



# Reconciliation Action Plan 2015 - 2017



We acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters where we operate our business. We honour the unique cultural and spiritual relationship to the land, waters and seas of First Australian peoples and their continuing and rich contribution to James Cook University (JCU) and Australian society. We also pay respect to ancestors and Elders past, present and future.



## Message from the Vice Chancellor and President

I am delighted to present James Cook University's first Reconciliation Action Plan. Through its implementation we aim to strengthen our commitment to enhance the lives of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through education and research, as reflected in our Reconciliation Statement. The Reconciliation Action Plan also supports our University vision to create a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide, through graduates and discoveries that make a difference.

We commit ourselves as an organisation and a community of individuals to the initiatives and the targets laid out in our Reconciliation Action Plan. This will help us build strong and mutually beneficial partnerships that work towards closing the employment, health and education gap for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Embracing reconciliation is a journey for the whole University that requires dedication, commitment and flexibility. We recognise that we will continue to learn along the way and will need to refresh our Plan to ensure the University achieves real and lasting

results. We will continually raise awareness on our reconciliation commitments by promoting the Plan to students and staff, and provide opportunities to engage in reconciliation activities.

Please feel free to provide input and feedback on our Reconciliation Action Plan so that it can evolve and remain relevant to the many communities we are a part of and I look forward to sharing our progress with you and to seeing the benefits realised for James Cook University.

We look forward with great anticipation to the future success of our students and staff and the achievement of genuine reconciliation between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.

**Professor Sandra Harding**  
*Vice Chancellor and President*

## Our business

Ranked in the top four percent\* of the world's tertiary institutions, JCU is dedicated to creating a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide, through graduates and discoveries that make a difference. The University conducts nationally significant and internationally recognised research in areas such as marine sciences, biodiversity, tropical ecology and environments, global warming, tourism, and tropical medicine and public health. Our researchers are recognised for their positive contributions to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social issues, education and research capacity.

Beginning in 1960 as a University College of The University of Queensland and in the period since our establishment as James Cook University in 1970, we have expanded into a multi-campus institution with our main campuses in the tropical cities of Cairns, Singapore and Townsville, with study centres in Mount Isa, Thursday Island and Mackay. We have some 21,000 students and around 5,000 staff. A total of 643 students (4.3% of domestic students) and 91 staff (2.4% of staff) identify as being of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. Whilst national parity for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is 2.5%, the population living in JCU's catchment represents 10% of the total population.

Our students come from many backgrounds, promoting a rich cultural and experiential diversity on campus. Our undergraduate and postgraduate courses span the arts, business, creative arts, education, engineering, law, medicine and health sciences, science, information technology and social sciences. We aim to give graduates the qualifications and skills they need for the global workforce as well as the cultural skills to provide genuinely competent services to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

We also recognise our special obligation to be relevant to our own region and have forged close linkages into the economy and social fabric of the northern Queensland community. We are dedicated to ensuring that our teaching, learning and research is high quality and delivers practical benefits to the peoples and industries of the region. In one way or another, improving the situation and circumstances of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in northern Australia has been central to who we are. From the 1970's we have provided pathways for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, delivered courses outside major metropolitan and regional centres, and committed to research activities that enrich and strengthen Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

JCU seeks to build a supportive environment for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff in order that they feel safe and respected. JCU is proud to build on our past successes through this, our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

\* Academic Ranking of World Universities produced by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University

# James Cook University Reconciliation Statement

JCU is committed to working towards the achievement of genuine and sustainable reconciliation between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. JCU believes that a commitment to the ongoing process of reconciliation is vital to the attainment of a better future for all Australians and all members of the JCU community. This Statement applies to all members of the JCU community.

Reconciliation promotes justice, recognition and healing. It is about helping all Australians move forward, creating a better understanding of Australia's past and how it affects the lives of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

JCU acknowledges that the impact of colonisation, public policies, racial discrimination and prejudice, have had a major effect on the lives of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to face disadvantages as well as prejudice and racism.

JCU acknowledges that Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the original inhabitants and traditional custodians of this continent and that they have unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land and waters.

