determination of Indigenous communities and to enhance the understanding among non-Indigenous people of Indigenous issues.
• One university coordinates research consultancies with land councils.
• In one university Indigenous research is increasingly being conducted by the Indigenous ‘education/support units’.
• One university is engaged in the study of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Central Queensland.
• One university is using research to contribute to the process of reconciliation.
• In one university there is collaboration between university and community for professional development and training programs.
• One university consults with the community in regard to the development of Indigenous programs and units.
• One university has developed programs that directly respond to community needs in areas such as early childhood.

Community Services and Community Development

• The university is a resource and provides information that focuses on Indigenous matters.
• One university is used as ‘Keeping Places’ for Indigenous resources.
• One university is willing to respond where appropriate on Aboriginal and intercultural matters or act as liaison to other sources of information and assistance.
• Some universities deliver cross-cultural awareness programs, both internal and external to the university.
• One university seeks to increase the accessibility of Indigenous resources of the university to the Indigenous community.
• One university encourages Indigenous community knowledge holders to collaborate on consultancies and other knowledge production activities.
• One university has developed a community register for university staff.
• One university seeks to minimise traditional barriers to university access for Indigenous people.
• One university wants to upgrade the educational and occupational qualifications of Indigenous community members who work in areas such as child welfare, community management positions and other areas.
• One university is using research to address Indigenous concerns in the areas of compulsory education.
• One university has provided research to address Indigenous concerns with the State judiciary.

Review, Monitoring and Evaluation

• Specialist Indigenous community groups review subjects and programs.
• In one university there is a review, which includes Indigenous community representatives, of the committee structure for Indigenous education within higher education.

Dilemmas of University–Community Relations

University–community relations have been influenced by years of institutional and financial restructuring in the higher education sector, as well as by uncertainty regarding non-Indigenous academics and their authority/credibility when contributing to debates about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Universities have supported the establishment of special Indigenous centres of various kinds. For example, one university supports an Aboriginal Cultural Centre: ‘it was initiated through the former CAE partner of the present university and was built on land that was in fact ceded to that purpose from them as well’ (Interview 43, p. 2). The university provides financial support of $100,000 a year to employ the curator and director. This centre is used extensively by both university and community personnel for teaching, research, and cultural awareness activities.
However, in order to redress its own serious financial problems the university is reducing or eliminating its financial commitments to funding and supporting the centre (Interview 38, p. 18). The centre has not been able to attract alternative sources of funding as had been hoped. A non-Indigenous academic believes that the university’s decision to cut funding is inappropriate in terms of its rhetoric of reaching out to the community and suggests it should respond to the financial needs of the centre in ways which give it ‘a different kind of priority than what I suspect is the straight financial rationalist kind of approach that will be taken’ (Interview 30, p. 2). In another university, a specific issues centre will cease operation as at mid-1997, as external funding has ceased and the university is not in a financial position to take on its administration, even though the faculty in which the centre is located has a specific interest in the issues which the centre addresses (Interview 49, p. 3).

Building connections between the university and Indigenous communities is often taken on by those academics who have a research and teaching role in Indigenous studies. One university academic reported on the planned process of course development for the Indigenous Studies major which included consulting with and actively engaging the Indigenous community in the curriculum development work (Interview 9, p. 10). Another non-Indigenous academic who works within an Indigenous academic/support centre, spoke about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies as being the ‘core business’ of the centre and re-iterated the importance of ‘maintaining links with the Aboriginal community’ as the expert reference group (Interview 45, p. 7).

A senior non-Indigenous academic suggests that the high profile public debates in areas such as Mabo, Wik and the Republic have succeeded in putting issues of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations to the fore of the university (Interview 4, p. 19). However, a problem for non-Indigenous academics wanting to contribute to the debates over these issues is finding an appropriate forum to speak or write, and also the question of their right to speak and to represent non-Indigenous perspectives sympathetic to Indigenous interests. A non-Indigenous academic, who has attempted to address these issues in her own work, suggests that a key problem is:

The lack of easily identifiable forums for dialogue within this area. We're publishing in marginal places and I think that we need to engage in dialogue with each other . . . the last 10 years has created a bit of a problem in terms of non-Indigenous people writing and speaking . . . the active recruitment policy of Indigenous lecturers has been a positive thing . . . The fact that there are representation issues in relation to who can speak is good but it has created a sort of temporary silence if you know what I mean. People are a bit unsure as to what they can say now.

(Interview 37, p. 20)

A senior Indigenous academic manager expressed his view that universities should recognise what is ‘Aboriginal business’ and see such business as being ‘the responsibility of Aboriginal people, not the institution’ (Interview 62, p. 5). He
sees the university’s responsibility as being ‘to listen to Aboriginal people’ (Interview 62, p. 5). He believes that universities should limit their involvement in these matters to responding to what ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lay down as their strategic interests’ (Interview 62, p. 5) and that this should only be in the educational and professional sphere.

Another aspect of university–community relations is the conflict between symbol and form. Some universities publicly acknowledge Indigenous achievement in a number of ways: at their graduation ceremonies (Interview 17, p. 21); by flying the Aboriginal flag; by renaming buildings and streets with Indigenous names; by including ceremonial addresses on the university calendar to welcome and giving respect to community elders at university events (Interview 14, p. 7); by sponsoring a chair in Aboriginal studies with funding from a mining company; and by introducing an Indigenous scholarship (Interview 61, p. 4). In another community, a local government dignitary is an Indigenous person and liaises with university senior management (Interview 28, p. 7). There are processes of consultation for taking advice from Indigenous peoples in relation to Indigenous matters, although some significant decision-making bodies such as the university council may have no formal Indigenous representation (Interview 17, p. 7) to ‘give a voice and give a message to the community’. In one university, while the university council did not ostensibly have Indigenous participation, a senior manager believed that, because of the council’s mixture (‘it has some business people, people from other educational establishments, people in the judiciary, public servants, industry, staff, unionists’ (Interview 47, p. 10), it would be sure to represent Indigenous interests as ‘everything people do here involves Aboriginals. People or issues in one way or another you just can’t avoid it, even if you wanted to you can’t’. In another example, a non-Indigenous staff member believed that even though Indigenous interests were not specifically represented on her faculty board, the nature of the relationship between the faculty and relevant Indigenous groups within the community was such that their interests were represented (Interview 52, p. 22).

On the other hand, some academics were concerned not to be seen to be advocating for the interests of a specific group. One academic commented, ‘I’d be worried about the university playing an advocacy role for Indigenous people in that case, which pushes them to one interpretation or another, because it then has impact for academic investigation of those particular circumstances’ (Interview 31, p. 19). His particular university has a very strong rural lobby and is renowned for its advocacy of rural interests through its research, teaching and community activities. This academic suggests that a key element of an academic’s role is ‘community service . . . And it’s up to the individual academic to find the form in which they’re going to do some community service’ (Interview 31, p. 21).
The mythology of the level playing field and an inability to discriminate amongst its clientele is a critical factor in university–community relations. Universities introduce initiatives which they see as openly and equally attracting all members of the community. One university has developed its commercial services sector with a view to drawing people from the community to access these facilities as both a community service and a university entrepreneurial activity. These services are widely advertised on commercial radio and television. However, Indigenous academics and students within that institution believe that few Indigenous people would use these facilities as ‘they feel strange, they feel alienated, they just don’t understand’ (Interview 1, p. 14); ‘there is nothing here for them unless they’re studying; there’s no reason to come here’ (Interview 15, p. 28); ‘it’s not a welcoming place. It’s a place of education and it stays within that framework’ (Interview 23, p. 2).

All universities are expected to have a university–community collaborative and consultative framework according to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affair’s guidelines; however, there is concern about Indigenous representation on such committees. An Aboriginal community–university consultative committee established in the late 1980s at one university has representatives from government agencies and various regional communities (Interview 43, p. 5). In another institution, a non-Indigenous administrator expressed concern that those Indigenous people who were on the Indigenous advisory committee were drawn from community organisations and may not necessarily constitute a ‘spiritual representation of the community’ (Interview 17, p. 21). He believed that these spiritually-minded people would provide ‘good value to the university’ (Interview 17, p. 21). As noted in Chapter 6, a conflict for Indigenous peoples within universities relates to the difficulty of maintaining connections with their communities within the university institutional framework (Interview 62, pp. 24–25).

**Conclusion**

Certain universities have initiated strategic plans which aim to enhance their relations with Indigenous communities. Important undertakings have included the joint development of collaborative research projects and community services, as well as cultural awareness activities targeted at the non-Indigenous community and specific purpose links such as the sponsorship of a journal. The nurturing of these relations is being strained through the increasing financial burdens being imposed on universities and the associated restructuring that has preoccupied many as they make structural adjustments to ensure their own survival. Likewise, non-Indigenous academics are reviewing the theoretical and political bases from which they operate in debates over relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

**Recommendation 14**

That universities actively engage in processes of consulting with Indigenous community groups as part of the universities commitment to community. In
doing this, the university recognises that Indigenous faculties, departments and centres within universities are part of those Indigenous communities.
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SP = University Strategic Plan  
EP = Equity Plan  
IP = University Indigenous Education Plan

* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

**Sub-categories**

1. Indigenous community representation in institutional administrative structures.
2. Special courses in response to community needs.
3. Cultural awareness and cultural affirmation.
4. University–community consultative and collaborative activities.
5. University services to Indigenous community development.
6. Intersectoral and interagency links and collaboration.
7. Community participation in university decision-making.
8. University–community research collaboration.
9. Processes to review and monitor university–community relations.
Anti-racism

The various forms of racism experienced and evidenced within Australian higher education and their implications in universities and broader society were also addressed by this report. While the issue is prominent in international literature (Bennett 1995; Feagin, Vera & Imani 1996; Mentzer 1993), to a large degree this literature addresses issues of racism based on colour (e.g. the experience of Afro-Americans) more so than the issues of being Indigenous; it may be argued that the latter, within a post-colonial context, carry the double burden of colour and Indigenous rights (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997, p. 8) Cowlishaw and Morris suggest that, for Indigenous peoples, issues of racism provide ‘a window on a world where the notion of race was mobilised not so much against the colour of the skin, as against the origin of that colour’ (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997, p. 1).

There are few reports and discussions of racism in higher education in Australia, although the current debate and the increasing significance of fee-paying overseas students has generated some public concern. Recently, the issue of racism has been publicly debated in Australia to the extent that it became necessary in late 1996 for the Australian Parliament to pass a Joint Resolution affirming equality, not racial intolerance, as a defining characteristic of the Australian nation (Dodson 1996, p. 3). However, such an affirmation which views anti-racism in terms of outlawing overt racial acts and denunciating racial violence denies the evidence of inquiries such as the National Inquiry Into Racist Violence (1991) and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1992) which have documented the extent of individual and institutionalised racism against Indigenous peoples in this country. Cowlishaw and Morris (1997, p. 178) argue that such forms of anti-racism, which are often associated with processes attached to achieving equity for all, deny the significance of racist beliefs and actions for those on which it impacts and make invisible the forms of racism which are ‘reproduced in various bureaucratic and institutional forums’. Michael Dodson, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, asserts that such calls to equality for all deny any rights which attach to cultural difference and to the identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples as the Indigenous peoples of Australia (Dodson 1996, p. 7).

