

Editorial

We are pleased to bring you Volume 55 Issue 1 of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*. This volume brings together research that explores Indigenous education across higher education, professional curriculum, community-school relationships and international contexts. The authors foreground the importance of Indigenous authority, culturally safe institutional practices, sustained relational accountability and structural change.

The volume opens with a focus on Australian higher education. Anderson et al. examine the confidence-competence paradox among university leaders in Indigenous higher education contexts. Drawing on a national survey and interviews with 41 university executives, they identify a disconnect between leaders' reported confidence in engaging with Indigenous peoples and communities and their self-reported experience in Indigenous higher education. The paper highlights the need for leadership development, cultural capability and institutional change that distribute responsibility for Indigenous success more equitably across universities. Centring the voices of six Elders, Harry et al. examine Elders in Residence roles in Australian higher education. The paper considers how Elders are positioned within university governance, Indigenous leadership and community engagement. Introducing the Dhurrun model, the authors show that Elders' contributions are often misunderstood, inconsistently supported or reduced to symbolic gestures. They argue that reclaiming Eldership in the academy is essential to restoring Indigenous authority and embedding relational accountability within higher education ecosystems.

Beaufils et al. explore the role of a dedicated First Nations student centre in supporting diverse transitions into university. Their study demonstrates how pathway translation, place-based belonging and wraparound support can assist students across the university lifespan from imagining university, through enrolment and first year, to ongoing study. The authors emphasise that improving participation and completion requires not only expanded entry pathways, but sustained investment in culturally safe infrastructures that support students through the varied and non-linear pressures of university life. Grounded in Aboriginal leadership and an Indigenist methodology, Dwyer et al. highlight the challenges and strengths shaping the higher education journeys of Aboriginal students from remote and very remote communities in the West Kimberley. Their findings underscore the urgent need for universities to move beyond inclusion towards genuinely relational, culturally responsive approaches that centre Aboriginal knowledge, care and self-determination. Clarke et al. evaluate the embedding of Indigenous public health competencies within the Master of Public Health program at the University of Melbourne. While their evaluation identifies strong integration of Indigenous public health topics across core, capstone and specialist units, it also identifies inconsistencies in students' exposure to Indigenous health learning and gaps in the systematic embedding of Indigenous leadership, governance and accountability. The authors recommend a dedicated core Indigenous public health subject, alongside future competency mapping across the program. Jha et al. turn our attention to information and communication technology (ICT) education in Australian universities. Drawing on interviews with ICT educators, they find that the integration of Indigenous perspectives remains limited and inconsistent, frequently dependent on individual initiative rather than systematic institutional approaches. The paper identifies barriers

including limited discipline-specific resources and structural curriculum constraints, while also highlighting the value of collaboration with Indigenous experts and culturally relevant pedagogies.

The volume then shifts to an international context. Gomez and Ramirez investigate the experiences of Indigenous university students in Colombia, combining longitudinal enrolment data with interviews involving students, faculty and staff. Their study highlights persistent barriers to participation and retention, including epistemic tensions between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. The authors argue for culturally resonant retention strategies and the integration of Indigenous epistemologies as structural redress for historical exclusion. The final paper by Blak Caucus et al. examines Aboriginal community perceptions and experiences of engagement with schools in New South Wales. Through community-led research conducted as part of the Culturally Nourishing Schooling project, the paper identifies the importance of local histories and contexts, clear and consistent communication, shared spaces and appropriate protocols for engagement. The findings demonstrate that relationships, collective trust and dialogue are critical to developing power-equal partnerships between schools and Aboriginal communities.

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