OFFICE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING
SEED GRANT

The ‘university place’: how and why place influences the engagement and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students

E-booklet

Associate Professor Maria M. Raciti
Associate Professor Jennifer Carter
Dr Kathryn Gilbey

With Adjunct Professor David Hollinsworth

University of the Sunshine Coast (Lead Institution)
University of Southern Queensland

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This E-booklet was prepared by the research team of:

- Associate Professor Maria M. Raciti (Project Leader), University of the Sunshine Coast
- Associate Professor Jennifer Carter, University of the Sunshine Coast
- Dr Kathryn Gilbey, University of Southern Queensland

With the assistance of:

- Adjunct Professor David Hollinsworth, University of the Sunshine Coast

With advice from:

- Associate Professor Gary Thomas, Queensland University of Technology

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- Raciti M, Carter J, Gilbey K & Hollinsworth D 2016, 'Country and the campus: conceptualising Aboriginal students' university experience', International Social Marketing Conference, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, 25–26 September.

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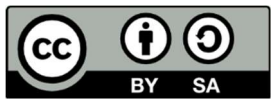

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Student Information and Learning Branch
Higher Education Group
Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 9880
Location code C50MA7
CANBERRA ACT 2601

<learningandteaching@education.gov.au>

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Dedication

The project team dedicate all project outputs to our dear colleague, the late Dr Michael Gardiner.

Michael was a member of the original project team and we would like to acknowledge his contribution to the project and wish for this project to be part of his legacy.

Acknowledgements

The project team acknowledge and thank the Gubbi Gubbi/Kabi Kabi peoples of the Sunshine Coast and the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of the Toowoomba area as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waterways being the locations where data for this project was collected. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We wish to thank all staff and students who participated in the project.

Importantly, we thank Associate Professor Gary Thomas for his generosity and invaluable guidance.

Imagine a culturally secure ‘university place’ where Indigenous students can *be*, *become* and *belong* and where accumulated positive experiences engender engagement, optimising students’ persistence and shaping their higher education outcomes and impact.

It was this imagining that was the impetus for this project.

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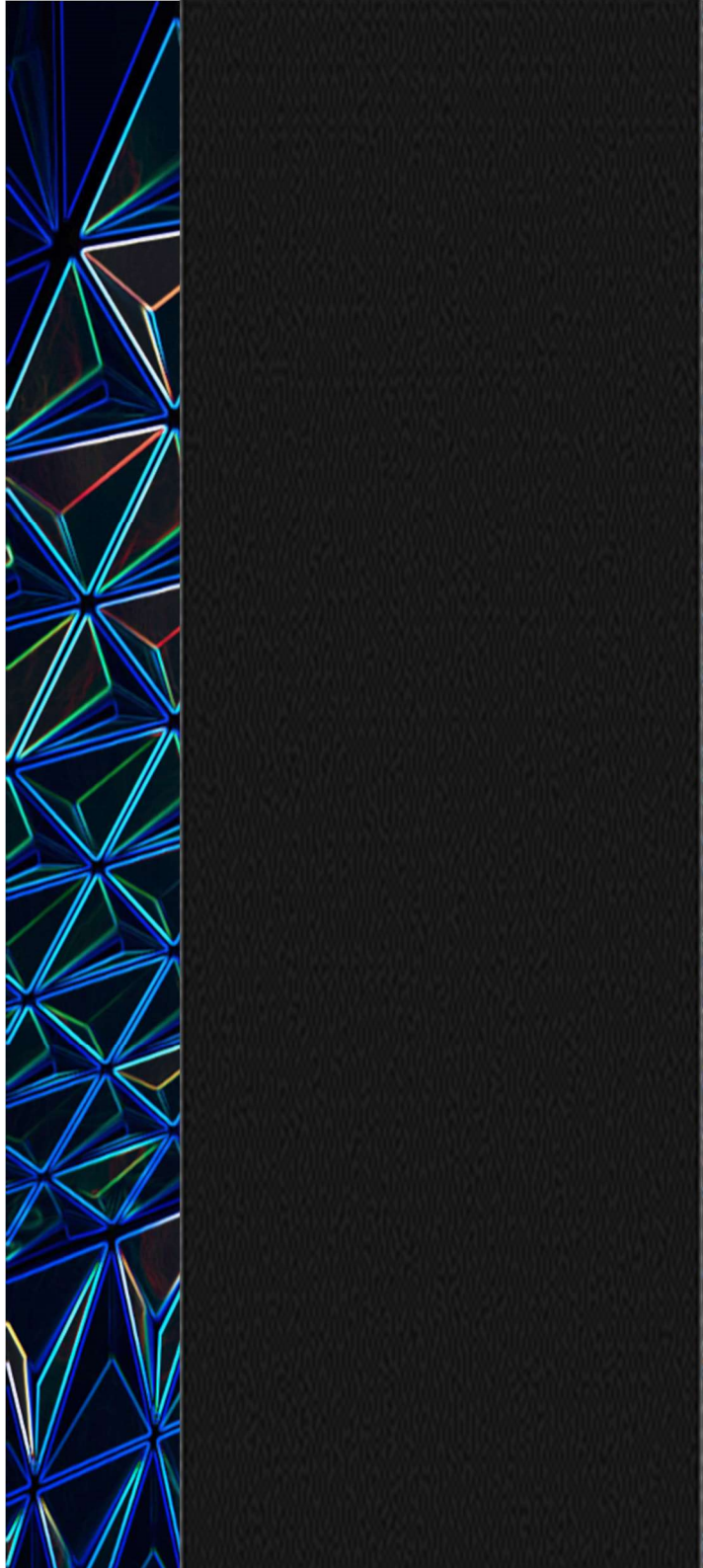


Q. Why did you choose to come to university?

A. ‘I never really had the opportunity when I was younger, mum was of the mindset that you left in Year 10 … I didn’t get very good grades in Year 10. If you went to TAFE and did hairdressing [for example], you could have children and go part time. So, you could still be there for your husband … have the hot meal on the table at six o'clock and be there to raise your kids. It wasn’t till we moved here 10 years ago, that I saw the university from the school, when the little one started Prep. I looked across and I saw the university and thought “no, no I'll never ...”.

So, I'm not first in family by any means, but I did look at it and it was pretty daunting, because I hadn’t really had a lot of experience, I didn't really know anyone who’d been to university—none of my friends, they were school friends, they all left in Year 10 same as me.

Then I thought I'll just walk in to the place and I noticed that there was an [Indigenous Services Division], so I went down … and I said I'm thinking about studying … and they said “welcome aboard”.

