



Charles Sturt  
University

# Report on 2019 Indigenous Research Summit

A professional development  
initiative of the School of  
Indigenous Australian Studies  
and the Faculty of Arts and  
Education

# Executive Summary

The following report provides an overview of the fourth Indigenous Research Summit held on the 27-28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019 at the Dubbo Campus and includes thanks for those who attended and presented.

The Summit was hosted by the Research Committee of the School of Indigenous Australian Studies with support from the Faculty of Arts and Education. The Summit is an annual professional development event for researchers working with Indigenous Australians. The 2019 Summit's theme was: *Decolonising the Academy*. The Summit opened with an Elders panel featuring Aunty Pat Doolan, Tubba-Gah Elder, Wiradjuri Country, Uncle Ray Woods, Chair, Wiradjuri Council of Elders, Ms Teresa Yasserie, Wiradjuri Country, and Ms Danielle Flakelar, National Parks and Wildlife Service Manager, Aboriginal Heritage and Partnerships, Wayilwan Country. Key notes were presented by Associate Professor Sandy O'Sullivan, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Elizabeth Mason, Terri Janke and Company.

Charles Sturt University's Research Narrative includes Indigenous Research as a key 'pillar' of the University's narrative in relation to research. It can and should be a part of all other research pillars: Agriculture, Land and Water; Sustaining resilient healthy communities; Regional development; Cultivation of a civic and just society; and Education and professional practice. That is,

“Working in partnership with Indigenous communities to the benefit of those and other communities, research is conducted by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff with an underlying respect towards different knowledge sources, ways of doing, and ways of being.”

During the Summit, over 30 delegates from the Faculty of Arts and Education as well as other Faculties and University portfolios came together to understand and explore the complexities of working with and within highly complex intercultural, social, intellectual, historical, and psychological spaces, enabling a greater depth of effective and impactful research in this field. The Summit was interactive with key presenters and panels designed as discussion starters to instigate reflection and reflexivity around critical foundations to usefully respond to the above.

Following the seminar, two recommendations were made: 1) to hold another such event in 2020, and 2) to maintain the momentum of the Summit by continuing to critically reflect and enact where possible cultural responsiveness in our work units.

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## Introduction

The Indigenous Research Summit was held on the 27-28<sup>th</sup> of November, 2019, at the Dubbo Campus of Charles Sturt University. The Summit was hosted by the Research Committee of the School of Indigenous Australian Studies with support from the Faculty of Arts and Education. The Summit is an annual professional development event for researchers working with Indigenous Australians. The intention of the Summit is to bring Elders, community, and other Indigenous organisations face-to-face with Charles Sturt University researchers, at all stages of their careers, to learn about collaboration and ethical research practice. The aim in doing so is to foster the research culture of the University to be inclusive and responsive to cultural safety when working with Indigenous Australians in a research capacity.

## Objectives

There were a number of objectives

1. Bring together CSU staff and HDR students with Community
2. Hear from key note speakers about impactful research and collaboration
3. Hear from key note speakers about research ethics and data sovereignty
4. Create an opportunity for Indigenous Australian community stakeholders to engage in a dialogue with CSU researchers and for CSU researchers to be responsive to community expertise
5. Create an opportunity for CSU researchers working across different campuses, Faculties, and Schools to network around common research issues and goals
6. Provide a forum for majority Indigenous Australian presence, leadership, and expertise in research

Beginning the Summit with an Elders panel prioritised the research expertise of Indigenous Australian community stakeholders and set the tone for discussion and reflection over the two days. In the longer term, it is anticipated that this Summit will boost the research identity of the University through partnerships with Indigenous Australians that are culturally safe.

## Outcomes

The Indigenous Research Summit was held on the 27 – 28<sup>th</sup> of November at the Dubbo Campus with 34 delegates attending over the two days. A breakdown of the characteristics of the group is included in Table 1 below. The Welcome to Country was performed by Aunty Margaret Walker, Elder, Wiradjuri Country.