While the international literature on racism in higher education addresses issues of persons of colour, as distinct from issues of Indigeneity, there are some questions which arise from this literature which need to be considered in an Australian context. For example, following a study of the experiences of black students in predominantly white United States institutions, Feagin, Vera and Imani (1996) asserted that recent analyses of United States educational institutions deny the reality of racism and discrimination for these students and their families both in education and in society at large. These analyses, embedded within notions of individual agency, focus on the supposed beneficial effects of multiculturalism for black students and argue that racial barriers and impediments are not important
problems for black students in these colleges. However, the authors argue that the effect of the denial of racism as a factor in their participation is to locate the problems ‘in the students themselves, their families and their communities’ (1996, p. 4), and to make these students responsible for their own experiences. They suggest this ‘view of education is myopic because it fails to examine the persisting role of white racism in creating serious barriers and dilemmas for black students and other students of colour’ (1996, p. 7). Cowlishaw and Morris refer to this form of racism as ‘liberal racism’ (1997, p. 4) as it fails to acknowledge the cultural and systemic conditions which produce racialised outcomes for some groups of people, such as high imprisonment, low educational outcomes, poor health conditions and limited employment options.

Love (1993) argues that as the forms of racism within higher education institutions are shrouded in moral calls for equality and policies of equity for all rather than overt and explicit forms of racism, there is little ‘institutional recognition of White racism, little discussion of how it is manifested on campus, and little attention as to how it affects Black students, even in the absence of overt intention to discriminate’ (Love 1993, p. 29). He argues that reports indicating blatant and violent acts of direct racism are only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ and that it is the ‘inability of the student to feel integrated into mainstream of academic life under these adverse conditions [which] contributes to the Black student’s sense of alienation, which in turn is acted out in a variety of subtle ways affecting the student’s perception of racism’ (Love 1993, p. 29). Thus, Love (1993, p. 33) argues that it is critical that universities address issues of racism across all levels of the institution including areas such as admissions, counselling and support services, course administration, and teaching and assessment practices. In addition, institutional leaders need to analyse and understand individual and institutional racism and the impact that it has on the institution’s ability to provide equity in educational access.

In considering the forms and effects of racism in universities, it is useful to distinguish between individual, institutional and cultural racism (also referred to as ideological racism (Pettman 1986)), as defined by Bennett (1995). Individual racism refers to specific acts directed against people of colour and may result in death, injury or destruction of property. Institutional racism are more subtle acts of racism which are often hidden in established policies and practices. Cultural racism combines ethnocentrism and the power to suppress or eradicate manifestations of other cultures. Bennett states that the legacy of cultural racism can be found in the formal curriculum, tests, and course offerings of university as well as in the modes of delivery. She states that it can also be detected in the hidden informal curriculum, as in low expectations for minority student achievement held by a white faculty, ethnic/racial myths and stereotypes held by students and faculties in the university community, and in an unfamiliar, non-supportive, unfriendly or hostile campus environment (Bennett 1995).

One of the most difficult and complex issues facing the campus community in the United States is how to respond to acts of racism and racial harassment without violating free speech. American studies (e.g. Bennett 1995; Feagin, Vera & Imani 1996) show an increasing number of individual acts of racism by white students
against minority students. These include acts of racial discrimination, racist remarks, racist behaviour, and physical attacks, as well as more extreme acts such as ‘cross burnings’, racist literature. The concern lies in the message given to minority and white students that racism will be tolerated when university and faculty official do not take a stand against racial harassment. However, while this may also be an issue for some Australian universities, it must be recognised that while universities value free speech, they are also mandated by Commonwealth and accompanying State legislation to provide safe learning environments which protect the individual against overt and explicit acts of discrimination.

The limited Australian literature on racism in universities (see Kaplan 1996), recognises that racism in Australian universities is an issue but states that in most instances universities are reluctant to admit this. In those instances where this has been done, there has been significant backlash against those who actively promote anti-racist strategies (Kaplan 1996). In light of the current debate on racism within the community and its implications for Australia as a provider of tertiary education to international students, and a subsequent statement by the Australian Vice–Chancellors’ Committee in relation to racism within universities (1997), it is likely that discussion of racism within the tertiary sector will become more prominent (Kaplan 1996).

Representation of Anti-racist Processes in University Policies

As can be seen from Table 8 on page 133, very few universities indicated, in any of the strategic planning documents surveyed, the need to respond to racism within their institutions. Of the 20 university plans surveyed, only six had university-wide anti-racism policies. This is not to say that these universities do not have such policies; merely that these were not represented in their strategic plans. In those universities where it was indicated that anti-racist policies were in place, reference to such policies was more likely to be found in the university equity plan than in the university strategic plan. In two universities, the Indigenous education plan identified anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies as part of their commitment to Indigenous student support. Only one university described the procedures which were adopted to redress racist actions in its Indigenous education plan.

Policy Overview

As stated, only a small number of universities represent issues of anti-racism in their strategic or equity plans, however, this section highlights the range of good practices in relation to racism and anti-racism strategies described in those plans.
Institutional Statements

- Some universities declare that all their faculties and divisions are expected to implement institutional policies on equal opportunity and anti-discrimination.
- Some universities make general proclamations on the development and implementation of an anti-racism policy, and that equity and social justice includes the elimination of racism and the production of guidelines to counter sexist and racist behaviour.
- One university’s policy not only states that racism, and its manifestations racial prejudice and racial discrimination), constitute unacceptable behaviour but that racism is actively discouraged within the university community.
- One university states that its objective is to ensure the absence of all forms of discrimination based on gender, marital status, race, age, physical disability or sexual preference in relation to all facets of student participation at the university.
- One university states that all university communication is bias free, devoid of racist terminology and that communication shall avoid stereotyping.

Institutional Strategies

- One university conducted an education campaign to support its policy and grievance procedure against racism.
- One university established a vice-chancellor’s committee against racism, with the initial task of developing a university policy against racism and taking on-going responsibility for the implementation of the grievance procedure and education campaign.
- One university’s project funds assisted in the production of guidelines to counter sexist and racist behaviour.

Programs and Promotion

- One university developed a graduate certificate in race relations to be offered through Open Learning Agency Australia.
- A university staff induction program includes an update on anti-discrimination law.
- One university publishes pamphlets on anti-discrimination policy and conducts a range of anti-discrimination courses and activities across the university community.
Dilemmas of Racism and Anti-racism

In line with Commonwealth and State anti-discrimination legislation, many universities now have anti-racism or racial harassment policies which apply to all sectors of the university. The dilemmas regarding racism and anti-racism as identified by interviewees are numerous, and relate to:

• conflicting definitions and perceptions of what constitutes racism;
• the differences between the culture of the university and some of the social views of the community within which the university is located;
• the conflict between academic freedom and taking personal responsibility for addressing aspects of racism;
• the inadequacy of anti-racist policies to provide a source of redress for those experiencing racism; the competing faces of racism, to which only some universities have shown a willingness to respond;
• identifying racism in the absence of overt and violent forms of racism; and
• the dilemmas an individual may face if he or she challenges racism within a university.

Contested Meanings

The positioning of the university within its community and the implications for the ways in which the university addresses issues of racism are critical in areas such as employment and staff relations, curriculum, university operation and relationships with its community. In one community, a university administrator made the following observation:

I think the university is . . . a reflection of the wider community, which means that we reflect the extremes from ‘red neck’ to ‘lovers of human beings’ kinds of beliefs.

(Interview 44, p. 1)

This administrator believes that despite ‘the extremes of red necks . . . we also have far more tolerance of the variety of cultural values in our community, than you would find in a place like Melbourne’ (Interview 44, p. 1). In another community, one administrator saw that in the past, ‘the University was a place of neutrality in terms of tensions within the community, and this includes tensions within the Aboriginal community itself, and tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal’ (Interview 27, p. 36). The administrator also believed that there ‘was the general feeling among Aboriginal students that even if things did blow up there were people (in the university) who would say, this is enough, this is not happening and do something about it’ (Interview 27, p. 36). Other staff members expressed their concern about the overt racism within their communities: a non-Indigenous lecturer in one community said, ‘I’m sure there would be more subtle forms of racism at work. There’s certainly a lot of overt racism in the town. I’ve been quite shocked’ (Interview 37, p. 12). An equity administrator expressed her shock at the
extent of systemic racism against Aboriginal people she encountered when she came to Australia and suggested that ‘there’s racism on campus. There’s racism in society, we know it’s there. It’s probably not very overt but it’s going on’ (Interview 60, p. 25).

To a large extent, many of the non-Indigenous interviewees were not aware of any significant racism being directed against Indigenous peoples within their institutions. This applied particularly to those respondents who had minimal contact with Indigenous peoples in their day to day activities. While recognising the existence of anti-Aboriginal racist debates in the general community, these people saw their own institutions as outside of this fray. Where racism was acknowledged, in some instances it was seen as being ‘basically ignorance’ and that overall, their university was non-racist, tolerant and open (Interview 16, p. 37), and a place which advocated equity and equality for all students through anti-racist policies. On the other hand, a non-Indigenous lecturer who worked extensively with Indigenous staff and students acknowledged that there was a diverse range of racially based opinions in his university. He observed that an Indigenous academic colleague regarded the university ‘as a racist organisation’ and saw ‘that the white people in its hierarchy are more likely than not driven in their every decision by racism’ (Interview 51, p. 19). This unsubstantiated comment serves to illustrate the tension between the identification of racism in overt and explicit actions, and the failure by academics/staff to see everyday occurrences of racism in their institutions which can contribute to racially-based outcomes for some students (Cowlishaw 1997, p. 178).

However, in one case study university, despite perceptions by many of a university as being a place of tolerance and neutrality in regards to race tensions and disputes, Indigenous staff and students reported instances of direct racial discrimination. In addition, non-Indigenous university staff spoke of the efforts required to challenge the racial attitudes and behaviours of fellow employees. An Indigenous person who has been a member of the general staff at one university for nearly three decades reported several experiences of racism. First, he was accused of stealing a raincoat which had been given to him by his supervisor; then, he was accused of offensive personal body odour despite the odour coming from cleaning detergent; then, he was told to relocate his work to a different site within the university; and, finally, he was reprimanded for swearing and was forced to make a written apology to his colleagues. The impact of this humiliation has been that this Indigenous employee now works on his own, eats his lunch on his own and has not said a swear word (Interview 39, pp. 1, 10–15). While others in the institution may see these acts of institutional regulation and control as being due to an individual’s alleged behaviours and outside the realm of racism, for the individual they confirm community racist and stereotypic responses, which lead this employee to see himself as racially positioned as the ‘Other’ in this institution (Cowlishaw 1997, p. 177).

In another university, a senior non-Indigenous female administrator who had had experience of working with Indigenous peoples prior to working at her current university, expressed her disgust and surprise at the type of derogatory and racist comments that were made by staff and students in relation to Indigenous peoples in
and out of the university community. While she acknowledged the strongly rural and conservative base of the university and the realisation that for the most part such attitudes were endemic and largely learned from family and other social contexts, she believed that university provided the first environment for some where the unacceptability and illegality of such comments had to be acknowledged (Interview 5, p. 2). She said that even though an anti-racism policy was in place it was largely ineffective, and this created a dilemma for staff and students as they had to make a decision as to how they would challenge those making racist comments. Her response as an administrator was to introduce workplace and personnel practices which clearly demonstrated her position on the issue and aimed to re-educate her staff (Interview 5, p. 2).

In what one manager saw as a perverse display of tokenism and reverse racism, a senior university executive manager appointed an Indigenous woman to a front office, high public contact position, so as to portray a corporate face open to matters of race and culture. The manager believed that the person’s appointment was so that the senior manager was able:

To show the image that he wasn’t racist, but it was a racist appointment. It was just a really public tokenism. The idea was to have this person at the front door where we used to have our switch and main reception, so that the first thing the public saw upon entering the university was an Aboriginal person. He thought that was great PR at the university.

(Interview 17, p. 26)

In another university, a general staff member alluded to possible concerns regarding the ‘attitudes and the reactions of students in the [residential] colleges’, with students coming from rural areas where they may have had limited exposure to ethnically diverse populations. He was concerned that:

The attitudes of the rural community are probably less tolerant than maybe the general community, to both overseas and people from other ethnic backgrounds and Aboriginals, and maybe that comes through in some way in the colleges.