JCU commits to working towards the achievement of reconciliation as follows:

- Create a university environment where Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and members of the wider campus community, work, study and live together with mutual respect and understanding
- Foster an environment where all students and staff feel safe and valued, regardless of their background
- Recognise and value cultural diversity as an asset which enriches the life of the University community

- Incorporate Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultures within the physical structures and spaces of the University
- Address racism and prejudice by highlighting University policies, providing an accessible complaints process, and by educating all students and staff about issues of racism, equity and equal opportunity
- Integrate Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, perspectives and experience across the curriculum through consultation with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

The University is proud of the achievements of its distinguished Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, graduates and staff. We are proud of the cultural richness and diversity of our University community. JCU looks forward to the future success of our staff and students and the achievement of genuine reconciliation between the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

## Our vision for reconciliation

Our vision is to build strong relationships, increase respect and improve opportunities for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is important as within our region, a significant proportion of the population identifies as being of Australian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. We will continue to raise awareness about our commitment to reconciliation by promoting our RAP to students and staff, and by providing opportunities to engage with reconciliation activities.

# Our reconciliation journey and achievements

Highlights in our reconciliation journey so far include:

**1977**

Established the Aboriginal and Islander Teacher Education Program (AITEP) to address Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education needs for north Queensland

**1981**

Student Association, with support from the University hosts first national land rights conference that leads to Mabo Case

**1990**

Community-based Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program (RATEP) commenced, 155 have graduated

**1992**

Established the Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Participation, Research and Development (CATSIPRD), becoming the School of Indigenous Australian Studies (SIAS) in 1998

**1998**

Diploma of Communication/Media established to train Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio broadcasters  
Graduation of the first Torres Strait Islander with a PhD in Australia

**2003-2004**

Nursing and education courses available at the Thursday Island Study Centre in the Torres Strait

**2003**

Established the Indigenous Health Unit (IHU) within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Molecular Sciences  
Appointed first Chair in Indigenous Australian Studies in Queensland

**2004**

Student Association were catalyst for the establishment of the annual Mabo Lecture which commemorates the life of Eddie Koiki Mabo

**2008**

Vice Chancellor and President launched the JCU Reconciliation Statement  
Naming of our Townsville campus library after the late former employee, Eddie Koiki Mabo  
Naming of creeks in language names, for Townsville and Cairns campuses, by local Australian Aboriginal Elders

**2012**

JCU served as a set for the *Mabo* telemovie, produced by Blackfella Films  
Australian Learning and Teaching Council Indigenous awards, two for Teaching Excellence and one for Programs that Enhance Learning  
Seven Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander honorary doctorates  
Strong employment history of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at JCU

**2013**

Vice Chancellor and President signed a commitment to the development of a RAP

## Our reconciliation journey and achievements (continued)

In May 2013, our Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Sandra Harding, signed a commitment to the development of a RAP to further support the JCU Reconciliation Statement. In August 2013, the JCU community was invited by the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor (SDVC) to self-nominate through an Expression of Interest process to be members of our first RAP Working Group. Nine members were chosen, comprising of Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and other Australian staff and students based in Townsville and Cairns. The Working Group was chaired by the SDVC and Associate Professor Jacinta Elston, and met monthly from September 2013 through to September 2014.

To ensure engagement across JCU, our RAP was developed by the RAP Working Group in consultation with students, staff, our Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group, and the Senior Management team. Our RAP has been endorsed by the Education and Research Committees, Academic Board, University Executive and the University Council.

In the process of developing this RAP, the University engaged with local Traditional Owners where our Australian campuses and study centres are based, to ensure cultural protocols are met and to seek guidance in respecting cultural beliefs and practices.

The RAP Working Group developed the RAP under the auspice of JCU's Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group. This Reference Group of eight Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members provides high-level advice to the SDVC on areas including governance, strategic planning, student welfare and engagement. Their term ends in September 2016.

The development of this RAP coalesces with our recently endorsed Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Action Plan in a significant and synergistic demonstration of our commitment and determination to uphold the commitment to our Reconciliation Statement. It also builds on the important work we are already undertaking throughout JCU to respect, support, and provide opportunities to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

Overall responsibility for this RAP is held by the SDVC who will continue to champion and uphold it within JCU as central to our core business as a university. The RAP Working Group will continue to work with the SDVC to monitor the implementation of the RAP. RAP actions will be reviewed bi-annually by the RAP Working Group. Senior Management is also responsible for the university-wide implementation of the RAP.

This RAP is available on JCU's website, along with complementary Support Guides for students and staff. These Guides provide ideas of how students and staff can contribute to the implementation of the actions and meeting the targets in the RAP. Our RAP is also available on Reconciliation Australia's website.

