

- The Curriculum Refresh monies provided a means for travel to the Indigenous Centres/Units of other Universities in a bid to gather new ideas and establish a network of resources. These visits were undertaken during December 2009 and included Queensland University of Technology, Griffiths University, University of Newcastle, University of New South Wales and Central Queensland University. Each of the centres/units offer some form of alternate entry pathway for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. Not all of the centres/units assess student's levels of literacy and numeracy prior to entry and only one of the five centres/units was evaluating their pathway program.

At least two of the universities have programs targeting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students. One of the centres/units has access to philanthropic funding and is able to deliver a Winter School for high school students as a means of recruiting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and another university provides for year 11 and 12 students to enroll in a university subject that they acquire credit for towards a degree.

The number of programs and staffing levels depends on the amount of money centres/units are allocated. One centre/unit is able to provide seed funding to faculties who are able to demonstrate that their courses offer access, retention, promotion and sustainability for Indigenous students within their Faculty.

All of the centres/units reported providing support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students as core business. Visiting the other Indigenous Centres/Units has assisted in providing some innovative ideas to encourage high school students to consider furthering their study through attending university. The visits also reinforced that SIAS is accomplishing some achievements as well as or better than other Indigenous Centres/Units.

- How can these findings best inform future practice at JCU? The message here is that universities need to engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students to encourage participation at the tertiary level. JCU could deliver a Winter School for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander high school students funded through the Higher Education Participation Program funding.

It is important that our primary and high school students are aware that university is an option as many students report not knowing their options and being rail-roaded into vocational educational courses. Many of the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants write in their entry assessment essays that they were not aware that they could go to university. Not only do high school students need to know that university is an option, they also need to know how to go about accessing and navigating the systems that exist, the level of

commitment and where to get assistance when family and friends fail to support their decisions.

- The second main finding relates to the fact that numbers of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants who successfully complete the entry assessment remains low despite promoting the program.

In 2010 Marketing advertised the assessment dates for entry into the course prior to study period one and again for study period two in both Cairns and Townsville. We also hired a venue in Cairns close to the suburbs where we know many Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people reside and ran an extra assessment sitting. To ensure people were aware of the venue Cairns SIAS Staff members spent an afternoon participating in a letter box drop which resulted in only one person attending the assessment. Following the advertising of TAC two hundred and ninety-two applicants sat the entry assessment with only fifty-two applicants identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; fifteen of these fifty-two applicants successfully completed the assessment.

The lack of interest could be attributed to contemporary issues that continue to impact Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people daily. However, the number of people who value education has increased over the years but so have the barriers, real or imagined. These issues include experiencing low expectations where many of our people grow up believing that they will never be successful. This is also linked to the notions of disadvantage and boredom.

Research tells us that we are the most disadvantaged people on Earth and that our young people indulge in substance abuse because they are bored. When people believe that there are too many barriers to being successful then it is highly likely that they will never succeed. Family violence is another issue that many are confronted with and for some life becomes an ongoing traumatic event with little room to consider change for the better. The other issue that impacts Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people is lateral violence. This is a learned behaviour most often found in groups of people who have been subjected to intense forms of oppression such as colonization. Lateral violence is prevalent in the workplace and the community and impacts on the well-being of our people, it includes:

- nonverbal innuendo (raising eyebrows, face-making),
- verbal affront (overt/covert, snide remarks, lack of openness, abrupt responses),
- undermining activities (turning away, not being available),
- withholding information,
- sabotage (deliberately setting up a negative situation),
- infighting (bickering),
- scape-goating,
- jealousy
- backstabbing (complaining to peers and not confronting the individual),

- failure to respect privacy,
- broken confidences.

For many of our people it is difficult for them to see beyond what they consider to be the norm; however education can offer the ability to make better life choices the challenge is to ensure our people are aware of the possible opportunities that exist.

- How can these findings best inform future practice at JCU? Again the message here is that universities need to engage with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the community and the workplace.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander JCU staff do attend community events such as NAIDOC, the career markets and are on various community steering committees, reference groups etc, however it is the non-Indigenous JCU community who needs to throw out the welcome mat.

Our people need to know that there will be genuine academic support and advice available when they need help. It is paramount that they know what the level of commitment is and that others before them have managed their lives including family, work, friends and recreation and have also managed to successfully complete a degree. Most importantly our people need to know that JCU can offer a safe environment for study free from lateral violence and discrimination.