(Interview 38, pp. 21–22)

In two of the case study universities, Indigenous students spoke of racist attitudes and behaviours they experienced in lectures, tutorials and in the service areas such as the student union (Interview 15; Interview 33). They claimed that these actions compounded their personal feelings of inadequacy and their inability to cope within the academic arena of the university. They saw racism as a critical factor in some students’ decisions to leave university. An Indigenous student described an experience in one class:
I think there was five of us in there and one of the younger female students came over to us and said we’re getting stared at and I said ‘well you come and sit with us in our group’. So we had all the Murris [Indigenous persons] on one side of the room and the others all around the place and these two idiots staring over there. Well, two of our students dropped out and went external and that one young female went external because of that reason.

(Interview 15, p. 4)

Another student described her experience thus:

I just find that if Koori [Indigenous] issues come up, I feel like I’m getting attacked. There have been cases where I’ve actually said things that agree with what they say, but they’ve got it into their heads so much that Kooris get everything they can’t even hear what I’m saying. They still attack me and if I wasn’t who I am, I probably would have left a long time ago. I probably would have walked out after some of the classes I had last year, particularly the [name of subject] classes. I would have just gone because there were times I felt like I was sitting there and everybody was sort of like this at me you know.

(Interview 33, p. 12)

In another instance a student spoke of the experience of being confronted by non-Indigenous students and being challenged to take responsibility for the actions of other Indigenous peoples (Interview 15, p. 7). These students expressed concern about the inability of lecturers and tutors to create a safe learning environment by taking action in response to what these students said, and believed these were instances of racism in the classroom. One Indigenous student said: ‘they’re the ones in charge of the environment, so they’re supposed to ensure a safe and friendly environment, not to create a hostile environment’ (Interview 15, p. 10). While these students acknowledge the need for debate and non-censoring of opinions, they see the lecturer or tutor’s role as ‘having a responsibility to ensure that it doesn’t go right over the top’ (Interview 15, p. 10). A student claimed that one lecturer’s way of responding to the racist comments of some students was to switch off the overhead and leave the room. The student believed that such a response was inappropriate as it did not address the issues (Interview 15, p. 11). Another Indigenous student claimed that a lecturer acted inappropriately in one instance by failing to provide appropriate leadership to students with regard to challenging racism in the classroom. He described the following:

The lecturer was making jokes throughout the semester, and the whole semester there was just this yucky anti-Aboriginal sentiment. There was an Aboriginal student in the class that they didn’t realise was Aboriginal. This is the Aboriginal student’s perception of what happened. And right in the very last lecture the Aboriginal student said ‘Oh well you thought I was from East Timor didn’t you—I’m not, I’m Aboriginal’.

(Interview 48, pp. 8–9)
Indigenous students described a lack of cultural understanding as a key factor in
the inability or unwillingness of some academics to respond in appropriate ways to
what they, as students, saw as racist situations (Interview 15, p. 10). Indigenous
students said that they were distressed by classes in which ‘students were
couraged to give their views’ (Interview 33, p. 11), as often these views were
racist. One student said that her experience was that ‘with some of the students . . .
you just knew, when they spoke to you, you knew they were so racist and having
me there like I stuck up for things’ (Interview 33, p. 11).

Some students said that they believed that some lecturers do not do enough in
these situations to ensure that the racist views of students are addressed, despite
the existence of legislation within universities in this regard.(Interview 15 and
Interview 33). They see themselves, as students, being asked to take responsibility
for addressing these matters and refuting racist comments of others. For some
students this is possible: ‘Well if some lecturers don’t qualify their statements I’ll
say something . . . There are lecturers who don’t and I think that should be
something the university needs to look at as far as cultural awareness’ (Interview
33, p. 13). However, for some Indigenous students, speaking out against racism
can be difficult. A non-Indigenous lecturer who works with Indigenous students
described how difficult this can be:

I think there are some people in the university who are not able to deal with
those kinds of [racist] comments when they’re made by other students in the
presence of ATSIs [Indigenous people]. It’s not that they’re not aware of it
but they don’t have the confidence to speak up and tell the other students
they are highly inappropriate and racist remarks.

(Interview 45, p. 1)

A senior research manager believes that the relationship between anti-racist actions
and academic freedom can be a ‘grey area’, and so:

Academics need to have some guidelines, perhaps, made up of what
constitutes racial and anti-racial behaviour. These kinds of things that are
coming out in lectures. That should be spelt out somewhere. You can’t do
this or you can do that. That grey area between academic freedom and
racism is something that might be open to quite a bit of discussion.

(Interview 4, p. 23)

However, some university staff are committed to explicitly addressing issues of
racism in the classroom and engage in anti-racist teaching. But such anti-racist
teaching is often ‘undone in a sense by the sorts of stereotypes that are conveyed
within other courses’. One academic spoke, for instance, of one course which had
‘listed the essential [stereotypical] characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander students’ as part of its contents (Interview 37, p. 22). This same academic
said that ‘there’s a lot of professional freedom that people can give lectures the
way they want to. However, you can’t be sort of ideological police, you can’t sort
of make everybody teach the one thing the way you want them to’ (Interview 37,
p. 23). However, despite academic freedom, she believes that ‘when it is racist then
you have a bit of an obligation to intervene’ (Interview 37, p. 23). For instance, when students engage in racist myth making: ‘There has got to be an intervention, a stand taken’ (Interview 37, p. 23). Hence, the lecturer needs ‘resources on hand to refute it and kill it quickly . . . ’ (Interview 38, p. 20).

At the same time, while there may be efforts to introduce issues addressing racism into courses there can be strong resistance from other students to the stance being taken in anti-racist teaching and an unwillingness to take on board the course materials because of their own attitudes. This becomes particularly problematic for lecturers in courses which are specifically about race and racism, whereby despite the course objectives of identification of racism and its implications, a student may espouse racist beliefs and still actually pass the course. This can occur because the student has met the technical criteria for course completion, even though attitudinally the student’s work may be unacceptable. One lecturer described his experiences in a race and racism subject:

I was just kind of flabbergasted as a teacher that in week 10 or 11 of a semester that this is what I could be hearing coming back. So it comes out at that individual level and that to me was a bit frightening. Because we thought, by what he (the lecturer) was presenting we were assuming we were transmitting something positive and disseminating something positive. But what you got from certain students was total negativity coming back to us. And that’s difficult as a teacher because you think ‘Well what has been the point of this?’, and then you start to pass them. I mean you had to pass people and confidentially I had to pass people that in most situations I would not have passed because it was obvious that they hadn’t taken on board anything that had been the subject content, to be able to have those views in the tutorials. I don’t know if other people have had similar experiences with that where you just really question what is the point.

(Interview 13, p. 14)

Another aspect of racism which Indigenous students discussed was the relationship between culture and race, and the definitions and constructions of them as ‘other’ by the dominant group. These were often based on external features and stereotypic notions, and contained an inability to see certain individuals as being group members of the ‘other’. One Indigenous student believed that one’s physical appearance was critical to determining the extent to which Indigenous people are subjected to racism. He believed that it ‘depends whether they have the features associated with Aboriginal people, the “stereotype” features, or the features of a non-Aboriginal. I feel that Aboriginals that don’t have the stereotype features of an Aboriginal are better off, blend in and are more accepted than the ones that are stereotyped as having the Aboriginal features’ (Interview 64, p. 16). Another student (who is fair in appearance) said she was not harassed around the university, and was able to make use of facilities that some of her fellow Indigenous students had difficulty in accessing (Interview 15). However, this also had negative impacts on student participation as these fairer students were not seen then to embody those aspects of disadvantage which defined the group as a targeted equity group in the university. Their membership of the group was seen as being based on
individual agency, which denies ‘shared memory and inherited social relations’ (Cowlishaw & Morris 1997, p. 5).

**Anti-racist Commitment and Actions**

Institutionally, universities ‘operate within a legislative requirement that says it [racism] is not on and we are committed to equity’ (Interview 16, p. 37). Cowlishaw (1997, p. 178) suggests that this linking of anti-racism with equity serves to deny the existence of racial beliefs and instead places the focus on those unsocial and generally unacceptable individual acts of racism which are overt and explicit. Hence, anti-racism can exist alongside acts of institutionalised racism within a university which silences the knowledge and experiences of a group on the basis of race, which has policies of staff performance and outcomes that may discriminate against a group’s spiritual and social beliefs, and which utilise procedures for assessment of knowledge that may be disadvantageous to the ways of learning of some groups of students (Christens & Lily, 1997). Cowlishaw and Morris (1997, p. 5) argue that because ‘racial consciousness’ is identified as the problem, anti-racism can ‘passively’ exist alongside actions that reproduce racial inequality and injustice.

The responses to and experiences of anti-racism within higher education vary greatly. While some universities have a defined anti-racism policy, these are not always made a part of the formal induction of new staff, nor are students made aware of them (Interview 37, p. 21). In other instances, staff are seen to confront racism ‘extremely well’ although their capacity to do so ‘comes back to individuals . . . some . . . wouldn’t handle it so well’ (Interview 16, p. 40). For example, in one university, an instance was given of staff in an engineering faculty who came from diverse cultural backgrounds and had been discriminated against themselves, and so may have the potential to be sensitised to these issues, ‘but of course this is no guarantee’ (Interview 16, pp. 40–41). In another university, to help staff develop strategies for understanding the complexities of racism, so they could in turn help their students, ‘we offer units in racism in the classroom for undergraduate and graduate teachers . . .’ (Interview 37, p. 22). At one university, its equal employment opportunity committee was developing a policy and associated procedures on racism after conducting a series of forums on racism and race relations (Interview 22, p. 4).

In contrast, an equity administrator suggests that even though ‘there are policies in place [and] some students do come up and talk to us about those issues, I don’t get too many people’ (Interview 60, p. 25). She believes that for some students this may be because ‘they fear victimisation’ (Interview 60, p. 25). An equity manager, in another institution, also acknowledged that while the purpose of the policies is to tell ‘people they do not have to put up with this kind of behaviour, the difficulty is that people do not come out making a directly racist statement. Subtle overtones of statements make it difficult to deal with’ (Interview 14, p. 7). Often these instances ‘come down to course content, the paternalistic approach, or misuse of stereotypes. You have to differentiate between these different levels’ (Interview 14, p. 7). An equity manager in another institution saw the capacity for groups to
take advantage of the anti-racist legislation related to issues of power (Interview 28, p. 27). She believes:

By and large, when you have people, staff and students who are not in a position of power they will not take action or initiate anything that may threaten their position . . . Often the staff and students in my experience don’t use the formal mechanisms available for them to bring up their concerns because part of my role is investigating and dealing with allegations . . . they say I don’t want you to do anything. So I think there is a need to raise their understanding and confidence as well so that it’s OK to take action, it’s OK to bring up issues. But I can see from their perspective, too, because they don’t really want to put themselves in a more difficult position.

(Interview 28, p. 28)

In one university, an equity manager described her efforts to conduct a professional development program to develop student and staff understanding of racism and discrimination. Some within the university opposed the workshops as they believed ‘that we don’t have these issues . . . this University is free from racism, free from discrimination’ (Interview 28, p. 26). While the final program itself was successful, the manager was criticised by some people because ‘the guidelines that I came up with were [said to be] restricting people’s freedom to express, because we went around telling them what they can or cannot use as a language at an educational institution’ (Interview 28, p. 22). In addition, she said: ‘we had a number of farmers threatening to take their kids away from this university because they send them here for certain values and if they can’t be free to say what they think then this university has lost the plot’ (Interview 28, p. 22). As far as university senior management was concerned, there was public support for the workshops, but she did not believe that this was ‘to the extent that I would have liked’. Instead she ‘felt quite vulnerable with them because a person in my role now would be seen as a troublemaker you see, creating bad negative publicity’. Her overall perspective on what happened was ‘I think in this change agent role, you get pressure from certain areas’ (Interview 28, p. 22).