I felt [like] “wow, I don’t know if I can do this”, and they said “we’ve got support here, of course you can do it”. Okay, all right, I'll give it a go. They said there’s [a bridging program], it doesn’t cost you anything if you fail, but at least it’ll give you an idea of what’s to come. I thought okay, well I'm not financially out of pocket or anything like that, why not.

So, I'm here [as a PhD student], seven years later.’

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project aim and context

This seed project aimed to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander[1] university student engagement and retention. Specifically, this project attended to the notion of the 'university place' and provides information and two tools that universities can use to help optimise the persistence and educational outcomes of Indigenous Australians. This project has produced meaningful, useful and novel contributions that are relevant to the sector.

Contextually, this project is aligned with the Australian Governments' priority area of improving access to and outcomes of higher education for Indigenous peoples as a part of the larger 'closing the gap' agenda. The recent Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report (Commonwealth of Australia 2017) indicated that efforts directed at understanding factors that optimise persistence at university is vital to improving Indigenous student completions and reaping the benefits that are central to increasing Indigenous Australians' quality-of-life. Growing Indigenous university student enrolments in recent times, although still significantly below parity, have been stymied by high drop-out rates that are twice that of non-Indigenous students (Edwards & McMillan 2015). Yet, for those Indigenous Australians who complete university the benefits are considerable in that they typically find work faster and have a higher commencing salary than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Turnbull 2017). Creating 'university places' that optimise the persistence of Indigenous Australians attends to this national agenda and was the focus of this seed project.

Much research has focused upon access to university for Indigenous students (e.g. Wilks & Wilson 2014), however little is known of the factors that support persistence. Several recurrent factors are identified as enablers of persistence for Indigenous students, such as whole-of-university efforts to enhance the university environment (see Behrendt et al. 2012). Indeed, one of the three strategies in the recently released Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020 focuses upon 'improving the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' (Universities Australia 2017, p. 11). What is missing from the current stock of knowledge is a nuanced understanding of these factors, the interplay between them, and the consequences of them for Indigenous Australians in today's increasingly complex 'university places'.

Central to this seed project is the notion of *place*. Place is broadly defined as 'space + meaning' (Harrison & Dourish 1996). People's identity is intertwined with places and, as such, people and places are knitted together (Sack 1997).

People and places are knitted together
(Sack 1997)

[1] Henceforth the terms Indigenous and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples will be used interchangeably. No disrespect is intended.

Even so, the relationship between people's identity and place is often overlooked (Malpas 1999). Place is defined as the experiential setting that consists of a specific location and the cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social activities that occur within (Relph 1976). People alter their identity in ways that help them navigate places (Baumeiser & Muraven 1996). Thus, the 'university place' comprises cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social activities in a locale that transpire across students' university experience and with which their identity is intertwined.

People give some places special significance. Known as 'third places', these special places are beyond home and work, where people can *be* their authentic self, *become* who they want and feel a sense of *belonging* (Rosenbaum 2006, 2009). University campuses have third place potential and as being, becoming and belonging are pillars of peoples' quality-of-life (Quality of Life Research Unit n.d.), the influence of the 'university place' is far-reaching.

For many Indigenous students, cultural safety and cultural security are key 'university place' factors (Bin-Sallik 2003). Cultural awareness precedes cultural safety in an organisation and cultural safety then advances to cultural security when understandings are directly linked to activities (Coffin 2007). That is, cultural security is a shift from 'knowing' to 'doing' across an entire organisation (Lumby & Farrelly 2009). This requires a disruption to status quo thinking and praxis and a conscious dislodging of the bystander effect, whereby individuals assume others are responsible or have already taken action (Darley & Latane 1968).

Ultimately, imagine a culturally secure 'university place' where Indigenous students can *be*, *become* and *belong* and where accumulated positive experiences engender engagement, optimising students' persistence and shaping their higher education outcomes and impact. It was this imagining that was the impetus for this project. Furthermore, the complexity of 'university places' and the inadequacies of past research presented the opportunity for this project to seed new thinking—one that includes students' identities (as a student, as Indigenous, as an emerging professional) and an ecological worldview featuring continuous co-creation.

Project approach

For this project, a case study approach comprised of two case universities and employed mixed methods that were organised into three stages. Stage 1 included the collation of relevant baseline data from the participating universities (e.g. Indigenous student enrolment numbers), and beginning-project presentations. Stage 2 comprised interviews and focus groups from which qualitative data was collected from: a) undergraduate and postgraduate Indigenous university students; b) academic staff; and c) relevant administrative, professional and technical (APT) staff at the participating universities. From this qualitative data, a framework was developed and was discussed at mid-project presentations and disseminated in the mid-project report. Finally, in Stage 3 quantitative data was collected via surveys of: a) undergraduate and postgraduate Indigenous students; and b) academic teaching staff at the participating universities. Stage 3 served to evolve the framework and develop the two project tools. End-project presentations, workshops, publications and this e-booklet served to widely disseminate the findings.

Intentionally disrupt status quo thinking and praxis regarding Indigenous students and the factors that enhance their persistence.

Key findings, project tools and central recommendation

The findings of this seed project resulted in two tools—The iPlace New Thinking Prompts and The iPlace Ecology.[2] Both tools are scalable, portable and non-prescriptive. The two tools are designed to seed re-thinking and new thinking about 'university place' praxis and they may be adapted either in part or holistically to assist with strategic imperatives or 'closing the gap' agendas of universities across the sector.

The central recommendation is that universities intentionally disrupt their status quo thinking and praxis regarding Indigenous students and the factors that enhance their persistence. 'University places' are a projection of the maturity of the Indigenous agenda of an institution and are an intersection of Indigenous peoples' social identities (as a student, as Indigenous, as an emerging professional). The experiences within its bounds define Indigenous studenthood and shape its impacts.

[2] The term 'iPlace' was coined for this project and features in the title of the two project tools to convey that the 'university place' strengthens, shapes and creates the intersecting and multi-faceted social identities of Indigenous students.

