

## **Proposal for the establishment of a new entity through the integration of the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang**

### **Preamble**

University of Sydney specific programs of study and support for Indigenous students have been provided through the activities of the Koori Centre, on the Camperdown Campus and Yooroang Garang on the Cumberland Campus.

At the September meeting of the Indigenous Education Working Group agreement was reached to investigate the establishment of a new entity (as yet un-named) through the integration of the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang. This entity will provide a focus for and the mechanism to coordinate all Indigenous activities relating to learning and teaching, student support, research and community outreach, across the University.

#### *Koori Centre*

In 1989, the Faculty of Education established an Aboriginal Education Centre and, in 1990, the Centre received substantial Commonwealth Government funding enabling it to provide a full range of support services. It also developed Aboriginal Studies programs in the University, drawing on the resources of the Sydney College of Advanced Education, one of the University's amalgamating institutions.

The name of the Aboriginal Education Centre was changed to the Koori Centre in 1992, to better reflect its purposes and community association. In 1994, the Koori Centre left the Faculty of Education and became a mainstream University initiative.

#### *Yooroang Garang*

In February 1999, Yooroang Garang was established as a School of the Faculty of Health Sciences. Yooroang Garang has provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with education, support and training in the Health Sciences since 1983. Over the past two decades it has grown from a support unit to a School offering a full range of academic courses as well as support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In the early 1980's, the Aboriginal Education Unit (AEU) at the then Cumberland College of Health Sciences, began training Aboriginal health workers employed by the NSW Health Department. It was one of the first organisations to provide accredited programs for Aboriginal Health Workers in NSW. The Unit also established an Aboriginal Health Science Support Program and an Aboriginal Health Science Preparatory Program to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to become allied health professionals through their study in the Faculty of Health Sciences. In 1989 Cumberland College of Health Science became amalgamated with the University of Sydney and a Bachelor degree for Aboriginal health workers was introduced.

In 2005 the University-wide position of Professor of Indigenous Studies was advertised. Dr Aileen Morton Robinson initially accepted the position but due to family circumstances was unable to take up the position. During 2007 the position of Professor of Indigenous Studies will need to be re-advertised. It is anticipated that this position be a cross-university position where the emphasis is on developing and coordinating research, making links with government and with various Indigenous communities. The professor will not act as Executive Director of the new entity.

## **Purpose of the new entity**

The Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang share three common objectives. These are to maintain and increase the recruitment, retention and academic success of Indigenous students across the faculties.

The Koori Centre is responsible for achieving these objectives across the University as a whole, while Yooroang Garang's focus is on Indigenous students in what was formerly the College of Health Science. There is some overlap between the recruitment activities of the two centres, and in recent years they have collaborated on a number of projects, particularly in the area of recruitment and community engagement. In the areas of retention and academic success, however, the centres have quite different philosophies. The Koori Centre focuses on developing Learning and Teaching skills that enable students to integrate into all University programs. Yooroang Garang provides tuition support to students, with its curricula focused on Indigenous Australian health issues in the community. Yooroang Garang has recently adopted the Koori Centre's Scaffolding Literacy Program.

The new entity will have the following purposes:

- The efficient and effective use of resources
- To manage, monitor, coordinate and report on Indigenous activities across the University.
- To improve internal and external communication relating to Indigenous activities emanating from the University.
- Reduce duplication of resources and effort.
- Give a strong public face to Indigenous issues at the University of Sydney.

In order to support these purposes the following principles will inform the development and work of the new entity.

The new entity will:

1. build on the strengths inherent in the work of the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang and draw on the strengths of other parts of the University where Indigenous research and teaching is undertaken – eg Public Health and Nursing
2. consolidate some activities that are replicated in KC and YG – marketing, recruitment, community engagement and outreach and student support.
3. ensure timeliness and accuracy for central reporting requirements for DEST
4. facilitate a consistency of approach regarding the leadership, organization, operation and management of initiatives and programs to support the University's Indigenous Strategy
5. embed a culture of transparency, mutual respect and trust, communication and collaboration amongst students and staff to ensure that the aspirations of the University's Indigenous Strategy are achieved.
6. coordinate and broker activities across the University to foster cultural diversity across the curriculum and in approaches to student learning and teaching.
7. provide advice to members of the Senior Executive and faculties relating to Indigenous issues.