*Table 1: Numbers attending and delegate affiliations*

Affiliation	Number of Attendees	Notes
<b>Charles Sturt University</b>	26	Representing all three faculties. (Including HDR Students) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty of Arts and Education: 19</li><li>• Faculty of Science: 1</li><li>• Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural</li></ul>

		Sciences: 2 • Research Office: 1 • Office of Indigenous Engagement: 1 • Professional Staff: 1 • Three Rivers, University Department of Rural Health: 1
<b>Community/ Industry Delegates</b>	5	Representing Indigenous Nations, Community Groups, and Industry Professionals
<b>External Universities</b>	1	Key note speaker Associate Professor Sandy O’Sullivan, University of the Sunshine Coast
<b>External Participants</b>	4	

During the seminar we heard from two key note speakers Associate Professor Sandy O’Sullivan, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Elizabeth Mason, Terri Janke and Company. The Summit opened with a Community and Elders’ Panel on Indigenous knowledges of Country and included a Panel from the School of Indigenous Australian Studies Research Committee. The Summit also included a book launch for *Our Voices: Aboriginal Social Work* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), edited by Bindi Bennett & Sue Green (Palgrave Macmillan) as well as a bird watching tour on the morning of the second day.

## Key notes

### Day 1: Community and Elders’ Panel on Indigenous knowledges of Country.

The opening key note panel for the Summit featured Aunty Pat Doolan, Tubba-Gah Elder, Wiradjuri Country, Uncle Ray Woods, Chair, Wiradjuri Council of Elders, and Ms Teresa Yasserie, Wiradjuri Country. It was chaired by Ms Danielle Flakelar, National Parks and Wildlife Services Manager, Aboriginal Heritage and Partnerships, Wayilwan Country. Aunty Margaret Walker, Wiradjuri Country, generously performed the Welcome to Country for the Summit. Associate Professor Jay Phillips then formally opened the Summit and proposed some questions for the audience to consider such as how the university integrates Indigenous knowledges into systems in a colonial way. She discussed decolonising as a way of walking backwards from colonising knowledges to centre Indigenous ways of knowing to research. Decolonising also means capturing the diversity of Indigenous peoples’ knowledges.

Elders then responded to questions formulated by the School of Indigenous Australian Studies Research Committee:

1. What do you want from researchers at Charles Sturt?

2. How would you like researchers to ensure they have made appropriate consultation and spoken to the right people?

3. What are the issues of ownership of stories and research data that are important to you?

4. What is the role of universities in working with communities in the area of research?

The discussion from Elders and participants focused on integrating culturally safe and community responsive research practices into University research. The Elders identified clear research needs and emphasised the importance of respecting Indigenous communities as knowledge stakeholders in University research. A summary of the discussion is outlined in Table 2.

*Table 2: Barriers and opportunities for collaboration identified during the panel session*

Barriers	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How to ensure appropriate consultation, how do CSU researchers know they are engaging with the right person?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A concentration of research expertise generously offered to Summit participants</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the issues regarding ownership of stories and research data?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PhD and Honours students are interested in carrying out research with Indigenous Australian knowledge stakeholders, the panel identified clear research needs and processes for culturally safe research</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The difficulties in building trusting relationships as a result of previous university research practices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Genuine and respectful engagement with Elders and communities can lead to evaluation research and supporting already existing projects and knowledge</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research processes (e.g. ethics)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Charles Sturt University has the opportunity to be a research leader in developing culturally safe research practices that prioritise data sovereignty</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aligning research timelines and duration of projects</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does the University integrate Indigenous knowledge into systems in a colonial way?</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting on with business as usual makes culturally responsive research difficult</li></ul>	

Distinct opportunities for collaboration with Charles Sturt researchers were identified however the question of relationships (specifically how to develop and maintain them) were a significant impediment as were some CSU processes. Forums such as the current one were recognised as ideal opportunities to develop these relationships and panellists were interested in keeping the dialogue open and repeating this opportunity.

**Day 1:** Associate Professor Sandy O’Sullivan, The Future is non-Indigenous: Strategies to Resist the System and Challenge Symbolic Annihilation

In this key note, Sandy O’Sullivan presented strategies to resist systemic oppression and challenge processes of domination and ongoing colonial annihilation. These strategies were developed out of extensive research within Australia and internationally to identify how the colonial system is “destroying who we are”. The strategies were based on real life situations and examples and provide Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples clear guidance in how to approach research within the academy and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

**Day 2:** Elizabeth Mason, True Tracks®: A Pathway to Effective Indigenous Engagement in Research

In this key note, Elizabeth Mason, a solicitor with Terri Janke and Company, presented on the company’s *True Tracks* framework for protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP). Ms Mason also outlined how western and non-Indigenous forms of intellectual property and copyright laws and legal principles differ from Indigenous conceptions of knowledge, custodianship, and authorship.

The presentation was engaging and informative with many participants expressing their surprise at the scope of existing copyright laws and how this can impact on culturally safe and collaborative research with Indigenous Australian communities.