KEY FINDINGS

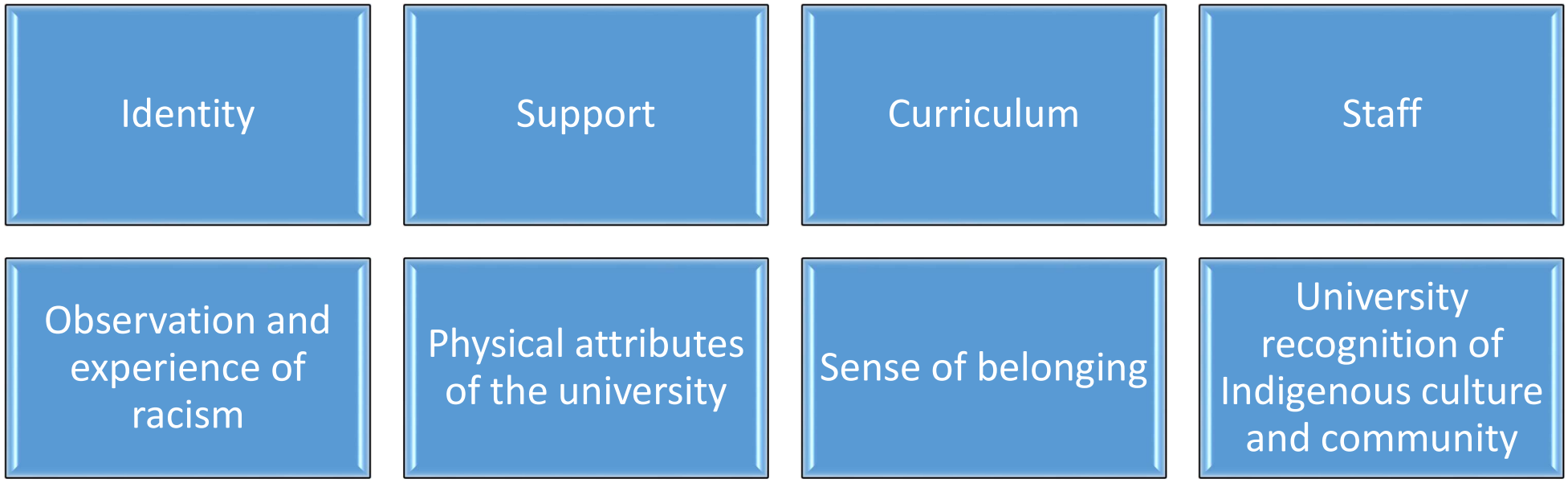
Stage 1: Baseline data

Baseline data was collected from the participating institutions. A higher-level perspective of the baseline data revealed the influence that the maturity of the Indigenous agenda has on university praxis.

Stage 2: Qualitative study

The qualitative study was exploratory in nature, employing focus groups and interviews to garner insights from Indigenous undergraduate and postgraduate students and interviews with staff (academic and APT).

Eight key themes were identified.



On being, becoming and belonging, Indigenous student participants voiced:

On being …

‘[Coming to university] has only strengthened who I knew I was’.

‘… growing up it was kind of shameful [to be Aboriginal]. Coming to uni I was like “what have I been doing?” I’ve been spending my life worrying—I kind of guess it’s grounded my identity. So, I’m glad I’ve come into this degree. I think actually the degree has helped me, meeting other Aboriginal people [at university]’.

‘I don’t know about who I want to be, but it has enabled me to find out what I want to do’.

On becoming …

‘It’s not the end, it’s the beginning’.

‘[I’m] moving onto the next chapter [in my life]’.

‘My daughter turned to me and she said “Mum, before you went to uni I would have never have heard that come out of your mouth … but now uni has given you the confidence and insight that you never had before”’.

On belonging …

‘So, this is like family for me’.

‘[At university, it’s] … just like a big family reunion, someone’s birthday party’.

‘… the only [Indigenous] community I’ve had is the university [Indigenous] community’.

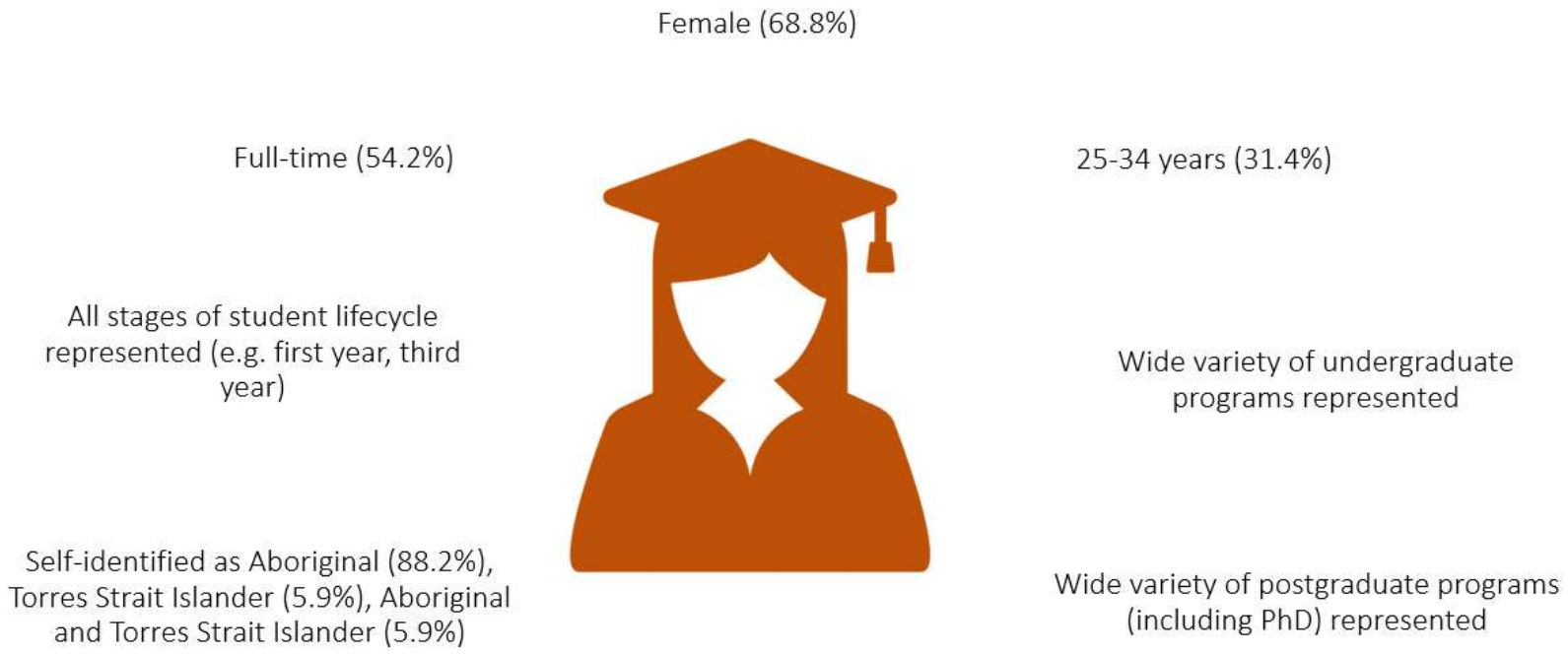
Stage 3: Quantitative study

The Stage 3 quantitative study comprised two surveys—a survey of Indigenous students and a survey of academic teaching staff. The surveys were administered in both on-line and paper-based formats with data collected concurrently at participating universities. Survey findings ensue.

