

Indigenous Student Success Program

2025 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT





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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)

INTRODUCTION

CQUniversity is a dual sector university encompassing the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education (HE) sectors with 15 campuses and study hubs across five states of Australia. Figure 1 below shows the locations of CQUniversity campuses and study hubs.



Figure 1: CQUniversity Campuses and Study Hubs

CQUniversity is a national leader in distance education, with 80% of its students studying off-campus, including many from rural and remote communities. Guided by its vision to be “Australia’s most accessible and supportive University,” the University delivers innovative education, training, and research that connect regional Australia to the world. Through the *Strategic Plan 2024–2028: We Change Lives* and the *Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan 2025–2028*, CQUniversity has implemented initiatives that increase access, participation, and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This report highlights the strategies, programs, and partnerships that demonstrate the progress achieved in 2025, reflecting the University’s commitment to empowering First Nations Peoples through education and support.



2.1 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

CQUniversity experienced growth in First Nations student enrolments in 2025, with an additional 12 students compared to the previous year, reflecting a positive increase in participation (Table 1).

Enrolment data shows that the majority of commencing students in enabling programs were aged 15–19, indicating strong engagement with early pathway opportunities. At the undergraduate level, the largest cohort of commencing students fell within the 20–24 age group, followed by those aged 15–19 and 25–29, demonstrating a mix of direct school-to-university transitions alongside mature-age entry pathways. Postgraduate enrolments were more evenly distributed, primarily across the 20–24, 25–29, and 40–44 age groups, highlighting varied entry points into advanced study. Gender distribution data indicates that most First Nations students enrolled in 2025 were female (351), compared to 120 male students, with one student recorded as unspecified.

Overall, these trends reflect continued growth in First Nations participation across a range of age groups and study levels, with particularly strong representation among younger students entering through enabling and undergraduate pathways.

Table 1: Commencing First Nations student data 2023 to 2025

	Enabling	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Total
2023	108	301	66	475
2024	153	262	55	470
2025	126	282	74	482

2.1.1 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

In 2025, CQUniversity implemented a new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2025–2028, aligned with the CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024–2028 *We Change Lives*. This builds on the University’s reconciliation journey, which commenced with the 2013 Reconciliation Statement and progressed through the Innovate RAPs (2016–2018 and 2022–2024), the latter comprising over 180 deliverables.

The Stretch RAP 2025–2028 focuses on embedding First Nations perspectives across curriculum, strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, increasing First Nations workforce participation, and supporting community-led research. It reflects a commitment to achieving measurable outcomes through culturally informed and community-engaged approaches.

The RAP was developed through extensive consultation with internal stakeholders, senior leadership, and First Nations advisors, including Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, ensuring alignment with community priorities.

CQUniversity recognises reconciliation as an ongoing process and remains committed to continuous improvement, innovation, and accountability in delivering meaningful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

2.1.3 Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS)

A total of 186 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in CQUniversity’s STEPS course in 2025. This was a decrease of 13 students compared to the previous year, and a slight decrease on the overall proportion of the cohort at 11.4% compared to that of 12.5% in 2024.

Of the 186 students, 29 students successfully completed their studies in either Term 1 or Term 2. A further 36 students are due to complete at the end of Term 3, and 43 students are planning to continue the course in 2026 and beyond.

A total of 69 students withdrew from the course, but it is expected that some of these students will return to study when their personal circumstances permit. Overall, the online enrolments were slightly higher with 105 students enrolled online compared to 81 students on campus.



2.1.4 Bachelor of Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine)

In March 2025, the fourth cohort started their journey in the Regional Medical Pathway (RMP) with four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. One of the four students was enrolled as a mature-age student.

The pathway for mature-age students was implemented to support and improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who left school and followed a different career trajectory. They are now supported to follow their passion and study medicine locally.

The 4 current and 3 past RMP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are enthusiastic ambassadors for the course and involved with recruitment and engagement activities whenever possible.

The program is committed to support students by arranging and sponsoring activities such as:

- CQUniversity students attending University Queensland (UQ) Indigenous Medical Students' events and NAIDOC Week celebrations.
- Mentoring opportunities by Indigenous GPs in the local community and between CQUniversity and UQ students.
- Presentations from organisations such as The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACCRM) and junior doctors involved with the Central Queensland and Wide Bay Hospital and Health Services (WBHHS).

As part of the Pathway to Medicine three-year curriculum the health, history, and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are embedded in all subjects. Students learn about culturally safe care to better understand how to partner and collaborate to meet health needs and improve health outcomes for First Nations Peoples. In addition, as part of their Immersive Learning Experiences, students are placed in units such as the WBHHS First Nations Health in Hervey Bay.

The RMP First Nations Work Group started discussions to revitalise the RMP for First Nations students. The RMP partners will work collaboratively to focus on engagement with and recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Increase the support and retention of the enrolled students and assist them with their career pathways into the Hospital and Health Services and beyond.

2.1.5 Indigenous Student Advising

In late 2024, CQUniversity redesigned its whole-of-student lifecycle support model, introducing a renewed focus on Student Advising. This new organisational structure was implemented from 1 January 2025 and embedded Indigenous student support within the Student Service SPOT, a centralised service providing a single point of contact for current and prospective students seeking support and advice.

Within this model, a dedicated team of Indigenous Student Advising Specialists (ISAS) provides culturally safe, personalised support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Each adviser is allocated a cohort of students and delivers both responsive (inbound) and proactive (outbound) support across the student lifecycle. This includes key transition points and "moments that matter" such as application, offer, enrolment, onboarding, and progression throughout study.

The Student Service SPOT operates via a collaborative model, with Indigenous Student Advisers working closely with internal stakeholders including marketing, counselling, and wellbeing, the IED, Academic Learning Centre, Schools, careers, student advocacy, safer communities, and financial support services. Strategic Indigenous programs such as access, pathways, community engagement, and tutoring are led by the IED, complementing the advising model.

In 2025, ISAS supported 1,051 HE and 1,039 VET students. Key activities included:

- 4,714 inbound interactions, providing support across areas such as getting started, cultural advocacy, academic progression, extensions, study planning, leave from study, and referrals to specialist services including counselling, accessibility, tutoring, careers, and student advocacy. Advisers also supported scholarship applications through the provision of cultural reference letters.
- 8,515 proactive outbound engagements, delivered through a coordinated, multi-channel approach (SMS, email, phone, and events). These included enrolment and conversion support, onboarding and orientation activities, Moodle/MyCQU guidance, census date reminders, fee risk interventions, academic progress check-ins, and targeted support for at-risk students. Additional activities supported graduation readiness and ongoing engagement through webinars, campaigns, and university events.

In 2025, a total of 379 qualifications were conferred to Indigenous students across all study levels, including short courses, certificates, diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications, and one doctorate.



The University also implements broader strategies to increase access and participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students beyond ISSP funding. These include but are not limited to the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024–2028, and centralised Indigenous leadership through the IED, which drives culturally safe policy, engagement, and education practices across the institution.

2.1.6 Partnerships

As previously reported, funding from BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA) supports the BMA Chair of Indigenous Engagement, provides scholarships for Indigenous students across Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and VET programs, and facilitates First Nations community-led research projects developed in partnership with Indigenous communities. The partnership is well on track to support at least 23 First Nations students by end of June 2028. To-date, 8 students have been supported (5 Undergraduate and 3 VET students), with 11 new scholarships promoted for 2025. Graduates from bachelor programs to date have included: Paramedic Science, Psychological Science, Arts and Digital Media, Physiotherapy (Honours), Medical Science (Pathway to Medicine), and Nursing. VET student graduates and current students have studied courses including Cert III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, Cert III in Hairdressing, and Diploma of Nursing.

Scholars graduation media releases [here](#) and [here](#).

See CQUniCares BMA Indigenous VET scholarship [here](#).

See CQUniCares BMA Indigenous Undergraduate and Postgraduate scholarship [here](#).

The Buralaigm Weiber program continued to engage with and support Years 3 and 4 Indigenous students from Gladstone West State School. Throughout the year, students benefited from excursions and attended Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) Central to participate in lessons prepared by a team of teachers and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members. Australia Pacific LNG funds the program.

Thanks to the support of the Matana Foundation, First Nations girls aged 10-16 attended a STEM and Arts (STEAM) promotion full day at the CQUniversity's Bundaberg Makerspace. [Media release](#). First Nations year eight students from Gladstone attended the annual four-day Monadelphous Indigenous STEM Program. The program is delivered by CQUniversity and is funded by Monadelphous. It aims to give students a taste of a future STEM career. Students engaged in a series of science, cultural and technology activities that included a visit to CQUniversity's Coastal Marine Ecosystems Research Centre (CMERC). [Media release](#).

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) & CQUniversity partnership to deliver the Girls Academies in Mount Morgan State High School and Baralaba State High School concluded early 2025 after 3 years of impactful programs supporting the education and career aspirations of several hundred First Nations girls.

