

Indigenous Student Success Program

2023 Performance Report

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|-----------------------|---|---------------|------------------------------|
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1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2. Enrolments (Access)

The proportion of Indigenous Australian (First Nations) students enrolled at Charles Sturt University has shown a consistent upward trend since 2018, with the percentage of enrolled Indigenous Australian students increasing from 3.4% to 4.0% of the total student body (domestic students only) in 2023. This represents an increase of 187 students (enrolments).

In 2023, the number of Indigenous student enrolments at Charles Sturt University rose by 3.5% compared to 2022, reaching 1,205 enrolments (refer to Table 1). There was a notable surge in Indigenous enrolments in 2020 across the sector, with Charles Sturt University also experiencing a peak in 2020 and 2021. Although the 2022 figures showed a decline from this peak, Indigenous enrolments are increasing in 2023, against a slight decline in domestic Non-Australian First Nation enrolments at the university (as shown in Table 1). Note, enrolments in the School of Policing are excluded from the above analysis. There are several unique features of these courses and participation profile and as such these figures are reported separately in Table 2.

Table 1: Charles Sturt University Domestic Student Enrolments 2020-2023

| Enrolment Count | 2020 | % change to 2020 | 2021 | % change to 2021 | 2022 | % change to 2022 | 2023 | % change to 2023 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Australian First Nations | 1,329 | 18.6% | 1,235 | -7.1% | 1,164 | -5.7% | 1,205 | 3.5% |
| Not Australian First Nations | 31,634 | 7.7% | 31,016 | -2.0% | 29,660 | -4.4% | 29,249 | -1.4% |
| No Information | 3 | | 5 | | 11 | | 13 | |
| Unknown First Nations Status | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Grand Total | 32,966 | - | 32,256 | - | 30,835 | - | 30,467 | |

Data Source: Indigenous Australian (First Nations) All Students, Charles Sturt University's Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) student data collection, Enrolment data provided by the Office of Planning and Analytics. Excludes School of Policing Students (reported in Table 2)

Table 2: Charles Sturt University School of Policing Enrolments 2020-2023

| Enrolment Count | 2020 | % change to 2020 | 2021 | % change to 2021 | 2022 | % change to 2022 | 2023 | % change to 2023 |
|---|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| Australian First Nations School of Policing Students | 221 | 4.7% | 205 | -7.2% | 150 | -26.8% | 101 | -32.7% |
| Not Australian First Nations School of Policing Students | 5,432 | 18.8% | 4,989 | -8.2% | 3,871 | -22.4% | 2,704 | -30.1% |
| Grand Total | 5,653 | | 5,194 | | 4,021 | | 2,805 | |

Data Source: Indigenous Australian (First Nations) All Students, Charles Sturt University's Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) student data collection, Enrolment data provided by the Office of Planning and Analytics.

Table 3: ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2023 payments¹

| | Education Costs | | Accommodation | | Reward | | Total ² | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|-----|---------------------|------------|
| | \$ | No. | \$ | No. | \$ | No. | \$ | No. |
| Enabling ³ | \$3,000.00 | 1 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | \$3,000.00 | 1 |
| Undergraduate ⁴ | \$368,500.00 | 128 | \$129,000.00 | 21 | | | \$497,500.00 | 149 |
| Post-graduate ⁵ | \$70,250.00 | 13 | \$4,000.00 | 1 | | | \$74,250.00 | 14 |
| Other | | | | | | | | |
| Total | \$441,750.00 | 142 | \$133,000.00 | 22 | | | \$574,750.00 | 164 |

Table 4: ISSP Grants – breakdown of 2023 payments

| | \$ |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| First Nations Commencement Grant | \$178,000 |
| First Nations Emergency Equity Grant | \$135,311 |
| Single Purpose Travel Grant | \$9,049 |
| Total | \$322,360 |

Strategies, activities and programs to support and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

In 2023, the university implemented a range of new and existing strategies, activities and programs to support and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- **Connections First Nations Direct Entry Program**
The university continued the Connections First Nations Direct Entry Program, a five-day entry program for First Nations peoples focused on building peer connections, social and cultural activities, and a series of academic benchmarking activities. The program is fully ISSP funded with no costs to the participants, ensuring no financial barriers are in place.