Indigenous student survey

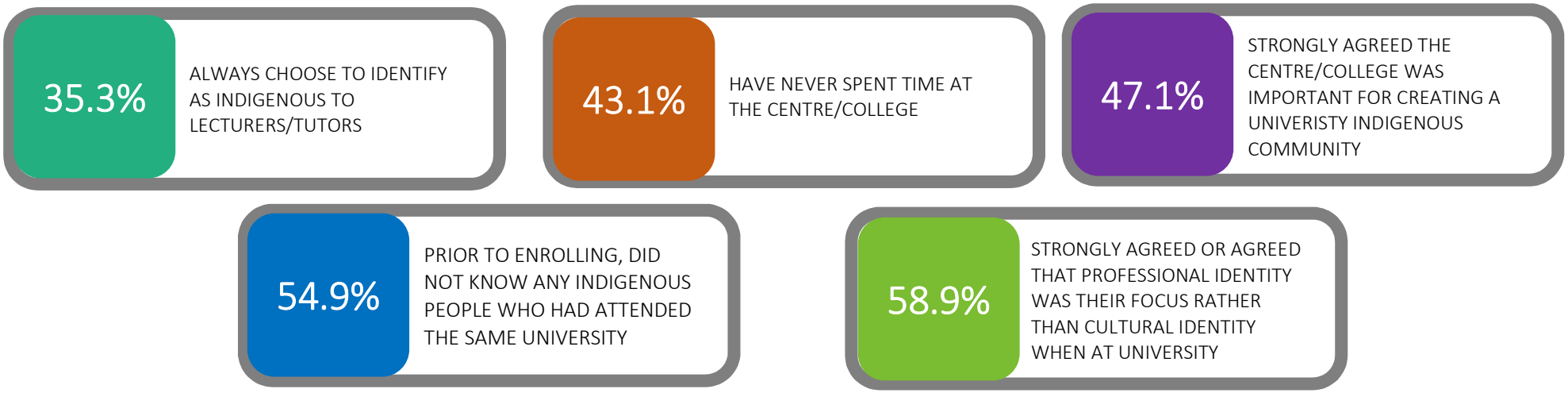
Respondent profile

Of the 51 useable Indigenous student survey responses, 49 were completed online and two were paper-based surveys. The profile of the respondents is depicted below.



A detailed summary of the univariate and multivariate analysis is provided in Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017) project final report.

In brief, the univariate analysis revealed many new insights, including the following.



In brief, the multivariate analysis revealed the following new insights.

Demographic differences

- Gender—Males felt lecturers/tutors were rarely 'well-meaning but inaccurate' in their discussion of Indigenous topics related to their classes more than females.
- Enrolment status—Part-time students were less likely to: a) feel other students were ignorant of Indigenous topics related to the class; b) be asked by other students to share their experiences and opinions as an Indigenous person in a class without forewarning; c) feel a sense of connection with other Indigenous students in the same classes as them.
- Self-reported heritage—More students of Torres Strait Islander heritage felt lecturers/tutors were rarely genuinely interested in discussing Indigenous topics in class than respondents of Aboriginal or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

In the following discussion, the notion of Indigenous studenthood is introduced representing Indigenous students' higher education journey. This notion is extended to 'Indigenous studenthood quality-of-life' (or 'quality-of-life while enrolled'). Both relate to measures and a scale created from data that assessed Indigenous students' perceptions that they can *be* their authentic self, *become* who they want and feel a sense of *belonging* at their university while on their higher education journey.

Influence of other students in classes on Indigenous studenthood quality-of-life

- Where other students in classes were ignorant of Indigenous peoples and culture, this had a negative impact on Indigenous students' quality-of-life while enrolled and vice versa.
- Where other students in classes were ignorant of Indigenous peoples and culture, this increased Indigenous students' need for interactions with other Indigenous peoples on campus (i.e. Indigenous students and Indigenous lecturers/tutors).

Where other students in classes were ignorant of Indigenous peoples and culture, this increased Indigenous students' need for interactions with other Indigenous peoples on campus.

The impact of Indigenous studenthood

- The higher an Indigenous students' quality-of-life while enrolled leads to increased satisfaction, engagement and lower dropping out intentions.
- A sense of connection with the university-based Indigenous community enhanced the relationship between Indigenous students' quality-of-life while enrolled and their satisfaction and engagement, and also lowered their dropping out intentions.
- The desire of Indigenous students to interact with more Indigenous lecturers/tutors and more Indigenous students was inversely related to identity self-categorisation (as a student, as Indigenous, as an emerging professional). This suggests that those Indigenous students who indicated that their professional identity was a focus to a greater extent than their cultural identity when at university had a lesser desire for interaction with Indigenous lecturers/tutors or Indigenous student.
- Where Indigenous students felt their lecturer/tutors were highly knowledgeable about Indigenous topics discussed in class, this enhanced their satisfaction, learning about Indigenous content relevant to their professional aspirations, and engagement.

Academic teaching staff survey

Respondent profile

Of the 64 useable responses for the academic teaching staff survey, 44 were completed online and 20 paper-based. A profile of the teaching survey respondents follows.