*Table 3: Barriers and opportunities for data sovereignty identified during the presentation*

Barriers	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copyright requires a material form to be protected and the person/s who create this material form then retain copyright over it, if you are employed by the university they may own copyright. Participants may not be aware that providing data through oral recordings means the copyright accrues to the person who has made the recording</li> <li>• Copyright enables people to create material to exploit for economic gain. This may be inconsistent with research values of universities and Indigenous knowledge stakeholders</li> <li>• Does the University have a strong framework for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities do not have to start from scratch, the <i>True Tracks</i> framework has already been developed and there are consultancy experts in this area</li> <li>• Recognition of Cultural and Intellectual Property broadens the scope for protection beyond individualist notions of copyright and intellectual property</li> <li>• <i>True Tracks</i> provides an avenue for redress if knowledge stakeholders find their knowledge has been inappropriately exploited</li> <li>• <i>True Tracks</i> framework provides a robust understanding of free, prior, and informed consent by folding these protocols into conducting research</li> </ul>

**Other sessions**

Building on the key note discussions, breakaway discussions focused on identifying opportunities and barriers for research within the University in more detail. It was great to have the key note presenters as well as Elders participating in these group discussions

<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Dr. Peta Jeffries.

and providing their expertise. Topics for discussion included: principles for impactful Indigenous Research Partnerships, applying these principles to research at Charles Sturt University, and mapping future research possibilities. Some realisable action items which arose out of these discussions include:

- Providing more outreach regarding University research activities for Elders and community groups, for example, newsletters
- Changes to Ethics forms to include benefit sharing and how researchers are feeding the research results back to community
- Open access for Elders to CSU's libraries
- Researchers to keep formal records of consultation
- Need to include communities in smaller regional areas in research outreach and planning and engage with the research they are doing
- Research active designation is crucial for enabling Indigenous academic supervisors, how can Indigenous researchers at CSU be supported in this?

The School of Indigenous Australian Studies also presented a panel discussion on what the theme of the Summit meant for their research.

- Dr Peta Jeffries discussed her research into the myths of Australian history and how these serve to maintain settler colonialism through various systemic and institutional processes of silencing, denial, and erasure
- Dr Holly Randell-Moon discussed their research on whiteness and their role in working with non-Indigenous peoples to recognise their privilege in order to free up Indigenous Australians from this labour

## Thanks

On behalf of the School of Indigenous Australian Studies we would like to offer the following thanks:

- Many thanks for the generosity of the Elders and Leaders who provided their expertise to Summit participants: Aunty Pat Doolan, Uncle Ray Woods, Ms Teresa Yasserie, Ms Danielle Flakelar, and Aunty Margaret Walker.
- Thanks to all those who spoke including our key note speakers: Associate Professor Sandy O'Sullivan and Ms Elizabeth Mason.
- Thanks to the key note presenters for your willingness to be involved in the discussions over the two days and for the insights you were able to share about collaboration and opportunities moving forward.
- A big thank you to all that attended for your engagement and contributions to the discussions over the two days.
- Thank you to Ms Dale Bonham for your assistance in organising and ensuring a smooth running of the Summit.

## Feedback

Feedback overall positive, with a genuine commitment expressed by participants to action changes in research culture and processes where possible.



## Costs

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Faculty of Arts and Education for the costs associated with running the Summit.

## Conclusion

Overall the Summit was a successful in facilitating discussion and identifying action for culturally responsive research practices and processes. Each of the stated objectives require capacity-building in a range of short, medium, and long-term measures. CSU staff from across three faculties, HDR students, and community representatives met and shared their experiences of research with Indigenous Australians. This opportunity to meet face-to-face enabled dialogue regarding relationships between communities as knowledge stakeholders and the University and its research remit. The Summit provided an opportunity to maintain and grow this relationship and develop collaborative projects in the future.

## Recommendations

All participants are very keen to repeat the Summit again in 2020. Key recommendations include actioning the opportunities and barriers to culturally safe research into the broader research processes of the University participants are involved in.

It is also important to build on the momentum from the Summit. To do this, it is intended that CSU researchers from the Summit work to grow relationships between now and the next Summit. With this in mind, if there is someone you would like to connect with, or a specific project you would like to discuss or develop, please contact the School of Indigenous Australian Studies Research Committee Chair Professor Sue Green (sugreen@csu.edu.au).

Report compiled by Dr Holly Randell-Moon  
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