Successful completion of the program provides applicants with guaranteed entry into a broad range of undergraduate degrees at Charles Sturt. Three Connections Programs delivered, with 29 out of 29 participants receiving an offer to commence studies in 2024. Course areas of interest for Connections participants were Nursing, Information technology, Social Work, Educational Studies, Veterinary Technology, Agriculture, Criminal Justice, Occupational therapy, Law & Paramedicine. The program is continuing to expand in 2024 with targeted programs involving external partners and organisations.

- **Scholarships for First Nations students**

Four forms of financial assistance were available to First Nations students:

- [The First Nations Education Costs Scholarship](#) to assist students with the cost of study (compulsory textbooks, study equipment and laptops).
- [The First Nations Accommodation and Relocation Scholarship](#) is to assist students with relocation and accommodation costs (removalists hire, bond payment, rent assistance).
- First Nations Course Commencement Grant, available to first year students commencing in 2023
- First Nations Emergency Equity Grant

These scholarships were promoted through a range of channels, and First Nations Student Advisers are available to assist students in understanding the application process and providing general assistance for submissions. In addition a page is also available to provide a curated list of a range of wider scholarships for First Nations students, from a range of sources. The scholarships team works closely with the First Nations Student Success team to discuss promotion of opportunities and opportunities to collaborate.

- **Deadly Pathways festivals (Partially funded by ISSP)**

The University launched its Deadly Pathways Festivals, offering students a chance to immerse themselves in university life, discover career and study pathways in health, technology, and science, engage in hands-on workshops, engage with First Nations role models and explore a range of support services and enabling courses.

300 secondary school students attended the festivals in Port Macquarie and Dubbo at Charles Sturt campuses in September 2023.

- **Other University activity (non-ISSP funded)**

Across Charles Sturt University a range of broader activities promote visibility of the overall University, study options and available support.

The Charles Sturt Advantage early offer program provides access to students who are progressing from high school to university. By admitting students based on both their year 11 results and their soft skills, consideration is given to a range of factors, skills and experiences that may not be captured in a student's ATAR. Last year 236 offers were made to First Nations students with 46 converted enrolments at census date. This conversion from offer to converted enrolment (19.49%) was approximately 7pp higher than the conversion for non-First Nations students.

First Nations components are also built into Explore Days, Open Days, and Orientation.

3. Progression (outcomes)

Existing activities to support commencing and continuing students to complete units or to help retain students

In 2023, the University continued the following **existing** ISSP funded services to support commencing and continuing students **to complete units**.

- **First Nations Student Centres on seven campuses**

There are seven First Nations Student Centres at Charles Sturt campuses in Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Orange and Goulburn. Students are welcome to visit the Centres for a culturally safe option to access computers, printers, kitchen facilities, connect with other students, and seek advice or support from staff.

- **First Nations Student Connect**

Launched in 2021, First Nations Student Connect was further expanded in 2023 delivering a seamless touchpoint for First Nations students to access tailored support services across the student lifecycle. First Nations Student Connect is designed to provide access to culturally safe support to improve First Nations students' participation and educational success.

Since the launch of First Nations Student Connect, registrations have steadily increased, with over 500 First Nations students (approximately 45%) registering by mid-2022, and 731 (approximately 53% of enrolled First Nations students) registered in 2023. First Nations students' progress rates increased by 1.2% on last year based on 1,131 students in 2022 and 1,145 students in 2023, and completion rates have remained steady. Given the First Nations Student Connect timeframe, it is likely a contributing factor to these improved outcomes.

Charles Sturt's team of First Nations student advisers are available to support First Nations students with general advice, one off support, or on-going personalised support. The advisers provide students with a safe and culturally safe environment.

First Nations students had access to a dedicated Academic Skills Adviser, First Nations. This role is a collaboration between the Academic Skills team and the First Nations Student Success team. This role, reporting into the Academic Skills team, is available to take appointments with First Nations students, assist with referrals within the wider Academic Skills team where specialist expertise is required, deliver Connect Sessions, contribute to the development of customised self-serve materials for academic skills topics, and facilitate sessions within the First Nations Direct Entry programs.