Female (69.4%)

Teach 10+ classes and about 101-200 students (42.2%) per year at their current university

45-54 years (29.7%) or 55-64 years (29.7%)

From a wide variety of disciplines

Full-time employees (84.4%) teaching in an on-campus mode (60.3%)

Self-identified and self-described cultural background (optional) as 'Australian', 'Caucasian' or 'Anglo Saxon'

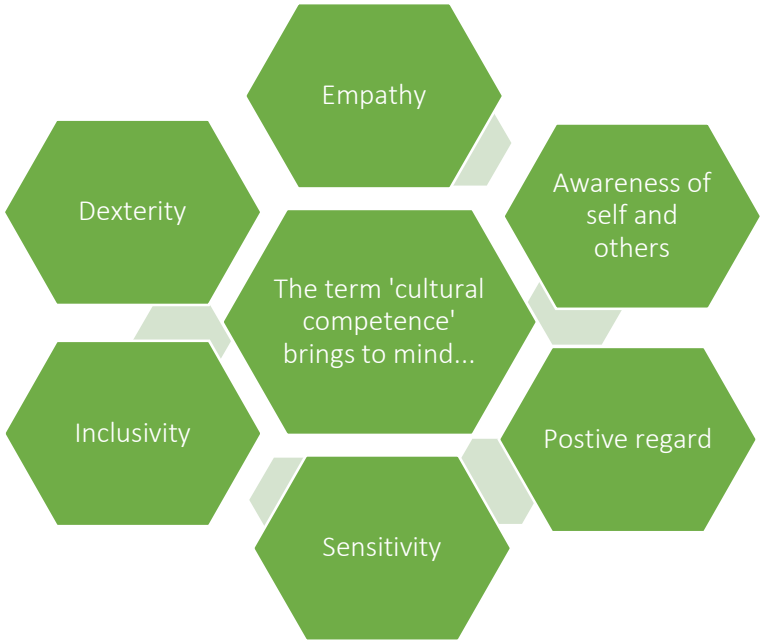
Taught at universities for 10+ years (50%)

A detailed summary of the univariate and multivariate analysis is provided in Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017) project final report.

In brief, the univariate and multivariate analysis revealed many new insights, including the following.

Importantly, academic teaching staff:

- Knew less about Torres Strait Islander people and their culture than Australian Aboriginal peoples and their culture.
- Were unfamiliar or not familiar at all with the term 'cultural safety'.
- Had concerns about teaching Indigenous topics relevant to their discipline.
- Had difficulty finding information and making this relevant to their discipline.
- Had concerns about a lack of guidance as to what information to incorporate and how to do this.
- Had concerns about being seen as patronising.
- Had concerns about misappropriating knowledge.
- Were fearful of student resistance and negative class discussions.
- Were fearful of getting information wrong and not knowing who to ask for assistance.
- Had limited personal and/or professional involvement with Indigenous peoples underpinning concerns and fear about teaching Indigenous topics relevant to their discipline, while staff who were confident had personal and/or professional involvement with Indigenous peoples.



17.2% REGARD THEMSELVES AS PROFICIENT OR EXPERT IN TEACHING INDIGENOUS TOPICS

53.0% VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT TEACHING CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSES

70.3% HAVE NOT UNDERTAKEN INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

Demographic differences

- Gender—
  Male academic teaching staff were less likely to see the preparation of teaching materials that embed Indigenous topics into their curriculum as part of their job.
- Employment status—
  Full time staff were more likely to feel that the university had not factored into their workload the preparation of teaching materials that embed Indigenous topics into their curriculum.
- Number of classes taught—
  Those who taught between four and six courses per year were less likely to feel they were trained to prepare materials that embed Indigenous topics into their classes.
- Number of students taught—
  Academic teaching staff who taught 301 or more students per year were most uncomfortable with the teaching of Indigenous topics relevant to their discipline.

Academic teaching staff who had taught longer and had been at their university longer were more likely to report that the preparation of materials that embed Indigenous topics in their curriculum has been factored into their workload.

Academic teaching staff who were clear as to the importance of Indigenous content in curriculum:

- Were more familiar with the term 'cultural safety' and enthusiastic about teaching culturally diverse classes, seeing it as positive, enjoyable and something they looked forward to.
- Regarded embedding Indigenous topics in their curriculum as part of their job.

Impact of teaching experience and length of time employed at current university:

The length of time teaching and the length of time employed at their current university moderated the relationship between: a) workload allocation to prepare materials to embed Indigenous content into their curriculum; and b) their perceptions that such was part of their teaching job, what they were trained to do and what they were resourced to do.

These findings suggest that those academic teaching staff who had taught longer and had been at their university longer were more likely to report that the preparation of materials that embed Indigenous topics in their curriculum has been factored into their workload.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECTOR

Indigenous students identify in different ways when at university

When engaging with their university Indigenous students may identify in three ways—seeing themselves as a student, as Indigenous, and/or as an emerging professional. Indigenous students will self-categorise, in that some will choose to identify as an emerging professional to a greater extent than as Indigenous; while others may choose to identify as a student in a program (e.g. 'I am a nursing student') in the first instance. Many Indigenous students chose not to disclose their Indigenous identity to academic teaching staff and/or other students (as is their right), and similarly most academic teaching staff will not ascertain a student's Indigenous identity from enrolment records. These issues can complicate initiatives aimed at supporting Indigenous students and the larger Indigenous agenda of universities, with protocols around self-disclosure in class and so forth worthy of discussion.

Recognise Indigenous diversity and avoid 'one size fits all' approaches

There is significant diversity among Indigenous students, Indigenous staff and Indigenous communities that is often unrecognised in university efforts. Similarly, the intersectional influence of other aspects of Indigenous students' identity such as their gender, age, class, religious beliefs, residence, sexuality and ability are often overlooked. In the absence of such recognition, strategic initiatives and policies within higher education can become generic ('one size fits all') and inflexible or perceived to be tokenistic or self-serving. This may lead to potential scepticism or disappointment by Indigenous students, staff and/or communities. University activities, including staff professional development, that embrace and celebrate Indigenous diversity and demonstrate that commitment at all levels has been sustained over time, will help university efforts be seen as genuine.

Assisting academic teaching staff to accept their shared responsibility

Academic and personal support for Indigenous students is a shared responsibility, with key accountability falling on academic teaching staff rather than the Indigenous Centre/College. Many non-Indigenous academic teaching staff (full-time, part-time and sessional) are uncertain, anxious or fearful about how best to embed Indigenous topics related to their discipline in their curriculum and how to best support and teach Indigenous students.

Regarding this issue, it is important to recognise that academic teaching staff fall into different categories including
a) culturally proficient, congenial-type academic teaching staff who are supportive, respectful and responsive;
b) academic teaching staff who are well-meaning but incorrect or inaccurate in their understandings of Indigenous Australians; and
c) uncongenial-type staff who lack cultural awareness, are unempathetic, inconsistent and ignorant of the impact they have on the experience of Indigenous students.