Several industry and community partners continued to offer generous scholarships restricted to First Nations students: this includes partnerships with Acumentis, Arrow Energy, BMA, Central Queensland Indigenous Development (CQID), Ecosure, Glencore Clermont, Holding Redlich, Kate Mullin Association, and Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS). Media releases [here](#) and [here](#).

New partnerships were established in 2025 with new donors North Queensland Bulk Ports Corporation, Squadron Energy, Yakeen Safety, Bristol Myers Squibb, Cairns Airport and Community Enterprise Queensland to offer additional scholarships. [Media release](#). Townsville Hospital and Health Service pledged in 2025 to support 12 annual academic prizes to celebrate the academic and clinical achievements of Townsville First Nations nursing students. [Media release](#).

The Whanu Binal program continued to support aspiring and emerging First Nations entrepreneurs through online sessions, yarns, mentoring and since 2025 a new fully accredited [Diploma of Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#). Thanks to funding provided by Arrow Energy, several First Nations students' tuition fees were fully sponsored.

CMERC continues to strengthen Indigenous student pathways and two-way learning through long-term partnerships with Traditional Owners across Queensland, integrating First Nations knowledges with applied research to advance seagrass restoration and nursery practice. CMERC supports on-the-job training, mentoring, and technical skills development spanning seagrass mapping, nursery operations, monitoring, and field restoration.



Embedded roles and mentoring:

CMERC hosts First Nations Sea Rangers seconded from Gidarjil Development Corporation, who are actively involved in developing seagrass restoration protocols and nursery management techniques while completing a Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management. One of the secondees, Aunty Marky Sullivan, leads nursery operations and seed processing, supports tours, and provides student mentoring. In recognition of her leadership and contribution, she received the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person of the Year at the Gladstone NAIDOC Awards (July 2024). Indigenous Sea Ranger Jasmine Craigie also joined the CMERC team and the SeaGrow project on secondment from Gidarjil. Jasmine is being supported in her training by Aunty Marky and Seagrass Nursery Officer Heidi Robertson, who are sharing their expertise to build Jasmine's skills in seagrass nursery operations and firsthand restoration delivery. CMERC also employs a Ngaro Traditional Owner trainee in Airlie Beach through a Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF) supported project (with Lendlease, the Fitzgerald Family and Reef Catchments), strengthening Whitsundays-based First Nations involvement in seagrass restoration.

Training and accredited learning pathways:

- CMERC has delivered targeted training sessions in seagrass mapping with Woppaburra Rangers and Ngaro trainees, building practical capability in habitat identification, field surveying, mapping workflows, and data interpretation.
- CMERC is finalising two seagrass restoration-focused units for the Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, with accreditation nearing completion—creating a formal, job-ready training pathway aligned to real restoration operations.
- Sea Rangers from Gidarjil Development Corporation and Woppaburra Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA), alongside CMERC staff and PhD students, participated in a CMERC-hosted Seagrass-Watch training event at CQUniversity. The sessions covered local seagrass species, monitoring protocols, and how regional seagrass systems compare globally. Field training at Lilley's Beach included identification of *Halodule uninervis*, *Halophila ovalis*, and *Zostera muelleri*. The training concluded with a presentation by Professor Emma Jackson on CMERC's restoration work, a facilities tour (led by Markeeta), and an early celebration of World Seagrass Day 2025.

Seagrass nursery and restoration forum:

In May, CMERC and Gidarjil Development Corporation co-hosted a two-day Seagrass Nursery Forum in Gladstone, bringing together 40+ delegates from eight Traditional Owner groups, alongside The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), Gladstone Ports Corporation (GPC), Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), University of Tasmania (UTAS), and researchers to strengthen collaboration in seagrass restoration. The forum included a nursery tour, presentations on global nursery networks, and discussions focused on training and workforce development. Day two featured separate Traditional Owner and researcher discussions, followed by a joint session to share outcomes and priorities. Key themes included recognising seagrass as a cultural indicator, the need for portable nurseries and tailored training, and accelerating research into seagrass life-cycle optimisation and rhizosphere processes. Participating Traditional Owner groups included Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, Woppaburra TUMRA, Ngaro Gia Application Group, Gunggandji Mandingalbay Yidinji People's Prescribed Body Corporate Aboriginal Corporation (PPBCAC), Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, Yuku Baja Muliku, Kuuku Ya'u, and Wulgurukaba Aboriginal Corporation.

Workshops and knowledge exchanges:

CMERC also supports ongoing knowledge exchange that reinforces cultural and ecological connections to seagrass and strengthens operational restoration capability. This includes participation in YILUM knowledge exchange week with Woppaburra Traditional Owners (focused on seagrass meadows, nursery operations, and species identification), and follow-up on-Country exchanges timed to favourable low tides to undertake practical field and lab training. These activities cover risk assessments, monitoring methods, intertidal flower collections, and the day-to-day requirements of nursery operations (record-keeping, maintenance, stock collection, and monitoring), directly aligned to the developing Cert III seagrass restoration stream.



2.1.7 Marketing

In 2025, CQUniversity's Marketing team delivered a range of campaign activities that supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation, inclusion and visibility, aligned to Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) objectives.

A dedicated Indigenous-focused recruitment campaign was delivered across paid media channels, promoting awareness of CQUniversity's study options and the specialised supports available to First Nations students. Activity focused on culturally relevant placements and messaging designed to increase awareness and consideration among prospective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Indigenous representation and acknowledgement were also embedded within CQUniversity's Main Recruitment campaign in 2025. This included the first-time inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student talent sharing their identity and connection to Country within long-form profile content. These stories were published via YouTube and CQUniversity's campaign landing pages, broadening representation by positioning First Nations students as part of the wider CQUniversity community, rather than as a separate audience.

Throughout 2025, the Marketing team consulted informally with the IED to refine First Nations target audience profiles and to review the effectiveness of previous creative platforms. This collaboration informed both campaign development and broader strategic decision-making, ensuring First Nations perspectives were considered in future planning. To strengthen culturally informed practice, the Campaigns and Content team also completed Cultural Competency Training in 2025.

In addition, strategic planning work was undertaken in 2025 to restructure CQUniversity's campaign approach for 2026. In consultation with, and supported by IED, a decision was approved to discontinue a separate Indigenous campaign media buy and creative platform and instead integrate First Nations audiences into the Main Recruitment campaign framework. This approach includes dedicated First Nations-targeted media and budget allocation. The change was driven primarily by a focus on improving media efficiency and effectiveness, while maintaining strong audience-centricity, and reflects an intentional shift to representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as an integral part of CQUniversity's broader student community.

2.2 SCHOLARSHIPS, OUTREACH ACTIVITIES, BRIDGING AND ENABLING SUPPORT

2.2.1 Outreach Activities

The Future Students team delivers a range of curriculum aligned programming providing aspiration-raising, career education, and transition encouragement to students from Regional, Rural and Remote, Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) backgrounds across Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, and Bundaberg regions.

In 2025, The Future Students Team engaged 24,089 students across 157 schools through 351 activities. Of those, nearly 5000 students completed a survey, of which 17% Identified as First Nations. This has increased from 2024, reflecting our intentional focus on reaching First Nations young people in the regions we serve. Our holistic programming that spans from aspiration to application aims to:

- Build Aspiration Through Connection: Our program delivery spans across the entire pre-student journey, creating multiple and frequent opportunities for young people to see themselves in higher education.
- Presentations: Introducing university pathways and possibilities.
- Campus visits and pop-up booths: Bringing university to students' everyday spaces and taking student ambassadors where possible.
- Attendance at career expos and subject selection events: Supporting informed pathway decisions at critical decision points.
- University experiences: Providing students a sense of place and connection to campus life at events at Year 8, Year 10, and Year 12.

This scaffolded approach recognises that aspiration develops over time through sustained relationships, not single interactions. By meeting students where they are (literally and developmentally) we create the foundations for confident pathway navigation toward post-school options.



In 2025, CQUniversity's Future Students team sponsored Determination & Growth Awards at 72 schools across Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Rockhampton, and Townsville, investing \$8,100 in celebrating First Nations student achievement. These awards, valued between \$100-200 each, honour First Nations students who demonstrate determination and strength of character in pursuing their goals while showing a positive attitude and commitment to personal growth. Recipients encourage and support their peers, contribute positively to their school community, and take pride in their cultural identity. A More Inclusive Approach to Recognition, the awards are part of a "Celebrations of Success" initiative which is a broader, more intentional recognition strategy that moves beyond traditional academic metrics to acknowledge accessible and meaningful participation milestones including:

- Consistent school attendance.
- Sporting achievements.
- Leadership and community involvement.

This approach creates reaffirming recognition touchpoints that celebrate progress, not perfection, reinforcing the message that success is achievable and building momentum toward university pathways. The objectives are to:

- Celebrate First Nations student success in visible, culturally respectful ways.
- Strengthen relationships with schools, families, and communities.
- Reinforce university pathways as achievable and supported.
- Increase CQUniversity's presence and relevance in key school and community events.