Now offered as a component of First Nations Student Connect, the First Nations Tutor Program is promoted to all First Nations students at key points in the year. Communication and engagement are managed with both tutors and students, in collaboration with key internal stakeholders. Students can access ten hours of one-to-one tutor support per enrolled subject.

In 2023, 212 students accessed 5,010 hours of tutorial assistance. Student feedback is generally very positive and indicates students value the tutoring program.

Table 5: ISSP Tutorial assistance provided in 2023

| Level of study | Number of unique students assisted ^[ii] | Total hours of assistance ^[iii] | Expenditure ^[iv] (\$) |
|----------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Enabling | | | |
| Undergraduate | 205 | 4,824 | \$ 587,250.63 |
| Post-graduate | 7 | 186 | \$ 17,093.37 |
| Other | | | |
| Total | 212 | 5,010 | \$604,344.00 |

In 2023, the following new activities were undertaken to support commencing and continuing students to complete units or to help retain students (see Appendix for visual indication)

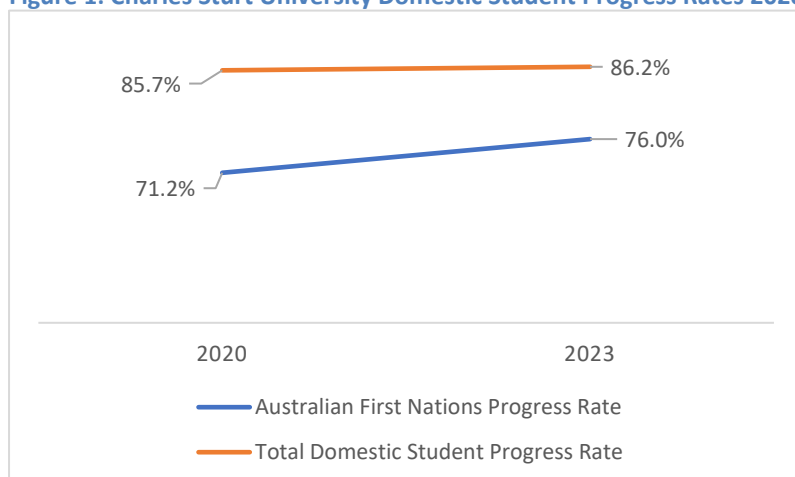
- Refurbishment of First Nations Student Centres**
 In 2023, the University utilised approved rollover ISSP funds to enhance the cultural safety of its First Nations Student Centres. This has included application of a prominent visual identity that is consistent across locations, some minor works, and purchasing of more culturally responsive furniture and associated items. This has been very well received by students as affirmation of their sense of belonging and identity within university grounds.
- Customisations to the University's Student Portal**
 Students who have registered for First Nations Student Connect can now access customised areas of the online platform for students where they can find out about available support, book appointments, display the First Nations visual identity, and register for workshops.

Measurement of the impact of the University's strategies to support student progression

The University has adopted a holistic and cohesive approach to supporting First Nations students academically, through pastoral care, and recognising the critical role of establishing a sense of belonging and community. As such, individual efforts cannot be isolated in an evaluation process. With this holistic view, the University is pleased with trends in progress rates for First Nations students at Charles Sturt. In 2023 the progress rate for First Nations students, excluding the School of Policing, was 76.0%.¹ This was a 1.2% increase on 2022 and continues the upward trend in progress rates which have increased by 4.8% since 2020. In particular, this increase represents a closing of the gap between First Nations and the overall student cohort as demonstrated in figure 1.

¹ In 2023, progress rates for First Nations students in the School of Policing were 98.8%.

Figure 1: Charles Sturt University Domestic Student Progress Rates 2020 and 2023²



Student feedback is also monitored via First Nations components of the customer relationship management system, adviser team debriefing on de-identified information shared in their appointments and a large focus group discussion with students and alumni, held in 2023.

University investment in cultural competency of staff and students

The University has an Indigenous Cultural Competency Program (ICCP) which responds to a series of strategic priorities at Charles Sturt and aims to improve the education and lives of First Nations peoples. In 2023, the program was reviewed and has been renamed the First Nations Cultural Awareness Journey in 2024.