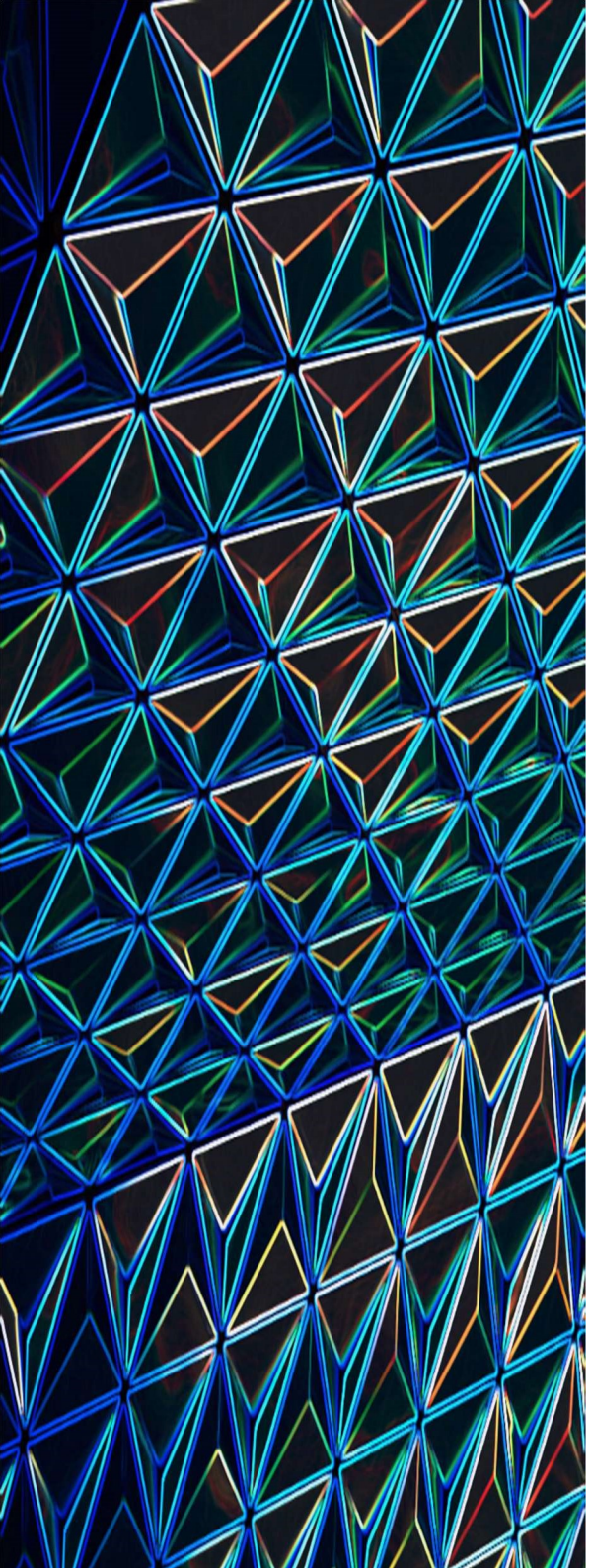
It should also be taken into account that academic teaching staff may have had limited personal experience and/or professional interaction with Indigenous Australians and this is often unspoken but will influence university initiatives. Developing targeted strategies and tactics for different types of staff, in addition to understanding academic teaching staff concerns (e.g. being seen as patronising or misappropriating knowledge and experiences without permission) are important precursors to effective and ongoing training and resourcing.

Enacting a holistic rather than mechanistic approach to institutional change

While not a new point, the need to enact a whole-of-university approach is one worth restating. Mechanistic or piecemeal attention to some aspects of the 'university place' may be appealing, however attending to recommendations concurrently and in a holistic manner is more likely to lead to optimal results for all stakeholders—Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Holistic approaches to embed Indigenous topics into the curriculum are crucial but need to occur within a coherent framework that incorporate human resources, research and research protocols, and community engagement in order to ensure the cultural safety, effectiveness and sustainability of curriculum development. In recognition of the scale of the challenges involved, especially at a systemic level, adopting policy and resourcing practices appropriate for whole-of-university implementation and capacity building is recommended. When preparing and enacting policies and initiatives that form the university's Indigenous agenda, care should be taken to not create or imply onerous responsibilities on Indigenous students, Indigenous academics or Indigenous Centre/College staff.

Adopting a whole-of-university approach is not without its challenges. One barrier that may be encountered centres on the social psychology notion of diffusion of responsibility (Kassin & Buke 2013) or the bystander effect (Darley & Latane 1968). That is, individuals or groups within a university may assume others are responsible or have already taken action. The resulting inertia may see the maintenance of status quo thinking and/or fractured pockets of activity that on their own may be ineffectual to enacting wholesale changes to the 'university place'. Drawing from the marketing literature, strategies and tactics for targeted groups who share psychographic and/or behavioural qualities ('niche marketing') might be considered as these are generally more successful than broad, 'one size fits all' approaches ('mass marketing').



TOOLS DEVELOPED FROM THIS PROJECT

The findings of this seed project resulted in two tools—The iPlace New Thinking Prompts and The iPlace Ecology.[3] Both tools are scalable, portable and non-prescriptive. The two tools are designed to seed re-thinking and new thinking about 'university place' praxis and they may be adapted either in part or holistically to assist with strategic imperatives or 'closing the gap' agendas of universities across the sector.

The iPlace New Thinking Prompts tool and The iPlace Ecology tools are presented next, following which, new future research directions are outlined.

The iPlace New Thinking Prompts tool

The iPlace Ecology tool

[3] The term 'iPlace' was coined for this project and features in the title of the two project tools to convey that the 'university place' strengthens, shapes and creates the intersecting and multi-faceted social identities of Indigenous students.

The iPlace New Thinking Prompts tool

iPlace New Thinking Prompts Regarding Indigenous Students	
New insights from Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017)	**New thinking prompts**
Choices are made by Indigenous students to self-identify (or not) to lecturers/tutors and other students in their classes. Furthermore, there was a tendency for lecturers/tutors to not identify Indigenous students from enrolment records. These practices indicate that it is preferred by both Indigenous students and lecturers/tutors that it is the choice of the student to self-disclose their cultural identity.	▪ Do universities vary in their management of diversity and equity descriptors (e.g. enrolment records available to academic teaching staff do not indicate if a person has a disability, yet Indigenous status is available) and what are the rationales involved? ▪ Do these findings reflect that academic teaching staff assume there are no Indigenous students in their classes or don't know how to identify Indigenous students?
Many Indigenous students neither spent time at the Indigenous Centre/College nor attended Indigenous events on campus, yet many strongly believed that these are very important and valuable.	▪ What proportion of Indigenous students do universities assume need the Centre/College? ▪ Is the symbolic value of the Centre/College and Indigenous events for Indigenous students considered by universities?
There is a desire for Indigenous-Indigenous and student-student connections while at university. Not all Indigenous students felt a sense of connection with other Indigenous students in the same classes or at the same university. Many did not know other Indigenous people who had attended the same university upon enrolling and did not have a clear idea of how many Indigenous lecturers/tutors were at their university. The need for Indigenous-Indigenous connections to assuage culturally unsafe classroom practices is apparent.	▪ Indigenous students are diverse in many ways including the want and need for Indigenous-Indigenous connections. Indigenous-Indigenous and student-student connections may not be needed throughout the entirety of studenthood, but how do students who desire them create such connections at a time when they need them?