The Federal Government has established seven priority areas through the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC). These priority areas provide the basis for the University's Indigenous Education Strategy.

IHEAC's Seven Priority Areas are:

1. Encourage universities to work with schools, TAFE colleges and other registered training organisations to build pathways and raise levels of aspiration and confidence of Indigenous students
2. Develop a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolments
3. Improve the level of Indigenous post-graduate enrolment, enhance Indigenous research & increase the number of Indigenous researchers
4. Improve the rates of success, retention and completion for Indigenous students
5. Enhance the status on campus of Indigenous culture, knowledge and studies
6. Increase the number of Indigenous people working in Australian Universities
7. Improve the participations of Indigenous people in university governance and management

Achieving these aspirations is required as part of the University's reporting requirements to DEST. The University's response to these priorities is found in Strategic Directions Document and the Learning and Teaching Plan (Goal 3)

### **Scope and Activities of the new entity**

The new entity will be organised around three activities: curriculum and teaching, student and staff support and research. KC and YG currently undertake the following activities. It is assumed that the new entity would continue to do these as well as develop other activities.

#### *Curriculum and Teaching:*

The Faculty of Health Sciences delivers to following programs in Indigenous Health:

Aboriginal Health Science Preparatory program, Aboriginal Health Science Support program, Bachelor of Health Science (Aboriginal Health and Community Development), graduate certificate in Health Science (Indigenous Community Health), Master of Health Science (Indigenous Community Health), Master of Health Science (Indigenous Community Health) by research and PhD

Department of Public Health in the Faculty of Medicine delivers the:  
Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion

Aboriginal Studies and Indigenous Australian Studies are offered through the Koori Centre, which include the following units of study:

Introduction to Indigenous Australia- Colours of Identity, Indigenous Bodies, Indigenous Creative Expression, Issues in Indigenous Rights, Speaking Gamilaraay, Indigenous Health & Communities, The Yolngu Way\* (Pre-requisite for Garma Fieldwork), Torres Strait Histories & Experiences, Garma Fieldwork\*

The Koori Centre also offers cultural sensitivity training.

### *Student and staff support*

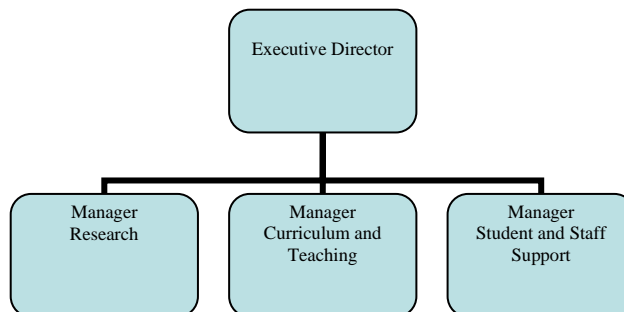
Student recruitment  
Staff recruitment  
Student discipline tutoring  
Student retention  
Staff retention  
Student mentoring  
Staff mentoring  
Community engagement – internal networks  
Community engagement – external networks

### *Research*

Indigenous Health (Public Health, YG. Faculty of Health Science)  
Student learning (KC)  
Indigenous languages (KC)

### **Structure of new Entity**

The new entity will provide a research, teaching and support function across the University. Accordingly it will require senior leadership, to give it status within the university and outside. A professorial appointment will enable senior leadership to coordinate and develop Indigenous research and community engagement. Operational leadership, namely the management and administration of the day to day activities will be through the appointment of an Executive Director.



Each of the portfolios will be headed by a manager.