The program aims to improve access, participation, retention and success rates for First Nations students; ensure all undergraduate programs incorporate Indigenous Australian content consistent with the Indigenous cultural competence pedagogical framework and encourage an organisational culture that is welcoming of all cultures (and train all staff in this respect).

The ICCP operates as an Individual Online Cultural Competency Program: This individual component of the journey to cultural competence has, as its learning outcomes, increased cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity.

From time to time, additional purpose-based sessions or local immersion activities are arranged around business needs. One example is Courageous Conversations convened for the University's Executive Leadership Team and Senior Indigenous Staff with expert facilitation from an Indigenous consultancy in 2023, which was follow up in early 2024 for continuity of dialogue.

Other broad University strategies to support student progression (Non-ISSP funded)

All services of Charles Sturt are designed with diversity and inclusion in mind and particular attention is paid to ensuring appropriateness to First Nations students, low SES, regional, remote and first-in-family. As such, the University provides careers and employability learning, academic skills by appointment, embedded academic skills support in subjects, embedded tutors program, proactive contact with students exhibiting indicators of being at risk of completion, Study Link skill building modules, Studiosity services, counselling services, support for accessibility and inclusion, social connections through clubs and student representative groups and a range of scholarship options, including an emergency equity grant.

² Excludes School of Policing

4. Completions (outcomes)

In 2021, Charles Sturt had its largest year-on-year growth in enrolled First Nation student completions in five years. In 2023, completions remained steady in comparison to the 2022 figures, and, over a five-year period, completions are trending upwards.

Table 6: Charles Sturt University Course Completion, Domestic Students, 2019-2023

| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Australian First Nations | 133 | 117 | 217 | 175 | 175 |
| No Information | 5 | 2 | | | 1 |
| Not Australian First Nations | 5,477 | 5,482 | 5,738 | 5,703 | 5,302 |
| Grand Total | 5,615 | 5,601 | 5,955 | 5,878 | 5,478 |

Data Source: Indigenous Australian (First Nations) All Students, Charles Sturt University's Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) student data collection, data provided by the Office of Planning and Analytics. Excludes School of Policing Students (reported in Table 7)

Table 7: Charles Sturt University Course Completion 2019-2023, School of Policing

| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Australian First Nations | 25 | 43 | 28 | 34 | 34 |
| Not Australian First Nations | 664 | 901 | 850 | 1,066 | 840 |
| Grand Total | 689 | 944 | 878 | 1,100 | 874 |

Data Source: Indigenous Australian (First Nations) All Students, Charles Sturt University's Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) student data collection, data provided by the Office of Planning and Analytics.

It is important to note that most of the strategies reported above to contribute to progression are also designed to contribute to successful completion.

5. Regional and remote students

In 2023, 835 Charles Sturt First Nations students hailed from regional or remote areas accounting for 69% of all First Nations students. This is an increase of 8.3% on the 2022 count of 771 students. This demographic diversity drives the development of services that account for various factors affecting the education of individuals in such locations. Instead of a single centralised centre, Charles Sturt University has established First Nations Student Centres across seven campuses. These centres offer both in-person and online appointments to ensure accessibility across extensive geographic regions. Additionally, efforts are made to foster a sense of connection and cultural safety through initiatives like Connect sessions and regular communication.

Table 8: Charles Sturt University Reported Residential Remoteness, enrolment count of First Nations Students

| Enrolment Count First Reported Residential Remoteness | Year | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Major Cities of Australia | 324 | 400 | 399 | 389 | 369 |
| Inner Regional Australia | 555 | 659 | 584 | 533 | 583 |
| Outer Regional Australia | 202 | 225 | 213 | 207 | 213 |
| Remote Australia | 29 | 35 | 31 | 28 | 37 |
| Very Remote Australia | 7 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Unknown Remoteness | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Offshore | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Grand Total | 1,121 | 1,329 | 1,235 | 1,164 | 1,205 |

Data Source: Indigenous Australian (First Nations) All Students, Charles Sturt University's Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) student data collection, data provided by the Office of Planning and Analytics.

Note: Changes have been made to the way the remoteness field has been calculated to comply with reporting requirements; this may result in apparent changes from past years.