An active opponent of racism in another institution spoke of her experiences and learning as a non-racist as being a very personal experience and interdependent for its success on contact with the ‘other’:

Becoming an anti-racist is a life long activity. There’s no interchange, and if you’re not involved with Aboriginal people you just can’t learn these things because you can’t learn them by reading about them I don’t think. For every life experience there’s a new specific knowledge related to racism I think and you might think you have learned a great deal about how to be a non-racist when you’re working with Aboriginal people but you find that you still do things wrong. You still put your foot in your mouth because our whole socialisation is entrenched, and it is a racist socialisation, a very subtle way though. I don’t mean in any emotional way but in very subtle ways we’re just very Anglocentric . . . So getting back to your question I think I’m still
learning and will continue to learn how to act in and not participate in a non-racist way for the rest of my life and it’s the same for all of my colleagues.

(Interview 48, pp. 8–9)

In some universities there was a concern that the public commitment to address issues of racism ‘may be . . . driven by economic necessities more than anything else’ (Interview 28, p. 14). One lecturer said that, when considering the university’s promulgation of its views on racism through the media, staff kept ‘talking about non-English speaking background or overseas students more than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ (Interview 38, p. 20). With ‘respect to overseas students the university has been very supportive . . . I guess there’s obvious reasons with the financial implications . . . but it has been genuinely pleased at the diversity that it brings to the institution’ (Interview 38, p. 21). Commenting on the recurrent anti-Asian racist debate, one equity manager said her university:

Was one of the few universities that made a statement very quickly in terms of its not tolerating racial discrimination . . . that was driven from councillors who were interested not necessarily by the management and then it filtered to the management and there had been quite a lot of activity at the individual staff members levels broadly taking up interest and saying that we do not want to tolerate what is being pushed at the moment.

(Interview 28, p. 14)

On the other hand, an Indigenous student at this university commented that he believed that:

looking around the University, a lot of effort seems to be put into other cultural students but we [Indigenous students] seem to be left behind the eight ball like as far as lecturers and that go . . . I think there’s more the University could do to help the Koori [Indigenous] students to be here and to stay here and at the moment it’s like all their effort goes elsewhere.

(Interview 33, p. 13)

The complexity of struggles and tensions around racism and anti-racism suggested by this statement illustrates that universities are sites in which multiple racisms are engaged (Interview 37, pp. 20, 21). Though lacking evidence, she claimed that perhaps this could explain why there are so few Indigenous lecturers in tenured positions within university faculties, and why there is ‘racism within the curriculum content, the way in which Indigenous people are “othered” and stereotyped and talked about . . . there is racism within the residential schools . . . this place could be a target for a very substantial anti-racism strategy’. Hence as Cowlishaw (1997) argues, in the broader picture the struggle over racial inequality is ‘no longer about segregation and exclusion, as they were in the past’ but are about ideological conflicts wherein universities are one of those ‘public arenas and institutional’ sites in which issues and struggles over racial inequality ‘are now fought out’. For universities to be truly anti-racist in this setting, they need to not only look at overt
and explicit forms of racism, but also examine how their bureaucratic and legal processes act to control and regulate the Indigenous population (Cowlishaw 1997, p. 189).

Conclusion

Understandings of racism are complex and contradictory, ranging from catch-all perceptions used to explain every negative experience, through to various forms of violence and harassment. Universities which explicitly engaged in anti-racist teaching, while not able to guarantee an end to racism, take students beyond the disempowerment created when people are encouraged to see themselves as victims, giving them skills and knowledge to constructively engage this form of social injustice. Universities are also playing a useful role in trying to counteract efforts to incite racism between Indigenous students and overseas students, especially those from Asia and the Pacific.

Recommendation 15

That universities acknowledge racism as being entrenched within university processes and actively commit to an examination of their organisational structures and processes so as to identify and redress factors that reproduce institutional racism and exclude the cultural and sovereign positions of Indigenous peoples.

Recommended Practice

- Universities collaborate with relevant stakeholders, particularly Indigenous peoples, to develop a comprehensive anti-racism strategy which is inserviced within all areas of the university.

- Within the comprehensive anti-racism strategy, universities commit to policies of exclusion and dismissal in event of intentionally racist acts, which infringe relevant state and Commonwealth legislation and university policies.
### Table 8  Category—Anti-racism

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SP = University Strategic Plan  
EP = Equity Plan  
IP = University Indigenous Education Plan  
* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

**Sub-categories**

1. Existence of anti-racism policies.
2. Programs to promote anti-racist activities.
3. Procedures to respond to racist acts.
This chapter covers evaluation and monitoring which includes management of the university itself as well as management by faculties, departments and Indigenous academic/support centres. Some evaluation is also undertaken by Indigenous community groups and members. Evaluative activities undertaken within universities involve assessing a range of diverse domains in which Indigenous peoples have interest or are involved. Monitoring and evaluation occurs in relation to strategic plans, policies, objectives, Indigenous programs, curriculum content and courses for Indigenous people, course delivery modes, student assessment, administrative processes, staffing development programs, academic work, Indigenous committee structure, student resourcing, Indigenous special entry and support programs, student monitoring, student recruitment and enrolment processes, decision-making processes with the university, personnel and financial administrative matters, line management, and inclusion of equity in senior management processes and others.

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training report (1996, p. x) suggests that ‘good equity practice’ exists when ‘there is regular monitoring and evaluation of the university’s progress towards the goals set in the plan’.

In recent years Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affair’s funding policies in relation to support of Indigenous students in higher education have varied following reports such as those by Ham (1996) and Higher Education Council (1997). Under the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Policy (AESIP), universities were funded on the basis of projected enrolments of Indigenous students for an upcoming year with adjustments to be made in the following year. This funding was independent of student outcomes. In 1996, following the Ham report, universities were funded 80 per cent of their allocation on the basis of student load, and a further 20 per cent on the basis of outcomes. This was accompanied by the introduction of student performance indicators in relation to access, participation, retention and success based on Martin (1994), which were used to assess individual effectiveness of universities in providing for the needs of Indigenous students. The current (1997) round of discussions between the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and universities in relation to the support of students in the target equity groups indicates that the Department is considering a far greater inclusion of Indigenous need and support into mainstream domains through its funding and policy processes. One issue which needs to be addressed here is how far does inclusion of Indigenous students into the mainstream militate against their expectations and achievements. Furthermore, the processes for accountability and quality outcomes for these students require thoughtful consideration.
Table 9 on page 145 illustrates eight aspects of the monitoring and evaluation processes within universities in relation to the participation and success of Indigenous students. Those domains of university actions where the evaluative and monitoring ‘gaze’ is concentrated most heavily relate to issues of individual student performance and success through the use of the Martin Performance Indicators as an annual reporting requirement to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Other areas where there is significant monitoring and evaluation activity relate to the resourcing of Indigenous students through the Indigenous academic/support centres and the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum. The implementation of these reviews is most heavily focused within the Indigenous academic/support centres which are subject to regular scrutiny in terms of the achievement and progress of individual Indigenous students, and the progress of Indigenous students as a ‘target’ group. While there is the annual report requirement to the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs on Indigenous students’ access, participation, success and retention, none of the university strategic plans actually indicates a response to these outcomes in relation to the programs and initiatives which are being introduced.

Only one university strategic plan indicates the need to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of its strategic planning processes. Four university strategic plans include the review of courses and programs to assess Indigenous content. For the most part these reviews are conducted by the Indigenous academic/support centre not by the particular faculty.

While research is a key activity of universities, no university’s strategic planning processes indicated a procedure to monitor and review the appropriateness and effectiveness of their research activities in the Indigenous arena. In addition, while Indigenous employment and career development programs have been introduced as part of university strategic plans, only two universities (in their equity plans) identified the processes by which to review and evaluate these strategies.

**Policy Overview**

University strategic plans and equity plans listed a range of good practices in relation to the evaluation and monitoring of policies, procedures and student outcomes.

**Curriculum Content and Course Design**

- Some universities review and evaluate Aboriginal programs at school, faculty, and department levels.
Universities review courses offered within Indigenous ‘academic/support units’. Most of the various reviews reported are carried out by the Indigenous ‘academic/support units’ themselves.

Non-Indigenous faculties undertake reviews of their programs and units involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies.

In addition to curriculum reviews, some universities evaluate teaching and assessment practices, including the nature and purposes of assessment.

One faculty in its evaluation and review process seeks to ensure that the Indigenous academic/support centre is included where relevant so as to review the Australian Indigenous studies strand.

Another university reviewed a faculty’s Aboriginal paralegal program, as well as reviewed and evaluated its Aboriginal health program.

One university conducted a major review of student enrolment trends over three years. It will continue to implement, monitor and review the university code of good practice.

One university has a course and unit development and review process that monitors the effectiveness of strategies to develop curricula which demonstrate respect for cultural diversity.

One university has a monitoring strategy which involves the evaluation by both staff and students of all workshops, courses, and programs. The purpose of this evaluation is to address outcomes for students with special needs such as Aboriginal students and other equity groups nominated by the Department of the Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. It is undertaken using focus groups, questionnaires to both staff and students, peer review, and feedback from community and student groups.

Administrative Processes

In one university, the administrative review initiatives include, among others, the introduction by an Indigenous academic/support centre of a procedure for monitoring student progress which is intended to include a more formal process of course assessment and review.

In one university the administrative responsibility for the development of the Aboriginal Education Strategy is such that each program has its own monitoring and evaluation procedures.

There is an initiative by one university for the introduction of phased responsibility for equity programs into mainstream activities.

Staffing and Staffing Development

Initiatives by one Indigenous academic/support centre include:

- the use of inservice programs in the evaluation of teaching;
- a review of administrative structures with the purpose of rationalising the disposition of academic staff;
the development of a process for benchmarking the quality of academic work in teaching and research; and
− professional development strategies targeting assessment practice, among other areas.

Teaching Methodology

• One university has established a set of assessment criteria for the review of course content and lecturing strategies.
• One university is evaluating all courses within an Aboriginal studies program so it can adjust the teaching and learning methods in response to student comments.

Research Methods and Research Ethics

• One university’s review and evaluation initiatives include a number of research projects being undertaken to investigate reasons for relatively low Indigenous retention and completion rates.
• One university is to research the demand for social work courses within the Indigenous community in their catchment area. This project is also intended to encourage Indigenous students to consider a career in social work and forge appropriate links with the Indigenous community.
• One university’s Indigenous research program plays a major role in ensuring that the university’s goals and objectives of promoting access and equity for Aboriginal people are achieved.
• One Indigenous academic/support centre is developing a process for benchmarking the quality of academic teaching and research.
• One Indigenous academic/support centre is undertaking a detailed research project to analyse patterns of enrolment, progress and performance of both current and former students. This project involves the establishment of a database and the collection of qualitative information on students’ experiences.

Community Development

• One university’s quality improvement strategies have concentrated on the review and evaluation of specific subjects by specialist Aboriginal community groups. This includes a review of the nature and purposes of assessment and, in consultation with the flexible learning centre, consideration of improvements to distance teaching strategies.

Monitoring Students
Some universities have undertaken initiatives to determine the number of Aboriginal students accepted in programs including investigating Aboriginal student retention and completion rates and to examine the use of a cohort analysis program to assist in the effective tracking of particular groups of students through their study careers.

**Reporting, Appraising and Reviewing**

- In one university the main forum for reporting is the Aboriginal Education Policy Committee which receives regular reports on program development, implementation and student results.
- One university is appraising relations between faculties, the needs of the university’s learning development centre and the Indigenous academic/support centre.
- One university in its review of its committee structure consulted with the directors of the Indigenous programs and Indigenous community representatives.

**Dilemmas of Monitoring and Evaluation**

The monitoring and evaluation of university policies face tensions over the lack of resources, as well as concerns about its purpose and opposition by some, to overly close surveillance.