The expected outcomes are as follows:

- Increased visibility of *University* in First Nations student celebrations.
- Strengthened community trust and engagement.
- Greater aspiration and preparedness for university pathways.
- Enhanced cultural safety and pride among students and families.

In addition to the above, the Future Students team is proud to have participated in the following initiatives in 2025:

Solid STEM Pathways: Solid Pathways–STEM is an online extension program for high-achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from Years 4–6 attending Queensland state schools. The program enables students to develop STEM capabilities and nurtures their scientific curiosity through critical and creative thinking while building upon their existing sense of cultural identity. CQUniversity supported the 2025 event which was an outstanding success, bringing 25 First Nations students together from five schools across the Rockhampton region, some travelling from as far as Moura.

Our day of culturally rich, curriculum-aligned activities created space for connection, pride, and deep learning. A standout was the Fire Making Workshop facilitated by Jordy Young from Warama Culture, a proud Darumbal man, current CQUniversity Paramedic Science student participating in the Queensland Ambulance Service's Indigenous Paramedic Program out of Woorabinda, and local small business owner. Jordy captivated students by sharing the science and cultural significance of traditional fire making, inspiring curiosity and teamwork. Students also participated in Sound Coding with Rhythm using clap sticks and kulaps (traditional Torres Strait Islander shakers), recognising patterns and rhythm as key elements of computational thinking, and a Mini Hut/Shelter Building challenge where they engineered structures from natural materials and evaluated them against simulated wind and rain. The event reinforced core engineering principles while honouring culture. A testament to the power of culturally responsive education and creating opportunities for young First Nations students to thrive through STEM.

QATSIF Graduation Ceremonies: The Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation (QATSIF) was established using funds derived from stolen wages and savings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders under the Aborigines Welfare Fund and the Indigenous Wages and Savings Reparations Scheme. It provides Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with educational scholarships to help them complete senior studies at high school. Not only does the foundation support students financially, but they also play a role in supporting First Nations students in Queensland to gain their Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE). CQUniversity is proud to support this event each year by opening our campus facilities, provide staff and student guest speakers, and deliver operational support on the day.



AFL Cape York House partnership: AFL House aims to provide educational, employment and training opportunities for Indigenous girls from Far North Queensland's most remote communities in a culturally appropriate, safe, and secure residential environment to ensure every student can reach their full potential. The Future Students team welcoming 40 AFL House Girls and Boys to the Cairns campus to experience university life at CQUniversity. The students participated in a variety of engaging sessions, including Exercise and Sport Science, Physiotherapy, Engineering, Education, and Paramedicine. We were also fortunate to have the STEPS join us to share valuable insights into pathway opportunities. Feedback from AFL House has been overwhelmingly positive. They expressed how inspired their students were by the visit, with many now viewing university as an achievable and realistic goal for their future. Overall, this event was a fantastic opportunity to showcase CQUniversity's programs and support services, while building stronger connections with AFL House and their students.

Start Uni Now (SUN): In 2025, there was 23 SUN students who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is an increase from the 22 in 2024. Of those students 16 passed their units. Most students were enrolled in Medical Sciences and the Arts, with a range of other disciplines such as nursing and education among other popular disciplines. Throughout their studies, SUN students had access to the full range of support and resources available at CQUniversity.

Start TAFE Now (STN): In 2025 the program had participation of 43 students who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander across 10 courses, with 18 students who successfully completed their qualifications. Popular areas of study included Sport & Recreation, Fitness, Trades and Animal Care. The students were provided with access to the full range of support services available at CQUniversity.

2.2.2 ISSP Scholarships

In 2025, 185 ISSP Scholarships were awarded, comprised of 21 Education Cost Scholarships, 2 Accommodation Scholarships, and 154 Reward Scholarships (Table 2). Table 3 shows a breakdown of the Scholarships and Bursaries awarded in 2025. This was an increase of 85 scholarships awarded compared to 2024, with Undergraduate Reward Scholarships seeing the increase in award.

The First Nations Student Success Evaluation project, initiated in 2024 to assess the impact of ISSP-funded scholarships on student pass rates and re-enrolment, progressed through 2025 and will continue into 2026. The project has supported a more evidence-based approach to the allocation of scholarships. An interim report from Phase 1 (quantitative) of the two-phase mixed methods study has established baseline data. While findings are not yet complete, pending the inclusion of First Nations student perspectives, early recommendations have been identified to enhance both the effectiveness of scholarships and the efficiency of their administration at CQUniversity. A final report, incorporating findings from both phases, will be delivered in due course.

This report will present comprehensive data, key insights, and recommendations relating not only to the outcomes of the research but also to the methodology. The research process has involved analysis across multiple datasets, including manual matching and verification of student records, alongside examination of ISSP project data and financial records provided by the Business Officer.

Table 2: ISSP Scholarships - breakdown of 2025 payments¹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ²	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ³	1,000.00	1	0	0	2,000.00	3	3,000.00	4
Undergraduate ⁴	56,500.00	20	17,730.00	10	75,918.00	147	150,148.00	177
Post-graduate ⁵	0	0	0	0	6,660.00	4	6,660.00	4
Other	0	0	0	0	21,552.00	0	21,552.00	0
Total	57,500.00	21	17,730	2	106,130.00	154	181,360.00	185



Table 3: Breakdown of 2025 Scholarships and Bursaries

Scholarship Name	# Awarded
Dare to Be Deadly Scholarship	20
D2BD Term 2 Support Scholarship	33
D2BD Accommodation Scholarship	2
D2BD Technology Bursary	37
D2BD Graduation Registration Bursary	19
Enabling Scholarship	1
D2BD Professional Registration Bursary	3
D2BD Study Resource Bursary	19
D2BD Residential School Bursary	8
D2BD Term 3 Boost Scholarship	42
Jilbay RHD Academy Emergency Assistance Bursary	1

For a list of scholarships visit: [List of current scholarships](#).

3. Progression (Outcomes)

3.1 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE UNIT SUCCESS AND RETENTION RATES OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

The responsibility for student support remains embedded University wide amongst several departments and all schools. Strategic partnerships have been developed to facilitate a shared knowledge and skills base across the University. Teams that work closely together include, but are not limited to, the IED, the Student Success Division, the Academic Learning Centre, Marketing, Governance, Future Students, Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), the Tertiary Education Division, and the Office of Research.

The following data shows success rates in 2023, 2024 and 2025 broken down into the three course types: Enabling, Undergraduate and Postgraduate. Success rate measures academic performance by comparing the equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL) of units passed to the EFTSL of units attempted.

Table 4 shows the success rate for Enabling courses. In 2025, the success rate decreased by 3.69% compared to the previous year, with both pass/fail rates and withdrawals decreasing from the previous year.

Table 4: Success rate for Enabling courses

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2023	52.61%	27.75	23.625	1.375	
2024	53.69%	35.5	29.625	1	
2025	50%	21.25	21.25		14.75

Table 5 shows the success rate for the Undergraduate level courses. In 2025, the success rate increased by 1.05% compared to 2024. The pass rate in 2025 decreased by 17.5 EFTSL when compared to 2024. The fail rate in 2025 decreased by 6.25 EFTSL as did the withdrawal rate, which decreased by 4.625 EFTSL.



Table 5: Success rate for Undergraduate courses

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2023	75.80%	332.375	95	11.125	0.25
2024	77.21%	346.875	91.125	11.25	0.125
2025	78.26%	329.375	84.875	6.625	58

Table 6 shows the success rate for the Postgraduate level. In 2025, the success rate increased by 19.14% compared to 2024, and the pass rate in 2025 increased by 4.375 EFTSL, compared to 2024. The fail rate in 2025 decreased by 3.875 EFTSL from 2024, and the withdrawal rates decreased by 1.0 EFTSL. Enrolment rates increased by 11.625 EFTSL in comparison to the previous year.

Table 6: Success rate for Postgraduate level

Year	Success rate	Pass	Fail	Withdrew	Enrolled
2023	68.67%	20	7.875	1.25	1
2024	67.66%	17	6.875	1.25	3.25
2025	86.80%	21.375	3	0.25	14.875

The success rates have increased for both Undergraduate students and Postgraduate students, with a decrease in Enabling course success rates. Noticeably, the withdrawal rates have decreased for Enabling, Undergraduate and Postgraduate students.

3.1.1 Supports for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Coursework Students

In 2025, CQUniversity embedded a range of ISSP-funded strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully complete units through a proactive, lifecycle-based advising model delivered via the Student Service SPOT and ISAS.