Support offered to regional and remote First Nations students to improve access to study

- Travel and Accommodation support for First Nations Direct Entry Program**
 As part of Charles Sturt University's commitment to the Connections First Nations Direct Entry Program, students' travel and accommodation costs are supported when traveling to the program location. This commitment ensures travel-related barriers to access Charles Sturt University are adequately addressed for prospective students from regional and remote areas.
- Support for students studying Online**
 The university's team of First Nations Student Advisers are responsible for the pastoral support of First Nations students studying Online. Communication is established through various mediums, improving connection between distance students and the support services available. All Charles Sturt University students can access academic and online study support services, including workshops, appointments, online study guides, assignment feedback, online chat, and a discussion forum.
- Support to attend intensives and professional placements**
 For eligible students studying approved courses, Away From Base funding support is also provided through First Nations Student Connect. This supports attendance at intensives and professional placements.

For students who are studying courses that are not eligible through the Away From Base funding, the First Nations Student Connect team support students through their submissions to Centrelink for ABSTUDY support to attend residential school blocks and professional placements.

ISSP Scholarships

In 2023, 164 Scholarships were awarded to Regional and Remote First Nations Students.

Table 9: ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students⁶

| | Education Costs | | Accommodation | | Reward | | Total | |
|---|-----------------|-----|---------------|-----|----------|-----|-----------|-----|
| | \$ | No. | \$ | No. | \$ | No. | \$ | No. |
| A. 2022 Payments | \$165,750 | 53 | \$50,750 | 10 | \$42,500 | 121 | \$259,000 | 184 |
| B. 2023 Offers ⁷ | \$481,750 | 147 | \$193,000 | 32 | | | \$674,750 | 179 |
| C. Percentage ⁸ (C=B/A*100) | | | | | | | 261% | |
| 2023 Payments | \$441,750 | 142 | \$133,000 | 22 | N/A | N/A | \$574,750 | 164 |

6. Eligibility criteria

6.1 Indigenous Education Strategy

Improving enrolment, retention and completion rates for First Nations students

The University is committed to improving our enrolment, retention and completion rates for First Nations students. Throughout 2023, Charles Sturt conducted extensive consultation and mapping to external strategic drivers which resulted in the publication of our [First Nations Strategy 2023-2025](#). This overarching strategy includes many educational commitments as well as commitments in wider contexts.

Aligned to the strategy, in 2023 the University has:

- Commenced implementation of a suite of First Nations Pathways activities to engage with future students, with a focus on schools, vocational education and training (VET), and mature aged people through two new aspiration building festivals held in Dubbo and Port Macquarie with over 300 attendees, and industry-customisations to previously delivered direct entry programs with 29 offers made. The University has also re-developed its enabling and transition programs in 2023 that will be offered to First Nations students in 2024.
- Improved cultural safety, retention, and completion for current students through First Nations Student Connect and other programs, including refurbishment of First Nations Student Centres and customisations to the Student Portal.
- Launched a new First Nations Alumni Connect network, achieved as a result of hosting a student and alumni gathering called the Big Deadly Yarn Up to gain insights into student experience and creating avenues for past students to support current and future students.

The University has a strong track record in promoting the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in curricula, graduate attributes, and teaching practices, noting the previously reported *Indigenous Australian Content in Courses and Subjects Policy* which has a governance mechanism for approvals and endorsement of Indigenous studies content across courses and in subjects. The Indigenous Board of Studies is chaired by the Head of School of Indigenous Australian Studies who is an Aboriginal person, and the board follows a collaborative, university-wide approach with a representative committee of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academic leaders.

In addition to the ICCP (now First Nations Cultural Awareness journey) the University actively celebrates Reconciliation Week with student and staff facing engagement; and encourages a strong University presence at a range of NAIDOC celebrations in communities across its footprint

In 2024, the University will implement an action from its First Nations Strategy as follows: *Determine institutional factors impacting retention and completion rates of First Nations students and implement targeted strategies to increase success rates*. It is anticipated that this work will result in establishing revised performance indicators of First Nations student success based on recent trends and support strategies.

6.2 Indigenous Workforce Strategy

Progress against Charles Sturt's Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy

Charles Sturt University continued in 2023 with the targets in its [Indigenous Australian Employment Strategy 2018-2022](#) while the [First Nations Employment Strategy 2024-2025](#) strategy was developed.