According to a student services manager, historically there has been little accountability and feedback in universities in terms of student attrition and subject evaluations. This has meant that there are no formal ways of a person saying: ‘Am I doing a good job?’. She believes that through greater accountability and evaluation based on performance indicators, there could be greater opportunity for critical analysis of what is being done ‘to cater for the major difference’ (Interview 11, p. 10). While subject evaluation is fairly common, there are questions about whose interests are served by subject evaluation in universities. One non-Indigenous lecturer suggests ‘that’s more to make lecturers feel really good about themselves and to be able to put that on their CV, I think, rather than really looking at pedagogical effectiveness’ (Interview 37, p. 24).

A non-Indigenous lecturer said that for the most part monitoring and evaluation processes are *ad hoc*, personal and focused on individual students: ‘Ah this person has come through this system, they are confident, they can articulate, they can speak comfortably and accurately, and whatever else’ (Interview 13, p. 43). However, some academics believed that as some of the Indigenous students have come in via alternative entry then the onus is on the university administration to provide the wherewithal for these students to succeed:

I suppose what the academics are really saying is that the university administration needs to consider putting more funding into the areas that
might support students with lower TERs and lower academic ability. So they're looking at more funding for areas like the academic skills centre.

(Interview 29, p. 24)

In one university, this issue was addressed through developing the teaching skills of academics by addressing generic issues relating to the fundamentals of good teaching rather than the ‘specific issue of how you might work with students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background’ (Interview 38, p. 5). Action learning projects are being implemented to help staff with ‘fundamental’ or ‘generic’ educational issues, concepts and strategies so that:

They then have the power to address issues [that] are specific to particular groups . . . empower staff to find their own solutions to particular problems. So if there are particular needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders that in a sense if they understand the basic concepts . . . they’ll be able to identify issues and then address them by referring back to fundamental educational principles and applying those.

(Interview 38, p. 8)

However, Indigenous academic staff in one university believe that as lecturers are unsure of what to do with Indigenous students they relegate responsibility for the learning outcomes of these students to the Indigenous academic/support centre and adopt an attitude of: ‘Well we don’t know what to do with them so we’ll just treat them like everyone else. If they fail too bad’ (Interview 12, p. 13). Some Indigenous academics who had studied through the institution in which they were now employed commented that some lecturers made it clear to first year students that this was the year for a ‘weeding out’. It was their belief that the weeding out of Indigenous students could be part of this process (Interview 12, p. 14).

Indigenous academic staff in one institution suggested that a ‘reward system’ was needed ‘where you could give certain lecturers accreditation for the work they put in helping Indigenous people through the course’ (Interview 12, p. 14). Such a system could be based on making Indigenous students’ success and attrition rates more transparent, and having faculties be more accountable for student success with ‘encouragements’ being put in place for those faculties which did not show significant improvement in Indigenous students’ success: ‘It would be really great if each academic could report to the VC once a year after graduation on the attrition of the Indigenous students and tell him why’ (Interview 17, p. 28).

However, another Indigenous academic said that it could be necessary to penalise these faculties or nothing would happen: ‘You’re going to have to penalise them to get them to do something, because that’s the only . . . you get a fine because you’re speeding. You get $100 coming out of your pocket and you soon start slowing down for a while anyway’ (Interview 12, pp. 31–32). Currently, it is the
Indigenous academic/support centre that is financially penalised by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs because of student attrition:

I mean if we don’t get it right, we lose money, but when it comes to looking at the University as a whole . . . our students are placed in mainstream and they just become students in the mainstream, unless they have a really good lecturer. But in terms of whether they fail or how successfully they are doing, there’s no monitoring of that at all.

(Interview 2, p. 16)

A senior academic manager, in a university which is introducing greater accountability at the faculty level for Indigenous student success and attrition, agrees:

I honestly think that each department should be made accountable and have to show why so many Indigenous students are not passing, because if there’s a higher number of Indigenous students that are dropping out than non-Indigenous students, then there’s something wrong.

(Interview 15, p. 41)

With an increase in strategic planning in one university, there is an expectation on deans that the overall university equity goals in relation to Indigenous students will be incorporated into the faculty plans and that deans will have responsibility for monitoring student success. A senior academic administrator believes that this approach could:

Make it easier to meet our reporting obligations to DEETYA for things like AESIP funding and the higher education Aboriginal support funding . . . We’ve got to document it so that it’s transparent and people know how it was arrived at . . . That’s essentially the way we work at this university with strategic planning. There’s a big emphasis on the processes.

(Interview 59, p. 10)

However, a difficulty in this regard is having a reliable database of students and access to accurate student records (Interview 28, p. 31). Another difficulty is the issue of communication and the dissemination of information. An equity administrator suggests the need to set up focus groups within the university which will ‘come up with some key action areas which set the time frames and goals and targets and then see how we measure within the time frame’ (Interview 28, p. 30). But for others it is a matter of: ‘You know, there is a too hard basket, and I think there are some things that are in that too hard basket for too long’ (Interview 5, p. 14). A senior manager does not believe that this attitude is ‘based on a lack of want or willingness, it’s lack of knowledge as to how to go about it’ (Interview 5, p. 14). This is tied into inadequate processes of communication between senior university management and the Indigenous community, and the stake which
Indigenous people would like to have in the university (Interview 5, p. 14). Instead it becomes the responsibility of the Indigenous academic/support centre to advise lecturers of Indigenous students in their programs (Interview 2, p. 16).

However, according to one administrator, the success of such an integrated approach to monitoring and accountability is closely tied to the critical mass of Indigenous students within a particular faculty. He believes that throughout the university, the Indigenous attrition rate is very low in some faculties because of student numbers, and hence ‘why would a faculty go and seek out one or two students in their faculty just because they’re Indigenous’ (Interview 17, p. 11). Consequently, the spotlight returns to the Indigenous academic/support centre to maintain the Indigenous student numbers as they are the part of the university most directly affected by high student attrition, not the faculties (Interview 17, p. 12).

Critical to this issue of greater accountability appears to be Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs reporting requirements. An equity administrator argues that where the Department’s requirements are seen to be ‘only for reporting, and not as a feedback and some sort of assessment as to how we are going and what are the impact[s] . . . then it’s a useless exercise’ (Interview 28, p. 5). She argues that if the reporting process was an evaluative process which impacted on funding then it could make some difference (Interview 28, p. 5). She sees a need for ‘DEETYA or the government organisations . . . to keep the issues alive and contribute to their social change’ (Interview 28, p. 5). By contrast, she cites the example of the affirmative action reporting process, whereby there is a need for regular reporting and where there is an expectation that the institution will deliver on achieving the equitable employment of women (Interview 28, p. 30).

In another institution, all programs which cater to Indigenous students are reviewed and reaccredited every three to five years. This is a legacy from the days when part of the institution was a college of advanced education. Initially, the university was very uncomfortable about this process but, with the changes in the Department’s requirements, the university has ‘begun to recognise the importance of this in terms of our credibility to the world out there and the market and the funding’ (Interview 27, p. 39). This review process includes market research which involves:

Aboriginal people in articulating what they see as important and then looking back at what we can provide whether it meets what they think is important . . . then we need to provide documentation to this committee that’s looking at this stuff to show that we have met the demands of the employer, the community needs, the objections which were made in terms of the previous evaluations of the program and so on. And then it goes to the program development committee and from there to the curriculum development committee of the academic board for verification.

(Interview 27, p. 39)
**Monitoring Research Outcomes**

While universities may establish policies, protocols and guidelines for conducting research in Indigenous communities, monitoring their implementation is difficult because they do not have the resources to do so (Interview 22, p. 12). A senior research administrator believes that while the intention is to monitor the outcomes of the actual research itself, this is problematic. He said:

> It is easier to look at those things that are relatively easy to monitor . . . things like publication numbers, postgraduate student completions, success in achieving external grants and also to an extent the indicators of degree of collaboration of the stakeholder groups.

(Interview 55, p. 8)

However, the effectiveness of research outcomes for stakeholder groups is much more difficult to monitor: 'It's less easy to objectively monitor the degree of collaboration with stakeholder groups in research and also the degree to which research results are adopted by the stakeholder groups’ (Interview 55, p. 8). He believes that in a context of limited research funding, it is far easier for researchers to meet Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs obligations to report on 'publications and grants and postgraduate completions . . . But we are not under an obligation to report on the things that are less easy to monitor like the outcome of research results’ (Interview 55, p. 8).

**Conclusion**

Overall, the current level of monitoring and evaluation used by universities regarding the implementation of aspects of their strategic plans concerned with Indigenous needs points to possibilities for significant new undertakings. However, investment in appropriate forms of monitoring and evaluation is proving especially difficult due to increasing financial constraints. Likewise, the uncertainties surrounding continuing employment for staff in universities has reinforced concerns about the implementation of new surveillance and control mechanisms. Nevertheless, the identification of these important issues provide universities with a focus for renewed debate and further action.

**Recommendation 16**

That universities indicate within their strategic plans their own institutional responsibilities to monitor, evaluate and respond to Indigenous access, participation, retention and success.
Recommendation 17

That the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs consult with Indigenous stakeholders to review the appropriateness of the Martin (1994) performance indicators so that they reflect the achievement of relevant and different outcomes for Indigenous peoples.
Table 9  Category—Monitoring and Evaluation

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SP = University Strategic Plan
EP = Equity Plan
IP = University Indigenous Education Plan

* Indigenous enrolment as a percentage of total university enrolment (1995)

**Sub-categories**

1. Policy implementation.
2. Curriculum design, course delivery and teaching methodology.
3. Administrative processes.
4. Research policies and practices.
5. External collaboration and university–community relations.
6. Student resourcing.
7. Indigenous employment and staff development.
8. Student progress.
Indigenous Visions for Universities

Most Australian universities have some form of Indigenous operational and student support facility, whether it be identified as a unit, centre, school or faculty. Each facility has its own identity and diversity of functions and responsibilities. The current status and operations of these facilities within universities is related to a diversity of factors which include the systemic positioning of Indigenous peoples within higher education; the impact of broader governmental policies relating to equity and Indigenous higher education and their translation into government funding; the historical evolution of the facility within a particular university; the personalities who have been involved in the making and growth of the facilities; the availability of funding, both external and internal; the socio-economic and geographical context of the university; the types of programs and student clientele which the university serves; and in many instances the good-will of diverse parties, both internal and external to the university.

These facilities have been evolving for over two decades in some institutions, and those that are older are usually located in universities which evolved from a college of advanced education. They continue to reflect the achievements which have been gained by Indigenous peoples and others within a context of changing government policies and societal issues in relation to Indigenous higher education. The recent Higher Education Council (1997) report on Indigenous support funding and Ham (1996) describe the wide variety of positions these organisations occupy within universities. However, despite the diversity in the status and operation of these facilities within universities, they share a vision for Indigenous higher education within universities and broader society. The Higher Education Council (1997, p. 17) report describes the Indigenous centres within universities thus:

A voice for Indigenous Australian staff and students and a focus for cultural and political change within the institution. Units are seen . . . to be key focal points within the institutions for the advocacy of Indigenous Australian values and the development of a presence in the institution.

It is this aspect of these centres as a ‘voice’ for Indigenous visions for universities that is the focus for this chapter. It is based on interviews with senior Indigenous academics nationally, in terms of their responses to the research data reported in Chapters 3 to 11. It is recognised that some aspects of their comments are influenced by and dependent upon the status of the facility of which they are part in their own institutions. Other issues reflect a cultural and political positioning within a broader context: questions are raised concerning the roles and functions of universities today and the positions held by Indigenous peoples within this environment. In providing space for commentary by Indigenous educational leaders on the research data, this report draws upon some of the ‘untapped energy
and intellectual capital’ within these centres, that give ‘voice to the knowledge and aspirations of Indigenous Australians’ so as to ‘enhance the quality and profile of all university activities’ (Higher Education Council 1997, p. xiii).