A key embedded approach was the delivery of proactive academic and pastoral advising at critical points across the student journey, including application, offer, enrolment, onboarding, study commencement, ongoing engagement, and re-enrolment. During application, offer, enrolment and onboarding stages, the Student Service SPOT led orientation activities designed to support transition into study. This included encouraging offer acceptance, supporting initial enrolments, delivering pre-orientation programs to build connection and preparedness, facilitating orientation week events, and providing information to assist students in navigating university systems and integrating into the university community.

At study commencement, ISAS provided targeted early-term support, including personalised check-ins, reminders to engage with study, monitoring of Moodle activity, census date guidance, and delivery of system navigation support (including MyCQU and Moodle). These activities were designed to strengthen early engagement and reduce barriers to participation in the critical first weeks of study.

During the student engagement phase, advisers conducted mid-term and later-term check-ins, particularly post-census, to monitor academic progress and wellbeing. These interactions provided opportunities to identify support needs early and connect students with relevant services, including tutoring, counselling and wellbeing services, and the Academic Learning Centre. This ensured students were supported to remain engaged and progress through their units.

At the conclusion of term, re-enrolment support was provided through direct adviser contact to encourage continuation of study and assist students in developing revised course plans where required based on academic outcomes.

New strategies implemented in 2025 included the formal introduction of structured mid-term and post-census check-ins, strengthening the consistency of proactive outreach and enabling earlier identification of students requiring additional academic or personal support.



CQUniversity measures the effectiveness of these strategies through multiple mechanisms, including monitoring of engagement data (such as Moodle activity and service utilisation), analysis of unit pass rates, progression and retention data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and case management records capturing proactive advising interactions at key lifecycle points. These data sources provide insight into student responsiveness to outreach, levels of engagement with academic support services, and continuity of enrolment across teaching periods.

Broader university strategies supporting student progression beyond ISSP funding include institution-wide retention and equity initiatives led by the Retention and Equity team. These are complemented by proactive re-enrolment support delivered by Student Advisers following term completion, as well as access to integrated wellbeing, counselling, and academic learning support services, ensuring a holistic support framework for student success.

3.1.2 Data Systems and Student Engagement

CQUniversity has invested in software systems that record and monitor engagements with students aimed at providing support and increasing completion rates. Students are surveyed on their experiences, and this feedback informs improvements to university support and programs.

CQUniSuccess is a system designed for academics to monitor student engagement with Moodle and other platforms for success. MYCQU is a portal for students to engage with their studies, and with academic and professional staff for assistance as required.

The Sugar CRM (customer relationship management) system, where student relationships can be built to best support their needs, including letters of support or cultural advocacy aids in providing support and strategies to First Nations students who are not achieving satisfactory academic progress and have been placed into the Monitoring Academic Progress (MAP) system. The ISAS also contacts students who have withdrawn from their studies to encourage re-enrolment.

Student engagement and progress is also monitored through the Moodle, Student One, Academic Information Management System (AIMS) and student engagement and communication platform (PULSE) systems which are university funded.

3.1.3 Student Health and Wellbeing Programs

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Team (SEWB)

In 2025, CQUniversity delivered a broad and integrated program of health and wellbeing initiatives designed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through a culturally safe, strengths-based, and relational approach. These programs were grounded in SEWB principles and focused on improving student experience, retention, and success across multiple campuses and community contexts.

A key priority was building staff capability to respond to student wellbeing needs. This included the delivery of Mental Health First Response and Indigenous Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA) training across campuses, with both staff-only and combined staff and student sessions. Training outcomes were highly positive, with participants reporting increased confidence in recognising and responding to mental health concerns, including culturally appropriate approaches to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Student-focused wellbeing initiatives were embedded across the student lifecycle, particularly at key transition points. Wellbeing information sessions were delivered to new apprentice cohorts, alongside orientation activities that promoted available support services. Programs such as Cuppa and Yarn and Calm Time provided ongoing opportunities for culturally safe connection, reflection, and peer engagement in both face-to-face and online formats.

Targeted support initiatives played a significant role in early intervention and retention. In 2025, 209 wellbeing packs were distributed to Indigenous first-year Bachelor students, complemented by follow-up wellbeing check-ins to strengthen connection and identify support needs. In addition, 110 First in Family packs were provided to students who are the first in their family to attend university, supporting confidence, belonging, and navigation of the university environment.

Counselling and clinical support services remained a critical component of the wellbeing framework. A total of 118 Indigenous students accessed counselling services throughout the year, demonstrating strong demand for culturally safe therapeutic support. Evaluation data indicated positive retention outcomes, with all Indigenous students who responded to the Student Evaluation Survey reporting they remained enrolled following engagement with counselling services. The University also prioritised peer-led and community-informed approaches to wellbeing. The Mindwaves initiative continued to support student mental health through peer connectors, with two Indigenous Connectors engaged in 2025. Feedback highlighted the value of peer support and informed the development of a dedicated culturally specific model, with a Cooee Connectors stream planned for implementation in 2026.



Engagement with community and cultural initiatives remained central to program delivery. Staff actively participated in NAIDOC Week, National Reconciliation Week, and other significant events, alongside contributing to community wellbeing networks and planning groups. Partnerships with organisations such as the STARS Foundation and JUTE Theatre supported outreach, mentoring, and creative wellbeing programs, particularly for young people and regional communities.

Finally, ongoing collaboration across internal teams and external stakeholders strengthened the overall effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives. This included participation in counselling supervision, neurodiversity co-design projects, RAP Champion activities, and sector working groups focused on Indigenous pedagogy and wellbeing. Together, these efforts reflect a coordinated and culturally grounded approach to supporting the holistic wellbeing and success of First Nations students at CQUniversity.

CQUGlobal

Participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in CQUGlobal programs was lower in 2025 compared to previous years. This decrease was primarily due to several key programs not being offered during the year because of academic availability and course changes. It is anticipated that participation will increase again in 2026 as program offerings are reinstated.

In 2025, a total of three First Nations students participated in short-term learning abroad opportunities. This included two Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science students who undertook a four-week overseas placement in Thailand, both supported through New Colombo Plan (NCP) Mobility Grants. In addition, one Bachelor of Social Work student completed a two-week study tour in Japan. These experiences continue to provide valuable international exposure, contributing to students' academic development, cultural capability, and global perspectives.

Academic Learning Centre (ALC)

The ALC provided, as per previous years support to students in the discipline areas of Academic Communication, Computing, Science, Mathematics and Statistics. The ALC Advisors collaborate with lecturers and unit coordinators in the Embedding Academic Skills project.

ALC staff plan activities and deliver workshop sessions that assist students to develop academic literacy and numeracy skills needed to be more successful at the unit assessment tasks. This project is Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded and focuses on supporting domestic undergraduate students from a low socio-economic background, students from regional and remote areas, and First Nations students.

3.1.4 Research by Higher Degree (RHD) Students

In 2025, the University continued to strengthen support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Higher Degree (RHD) students through the ongoing implementation of established initiatives and the introduction of targeted strategies to improve access, participation, and progression.

A key continuing initiative was the Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy, which remained central to supporting First Nations research candidates. In 2025, the Academy expanded to include First Nations students enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Research, providing a culturally safe and supportive environment that integrates academic guidance with pastoral and cultural support. The establishment of Jilbay Yumba on the Rockhampton North campus further enhanced this model by creating a dedicated space for student engagement, collaboration, and community connection.

New and enhanced strategies focused on improving access and progression pathways. These included the allocation of remaining fee-free scholarships for the Graduate Certificate in Research through the partnership with the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Developing Northern Australia, as well as delivery of an online writing intensive program to strengthen research capability and support timely progression. Additional tailored support was extended to First Nations students undertaking the Graduate Certificate in Research (GCR), providing early pathway support into higher degree research.

The University measures the effectiveness of these strategies through structured governance, reporting, and data monitoring processes. The Jilbay Academy is required to submit a six-month progress brief and a 12-month annual report to the University's Research Committee governance group. In addition, research higher degree statistics, including the number of commencing Indigenous research candidates, are presented to the Research Committee regularly (up to eight times annually). These mechanisms enable ongoing monitoring of student progression, participation, and outcomes.



In 2025, outcomes included one successful First Nations RHD completion, demonstrating the impact of sustained academic, cultural, and pastoral support provided through the Jilbay Academy model. While specific data on tutorial assistance and mentoring impacts were not formally reported, the Academy's holistic approach integrates these supports to enhance student experience, progression, and completion.

The University also invested in strengthening cultural competency among staff to improve the quality of RHD supervision and student experience. In 2025, six academic staff successfully completed a micro credential in the supervision of Indigenous RHD candidates, enhancing culturally informed supervision practices. Additionally, the IED contributed to curriculum development for the refreshed Graduate Certificate in Research through a dedicated workshop, ensuring Indigenous perspectives and approaches are embedded within research training.

Beyond ISSP-funded initiatives, the University continues to support First Nations RHD students through integrated academic, cultural, and pastoral support mechanisms. The Jilbay Academy plays a key role in this holistic support model, contributing to improved student progression and completion through culturally responsive, relational approaches.