In 2023, the strategy supported the appointment of First Nations people across a diversity of occupational and discipline groups, levels and work areas; reviewed and enhanced existing strategies and policies to

support the appointment and development of First Nations staff; and provided opportunities for First Nations students studying with us to gain hands on experience within relevant professional areas of the University with an aim of 'growing our own' pool of potential future staff.

Key targets of the strategy included exceeding 3% First Nations staff representation in total staff numbers, and 2% First Nations academic staff in total academic staff numbers. These targets were both exceeded, as shown in the employment figures below:

- All staff - 3.5% First Nations Australians (increase from 3.2% in 2022) on 31 December 2023
- Professional/general staff - 3.89% First Nations Australians on 31 December 2023
- Academic staff - 3.5% First Nations Australians on 31 December 2023

Senior Indigenous staff of the University

In 2023, the University had five senior First Nations staff members:

- Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Success
- Head of School, Indigenous Australian Studies
- Level E Academic
- Director, First Nations Pathways
- Director, First Nations Student Connect.

The senior role of Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Engagement position was also filled in late 2023, with the incumbent commencing at the beginning of January 2024.

Indigenous Employment Strategy Redevelopment

Following extensive face-to-face and online consultation with First Nations staff and other stakeholders, a new employment strategy was developed in 2023, and launched in February 2024. The [First Nations Employment Strategy 2024-2025](#) was built upon key themes that emerged from staff consultation, along with a review of best practice across the sector and progress against the previous strategy. Actions have been planned to address three priority areas:

1. Attract and Recruit
2. Develop and progress
3. Engage and support

Key actions currently being implemented include:

- Establish a First Nations talent pool
- Develop framework to recognise and value cultural load of First Nations staff, informed by consultation with First Nations staff
- Foster opportunities for First Nations Staff to engage with each other
- Host monthly staff network meetings and annual Nguluway conference
- Provide a voice for First Nations staff by facilitating engagement and consultation on matters that affect them
- Provide First Nations staff with access to cultural advice and employment guidance.

Cadetship program

The University's First Nations Cadetship program continued as per 2022, providing First Nations students with hands on paid work experience in a professional area of the University that complements their studies. In 2023, 10 First Nations students participated in the program.

6.3 Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Implementation of Indigenous Governance Mechanism

Allocation and expenditure of ISSP funds at Charles Sturt was regularly monitored by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success) and Director, First Nations Student Success (both Indigenous staff) and the Manager, Finance Liaison (Divisions and Programs) with several points of dialogue with the Chair, Indigenous Board of Studies Head of School - School of Indigenous Australian Studies (also Indigenous).

Funds were allocated and expended in accordance with university policy and procedure relating to approval delegations, procurement, and responsible stewardship of public funds. Overall updates were provided to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic through established approval and reporting processes of the University.

Other activities involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the decisions of the University

As part of the [First Nations Strategy 2023 – 2025](#) Charles Sturt University through outcome 3 will *Commit to appropriate and diverse involvement of First Nations people in decision making*. To achieve this commitment, we will:

- Implement a framework to guide the inclusion of First Nations peoples in decision-making, ensuring respect and reciprocity and capability development to assist First Nations people to actively participate in a range of decision-making processes.
- Promote and report on representation of First Nations staff and students at key decision-making groups.
- Develop and implement culturally responsive principles and terms of reference for all committees dealing with First Nations matters.
- Promote First Nations representation with all Regional Consultative Committees in the Charles Sturt University footprint.
- Seek to formalise partnership arrangements with key First Nations stakeholders, aligned to Charles Sturt strategic priorities.
- Promote First Nations involvement and content in our research work and research bids.

The actions above are part of a 3-year strategy to be delivered by 2025. Some of this work is being delivered through the First Nations Research Strategy, some through the First Nations Engagement Framework, and some through operational and process improvements.

Across the University, there are a broad range of activities involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in university decisions.

