



FLINDERS UNIVERSITY
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The Secretary
Standing Committee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Scarlett

Submission No.	70
Date Received	17-5-05

Inquiry into Indigenous Employment

Flinders University values and respects the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of its community and encourages inclusive practices in order to provide an environment that is creative, innovative, flexible and productive. To recognise its commitment to cultural diversity and to sustain and enhance a culturally inclusive environment, Flinders University:

- promotes a respect for cultural diversity in University programs and policies;
- encourages staff and students to observe the values of inclusiveness and fairness whilst maintaining high professional standards so they are able to effectively interact with and operate in culturally diverse communities;
- provides adequate facilities and use materials and methods that are culturally appropriate for students and staff in the University;
- develops further initiatives that promote mutual respect, harmony, cooperation and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange; and
- supports an educational approach to the challenges that cultural diversity brings.

The University has implemented several initiatives which have had a positive impact on employment opportunities and outcomes for Indigenous people at the University.

These include:

1. The establishment of an Aboriginal Education Unit

In 1990 the University established the Aboriginal Education Unit to meet the growing needs of Indigenous students at the University. The Unit was originally staffed by one general staff member. Since 1990 the Unit has continued to grow in line with increasing Indigenous student numbers so much so that it was necessary to undertake a review of the activities of the Centre in 1995. One of the outcomes of the review

was the renaming of the Unit Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research to reflect its broader portfolio of student support, teaching and research. Yunggorendi is a Kaurna word meaning “to impart knowledge, to inform, to communicate.” In the same year the University also committed capital works funding to building a Centre for the program, known as Yunggorendi Mande (Mande being the Kaurna word for shelter). The Centre reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor.

Currently there are eleven staff employed within the Centre, ten of whom are Indigenous. The Centre is funded through a combination of Indigenous Support Funding (DEST) and University recurrent funding (approximately 50/50). This financial commitment from the University has ensured the growth of the Centre. The strategic operations of the Centre work back strongly into the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) goals 2005 – 2007.

2. Indigenous representation on University Committees

The University encourages Indigenous representation on its committees including Academic Senate, Equal Opportunity and Diversity Committee, Faculty and School Boards and the several minor teaching and learning committees.

3. Indigenous Cadetships

The University, in conjunction with the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health has established an Indigenous Cadetship in the Department of Environmental Health, Faculty of Health Sciences. The Cadetship allows for the incumbent to enrol and complete the course requirements of a Bachelor of Environmental Health on a full-time basis while providing opportunities for work placement and mentorship throughout the duration of the Cadetship. A weekly allowance is paid and a financial contribution towards the cost of books, equipments and fees.

4. Graduate Development Program

In 2004 the University created a Graduate Development position within Yunggorendi First Nations Centre with the intent of creating an opportunity for an Indigenous honours/postgraduate student to commence a career in academia. The position is a full-time level A and the incumbent is provided with time-release to complete their post-graduate studies whilst being mentored in an academic role.

5. Policy

The University has developed and implemented a policy framework to ensure cultural inclusive practice in the University to aid in the retention of Indigenous staff members. Policies include:

- Annual entitlement to cultural/ceremonial leave
- Indigenous specific academic profiles developed by Indigenous staff in Yunggorendi First Nations Centre that recognise prior experience and community involvement/cultural activity as key aspects
- Cultural Inclusivity Strategy which aims to facilitate the enhancement and integration of a culturally inclusive dimension into the core activities of the University - teaching and learning, research and administration.
- Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity Practice Toolkit which provides mechanisms for academic staff to incorporate cultural diversity within their teaching practice.

- Advertising positions within Yunggorendi under Section 65A of the Equal Opportunity Act (1984) SA which encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to apply.
- Policy against Racism
- Grievance procedures for complaints of unlawful discrimination and harrassment

6. Employment Strategy for Indigenous Australians

As part of the development of the University's Employment Strategy for Indigenous Australians current Indigenous staff were interviewed to ascertain what Flinders does well to support the recruitment, participation and career development of Indigenous Australians, identify what could be improved, and seek consensus on the approach to be used for the Employment Strategy. Aspects identified by participants as leading to a higher retention rate for Indigenous staff included:

- the capacity within roles to be able to contribute to Indigenous communities
- recognition of the social and emotional labour cost involved in being an Indigenous academic
- strong support networks
- opportunities for professional development/further study
- opportunity to undertake research
- the provision for cultural and ceremonial leave
- high level of engagement across all areas of academic activity, ie teaching, research, administration and community
- recognition of Indigenous histories which are important in an educational, social, cultural and historical context
- comprehensive induction process whereby new staff are informed about the University's discrimination policies and intolerance of racism and its provision of staff development opportunities
- valuing of community involvement and connections
- appointments to continuing positions
- dedicated space which provides a culturally safe space for Indigenous staff and students.
- University commitment to Indigenous issues and acknowledgement of the value of Indigenous knowledge and culture
- recognition of Indigenous culture through the flying of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags
- the University's reputation for its commitment to social justice initiatives and Indigenous communities

The policy framework serves to underpin the practice of the University which has resulted in an increase in opportunity for employment and an improvement in employment outcomes for Indigenous staff within the University.

Yours sincerely



Professor Chris Marlin
Acting Vice-Chancellor