At JCU, this RAP is everybody's business.

## 1. Relationships

JCU is committed to building stronger relationships between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. We strive further to create a university environment where Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and members of the wider campus community, work, study and live together with mutual respect and understanding. Central to this is fostering an environment where all students and staff feel safe and valued, regardless of their background.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target	
1.1	JCU RAP Working Group actively monitors RAP development, including implementation of actions, progress and reporting	SDVC RAP Working Group	October 2014 December 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RAP Working Group oversees the development, endorsement and launch of the RAP</li> <li>Meet bi-monthly to monitor and report progress of RAP implementation</li> </ul>
1.2	Communicate JCU's RAP to all employees, students and external stakeholders to raise awareness of our commitment to reconciliation	SDVC  Director Human Resources Dean Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement Deans	November 2014 November 2014-2016  January 2015  November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide all JCU staff and students with an electronic copy of the RAP</li> <li>Provide students and staff with online Support Guides which they can contribute to, to support their engagement with the RAP</li> <li>Provide published JCU RAP to Reconciliation Australia for RAP registration and uploading to website</li> <li>Present and promote the RAP to all staff and students, including staff inductions and student orientations</li> </ul>
1.3	Engage with Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff, also students and staff of the wider Australian community within JCU, to build stronger relationships	SDVC  Director Student Services JCU Student Association  Vice Chancellor  Dean College of Arts, Society and Education	November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement an annual internal communication plan that includes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' festivals and significant events to students via Semester Planners, JCU Student Association Wall Planner and Student Diary</li> <li>Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' festivals and significant events to staff through email from the Vice Chancellor and intranet</li> <li>The JCU annual Mabo Lecture for students and staff on the topic of an Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issue</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 1. Relationships (continued)

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
1.4 Engage with key Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, stakeholders and communities outside JCU to build stronger relationships	SDVC Deputy Vice Chancellor Global Strategy and Engagement	November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a list of key Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from local communities, including potential students, education experts and community leaders</li> </ul>
		November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement an annual external communication plan that includes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informing and inviting the wider community via JCU's public website, to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' festivals at JCU</li> <li>Encouraging JCU students and staff to participate in key Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activities taking place outside of JCU</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		November 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise at least two meetings per year with key Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and stakeholders from our communities, for support and strategic advice</li> </ul>
1.5 JCU to participate in and support National Reconciliation Week (NRW) to promote stronger relationships between Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians	SDVC Deputy Vice Chancellors Deans Directors Chief of Staff	27 May – 3 June 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to organise at least one internal event each year for NRW</li> <li>Support the participation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, RAP Working Group members, Student Council members and senior leadership/staff to attend community NRW events</li> <li>Register JCU's NRW events on Reconciliation Australia website</li> </ul>
1.6 Award of Excellence to recognise outstanding contributions to the JCU reconciliation journey	Vice Chancellor	November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Award for Excellence for successful contribution to reconciliation for all JCU students and employees, presented each year</li> </ul>

## 2. Respect

JCU recognises and values cultural diversity as an asset which enriches the life of the University community. We will continue to respect and incorporate Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultures into our physical structures and spaces at JCU, and integrate First Australian peoples' cultural knowledge, relationship to land and sea, histories, perspectives and experiences throughout our core business activities.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target
2.1 Engage JCU students and staff in cultural learning to increase their understanding and appreciation of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and achievements	SDVC Director Human Resources Dean Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement	June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a comprehensive program that aims to increase cultural awareness and competency of JCU staff to engage and respond to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imperatives in higher education</li> </ul>
		December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum framework and implementation plan to be embedded into courses, subjects and programs</li> </ul>
		December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support academic staff to engage with the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum framework for content in their subjects/teaching practice</li> </ul>
2.2 Engage JCU students and staff in the cultural protocols around Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country ceremonies to promote understanding and shared meaning behind these ceremonies	SDVC  Director Human Resources Dean Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement Deans  Vice Chancellor	November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure Acknowledgement of Country statement is set out on the Home Page of the JCU public website</li> </ul>
		January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define significant events, such as celebrations, gatherings, meetings, and special lectures, at which a Welcome to Country from a local Traditional Owner will be included</li> </ul>
		January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement JCU's guide to cultural protocols, and communicate cultural guide existence at student orientations and staff inductions</li> </ul>
2.3 Celebrate and participate in National NAIDOC Week and JCU NAIDOC Week events	SDVC Director Human Resources Deans Directors Chief of Staff	January 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distribute an email from the Vice Chancellor to all staff and students encouraging the use of JCU's guide to cultural protocols</li> </ul>
		September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review HR policies and procedures to ensure there are no barriers to staff participating in internal and external NAIDOC Week activities</li> </ul>
		September 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise at least one event to celebrate NAIDOC at each of JCU's campuses and study centres</li> </ul>
		September 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and provide the opportunity for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to engage with their cultures and community to celebrate NAIDOC Week events</li> </ul>