Executive Leadership

In 2023, the University's Executive Leadership Team held a special meeting, *Courageous Conversations*, convened for the Executive Leadership Team and Senior Indigenous Staff with expert facilitation from an Indigenous consultancy. This was a highly constructive gathering of leaders with shared responsibility for a whole of University approach to strengthening outcomes for First Nations people. In 2024, the Executive Leadership Team is looking to convene three more meetings of this group. These will be focus meetings between the Executive Leadership Team and First Nations leaders, including key First Nations employment and research personnel. The principal purpose of the focus meetings is to discuss progress and obstacles toward the implementation of Charles Sturt's First Nations Strategy.

Governance Committees

The following Charles Sturt Governance Committees have First Nations peoples appointed in First Nations related positions specified in the Membership and Terms of Reference:

- **University Council** – two First Nations people were appointed onto Council in 2023. These appointments were an active decision for First Nations representation on Council.
- **Academic Senate** – Chair, Indigenous Board of Studies; Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success)

- **University Courses Committee** – Chair, Indigenous Board of Studies; Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success)
- **Academic Quality and Standards Committee** - Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success)
- **University Research Committee** – Member with experience in Indigenous-focused research (not an identified First Nations role)
- **Indigenous Board of Studies** – Two academic staff at Level B or above (Indigenous Australian where possible) from each of the faculties and an Indigenous student enrolled in a course of the University.

Note – several Governance Committee appointments above will include the Pro Vice-Chancellor, First Nations Engagement in the Membership and Terms of Reference. This will apply from 2024 given the appointment to this position.

Design and review of subjects and courses

Indigenous leadership and support for staff across the University on the design and review of subjects and courses and curriculum is embedded in the Division of Learning and Teaching via the Gulaay Team (includes Academic Lead, Educational Designer and Learning Resources Officer). The team supports the [Indigenous Australian Content in Courses and Subjects Policy](#), the [Charles Sturt University Strategy 2030](#) and the [Charles Sturt First Nations Strategy](#). The Gulaay team is responsible for coordinating the inclusion of First Nations curriculum and pedagogy in Charles Sturt courses. The team is tasked with the creation of original resources to enable this work, providing professional development, resources, learning materials and cultural immersion experiences to help staff comply with our policy requirements.

Principles for First Nations Engagement

In partnership with the Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Engagement and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success), the Office of External Engagement is developing an overarching framework for First Nations engagement at Charles Sturt. This involves consultation with a broad range of stakeholders, internally and externally; and with both First Nations and non-First Nations representatives. The stakeholder engagement plan will be predicated on an agreed set of engagement principles, to be followed by all Charles Sturt University staff. Work commenced on this in 2023 and will continue into 2024.

Business development and partnerships framework for First Nations priorities

The Office of External Engagement is customising Charles Sturt University's whole-of-university business development and partnership framework for First Nations relationships and development opportunities. The customisation process is being undertaken via co-design with the Pro Vice-Chancellor First Nations Engagement and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success) and relevant organisational stakeholders. The customisations ensure that activities are culturally appropriate and aligned with the Charles Sturt First Nations strategy. This framework builds on piloting of approaches in 2023, producing insights for a more formalised approach from 2024.

Employment Consultations with First Nations Staff Network

Senior leaders of the University are regularly invited to attend the First Nations Staff Network meeting to consult with First Nations staff on decisions relevant to them, as well as provide an opportunity for First Nations staff to ask questions of senior leadership. The First Nations Staff Network were key stakeholders in guiding the development of the new First Nations Employment Strategy 2024-2025, through ongoing consultation across various stages of the development of the strategy.

Student Experience

The University's Student Experience Survey includes a question about the First Nations Student Connect services and the information gathered will be used to inform and improve the service for students.

Division of Facilities Management

In 2023, Charles Sturt's Facilities Management Division sought First Nations involvement in decision making through the following activities:

- Support for First Nations road and walkway naming – most recently consultation with Birpai LALC, Elders, and First Nations staff for Port Macquarie road and walk naming.
- First Nations consultation in Campus Master Plan development.
- Procurement measures in place to engage First Nations businesses, including weighting quotes for First Nations vendors.
- Active encouragement for First Nations participation in Campus Environmental Working Groups (CEWGs), with active representation in Wagga, Dubbo, and Albury, and plans to expand to Bathurst and Orange. Wagga Campus CEWG has dual focus on environment and Yindyamarra Reconciliation Site management, hosting reconciliation activities including Yindyamarra Walk and Talks.
- First Nations staff involvement in Yindyamarra Reconciliation Site signage refresh, consulting with Mawang Gaway Aboriginal Consultative Group in Wagga.