iPlace New Thinking Prompts Regarding Indigenous Students

New insights from Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017)	New thinking prompts
It was found that: a) male Indigenous students are less likely to perceive lecturers/tutors as well-meaning but inaccurate in the class discussions of Indigenous topics; and b) Torres Strait Islander students feel their lecturers/tutors are rarely genuinely interested in discussing Indigenous topics in class.	▪ What issues are most likely to be at play here? ▪ How might universities encourage staff to engage more effectively in incorporating Indigenous content in their teaching? ▪ How might universities address the need for content on Torres Strait Islander curricula?
Student-student classroom experiences were influential. Ignorant peers negatively impact Indigenous students' quality-of-life# while studying and this lack of cultural safety drives a need for more Indigenous-Indigenous interaction. Conversely, positive student-student classroom experiences where peers are competent positively impacts Indigenous students' quality-of-life.	▪ How might universities attend to this? ▪ How does embedding Indigenous content in curricula affect this experience (positively and negatively)?
Indigenous students' quality-of-life while studying influences how Indigenous students choose to identify in the first instance while at university (as Indigenous and/or as an emerging professional).	▪ What are the assumptions and implications for academic teaching staff, for programs and program leaders/coordinators?
It was found that Indigenous students': a) social affiliation and sense of connection with a university-based Indigenous community; and b) desire for Indigenous-Indigenous connection, ameliorates culturally unsafe experiences.	▪ Are there barriers that might circumvent this? ▪ How might more culturally safe spaces be provided?
Competent, knowledgeable teaching of Indigenous content in courses leads to positive learning outcomes, yet there was no statistically significant relationship between incompetent teaching and negative learning outcomes.	▪ Why is this so? ▪ What are the implications for universities around professional development in cultural competence?

quality-of-life in this context is where Indigenous students while at university can 'be' themselves, are 'becoming' who they want to be and have a sense of 'belonging'.

iPlace New Thinking Prompts Regarding Academic Teaching Staff

New insights from Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017)	New thinking prompts
It was found that regardless of university-provided Indigenous cultural awareness training, few staff have undertaken this training.	▪ What are the challenges involved in Indigenous cultural awareness training? ▪ Are other forms of training, such as cultural safety or cultural humility, more effective? ▪ Is the primary need for non-Indigenous staff to be supported in critically reflecting on their own racial and cultural positioning rather than being given essentialised stereotypes of Indigeneity?
Lecturers/tutors know less about Torres Strait Islander people and their culture than Aboriginal peoples and their culture.	▪ Is this common across the sector? Given the significant differences in distribution of Torres Strait Islanders in Australia, in what situations/contexts/locales should this be addressed?
Most academic teaching staff did not know the number of Indigenous students at their university and did not look up student enrolment records to identify Indigenous students in their classes. This complemented the Indigenous student survey results that indicate that Indigenous students prefer the choice to self-disclose (or not) their cultural heritage in various contexts.	▪ Given that students have an inherent right to privacy, specifically in relation to whether they choose to disclose their Indigenous identity in specific contexts, staff professional development needs to emphasise that all academic teaching staff need to operate on the assumption there may be an Indigenous student in their class, and other staff on the assumption that the person they are servicing may in fact be Indigenous. What training and conversations need to be initiated to reinforce this? ▪ What implications does this have for the sector's policy statements about Indigenous students (many of which assume that Indigenous identity is transparent and fixed)?

iPlace New Thinking Prompts Regarding Academic Teaching Staff	
New insights from Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017)	**New thinking prompts**
Lecturers/tutors were concerned about teaching discipline-relevant Indigenous topics in their classes. Specifically, they mentioned fear of being perceived by students as patronising, misappropriating knowledge and experience without permission, potential for student resistance and negative class discussions.	▪ How can such fears be assuaged? ▪ What kind of specific staff development can encourage academic teaching staff to more comfortably take risks and engage in genuine dialogue with Indigenous people and content?
The responses to open-ended questions indicated that some academic teaching staff had limited personal experience and/or professional involvement with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.	▪ Are there significant challenges and dangers in encouraging large numbers of staff to seek out such experiences? ▪ Do Indigenous communities and organisations have the capacity (and desire) to provide such experiences?
Many positive outcomes result when lecturers/tutors are confident about the teaching of Indigenous topics relevant to their discipline in classes.	▪ How might universities respond to the lack of confidence among lecturers/tutors? ▪ What is the relationship between lecturer/tutor confidence and expertise? ▪ What are the practices of confident lecturers/tutors that ensure they maintain currency and accuracy about the Indigenous-related topics they teach?

iPlace New Thinking Prompts Regarding Academic Teaching Staff

New insights from Raciti, Carter, Gilbey and Hollinsworth (2017)	New thinking prompts
Training, resourcing and adequate workload allocation themes were commonly mentioned by academic teaching staff. The results suggest that where academic teaching staff have access to relevant training, and they are adequately resourced and provided with a workload allocation, positive outcomes will manifest.	▪ What training, resourcing and/or workload allocations are provided by universities? If not provided, why not? ▪ How were these determined and have they been formally evaluated? What is best practice? ▪ Is teaching work related to embedding Indigenous content in curricula regarded as 'core business'? If not, is this view at odds with the priorities of the Australian Government which identify that progress requires changes to the status quo (i.e. 'core business'), and such changes require investment (i.e. resourcing) to be successful? What are the implications for staff and managers?

The iPlace Ecology tool

Following triangulation of the project's literature review, exploratory qualitative findings and descriptive quantitative finding, it became apparent that a mechanistic worldview anchored in the technocentric ontology that views phenomena as divisible and discrete (Gladwin et al. 1995) was inadequate. New thinking was needed. Hence, an ecological worldview rather than a mechanistic worldview was deemed a better fit. The ecological worldview is a 'web-of-life' perspective that embraces co-creation and co-evolution processes (Capra 1996; Hes & Du Pleissis 2014).