One senior Indigenous academic, conscious of the ‘distance travelled’ by many of these centres, expressed concern that any discussion of inclusivity of Indigenous matters and issues within universities acknowledges that, while there may be a series of gaps yet to be addressed in terms of inclusion of Indigenous interests, universities are continually subject to change and interruption. This disruption includes those challenges from Indigenous peoples (Interview 70, pp. 11–12). In this regard, he argues, Indigenous peoples in Australia have made some very significant advances over the last two decades. He and others stated that these changes, which have led to Indigenous issues being given a more prominent status in some institutions, reflect the energies and commitment of a number of people over that time. Critical to this growth is the profiling of Indigenous knowledges and issues within university structures, as well as a greater engagement and collaboration between Indigenous academics and university leaders as they work together in partnership.

Universities as Sites of Indigenous Knowledge Production

The core work of universities is the production and consumption of knowledges. Knowledge about Australian Indigenous peoples and cultures has long played a part in universities through disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, sociology, history and the sciences. To a large extent this knowledge has objectified Indigenous peoples and positioned them as ‘other’. However, Indigenous peoples are now better positioned within universities to take on a key role in redefining existing knowledges and legitimising Indigenous knowledges.

Central to this academic work of profiling Indigenous knowledges have been the efforts of the Indigenous academic/support centres to establish their own credibility within higher education, moving beyond being ‘temporary, and vulnerable to soft funding’. However, many of these centres face pressures on resources and staffing as they find themselves in a situation where they attempt ‘to do everything so in a way they are almost mini-universities in themselves’ (Interview 71, p. 6). This is one contributing factor to high staff turn-over or burn-out. These centres are also struggling to assert their authority and legitimacy as academic centres, as they attempt to move away from being merely support centres for Indigenous students (Interview 72, p. 5; Interview 73, p. 7). However, a major issue for Indigenous centre staff working to support Indigenous students, is the difficulty in balancing the demand and desire for staff to be involved in teaching, student support, research and community service, while maintaining an ‘open door’ policy to ensure accessibility to students. One senior Indigenous administrator acknowledges that while there ‘is a distinct line between teaching and support . . . all of our staff are expected to not only teach but to give lots of support to students’ (Interview 75, p. 18). In view of this tension between providing adequate and appropriate student support and engaging in the politics of institutional change, some large centres have employed some staff primarily for student support. The alternative is: ‘I just
see a danger of our jobs in some areas becoming too huge and people not giving
enough time to the support of students’ (Interview 74, p. 17).

Some centres have become teaching and research facilities offering programs
across all levels, both within the specific Indigenous programs area and elsewhere
in the university. A senior academic within an institution which has opted for this
latter approach is committed to establishing and protecting Indigenous
knowledges:

So the notion is, it’s the projection of Aboriginal knowledge, not the setting
up and hiving off of enclaves and I think that’s what is really reflected in this
whole attitude towards Aboriginal centres. We should be in universities not
because we want that presence there, but because we want to take the whole
cultural ethos and involve it within all human knowledge which is what
universities should be the repositories of, not just to say we want our rightful
place.

(Interview 70, p. 17)

Within this debate over the retention of aspects of cultural knowledge by and with
Indigenous peoples, one Indigenous academic said:

It’s a dilemma for us as a group of people to want to hang on to so many of
our cultural ties that might inhibit or restrict our movement into modernity
. . . We need to start talking about how we can be reflective about those sort
of cultural attitudes that we see important within modernity and still need to
maintain, whatever they are, and somehow or other encourage them, if we
can identify them. But there are some that I can see will go. I mean the whole
art world is a classic example of it. Aboriginal art has made the transition for
us. It’s done with acrylic on canvas as far as a lot of stuff is concerned and
yet what is on the canvas, done in an entirely different contextual
arrangement, is Aboriginal thinking, world view, cosmology, whatever, it’s
present.

(Interview 70, p.34)

Indigenous peoples are now speaking of their propriety right to Indigenous
knowledges within universities. Indigenous academics are working for the
inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within universities in ‘an Aboriginal way’
(Interview 70, p. 27). While there is contention as to what constitutes an
‘Aboriginal way’, it may be regarded as a way which enables Indigenous
knowledges to be encoded outside of those existing disciplinary frameworks that
have appropriated Indigenous knowledges up until the present. A senior academic
spoke of the need for cultural protocols to determine what can be taught and by
whom:

In Aboriginal cosmology, there are only some things that we are prepared to
share within the university and this of course is decided by our advisory
committees which are all Aboriginal.
Indigenous advisory committees act to vet material and ensure its cultural credibility and reliability. The teaching of Indigenous knowledges raises questions concerning what should be taught, who should teach it, how it should be taught, and who should be able to access what knowledges. A senior Indigenous academic identified a range of uncertainties surrounding these issues:

What are the rules and what are the bottom lines of the sorts of things that are appropriate knowledge . . .? And because we haven’t written those sorts of rules yet, even if the institution, and in our case, all people in the institution, come to us all the time for advice about what they could and should do, it puts us in a difficult position because we still haven’t written the rule book yet about how everybody should work.

Some of the issues still to be effectively addressed in terms of ‘protecting the integrity of the Aboriginal knowledge in courses’ include finding appropriately qualified and skilled resource personnel; encoding the knowledge in appropriate ways and critiquing what is Indigenous knowledge; determining what will be public and private knowledge; resourcing the knowledges outside of the extant documentation; and, finally, putting in place processes which ensure the legitimacy of the Indigenous knowledges within an Indigenous framework (Interview 70, pp. 26–27).

The inclusion of Indigenous knowledges within universities is finding expression in efforts to ‘Indigenise’ the curriculum across faculties. Where this has already occurred, the Indigenous academic/support centres have been involved in working collaboratively with faculties. Critical to the success of these efforts has been support by senior faculty management. Indigenous academics are working to ensure the validity and reliability of Indigenous knowledges when taught across the curriculum and see themselves as integral to any efforts in this regard. One such academic sees the situation thus:

The line we’re taking at [name of university] is that we have a core group of half a dozen people whose job is to create opportunities for other Aboriginal people out there in the different faculties and schools; and to provide for those people and the faculties and schools, a specialist consultative teaching protocol and ethics advice structure based on having a small core of highly expert people to do that.
In another university, an Indigenous academic described a project to Indigenise the curriculum by the Indigenous academic/support centre with the support of a university senior management planning committee. A project officer was engaged to consult with staff in various faculties, exploring how Indigenous content might be included within their subject areas. This was then followed by cross-cultural awareness workshops with academic staff within a particular school. Academic staff were asked to consider how they might include Indigenous perspectives in their subjects. This strategy is used across all schools regardless of discipline area. The project has resulted in a number of significant outcomes including the introduction of a core unit in a welfare degree program for all students, as well as the production of a staff development package. Recognising the difficulty of addressing all areas of knowledge in the short term, the project has identified those aspects of the university’s curriculum which most directly impact on Indigenous peoples, including mining, psychology, social work and teaching as priority areas for development (Interview 75).

In another university, in an attempt to shift the responsibility for inclusion of Indigenous knowledges from the support centres to other areas of the university, a senior Indigenous academic used ‘money as the carrot’ for achieving this change. Given the resource constraints, additional funding attracted interest from cash-strapped faculties to undertake projects to include Indigenous knowledges within their courses. Faculties were invited to make submissions for funding to undertake this work. The Indigenous academic/support centre distributed project funds to faculties for specific purpose projects. The Indigenous academic described the situation thus:

They had to improve Indigenous access, participation and completion of courses. $80,000 was available; and we have eight faculties. Half of the $80,000 was evenly distributed so that faculties received $5,000 each; and the remaining $40,000 was allocated on the basis of student numbers. Faculties thus received varying amounts. They were requested to submit a proposal outlining how this money would be spent and how they would match it from their faculties . . . and they came up with a number of interesting projects. Importantly, the scheme encourages faculty ownership and management of these projects.

(Interview 71, pp. 17–18)

The Indigenous Advisory Committee within the university is currently monitoring the projects to assess their effectiveness.

In another university the Indigenous academic/support centre commissioned an audit to map the inclusion of Indigenous matters across all areas of the curriculum (Interview 17, p. 3). Even though this led to a very good report, it did not prove a useful strategy for effecting change as little resulted across the university from the report’s recommendations. There is considerable uncertainty as to why there has been such a limited response: perhaps it is because university staff find the recommendations unhelpful, or they are limited in suggesting where to go next (Interview 17, p. 3).
In their efforts to increase Indigenous knowledges and student participation within the curriculum, some Indigenous centres are looking towards Indigenous-specific programs to address the direct needs of Indigenous students. In the course design and delivery of these programs, they have attempted to respond to the issues of effective Indigenous student participation. A senior administrator suggests that critical factors in the development of appropriate curriculum for Indigenous students include:

- locating instruction where it is most accessible to the community;
- making the assessment processes appropriate to the identification of skills which the student can demonstrate
  - e.g. competency-based assessment;
- enabling students to remain in their communities while they are undertaking studies; and
- resourcing students in ways which meet individual needs (Interview 75).

Much of the course development in this centre has directly focused on Indigenous specific programs which address community needs. Many of these courses are offered in an articulated mode from advanced diploma to masters levels, whereby students can receive accreditation at all levels of achievement. The courses are marketed as part of the university’s offerings and Indigenous students graduate along with their non-Indigenous peers in the university’s graduation ceremony. In addition, the centre develops Aboriginal studies programs for inclusion within other courses across the university.

Interestingly, where universities have implemented specific courses for Indigenous students which are offered in appropriate modes, the concentration of Indigenous enrolment within those universities is often in these specific programs. Often these courses are delivered around ‘a block’ attendance mode so that students are only required to be on campus for a small number of weeks per semester. An Indigenous academic involved in the delivery of these programs saw that this mode of course delivery not only had value for the individual but was also important from a community perspective, particularly for people in rural areas:

Those sorts of courses maintain a resource within country centres because people aren’t forced to relocate and move away, break their family ties, that sort of thing. So what it is doing by maintaining those human resource they are creating leaders again . . . I think the whole community, whether it be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, benefits by maintaining human resources within their own country towns.

(Interview 74, p. 25)

Critical, however, to Indigenous academics’ efforts to enhance university environments through the teaching of Indigenous knowledges, is the need for Indigenous academics and education centres to critique their position in relation to how they represent their community in speaking as a community voice (Interview 75, p. 22). At all times, the ownership of Indigenous knowledges, the right to
select teaching material and the authority for teaching such knowledges within universities is seen to belong to the Indigenous communities. The following example of curriculum design illustrates this process:

For each one of our subjects we always have an advisory committee, and except for those experts that we need in curriculum design or market survey, the bulk of those people come from our communities. And they advise us exactly in how to proceed. We’re teaching an Aboriginal language as a three year degree program. That is totally controlled by the owners of that language. They vet everything that’s developed. They cost us a package to do that too because it means the lecturers have got to go out into the bush and sit down and talk with the people about it. We have to put a trained linguist in and we couldn’t find an Aboriginal so there’s a non-Indigenous person sitting in there, but two major lecturers have come from that language group. But that ownership business is contained in that way administratively.

(Interview 70, p. 22)

The energies generated by the development of new knowledges and the profiling of Indigenous peoples within universities have also been evidenced within the field of research. For many years Indigenous peoples have been under the gaze of non-Indigenous research within a tradition which has objectified Indigenous peoples. One Indigenous researcher believes that this ground is shifting so that there is now a greater awareness of the issues of ethics and protocols, and the need to involve and actively consult with Indigenous peoples in research. There have been a variety of guides for implementing research with Indigenous peoples over some years (e.g. guidelines from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Institute and the National Health and Medical Research Council). Universities are now starting to develop their own guidelines for research with Indigenous peoples, and incorporating these guidelines into university research policies. One university has developed its own Indigenous ethical guidelines based on a research project which asked Indigenous organisations involved in research how they dealt with ethical and protocol issues. These guidelines are now part of the university’s ethical clearance processes. All research to do with Indigenous peoples is vetted and scrutinised by an Indigenous researcher. This is intended to ensure that the appropriate approvals to conduct the research have been sought and that the research has the support of those Indigenous communities within which it is to take place (Interview 76, pp. 6–7).