Faculty of Science

- **School of Agricultural, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences (SAEVS)**
 - Environmental Science -- Firestick representatives joining the SAEVS External Advisory Committee to support Indigenous leadership and protect, conserve, and enhance cultural and natural values of people and Country through cultural fire and land management practices. Senior Lecturer in Sociology western also part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Advisory Committee, receiving updates about Indigenous employment opportunities, as well as the Aboriginal joint management of parks model, receiving direct Indigenous perspectives.
 - Agriculture -- All External Advisory Committees have an invited First Nations member. All subjects with First Nations content have been developed in consultation with Charles Sturt's First Nations Educational Designer and through the Indigenous Board of Studies, and at times with First Nations community partners.
- **School of Rural Medicine (SAM)**
 - Sub-committee overseeing Indigenous Health Curriculum chaired by the head of Indigenous Curriculum, with First Nations student membership. The head of Indigenous Curriculum also sits on a number of other School committees including the executive committee and the interview panel as part of the admissions process for the First Nations Pathway.
- **School of Nursing, Paramedicine and Healthcare Sciences (SNPHS)**
 - In 2023, at least 70% of members identify on the External Advisory Committee for the Bachelor of Health Science (Mental Health) identify as First Nations people.
 - Last year we undertook a consultation about this course, and the majority of people interviewed as part of that activity also identified as First Nations people. As a result of the outcomes from that consultation, we are currently seeking EOIs from community to join a working group to review the feedback from community and provide recommendations to the committee and School leadership on potential changes to the degree.
- **Three Rivers**
 - Three Rivers Department of Rural Health, as part of our governance structure has an Advisory Board, a Rural Allied Health Advisory committee and Aged Care committee, all of which have First Nations membership and input into the direction of Three Rivers activities. In 2023 we consulted with First Nations health professionals and those who provide services to First Nations communities to identify and address professional development needs.
 - Research projects with relevance to First Nations health and wellbeing are reviewed by the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council Human Research Ethics Committee. As part of these submissions researchers consult widely with First Nations communities and representatives.
 - Research projects with relevance to First Nations health and wellbeing are governed by Steering/Advisory Committees with strong First Nations representation among committee membership.

6.3.1 Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

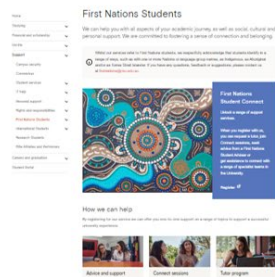
In the context of the Indigenous Student Success Program for 2023, we are pleased to observe positive trends in outcomes for First Nations students at Charles Sturt. Specifically, there has been a marked enhancement in the enrolment and progress rates of our Indigenous students over the last five years. This data underscores our commitment to fostering an inclusive and successful academic environment for all students.

We are ambitious in our commitments to continue to improve on this performance and have laid some strong foundations in 2023 in the form of the University's First Nations Strategy, and appointment of an Indigenous person into the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success) followed by a further appointment to our identified leadership role, Pro Vice-Chancellor, First Nations Engagement. We anticipate continued improvement across our First Nations education performance in coming years as a result of this investment in strategic planning, leadership and accountabilities across the University.

Professor Graham Brown, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

7 Appendix

7.1 Upgrades to physical and online environments



Upgrades to Charles Sturt University First Nations Student Centres and online environments in 2023

¹ This information provides for the number of students and cost of the scholarships expended in 2023. The figures for students should include the actual number (head count, not the EFTSL). Scholarship figures (head count and costs) should include the university award scholarships from the flexible finding pool as well as any preserved scholarships. Only payments made during 2023 should be included in this table. For multi-year scholarship agreements, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded in the performance reporting for the relevant future grant year.

² This figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.

³ Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁶ Only record amounts which required payment during the 2023 calendar year. For multi-year scholarship offers, payments to be made in future grant years will be recorded against the reporting for the relevant future grant year. Note the data in this table is a subset of the scholarship data provided in Table 1.

⁷ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2023 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2023 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2022 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

⁸ This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.