By way of explanation, the reoccurring tension between the opposing worldviews of mechanism (the parts) and holism (the whole) is perennial, with debates documented since early Greek philosophy (Capra & Luisi 2014). Both mechanism and holism (also referred to as ecological) perspectives are present in most disciplines that use scientific research methods. However, in modern times there has been a swing towards an holistic/ecological worldview—albeit at different rates and in different forms depending upon the field—that recognises interconnectivity represents a shift from viewing the world as a machine to understanding it as a network (Capra 2002; Capra & Luisi 2014).

As detailed by Hutchins (2012) ecological thinking principles centre on the continuous interplay among:

Networks—all elements are interconnected and share resources across their boundaries.

Cycles—continuous flow of activity, resources and ideas.

Partnerships—co-operation, understanding, interdependency and networking.

Diversity—leveraging complexity and difference to achieve robustness and resilience.

Dynamic balance—flexibility and responsiveness with multiple dynamic sense-and-response feedback loops to keep the system in a state of dynamic balance. No single element is maximised and all elements fluctuate.

The iPlace Ecology subscribes to ecological thinking principles and represents the second tool of this project for use across the sector.

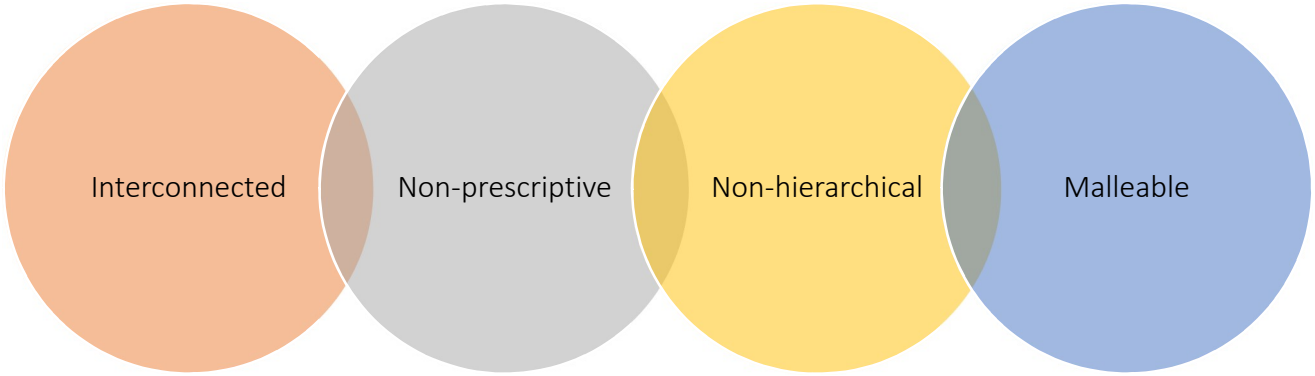
In brief, The iPlace Ecology tool:

- Views all elements as interconnected, comprising 'living' building blocks interacting in a 'cooperative dance' within self-regulating and self-organising university environments.

- Is not prescriptive, hierarchical, inflexible or static and does not privilege elements or roles above others.

- Elements, either individually or in combination, provide innovative launching pad/s for university endeavours that can be matched to the maturity of the Indigenous agenda of individual, diverse institutions.

- Is malleable, able to be de- and re-constructed in ways that enable individual institutions to map, traverse and evolve their 'university place'.



Raciti, Carter, Gilbey & Hollinsworth

The iPlace Ecology tool

iPlace Antecedents

University-focused antecedents

- Physical Attributes: location, size
- Indigenous Attributes:
  - Centre/College services available
  - Indigenous events
  - Number of Indigenous students and Indigenous lecturers/tutors
  - Indigenous content in curriculum
  - Lecturers/tutors' cultural training

Student-focused antecedents

- Choice of the student to self-disclose Indigenous identity: to peers and to lecturers/tutors
- Student commitment to study: valued, attendance, participation
- Support of students' study: family, lecturers/tutors

Interface-focused antecedents

- Student-lecturer/tutor classroom experiences: cultural in/competence, dis/interest in related Indigenous content
- Student-student classroom experiences: cultural in/competence
- Non-classroom university experiences: patchy commitment across institution leading to a paradoxical student experience

iPlace Mediators and Moderators

University-focused mediators

- University 'Indigenous agenda':
  - Maturity, diversity and prioritisation of Indigenous agenda
- Lecturers/tutors' capability and capacity:
  - In/adequate guidance and resourcing to embed Indigenous content in curriculum
  - In/competent teaching of Indigenous content in curriculum
  - Lecturer/tutor uptake of un/available relevant cultural training
- Campus lifestyle: opportunities to participate in Indigenous events, presence of Centre/College

Student-focused mediators

- Intersecting social identities: as student, as Indigenous, as emerging professional, within classroom + within university
- Studenthood quality-of-life: be, become, belong

Interface-focused mediators

- Student-lecturer/tutor relationships:
  - With Indigenous and non-Indigenous within classroom and within degree
- Student-student relationships:
  - With Indigenous and non-Indigenous within classroom and within degree
- Indigenous-Indigenous togetherness:
  - Interact with more Indigenous lecturers/tutors and more Indigenous students

Psychological moderators

- University-focused:
  - Lecturer/tutor familiarity of Indigenous peoples and culture (personal and professional)
  - Lecturer/tutor perceived self-efficacy (fear, anxiety, enthusiasm, confidence)
  - Lecturer/tutor workload recognition when embedding Indigenous content
- Student-focused:
  - Social affiliation and perceived sense of connection with university-based Indigenous community with Indigenous students in general, Centre/College, local Indigenous community

iPlace Outcomes and Impact

University-focused outcomes and impact

- Proximal university outcomes:
  - National indicators: satisfaction and retention of Indigenous students
  - Attending to national agendas
- Distal university impact:
  - Social justice for Indigenous Australians: academic, cultural and social capital that elevates Indigenous success

Student-focused outcomes and impact

- Proximal studenthood outcomes:
  - Learning about Indigenous content relevant to professional aspirations
  - Identity self-categorisation: intersecting and context-dependent
- Distal alumni impact:
  - Anticipated improved quality-of-life: personal (employment, income), intergenerational legacy

Interface-focused outcomes and impact

- Proximal student-university outcomes:
  - Culturally-safe classroom and non-classroom relationships and experiences
  - Self-reported, student-perceived engagement
- Distal student-university impact:
  - Praxis of student, lecturers/tutors and peers that demonstrates ability to work effectively for and with Indigenous peoples

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