3.2 TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE

Tutorial assistance provided through the ISSP funded program is detailed in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Tutorial assistance provided in 2025

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted ⁶	Total number of tutorial sessions attended ⁷	Total hours of assistance ⁸	Expenditure ⁹ (\$)
Enabling	16	131	236.75	\$13,448.43
Undergraduate	96	2,718	5,870.15	\$395,789.44
Post-graduate	8	111	358.1	\$20,174.98
Other	-	-	-	\$11,489.65
Total	120	2,960	6,666.50	\$440,902.50

The Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Program (ITAP) equips students with study skills, knowledge, and confidence to be successful in their studies. The program enhances the student experience as it builds on the 5P's framework we connect with students to understand their Profile, Preparedness, Promise and Processes while monitoring their Progress throughout their studies (Kalsbeek, 2013*; Wood, Gray- Ganter and Bailey, 2016[#]). In 2025, the ITAP continued to provide targeted academic support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across CQUniversity through free, discipline-specific tutorial assistance.

The program focused on improving student retention, confidence, and unit completion outcomes by significantly expanding and reviewing the pool of appropriately qualified Casual Academic Learning Advisors. A total of 120 First Nations students participated in ITAP during the year, with strong unit completion results achieved, including completion rates of 85% in Term 1 and 89% in Term 2 and 89% in Term 3 2025.

Targeted improvements were made to the administration of the ITAP program throughout 2025, including an audit of Learning Advisors and system enhancements within Chronus to ensure optimal matching between students and tutors. All Casual Academic Learning Advisors were required to complete PDC137829 Staff Training Foundations of Academic Integrity and PDC151653 First Nations Cultural Awareness Training (Level 1) prior to being matched with students.

New promotional materials were developed to increase program visibility, and ITAP information was presented at POP Week and Orientation Week events. Program administration and compliance processes were strengthened to support sustainable delivery and ensure culturally safe practices.



3.3 THE INDIGENOUS SUPPORT UNIT AND OTHER INDIGENOUS STUDENT SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

A significant milestone in 2025 was the elevation of the IED to a standalone Vice-President portfolio. This structural advancement strengthened institutional leadership, accountability, and governance, reinforcing CQUniversity's commitment to embedding Indigenous engagement and reconciliation outcomes across all areas of the University. In February 2025, CQUniversity formally launched the newly established IED at a dedicated staff forum led by the Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Nick Klomp. The forum outlined the role of the IED within the University's structure, introduced key staff, and highlighted the resources and support available across the institution. It also set clear short- and long-term priorities, including strengthening First Nations student recruitment and completion, advancing research, and deepening community engagement. The forum also showcased the University's new Indigenous artwork and branding *Chasing Dreams* by artist Samantha Campbell from Coolamon Creative and provided an update on the new CQUniversity Stretch RAP 2025-2028 which was also officially launched in May 2025. Indigenous student support is embedded across several units within the University. The following programs of student support, engagement, advocacy, and strategic direction are described below.

Indigenous Engagement Division (IED)

Led by Professor Adrian Miller, Vice-President IED, and BMA Chair in Indigenous Engagement, the IED continues to develop and lead the implementation of key strategies such as the CQUniversity Stretch RAP 2025-2028, the First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026-2030), Cultural Safety Framework, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol (ICIPP), First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy, First Nations Curriculum Framework and Indigenous Engagement Framework. ISSP funds partially subsidise salaries of IED staff.

Throughout 2025 the Indigenous Engagement team actively delivered a broad range of community engagement, school outreach, and partnership activities to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, education providers, and key stakeholders. These activities reflect CQUniversity's ongoing commitment to culturally respectful engagement, increased visibility, and the development of strong education and employment pathways for First Nations students.

The University maintained a strong presence at significant cultural and community events, including NAIDOC Week activities, Dorrie Day celebrations, and community-led events across multiple regions. Participation in these events provided opportunities to build and strengthen relationships with communities, promote CQUniversity's programs and support services, and demonstrate a visible commitment to reconciliation and cultural recognition.

Engagement with schools and young people remained a priority, with targeted outreach activities delivered through programs such as the Stronger Sisters initiative and participation in regional careers expos. These initiatives support aspiration-building, strengthen education-to-employment pathways, and provide early connection points for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students considering tertiary study.

The team also contributed to sector and industry engagement through participation in forums and collaborative discussions with external partners. This included engagement with government agencies to explore student placement pathways and employment opportunities, as well as participation in sector-specific forums that strengthen connections with First Nations-led initiatives and community priorities.

Significant emphasis was placed on celebrating student success and strengthening relationships with families and communities through attendance at graduation and cultural recognition events. This included Indigenous Sash presentations and graduation ceremonies across multiple campuses, ensuring inclusive recognition of First Nations student achievement and reinforcing connections between the University and community.

Additional community outreach activities, including participation in local events and hosting information stalls, further enhanced engagement with prospective students, families, and community members across regional locations. Collectively, these activities demonstrate CQUniversity's commitment to building meaningful, sustained partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They contribute to increased awareness of educational opportunities, strengthened pathways into higher education, and improved student engagement and success outcomes.

Jawun Research Centre

In 2025, new Director of the Jawun Institute, Professor Yvonne Cadet-James, was appointed. The formerly named Jawun Research Centre and Centre for Indigenous Health Equity Research was launched as an Institute. The Jawun Research Institute capabilities are in system sciences, public health equity research, impact assessment and evaluation, health economics, genomics and evidence reviews and translation/advocacy.



Indigenous Student Advising Specialists (ISAS)

Operating within the Student Service SPOT team, they support all future and current Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander students at CQUniversity across Australia. Individual case management provides one-on-one supports and referrals for the ITAP, financial guidance around scholarships, cultural advocacy, safe learning assistance, basic program information, and referrals to other areas such as SEWB, Counselling, Accessibility and Equity, and Student Advocacy. Students also have access to academic and personal enrichment programs offered by numerous teams across the University, such as the Peer-Assisted Study Scheme (PASS), the Student Representative Council (SRC), and Student Mentoring. Staff also participate in University and STEP's orientation days, open days and events such as NAIDOC Week and are members of recruitment and scholarship panels. Staff continue to host on-campus and online events to connect with students in creating culturally safe spaces to yarn and connect with others in their fields of study, while sharing some of the challenges and impacts of life, work, and study balance.

3.4 THE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE CULTURAL COMPETENCY OF STAFF TO ENSURE THE UNIVERSITY OFFERS A CULTURALLY SAFE AND ENRICHING ENVIRONMENT

In 2025, a mix of new and existing programs and strategies were delivered to provide a culturally safe and enriching environment for our staff and students, these are programs outlined below.

CQUniversity's First Nations Cultural Competency Framework 2023-2028, outlines the three levels of cultural competency education required for all staff and students at CQUniversity - introductory, intermediate and advanced/graduate - and provides a series of training activities and courses to be completed. Below Table 8 shows the number of employees of have completed training to date. This remains a key ongoing Deliverable in the CQUniversity Stretch RAP 2025-2028.

Table 8: Cultural Competency Training

Course Name	Active Employee Completions	Inactive Employee Completions	Total Employee Completions
PDC151653: First Nations Cultural Awareness Training (Level 1)	224	10	234
PDC115414: A Guide to First Nations Community Engagement at CQUniversity	5	0	5
Masterclass 1: First Nations Cultural Awareness Training	106	3	109
Masterclass 2: First Nations Cultural Safety Training	78	1	79
Masterclass 3: First Nations Cultural Competency Training	52	1	53

Moving into 2026, the development of a Cultural Safety Framework and an Indigenous Engagement Framework, are ongoing, these began in 2025 as part of our Stretch RAP commitments.

Through 2025, we developed an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol (ICIPP), in collaboration with Terri Janke, this was finalised in early 2026. The ICIP Protocol has been developed as a foundational document to guide, respectful, ethical, and culturally safe engagement with Indigenous Peoples, knowledges, and communities. It sets out the principles and practices that ensure Indigenous voices are prioritised, and cultural integrity is maintained across all aspects of our teaching, research, and community engagement.



3.4.1 Programs and Projects

First Nations Student Success Evaluation (IED)

A suite of research and engagement projects is currently underway to better understand the structural, institutional, and experiential factors influencing First Nations student performance at CQUniversity. These projects collectively contribute to an evidence base that will inform targeted strategies to improve student success outcomes.

The key projects are outlined below:

Understanding First Nations Student Experience at CQUniversity: Phase 1 of this project, comprising a quantitative survey, has been completed. This phase has provided baseline insights into student experiences across the University. Phase 2, which will involve qualitative data collection to deepen understanding of these experiences, is on track to commence in February 2026.

Exploring Academics' Perspectives on Supporting the Success of First Nations Students: This project is currently in Phase 1, with survey data actively being collected. The research focuses on identifying academic perspectives, practices, and challenges associated with supporting First Nations student success, with the aim of informing institution-wide teaching and support approaches.