### 3. Opportunity

We understand the significant social and economic barriers experienced by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities within our region. We will contribute to the efforts to strengthen study, employment and economic opportunities for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through our continuing engagement across all facets of our core business activities.

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target	
3.1	Build on existing opportunities to increase Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment at JCU	SDVC Deputy Vice Chancellors Deans Directors Chief of Staff	November 2014  November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uphold the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy currently under review to ensure barriers to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff are able to be addressed</li> <li>Increase opportunities for JCU staff vacancies to be advertised in Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, and other networks</li> </ul>
3.2	Investigate and promote supplier diversity opportunities to increase the number of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses within the JCU supply chain	Deputy Vice Chancellor Services and Resources	November 2015 December 2015  June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate becoming a member of Supply Nation</li> <li>Undertake a review of JCU's procurement policy to identify barriers to engaging Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses</li> <li>Determine and implement strategies to increase engagement of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander companies, including the public promotion of business opportunities and sourcing providers for our Preferred Supplier Lists</li> </ul>

### 4. Tracking progress and reporting

Action	Responsibility	Timeline	Measurable target	
4.1	Monitor the progression of JCU RAP commitments	SDVC RAP Working Group	March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the requirements and process for annual reporting against the RAP's measurable targets for JCU Deputy Vice Chancellors, Directors and College Deans</li> </ul>
4.2	Annual reporting on JCU RAP implementation	SDVC University Secretary RAP Working Group	August 2015 and 2016 Submit by 30 September 2015 and 2016 November 2015 and 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JCU Annual Report to include achievements and progression of the RAP</li> <li>Report annually to Reconciliation Australia on progress of RAP, including completing the RAP Impact Measurement Questionnaire</li> <li>Provide a verbal presentation to the Vice Chancellor's Advisory Committee annually, with an update on RAP and seek input for future progression</li> </ul>
4.3	JCU RAP refreshed and updated	SDVC RAP Working Group	December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review, refresh and update JCU RAP based on learnings, achievements and challenges and forward to Reconciliation Australia for review and endorsement</li> </ul>

### Coming Together and Respecting Difference

Acrylic on linen by *Kassandra Savage*

Language group: *Waanyi and Walangama clan part of Gkuthaarn/Kukatj nations*



JCU acquired this artwork as part of our commitment to implement this RAP. The artwork represents JCU's story in an Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander way:

- Circles in the middle depict JCU as a meeting place
- Outer circles are JCU's linkages to communities through their students who return home to share their new knowledge and understandings
- Different patterns within the hands and arms are the differences between and within Australian Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and multicultural Australia. There are also similarities in the hands and arms used to illustrate us standing together for equity and equality
- The ripple effect in the arms and hands represents our reconciliation journey; starting small, growing bigger and reaching out to touch more and more lives. The effect gathers momentum to develop support and understandings. The circles represent the importance of yarning circles, meeting circles, and communities, in order that we can connect with each other.

### From the artist

My connection to JCU goes back over 25 years when I was a student studying to be an early childhood teacher. It was through a special entry program that targeted Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, giving us the opportunity to study and graduate with the same qualifications as other students. This opportunity changed my life and 25 years later, having taught in many communities, I am still teaching and making a difference in the lives of all children, especially our Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. They need strong role models to encourage them to follow their dreams and to inspire them to do great things. I believe education plays an important role in shaping young children to be more accepting and tolerant of people from different cultures and backgrounds.

*Kassandra Savage*



To find out more online:

[www.jcu.edu.au/reconciliation](http://www.jcu.edu.au/reconciliation)

Enquiries about this RAP should be directed to:

Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor

James Cook University

Townsville QLD 4811

Telephone: (07) 4781 6884

Email: [sdvc@jcu.edu.au](mailto:sdvc@jcu.edu.au)