The Executive Director will be responsible for the day to day running and management of the new entity, in particular the management of staff and resources. This person will also be responsible for ensuring the collection, monitoring and reporting of data required by DEST is undertaken in a timely way and is accurate. The three portfolio managers will report to the Executive Director and be responsible for the management and administration of their areas of responsibility.

### **Operations of the New Entity**

Current staff of YG and Koori Centre will become members of the new entity. They will report to the Executive Director. These staff will be responsible for delivering programs and units of study currently offered through KC and YG. Programs offered by the Faculty of Medicine in Indigenous Health promotion and the Faculty of Health Science will continue to be delivered by these Faculties.

## **Recommendation**

That

1. A group be established with membership from KC and YG, Rural Medicine and the Faculty of Health Sciences to develop a more concrete proposal and a time line for the establishment of this new entity
2. The position of Professor of Indigenous Studies be advertised early in 2007.

### 3. Appendix 1

#### Main findings from reports

The review of the reports revealed the following themes:

##### *Statistical information*

- Student numbers overall are declining. Lyn Martin indicators show that the University is not achieving its .97% average.
- That enrolment figures are highest in the College of Health Science, however completion figures are low.
- Enrolment figures are low in the College of Science and Technology.
- Enrolment figures are declining from the Cadigal Special Admissions Program.

##### *Objectives*

- Both the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang have the same objectives – to address student recruitment, student retention and success. Whilst the Koori Centre promotes its roles, there was a noted lack of Yooroang Garang's promotion of its roles.
- There is a limited amount of communication between the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang, and a lot of overlap in their activities.
- There is a lack of clarity around the roles of the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang, and there are conflicting perceptions about their roles. For example, some reports state that Yooroang Garang is active in the community, other reports state that it doesn't engage with the Indigenous community.
- There is a need for the Centres to collaborate on their areas of expertise in order to reach their key objectives.

##### *Recruitment*

- The need to raise the awareness within the Indigenous community of programs offered through what was the College of Health Science and the College of Sciences and Technology.
- There are a number of the same strategies that the Koori Centre and the Yooroang Garang have adopted to achieve their objectives of student recruitment. For example, the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang both administer the Cadigal Program for student recruitment and are working on a joint travelling road show marketing program.
- That there is potential for the Yooroang Garang to apply its community engagement skills to other faculties, such as the College of Science and Technology. For example, one of the reasons for the decline in enrolments in the Faculty of Science and Technology is the perceived lack of relevance of Science to the Indigenous community and the perceived career outcomes of the course. Catering curricula to issues in the Indigenous community is one of Yooroang Garang's strengths.

## *Retention*

- That building a sense of community and integration within the University promotes student retention and success rates.
- The Yooroang Garang has recently adopted the Koori Centres Scaffolding Literacy Program to address student retention while providing students with cultural support. However, students in the College of Health Science have felt reluctant to seek help from non Indigenous staff within the College of Health Science. The Yooroang Garang needs to work on its mechanisms for providing student support, and could benefit from some communication with the Koori Centre in this area.
- Within the College of Health Science, students are reluctant to seek assistance from non-Indigenous staff or tutors; there are a lack of systems in place for students to learn general study skills such as time management, academic writing skills, and exam preparation techniques. There is also a lack of knowledge about what support services do exist and who is responsible for them. (Review of Indigenous Health, )
- The issue of Postgraduate qualification also emerged frequently. The Koori Centre focuses on developing its Learning and Teaching skills by ensuring that staff within the Koori Centre attain higher research degrees and provide a source of inspiration and leadership for Indigenous students. There is support for staff at the Koori Centre to pursue higher education degrees in order to supervise prospective postgraduate students. However there was a noted absence of this type of commendation to Yooroang Garang. Their teaching unit could also benefit from staff pursuing higher research degrees.
- There is a lack of knowledge of Indigenous students after they have graduated. There is potential for the Koori Centre and Yooroang Garang to set up an Indigenous Alumni.