Retrospective Analysis of Scholarship Impact on Student Success: Phase 1 of this project, involving retrospective data analysis, has been completed. The findings have been compiled into a report and presented to the First Nations Success Strategies Committee (FNSSC). This phase examined the relationship between scholarship provision and student success outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Phase 2 will involve qualitative data collection, scheduled for February 2026, to further explore student experiences and the impact of scholarships in greater depth.

Together, these projects represent a coordinated approach to understanding First Nations student success from both student and staff perspectives, as well as through institutional data. The insights generated will directly inform future program design, policy development, and targeted interventions across CQUniversity.

First Nations Unit Specific Tutorial Program Pilot

In 2025, a cohort-style tutorial program was piloted across seven units during Terms 1 and 2. The initiative aimed to strengthen student engagement, academic support, and overall success through a more relational and structured learning environment.

Evaluation data indicates that the program was most effective in units with a practical component. Notably,

Medical Anatomy and Physiology 1 (BMSC11007) recorded a 32% increase in pass rates compared to the average over the previous three years, while Medical Anatomy and Physiology 2 (BMSC11008) demonstrated a 21% increase over the same period. These outcomes suggest that cohort-based models are particularly impactful in applied learning contexts, where collaborative and hands-on engagement can be more readily facilitated.

In contrast, implementation within fully online units without a practical component resulted in limited student engagement and minimal impact on pass rates. This highlights the importance of delivery mode and unit design in determining the effectiveness of cohort-style support models.

The findings from this pilot are directly informing the design and targeting of the program in 2026, with a stronger emphasis on units where relational and practical learning approaches can be effectively embedded. A final evaluation report has been drafted and will be presented to the FNSSC in 2026.

More broadly, several key learnings emerged across the suite of 2025 activities: A stronger understanding of the varying impacts of scholarship types on student engagement and success. This has informed the development of a revised and more targeted scholarship strategy for 2026. Identified the types of units in which cohort-style tutorial programs are most effective, reinforcing the importance of aligning delivery models with pedagogical context.

These insights will guide program refinement in 2026. Revealed that many students are unaware of existing support services, such as SPOT, and highlighted clear student preferences regarding how support is accessed and delivered. This has emphasised the need for improved communication, visibility, and culturally appropriate engagement strategies. Collectively, these insights are strengthening the evidence base for future program design, ensuring that initiatives in 2026 are more targeted, effective, and aligned with student needs and preferences.



The First Nations Precinct on Rockhampton North campus was soft launched in October 2025 during the First Nations Staff Conference, with the official launch planned to take place in February 2026 at Pre-Orientation week. Students, staff and community members gathered on Darumbal Country to celebrate the opening of the new First Nations Precinct at University's Rockhampton North campus, marking a significant step in strengthening support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The precinct is being created as a dedicated hub for cultural connection, learning and community engagement, with the University aiming to provide a strong foundation for Indigenous student success.

As described in previous reports, CQUniversity continues to enhance cultural competency and cultural safety through its promotion of the 2025 Calendar of Significant Indigenous Dates, awarding of Cultural Sashes at graduation and its development of a Cultural Safety Framework.

In 2025, CQUniversity introduced a dedicated First Nations Indigenous Sashing Presentation, held prior to formal graduation ceremonies. This event provides a culturally significant space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families, and communities to come together to celebrate student achievement. The ceremony recognises not only the academic success of graduates, but also the vital role of family, community, and cultural identity in supporting that success, acknowledging the broader significance of these achievements for First Nations Peoples.

Across two days, First Nations staff attended a dedicated First Nations Staff Conference, *Always was Always will be with CQU*, providing a culturally safe space to yarn, connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. The forum supported reflective practice and peer learning, enabling staff to strengthen their knowledge, skills, and confidence in delivering culturally responsive approaches across their roles. The conference brought together First Nations staff from across Australia, facilitating a meaningful exchange of ideas and perspectives, reinforcing cultural identity while building stronger professional networks across the University. It also contributed to the ongoing professional development and First Nations leadership. All CQUniversity Policy documents are available on our [website](#).

Indigenous Procurement

The CQUniversity Procurement Policy and Procedure was earmarked for updating and replacement in 2025, however was pushed out to 2026 considering the release of the Queensland Procurement Policy 2026 (QPP26). The overhaul of CQUniversity's Procurement Policy and Procedure intends to expand information on and processes to increase Indigenous Enterprise procurement. Sections 4.8 and 4.9 of the [CQUniversity's Procurement Policy and Procedure](#) includes the University's commitments to Indigenous-focussed procurement.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) supporting Indigenous procurement are laid out in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan; Our Partnerships; First Nations Commitment at CQUniversity. In addition to the KPIs outlined in the CQUniversity Strategic Plan, our Corporate Procurement Plan (the "CPP") digests the KPIs from the Strategic Plan into a procurement context. The CPP outlines our commitment to Indigenous Enterprise procurement and assists individual departments and schools to adopt socially responsible practices into their procurement planning and strategies.

A StaffNet directory of information and resources designed to assist buyer engagement with Indigenous suppliers, are available to support staff to meet these KPIs. Furthermore, CQUniversity has been working to improve identification and reporting data quality. In 2025, improved categorisation was implemented in FinanceOne allowing First Nations Enterprises to be categorised as Registered, Certified (according to Supply Nation's data), or Self-Identified.

Dashboards allowing greater accessibility to this data are earmarked for implementation by Quarter 3, 2026. CQUniversity also renewed its membership with Supply Nation for a further 12 months at the end of 2025. Access to Supply Nation's directory of suppliers and visibility of their certification program assists CQUniversity's data to be more indicative of the social effect we are having.

The University's annual spend with First Nations enterprises has increased from \$476,153 in 2024 to \$1,116,282 in 2025 (a ~57% increase) between 2024 and 2025. We have cross referenced our data with Supply Nation's supplier register and identified that of the 2025 expenditure, \$26,041 was with Certified, \$336,998 was with Registered, and \$753,243 was with Self-Identified First Nations enterprises. The Procurement Advice Team (PAT) continues to function as a conduit between potential suppliers and our buyers, putting organisations in touch with appropriate university divisions for potential and upcoming opportunities.



3.4.2 Public and Campus Events

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) 2025

CQUniversity proudly promoted Reconciliation Australia's National Reconciliation Week (NRW) resources to all staff via internal communications, StaffNet, and a dedicated social media campaign. These materials were also integrated into staff discussions through divisional and team meetings to promote active participation and engagement. The University met its RAP commitments to organise at least one NRW event on each campus, with events hosted in Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Emerald, Mackay City and Ooralea, Melbourne, Rockhampton North, Sydney, and Townsville. These gatherings saw strong attendance and meaningful involvement from staff, students, alumni, and community stakeholders, including Traditional Owners.

NAIDOC 2025

CQUniversity's vibrant celebration of NAIDOC Week, featured events held across the national campus footprint. Activities such as cultural trivia nights, bush tucker plantings, breakfasts, morning teas, and community gatherings provided meaningful opportunities for staff, students, and local communities to come together in recognition of the history, cultures, and achievements of First Nations Peoples.

Stretch RAP Launch

CQUniversity launched its Stretch RAP, a bold and ambitious commitment to advancing the work achieved through our Innovate RAP and expanding our impact through deeper, more meaningful engagement. The launch was held on the Rockhampton campus and livestreamed across the University's campus footprint, events then followed, with cultural activities on campuses. CQUniversity continues to advance the priorities set out in its Stretch RAP, ensuring reconciliation is not a parallel stream of work, but embedded across all aspects of our operations, strategy, teaching, and engagement. The progress made reflects our whole-of-institution commitment to promoting Indigenous knowledges, leadership, and cultural safety, while walking alongside our First Nations communities on the path toward truth-telling, healing, and self-determination.