Another strategy is that all research concerning Indigenous peoples should be discussed in the early stages of its development with the Indigenous academic/support centre. Through this consultation process, Indigenous peoples are able to advise on the appropriateness of the design and provide guidance in the formulation and implementation of the study (Interview 75, p. 7). However, in the context of the diverse pressures which are being placed on Indigenous academic/support centres, it appears that while it is desirable to have this consultation with those proposing to undertake Indigenous research, further pressure is placed on a small group of people. Centre management have to prioritise resources, including time, so that they can meet increasing demands as
universities become more responsive to the inclusion of Indigenous peoples and issues within their business. People within Indigenous centres now have to represent Indigenous interests across a wide area of the university. The challenge, as seen by one senior Indigenous manager, is not to become ‘a professional committee member’ (Interview 75, p. 20).

Universities are changing their perspective on what is regarded as ‘real research’ and who are to be regarded as ‘real’ researchers. Much Indigenous research is undertaken to address the needs of Indigenous peoples. The ground is shifting and Indigenous research is no longer marginalised:

We have thrown the pebble into the pond so it’s not confined to us anymore. The fact that we are getting reactions even though they are often negative means that we have made an impact. We might not have made the change we want, but we’ve made the people come up with the opposing argument if you like, which gives us the next hurdle to take, and that is to get rid of the argument or meet them half-way.

(Interview 76, p. 13)

The Indigenous commitment is to undertake research which has a value to the Indigenous community:

One of the things that we want this university to recognise is that often in this role, a lot of the things are crisis management and you don't have the opportunity to do as much teaching and research, and when you do the research it's often in articles or journals that are important for Aboriginal people but not what they see as recognised journals or refereed journals so they're not recognised or valued the same as those. The university needs to acknowledge that it’s valuable for our type of work.

(Interview 72, p. 18)

Another Indigenous researcher is positive about the future of Indigenous research and suggests that:

There’s a whole lot of things that are going to keep happening. There are different universities and different groups dealing with these things in different ways depending on where they are and who they are working with. I think that’s one of the important messages, there is not just one answer.

(Interview 76, p. 17)
Partnerships for a New Vision

This air of optimism in relation to the shifts in curriculum and research also influences views about the range of activities and relationships being developed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within universities, particularly in the area of senior management and leadership.

Some Indigenous academic/support centres have become a school or faculty within universities, with most having a direct line to the senior management of their universities. Some centres are still located within a faculty or another administrative centre such as student services or registry. The location of these centres is crucial to their role in the institution and their accessibility to key ‘players’. Senior Indigenous academics spoke of the importance of their relationships with senior university staff and the willingness of those persons to act as advocates for Indigenous matters both internally and externally to the institution. Central to this advocacy from senior university management are issues of goodwill and personal trust. Two senior Indigenous managers explained these issues in the following terms:

We rely on the goodwill of individuals and it doesn’t matter whether the policy is there or not, it’s those that take up the policy and run with it and it’s people who have some empathy, some understanding, some goodwill I suppose is the best word for it.

(Interview 71, p. 25)

I find a lot of these things around the place on goodwill if you have good relationships with people. There's nothing written down about well this is the way it is.

(Interview 72)

Goodwill and trust are qualities which, in these times of university restructuring and corporatisation, can be put under severe stress. Some academics spoke of the need to document worthwhile practices which currently operate by virtue of trust and goodwill, and to have them ratified as official policies within the structural elements of the institution. One senior academic, who operates within a supportive university environment which is keen to Indigenise a range of courses, recognises the vulnerability of some of the ways in which Indigenous peoples have worked with institutions in the past. To a large degree they have been quarantined against broader organisational and funding changes:

It has emerged for me that some of the key questions about structure, agreements and rights of Aboriginal managers . . . do need to be perhaps put up front in some sort of way. Most of us tend to deal with agreements that have occurred over time that have been dependent upon individuals . . . that changes of course . . . you then have to go digging back, the new person has to go racing back to find a reference from seven or eight years ago in the council minutes to use and you roll it up and beat them over the head with it. Those sorts of things. So I think from a political point of view I can see that
even though at our university we’ve just got by accident now a great arrangement and top support and everything like that, I’ve been thinking very much that I don’t actually have a piece of paper that is printed that everybody knows about that says this is the way of the world . . . So that’s one thing that struck me from a political point of view.

(Interview 70, p. 35)

This support of senior management has been critical to the success of a number of the endeavours, including course approvals, funding, public support and administrative changes. However, critical to these relationships appear to be Indigenous managers’ capacity to undertake extensive networking among senior management. This is not an easy task, as some managers being both Indigenous and female, challenge both issues of gender and race dimensions in their relationships with other senior staff, who are usually white males. One senior Indigenous academic spoke of her efforts to manage ‘upwards’, whereby she engages senior managers in the university to represent selected Indigenous matters knowing that those matters will receive a far greater response coming from that person than from herself (Interview 71, p. 13). An example she gave was of a statement to the media by a senior university executive about reconciliation and the ‘Bringing Them Home’ report (Interview 71, p. 6). Another example was the recent bestowal of an honorary doctorate upon an Aboriginal woman which was an initiative of the university itself.

In another university, a senior Indigenous academic said she received support from the university executive in a struggle with a faculty to establish an Indigenous program. Prior to this, the faculty kept coming up with objections to the approval of an Indigenous course (Interview 72, p. 10). The Indigenous members of the course development committee, who believed that the faculty was deliberately preventing the course from being approved, approached the university executive to ‘advocate’ for them to the faculty.

The recognition and integration of Indigenous issues into the overall operation of the university is a key issue for Indigenous managers. However, these centres, while striving to establish their own independence and self-management, also want to have power and impact within the university. This issue is being addressed through integrated strategic planning processes, the establishment of joint planning committees, Indigenous representation on high level university committees, and regular contact between centres and senior management. This contrasts with the ‘hands-off’ management of universities trying to create a space for self-management in these centres (Interview 17). In some instances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education strategies are enmeshed within the university strategic plan, giving credibility to the Indigenous interests (Interview 74).
The style of leadership of Indigenous managers’ is also another factor in the recognition of Indigenous matters in the university. Some people expressed concern about the ‘high profile personality’ phenomenon and its effectiveness in times of rapid change in universities. In one university, an Indigenous academic described her style of upwards management as follows:

I believe that if you work upwards and laterally then the things that are underneath tend to fall into place . . . and if you can get your things written into the strategic plan of the total university, that’s wonderful, but you’ve got to then try and get it into the implementation phase, and everybody knows that probably in all institutions faculties are laws unto themselves.

(Interview 71, p. 9)

Another university has established an Indigenous planning committee which consists of senior university managers. This committee endorses and supports the Indigenous education plan which is developed within the centre. Within the same university the strategic planning process has the support of the vice chancellor and other senior managers, thereby ensuring that Indigenous issues are addressed in all areas, such as teaching and learning, research and planning. The strong support the university’s leadership has for indigenous issues is being frustrated by changing curriculum demands, funding cutbacks and under-resourcing. However, an Indigenous manager commented: ‘we can always see the weaknesses except when we benchmark to other universities and then we realise we are well off’ (Interview 75, p. 12). The situation for Indigenous people in this university has improved markedly. A senior Indigenous academic within this institution recalls:

I think there was a time when I could distinctly remember where there wasn’t any respect given for Aboriginal stakeholders in the university. We were shoved in poor accommodation. I can remember really fighting just to get the Aboriginal colours on our letterhead, because it was against university policy. It only had green and yellow and you weren’t allowed to divert from that. So we have come a long way if you look back. Just implicit racism and lack of understanding. When you look back at those days to where we are now, we’ve come a million miles. We don’t ask if we can fly the flag now. We just fly it.

(Interview 75, p. 23)

Where a committee is being established to advocate for Indigenous interests, it is critical that its members from the university be senior managers or academics capable of making decisions. However, simultaneously, university leaders are expected to support Indigenous issues, as well as recognise that it is inappropriate for them to act on their own in this regard. A senior Indigenous academic said ‘I would be very upset if I saw a day when the university undertook issues in the Indigenous domain without our involvement. I’d be pretty horrified actually’ (Interview 75, p. 22).
Indigenous interviewees repeatedly spoke optimistically of their capacity to impact on university decision-making and to bring about changes. For one academic this was seen in terms of reconciliation and social justice:

Partnerships absolutely, that’s what reconciliation is all about in my view. There’s been enough friends made and I think . . . we need to take the stuff out of equity absolutely and to give it the next leg of its journey which is that partnership arrangement. While I think there has been an acknowledgment of equity issues, now we need to, while the friends have been made, get on with the business now of the social justice issues.

(Interview 73, p. 14)
Conclusion

The focus of this research project was universities themselves and not the Indigenous students or Indigenous education support units as such.

The project identified a range of ‘good practices’ as represented in university strategic plans or similar policies.

There have been some important initiatives in the institutional management of universities, ranging from collaboration with Indigenous communities; enhancing Indigenous representation in university policy making and the development of strategies for the employment of Indigenous people. With respect to curriculum and teaching universities have legitimised the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum; sanctioned the provision of specific programs for Indigenous students; developed programs responsive to Indigenous community needs, and given impetus to collaborative course development involving Indigenous participation. Equity considerations in relation to the administration and organisational structure of universities are being addressed. Universities need to build on the good practices they have developed with respect to researching Indigenous issues, such as collaboration with Indigenous peoples; furthering their ethical commitment to addressing Indigenous needs, interests and perspectives, and enhancing the capacity of Indigenous peoples themselves to engage in research. Among the worthwhile initiatives regarding student resourcing that need to be sustained is the move towards judging the success of student support in terms of the responsiveness of universities to Indigenous students’ needs and interests. This study also identified a range of useful ideas concerning university–community relations which could be tested more widely, including the development of collaborative research projects; cultural awareness activities targeted at non-Indigenous communities and the publication of Indigenous knowledge. Finally, universities have shown that they can play quite a useful role in teaching about anti-racism in Australia and in counteracting efforts to incite racism.

This project also explored with Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of university communities what they saw as key dilemmas for equity issues in universities. From their evidence it can be seen that universities need to advance the constructive debates concerning university leaders acting as advocates for Indigenous interests as well as increasing Indigenous representation within faculties. Likewise, universities should review the processes for accelerating the Indigenisation of their curricula and teaching practices; review their existing knowledge base to redress the marginalisation or negative stereotyping of Indigenous peoples, and engage Indigenous people in the production of really useful knowledge. Similarly, more needs to be done to address equity considerations in relation to the administration and organisational structure of universities. Further consideration and debate is needed with regard to the role of non-Indigenous researchers in producing knowledge about Indigenous and non-
Indigenous relations. Research ethics policies and procedures need to be reviewed in the light of Indigenous positions statements on these matters, and more Indigenous researchers need to be trained especially through postgraduate studies.

Universities need to be aware that Indigenous students, staff and communities are experiencing considerable negative impact as a result of university restructuring and their changing financial plight.

Unfortunately, the university policies examined in this study showed little concern for sustaining and advancing Australia’s anti-racist heritage, or for engaging the complex and contradictory issues surrounding racism. The considerable interest and expertise among Indigenous and non-Indigenous university staff should be engaged to address these issues. Universities need to review the practices they are currently using to monitor and evaluate equity policies and procedures, particularly as these relate to Indigenous students.