Media Exposure

Throughout 2025, CQUniversity's IED and the Jawun Research Institute continued to strengthen national visibility and public awareness of First Nations initiatives, research, and community partnerships. Media activity remained a significant avenue for promoting Indigenous-led work, with 73 total media mentions across online, print, radio, television, and social media. As noted in the report, *"CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement and Jawun Research Institute received 73 mentions... compared to 110 mentions for the previous year."* The overall potential reach increased dramatically, this reflects improved placement in high-visibility outlets and stronger national interest in Indigenous research and community issues. Radio remained the dominant media channel, accounting for 60.9% of all coverage, particularly in relation to the Reconciliation Action Plan and the Native Resources in Foods and Medicine Symposium. Online media contributed 26.1%, followed by print (8.7%) and television (4.3%). Top publications included multiple ABC regional outlets, Koori Mail, National Indigenous Times, and Triple M Central Queensland—demonstrating strong engagement with both Indigenous-focused and mainstream media. These stories reinforced CQUniversity's role as a national voice in Indigenous health, education, and community development. Several high-impact stories elevated the profile of First Nations leadership and research at CQUniversity. These included:

- The Conversation and Yahoo News Australia – Research Impact. CQUniversity contributed one First Nations-focused article to The Conversation in 2025, authored by Leslie Baird and Komla Tsey. The article generated 32,456 reads and was republished 12 times, with readership concentrated in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. Closing the Gap Analysis – [View here.](#)
- National Indigenous Times – Leadership Appointment - *"Indigenous researcher to lead CQUniversity's Jawun Institute"*. [View here.](#)
- Koori Mail – Leadership Feature - *"Renowned health advocate to lead Jawun Research Institute."* [View here.](#)
- National Indigenous Times – Native Foods & Medicine Symposium - *"Indigenous voices lead native food and medicine push."* [View here.](#)
- Koori Mail – Indigenous-led Partnerships - *"Indigenous-led partnerships highlighted at native food and medicine symposium."* [View here.](#)



Social Media Engagement

Social media activity further amplified First Nations content, generating 80 total social echo interactions. The strongest-performing posts highlighted:

- First Nations student success stories.
- Indigenous-led pathways in medicine, social work, and education.
- Community partnerships and cultural engagement initiatives.

For example, the post celebrating the 2025 medical student cohort generated 2,368 engagements, while posts featuring First Nations students Bree-Anna Saltner and Lainey Wilson generated 1,564 and 1,336 engagements, respectively.

New Facebook and LinkedIn pages were launched mid 2025 following the closure of the previous Facebook group, consistent content was shared across Facebook and LinkedIn to establish the pages and assess early audience response.

On Facebook, the page currently has 78 followers, reflecting a net increase of 24 followers since launch. Engagement across published content included 63 reactions, 8 comments, and 8 shares. Posts focused on organisational updates, opportunities (including position advertisements, scholarships, and ITAP-related content), as well as people-focused content such as staff spotlights. Engagement levels indicate positive interaction relative to the page's size and limited posting activity.

On LinkedIn, the page has reached 83 followers and generated 567 impressions between October and December 2025. Engagement included 15 reactions, with visitor analytics recording 6 page views from 3 unique visitors. Desktop usage exceeded mobile access, aligning with LinkedIn's predominantly professional user base. Both platforms demonstrated early engagement and follower growth. These results are consistent with expectations for newly established pages and indicate strong content relevance, with clear potential for increased performance through an expanded and more regular posting activity moving forward.

Digital and Video Content

The Corporate Communications team produced three videos featuring First Nations content, including:

- A profile of Aunty Gwendelyn Mick and Shontara Hill. [View here.](#)
- A feature on the Buraligim Weiber program. [View here.](#)
- A video supporting the CQUniCares Appeal and Indigenous Sea Ranger Training. [View here.](#)

These videos were distributed across social channels and the CQUniversity weekly digest, contributing to broader digital engagement.

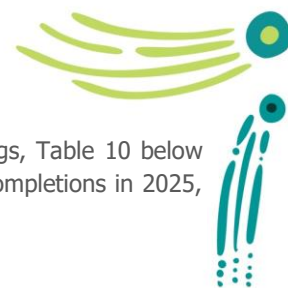
4. Completions (Outcomes)

4.1 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE AWARD COURSE COMPLETION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

Table 9 below shows the number of CQUniversity First Nations student completions. The data shows an increase in Enabling and Undergraduate completions in 2025 and a slight decrease in Postgraduate completions since 2024.

Table 9: First Nations student completions

Course level	2023	2024	2025
Enabling	55	45	67
Undergraduate	62	90	110
Postgraduate	25	25	22
Total	142	160	199



Aligning with the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED) Broad Field of Education groupings, Table 10 below shows completions by discipline for undergraduate students. Overall, Health seen the greatest number of completions in 2025, with 61, an increase of 13 since 2024, followed by Society and Culture with 24.

Table 10: Undergraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2023	2024	2025
Architecture and Building	0	0	0
Creative Arts	4	4	2
Education	9	7	14
Engineering and Related Technologies	1	2	1
Health	29	48	61
Information Technology	0	1	2
Management and Commerce	3	2	4
Natural and Physical Sciences	0	4	0
Society and Culture	16	20	24
Agriculture, Environmental and Related	0	2	2
Total	62	90	110

Table 11 shows completions by discipline for Postgraduate students. Likewise, Health had the highest completions, with a total of 11 for 2025.

Table 11: Postgraduate First Nations student completions by discipline

Discipline	2023	2024	2025
Education	6	5	5
Engineering and Related Technologies	2	2	1
Health	10	14	11
Information Technology	1	0	0
Management and Commerce	2	1	0
Society and Culture	4	3	5
Total	25	25	22

In 2025, CQUniversity continued to implement embedded ISSP-funded strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully complete award courses. These strategies were designed to provide consistent, culturally safe support across the full student lifecycle, with a strong focus on progression to completion. Embedded strategies included proactive student advising from enrolment through to final units of study, ensuring students received ongoing academic and pastoral support at key stages of their qualification. This was complemented by structured re-enrolment and progression planning after each study period, supporting continuity of enrolment and timely progression through courses. In addition, academic support programs were aligned with key course milestones and completion requirements to ensure students were appropriately supported at critical points in their studies.

In 2025, several new strategies were introduced to further strengthen completion outcomes. These included a structural redesign of Indigenous student support to ensure culturally appropriate services were embedded across the entire qualification lifecycle, from entry through to completion. There was also increased Indigenous leadership and governance through the IED, strengthening oversight and cultural responsiveness across student support initiatives. Formalised re-enrolment and course planning outreach following each study period was also introduced, providing more consistent and targeted support to maintain student progression and reduce attrition risk. These enhancements strengthened completion pathways by ensuring students received timely, coordinated and culturally safe support throughout their studies, particularly during transition points that are known to impact retention and completion.



Beyond ISSP-funded activities, CQUniversity supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student completions through broader institutional strategies. These include university-wide student success and retention frameworks, equity-funded progression initiatives, and strengthened coordination between academic schools and student support services. Together, these approaches provide an integrated support environment that contributes to improved qualification completion outcomes.

Alumni

There were no new alumni-specific initiatives introduced in 2025. The University continued to build on previously established activities and outcomes, with updated participation data outlined below. The University maintains 44 Indigenous Alumni profiles on the CQUniversity website, supported by a dedicated search function that enables users to view First Nations graduate stories. This initiative continues to showcase graduate success and highlight diverse study pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In 2025, six First Nations alumni mentors remained active within the Industry Mentoring Program, representing both VET and HE sectors. The mentoring program underwent a formal review during the year, resulting in a pause on active recruitment, with only organic applications progressing. First Nations alumni Ms Nareeta Davis and Mr Wayne Denning continued to serve on University Council throughout 2025. Both appointments form part of a term spanning June 2023 to June 2026, ensuring ongoing First Nations representation in university governance. A total of 91 First Nations alumni participated in meaningful volunteering and experiential engagement activities in 2025, representing 11.6% of the overall engaged alumni cohort. This included continued academic support for First Nations perspectives units within the Bachelor and Master of Education programs, with several First Nations alumni contributing as specialist guest speakers. Additional engagement occurred through broader alumni volunteering and participation initiatives.

5. Regional and Remote Students

CQUniversity is well established in the delivery of distance education with more than half of the current student cohort made up of students studying off campus, many of whom are based in regional and remote areas. In 2025, of the 1029 First Nations HE students enrolled, 843 students were recorded as living in regional and remote areas, with the remaining 182 residing in major cities, this in an increase of 11 students from 2024 data. Students who must study internally or at a particular campus are able to access the 11 campuses and the Regional University Study Hubs partnership centres, situated in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia. As previously described, the Woorabinda Indigenous Knowledge Centre and Education Hub support students in Woorabinda to continue to study and live in their community and travel to campus for residential.

Works previously undertaken through the Northern Australia Infrastructure Fund (NAIF) loan have enabled the continuation of upgrades to existing digital platforms (digital works). These upgrades and enhancements have provided regional and remote students with opportunities to access facilities and support services equivalent to those being provided on the metropolitan campuses.

CQUniversity services regional and remote students through the well-established delivery of online teaching, support services, scholarships, and bursaries to assist students with start-up costs, including textbooks, uniforms, technology, and equipment. Accommodation scholarships, travel bursaries, industry placement scholarships, and work readiness bursaries are also available. The Scholarships Team supports students with information regarding available ISSP, external and donor-funded scholarships and can provide students with information about how to access ABSTUDY relocation assistance. Table 12 shows the scholarship data for remote and regional students. Indigenous Commonwealth Education Costs and Reward Scholarships showed an increased level of demand.