This study noted evidence of a range of external imperatives that are now posing challenges to the working life of universities. These range from changes in the political and economic operations of universities, through efforts to reconstitute their knowledge base for transnational endeavours, to increasing their responsiveness to a culturally and linguistically diverse student population. It is under just these conditions that Indigenous peoples expect universities to demonstrate, in both policy and practice, their commitment to democratising their culture through deepening and extending social justice initiatives throughout their operations.

Universities have opened their doors to Indigenous Australians, and not always merely in response to the policy requirements imposed on them by external agencies. However, some of the evidence from this study indicates that universities are ambivalent players in enhancing Aboriginal self-determination, cultural freedom and protection from sources of social vulnerability. There is strong support among Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders within universities for Indigenous efforts to claim universities as a space for strengthening their identity, cultural values and socio-economic standing. Universities are urged to take the initiative to make the necessary changes from within their own political and economic resources.
### Appendix 1

**University Documents Consulted for Purposes of Mapping Inclusion of Indigenous Issues into University Policy Documents**

| University A | University Strategic Plan, 1995–2004  
|              | Institutional Equity Plan, 1996–98 triennium  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1996–98 |
| University B | University Strategic Plan, 1996–2000  
|              | Institutional Equity Plan, 1996–98 triennium  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1996–98 |
| University C | University Strategic Plan (final draft)  
|              | Institutional Equity Plan, 1996–98 triennium  
|              | Aboriginal Education Strategies, 1996–98 triennium |
| University D | University Strategic Plan  
|              | Equity Plan, 1996–98 triennium  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1996–98 |
| University E | Strategic Plan, 1994–2000  
|              | Corporate Planning, 1996–2000  
|              | Equity Plan  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Plan, 1996–1998 |
| University F | University Strategic Plan  
|              | Equity Plan, 1996–1998  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1996–98 |
| University G | University Strategic Plan  
|              | Equity Plan, 1996–1998 triennium  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Plan, 1996–98 |
| University H | University Strategic Plan  
|              | Equity Plan, 1996–1998  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1996–98 |
| University I | University Strategic Plan  
|              | Equity Plan, 1996–1998  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, 1997–2000 |
| University J | University Strategic Plan, 1995  
|              | Equity Plan  
|              | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy |
University K  The University Plan, 1994–2000  
   Equity Plan  
   Aboriginal Education Strategy

University L  University Strategic Plan  
   Equity Plan, 1996–98 Triennium  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategic Plan, 1996–1998

University M  Strategic Plan, 1996–2000  
   Equity Plan, 1996–2000  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy

University N  1996 Strategic Plan  
   Equity Plan  

University O  University Plan, 1994–2004  
   Equity Plan  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy

University P  University Strategic Plan, 1996  
   Equity Plan, 1996–1998  

University Q  University Strategic Plan  
   Equity Plan, 1996–1998  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy

University R  University Strategic Plan  
   Equity Plan, 1996–1998 Triennium  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategic Plan

University S  University Strategic Plan  
   Equity Plan  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy

University T  University Strategic Plan, 1994–1998  
   Equity Plan  
   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy
Appendix 2

Format for Invitation to Participate in Interviews

Please find enclosed documentation concerning a project being undertaken by staff from Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland.

The project is a national investigation into the systemic inclusion of equity issues and practices into Australian universities, with particular reference to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students (see Information Statement attached). This project is funded through the DEETYA Evaluations and Investigations Program.

Your university has been selected as a case study institution for the project as it has established through its practices, a reputation for success in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands higher education. In addition it reflects a rural geographical location, it is of a medium size, it has a history of distance education provision, it has had a lengthy history of provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands courses, and it serves a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students and communities.

The research team would like to visit this university from [dates when the research team will be visiting]. During the visit we hope to meet with a wide range of staff, students and community people. Data for the case study will be gathered via semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The purpose of these interviews and the focus groups will be to investigate the ways in which the university is seen by key stakeholders as having developed worthwhile inclusive practices.

Those with whom we would like to conduct discussion groups or interviews are senior university administrative staff, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands tertiary students, staff of the Equity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Units, members of relevant University committees, and selected academics who are responsible for the major subjects in which these students are enrolled, e.g. Arts, Education and Business.

Thus as [position of the person you are inviting to be interviewed, e.g. Dean of the Faculty of Arts] we are writing to seek your support for this project by participating in an interview with the project team. It is anticipated that the interview will take up to one hour.

As part of the preparations for the project, we have received CQU Human Research Ethics Committee’s clearance for the research. Moreover, in accordance with the principles and procedures for this project neither the university nor its staff members or students will be identified by name, unless otherwise negotiated and approved in writing by the person/s concerned.
If you are willing to participate in the case study will you please contact [research assistant’s name] on [phone/fax number] to advise an appropriate time, day and place for the interview.
Appendix 3

Interview Consent Form

Ethical Clearance No: 96/11-348

1. An Information Sheet has been provided to me. It provides details about the nature and purpose of the study. I also understand that I can obtain a copy of the detailed research proposal should I desire. Yes/No

2. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time during the course of the study. Yes/No

3. I realise that what I say in the interview is not intended to be confidential. Yes/No

4. I agree to clearly indicate to the researcher any matters about which I wish confidentiality to be respected. Yes/No

5. I want my anonymity to be maintained. Yes/No

6. I am aware that I may ask to examine the interview transcripts to ensure they are an accurate reflection of my statements. Yes/No

7. I wish to examine a transcript of my interview. Yes/No

8. I wish to receive feedback on the research by:

   • Being notified of the location of any published study. Yes/No

   • Receiving a summary of the published study. Yes/No

   • Being placed on a waiting list for perusal of a copy of the project report. Yes/No

   • Personal contact from the researcher. Yes/No

Signature of Interviewee: .......................................................... Date: ......................

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

Address: .....................................................................................

..............................................................................................
Information Statement

‘Equity Issues: Every University’s Concern, Whose Business?’

An investigation into the systemic incorporation of equity issues and practices into Australian tertiary institutions, with particular reference to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students

The purpose of this project is, in the light of current access and equity policies, to conduct a national investigation into the nature and extent of systemic practices of inclusion as they impact on the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people in tertiary education.

Access and entry to higher education award courses by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people over the period 1991–1995 has increased. However, a crucial question which arises here is, to what are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students gaining access? While universities are broadening their entry base, it is also important to know what they are doing to implement appropriate practices to meet the needs of the increasing diversity of students now accessing tertiary education.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people, ‘going to university’ is for purposes of community self-determination and empowerment, and as such their motivation for accessing higher education is itself not an individual but a community aspiration. Consequently there is a determination by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students to maintain cultural identity and values, and thus engage in resistance to assimilationist practices wherever these may arise.

The MCEETYA Draft Final Report (1995, p. 4) states that

ensuring equitable access to education and training services requires more than merely gaining entry to mainstream programs. Indigenous Australians require an education which enables them to achieve their cultural and academic potential in Indigenous terms as well as in mainstream academic and technological skills. Providing an education which does not strengthen the identity and cultural values of Indigenous peoples is assimilationist.

As such the purpose of this project is to address the following key issues in relation to the inclusivity of diversity within higher education:

• What good practices are represented in university strategic plans (or similar policies) in this regard?

• What dilemmas do Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of university communities see as key dilemmas?
• How do Indigenous leaders in universities regard these practices and dilemmas?

This project is being funded by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs under its Evaluations and Investigations Program. The project team may be contacted via:

Ms Lynette Anderson/Ms Clare Stehbens  
Capricornia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre  
Central Queensland University  
Rockhampton Mail Centre  Qld  4702  

Ph:    (079) 309 250  
Fax:   (079) 309 692
Appendix 5

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

1. **Culture and Value**
   How are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands interests reflected in this university’s culture and values?

2. **Institutional Management**
   In what ways do the university’s leaders demonstrate a responsiveness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests?

3. **Curriculum and Teaching**
   In what ways are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples interests and perspectives legitimated in the university’s transmission, production and dissemination of knowledge?

4. **Administration and Organisational Structure**
   How does the university’s organisational and administrative structure demonstrate its responsiveness to Indigenous people’s participation in this institution?

5. **Research and Development**
   How inclusive are the university’s research and development policies and procedures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests and participation?

6. **Student Resourcing**
   How does the university demonstrate a commitment to achieving equality of access and equality of outcomes in its resourcing of Indigenous students?

7. **University–Community Relations and Liaison**
   How does the university’s policies and practices demonstrate its understanding of Indigenous communities and their needs and interests, and in what ways does it advocate for and support these interests and needs?

8. **Anti-Racism**
Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and community regard this university as a non-racist environment?

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

What processes are there within the university for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its policies and programs to improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples who participate in it?
Appendix 6

Letter to Invite Participation in Focus Group

Dear

You are invited to participate in a focus group as part of a research project being undertaken by the Capricornia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Education Centre from Central Queensland University in Rockhampton, Queensland.

The research project, whose working title is ‘Equity Issues: Every University’s Concern, Whose Business?’, is an investigation into systemic inclusion of equity issues into Australian universities, with particular reference to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students. The project is a national project and your university has been chosen as one of the case study universities. The project has received the approval of the CQU Human Research Ethics Panel and all persons participating in the project will be covered by principles and procedures which have been outlined to the panel.

The focus group will require approximately one and a half hours of your time and will explore issues relating to the good practices being pursued by your university to respond to the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students and their communities.

[This next paragraph explained the date of the focus group, where it will be held and at what time.]

If you are able to participate in the focus group please contact me [describes how the person can be contacted].

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely
Focus Groups

The focus groups variously included:

• members of the advisory committee;
• staff of the university;
• Indigenous students, and
• staff from the Indigenous academic/support centre

(Please note: comments in brackets for the use of the facilitator)

1. **Do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities regard this university as a welcoming place? How do you know this?**
   (This question also explored the response of the university to issues of anti-racism.)

2. **In what ways does the university recognise and respond to the diverse cultural positions and obligations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands students?**
   (This question explored issues of students personal needs and cultural obligations, as well as issues of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices, and issues of cultural representation within the university.)

3. **How effectively and in what ways does the university recognise and collaborate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities in meeting their needs?**
   (This question also explored the university’s understanding of the community, and its expectations, and the processes and protocols for communication between the university and the community, for instance with regard to research and training.)

4. **Does the university take a leading role in advocating for and supporting the interests of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people in the broader community?**
   (This question included exploration of the issues that the Indigenous community considers important in relation to the broader community, what they saw as their relationship with the broader community, avenues where the opinions of the broader community about Indigenous peoples are represented, and the university’s demonstrated willingness to advocate for Indigenous communities, and its response to competing interests in the community.)
## Overview of Those Interviews and Focus Groups Conducted for the Research

### Participants

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* Not all numbers between 1 and 79 were allocated an interview
Location of Interviews

Interviews 1 to 17 were conducted in university case study A.

Interviews 21 to 39 were conducted in university case study B.

Interviews 40 to 64 were conducted in university case study C.

Interviews 70 to 79 were conducted as data validation interviews following analysis of the policy and dilemma analysis materials from the case study universities.

Classification of Interviewees’ Position

**Senior administrator** is defined as anyone who is in the position of vice chancellor, deputy vice chancellor, pro vice chancellor, registrar or bursar.

**Administrator** is defined as anyone who operates primarily in the role of a section manager or administrator.

**Senior academic** is defined as anyone who is in the position of dean of a faculty or head of a school.

**Academic** is defined as anyone who is in a lecturing, tutoring, teaching, academic support or research position within the university.

**Student** is defined as someone who is officially enrolled within the university.

**Community member** is defined as someone who participates and has a relationship with the university through an advisory or liaison function.


Kemmis, S. 1994, *Control and Crisis in University Teacher Education*, The inaugural Dr Harry Penney Lecture, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 11 April.


Proceedings of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference, Hervey Bay, Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, pp. 46–58.