Table 12: ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students¹⁰

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A.2024 Payments	136,000.00	54	13,695.72	3	20,264.40	43	169,960.12	100
B.2025 Offers ¹¹	78,000.00	32	17,730.00	11	188,674.00	181	284,404.00	224
C.Percentage ¹²							167.30%	
(C=B/A*100)								
2025 Payments	57,500.00	21	17,730	10	106,130	154	181,360	185



In 2025, ISSP-funded support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in regional and remote locations was delivered through flexible, accessible, and proactive engagement approaches designed to reduce geographical barriers to participation and success. Support was provided through multiple delivery modes, including online platforms, telephone, SMS, and email communications, ensuring students could access advising and support services regardless of location. This flexible approach enabled continuous engagement across the student lifecycle, particularly for those who may have limited access to on-campus services.

Regional and Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were prioritised through early identification at the application and enrolment stages. Once identified, students received proactive, wraparound outreach from ISAS, with targeted support embedded at key transition points including enrolment, onboarding, study commencement, and ongoing progression. This ensured equitable access to support services and strengthened continuity of engagement for students studying outside major campus locations. These approaches ensured that regional and remote students were supported in a timely, culturally safe, and consistent manner throughout their studies, reducing barriers associated with distance and strengthening retention and participation outcomes.

SEWB support was offered to regional and remote students and ISSP funding prioritised regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through online, culturally safe, and free wellbeing and engagement activities, removing travel and cost barriers. Online delivery ensured students studying externally or living away from campuses could participate equally. Students were prioritised through free access to programs, book giveaways, online wellbeing sessions, SEWB packs, and early engagement activities that supported connection.

Strategies to improve access to university study were implemented and key strategies included:

- Online delivery of SEWB initiatives across all campuses.
- Culturally safe facilitation by a First Nations staff member.
- Student co-design through surveys to shape wellbeing supports.
- Early pathway engagement with school-based programs.
- Partnerships with community and industry organisations.

These strategies reduced geographic, cultural, and financial barriers to accessing university support.

SEWB also provided the following activities in 2025:

- *Online Indigenous Literacy Day*
An online wellbeing initiative aligned to the theme "*Strength In Our Stories: For Now and Future Generations*," featuring a First Nations book giveaway and student survey, receiving 28 responses. The survey informed future wellbeing planning, highlighting demand for culturally safe counselling, SEWB packs, online Cuppa and Yarn sessions, meditation, and regular check-ins.
- *Binalmalmal (Listening and Learning) - Skills for Theatre Program*
Six free micro-credentials in acting and technical theatre were delivered through face-to-face, online, and hands-on learning in Far North Queensland, through partnership between CQUni and JUTE Theatre in Cairns. Wellbeing support included writing mentorship and strategies for managing creative stress.
- *STARS Foundation - Community Engagement (Cairns)*
Wellbeing and pathways yarning sessions were delivered to Years 8-12 students. An on-campus visit is scheduled for February 2026 to strengthen early connection to CQUniversity and future study pathways.
- *SEWB Packs*
Were distributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to provide practical, culturally responsive wellbeing support. Packs supported students experiencing study-related stress and financial pressure and functioned as an early intervention tool, strengthening connection to wellbeing services and ongoing engagement with study.

These initiatives improved access to culturally safe wellbeing support for regional and remote students, strengthened student voice in service design, increased confidence and readiness for study, and supported early engagement with CQUniversity. The inclusion of SEWB packs provided practical, timely support that complemented counselling and wellbeing initiatives. Overall, ISSP activities enhanced connection, wellbeing, and pathways into higher education.



6. Eligibility Criteria

6.1 INDIGENOUS EDUCATION STRATEGY

The First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy 2024–2028 (FNESSS) continues to serve as CQUniversity's Indigenous Education Strategy under Section 13 of the ISSP Guidelines. Following its approval by Council in October 2024, 2025, represents the first full year of active implementation. During 2025, the university prioritised operationalising the governance, data, and cross-divisional collaboration mechanisms embedded in the FNESSS, while advancing the foundational work initiated in the previous reporting period.

Governance of the strategy is overseen by the FNSSC, with six-monthly reports submitted to Academic Board by the Vice-President Indigenous Engagement. The FNESSS, via its conduit to CQUniversity's RAP, also informs CQUniversity Learning and Teaching Strategy, ensuring that cultural capability, embedding of First Nations curriculum, and teaching scholarship remain institution-wide priorities.

Progress against milestones

- *Strengthened data capture and application*

In 2025, the university achieved significant advances in data capability and early intervention readiness. A dedicated First Nations student dashboard, modelled on an existed dashboard used by the Tertiary Education Division, was commissioned to provide centralised, rapid access to enrolment, participation, retention, success and completion metrics at course, college, school, and university-wide levels. This capability is now informing targeted responses and local planning (FNESSS Actions 1.3.1 and 1.3.3). While the inclusion of First Nations performance data in the Unit Assessment Review process (Action 1.3.2) and the automation of student exit surveys (Action 1.3.4) is scheduled for later implementation, the 2025 uplift in data infrastructure has created the necessary foundation for systematised early intervention and continuous improvement. Outcomes for 2025 were the strongest in at least four years across enrolment, participation, success, and completions, with the most pronounced gains observed in completions (see later section of this report).

- *Strengthened pathways and student support*

The FNESSS continued to strengthen collaboration across divisions to improve transitions, retention, and progression for First Nations students. In 2025, the presence of IED staff across governance and operational committees increased, strengthening the integration of First Nations perspectives in university decision-making across education and student success portfolios. These efforts contribute to building a culturally capable workforce and learning environment and embedding cultural safety in everyday practice. Collaboration with Access Education has also been strengthened, with commencement of a collaborative research project to better understand the experiences and needs of First Nations students within enabling programs (Action 2.3.1). The STN, SUN and STEPS programs remain fee-free for First Nations students, preserving low-barrier pathways into Tertiary education. A review of delivery and funding models will commence in 2026 (Action 2.3.2). Further, a collaborative digital project feasibility case between IED and the Office of Education, Strategy and Quality was established in 2025. This work, to commence in 2026 and beyond, will enable an efficient analysis of courses that do/do not contain exit pathways, as well as First Nations content in units and courses. These data will be vital to benchmarking and the development of targeted action plans (Action 2.3.4).

- *Strengthened course and unit design*

Embedding of Indigenous content within curriculum continued to progress through the implementation of the First Nations Curriculum Framework (2025) (Action 3.3.1, Action 3.3.2). Work also commenced on addressing ACER/AUER audit (Action 3.3.3), with further consolidation scheduled for 2026. CQUniversity sustained and expanded its all-of-institution cultural capability initiatives. The First Nations Cultural Competency Framework (2023–2028) underpinned professional learning, complemented by masterclasses and training programs initiated in 2024 and expanded in 2025. A review of effectiveness and staff perception on needs will commence in 2026, to further inform cultural capability training and the embedding of First Nations Curriculum and Teaching in 2026 and beyond.

- *Strengthened teaching and scholarship*

Through 2025, the IED welcomed the draft version of CQUniversity's Learning and Teaching Strategy: Future Now. Due for release in 2026, it was ensured that the draft version of that document included First Nations priorities, and was linked via the Reconciliation Action Plan, to actions within the FNESSS. Further, IED staff were included on an Academic Profiles Working Group, to better guide Teaching Scholarship across the university (Action 4.3.1).



- *Strengthened performance targets*

Across all key indicators - including enrolments, participation, success, and completions - 2025 represents the strongest performance observed over the last four years and coincides with the first full year of FNESSS implementation (Action 5.3.1). Enrolments grew modestly to 1,043 (2025), reflecting a slight uplift in First Nations student recruitment. Participation has increased annually from 5.74% (2022) to 6.39% (2025). Success rates for commencing Indigenous undergraduates followed a steady upward trend from 71.72% (2022) to 78.10% (2025), suggesting sustained improvement in academic progression. The most notable change is in completions, which dipped from 153 (2022) to 139 (2023), then rose to 160 (2024) before a surge to 199 (2025). This rise was driven by undergraduate completions, which increased from 89 (2024) to 109 (2025). While FNESSS aligns with stable gains in enrolment, participation, and success, the step-change in completions in 2025 provides the strongest early signal that the strategy's data capability, governance focus and cross-divisional coordination are contributing to improved graduation outcomes.

- *Barriers*

Persistent barriers to further improving First Nations student outcomes include complex external factors affecting student continuity (regionality, employment and caring responsibilities). These factors were identified in formal student engagements (survey) throughout 2025. The need to further systematise early contact with new First Nations student upon enrolling at CQUniversity, as well as early intervention within colleges/schools according to identified indicators will be priorities in 2026 and beyond that will continue to improve CQUniversity's support for First Nations students.

- *Strategy status*

The FNESSS 2024–2028 remains current.

- *Public link to the strategy*

The FNESSS is publicly available at CQUniversity's First Nations Policies and Cultural Resources webpage: <https://www.cqu.edu.au/about-us/indigenous-engagement/policies-cultural-resources>.

6.2 INDIGENOUS WORKFORCE STRATEGY

The First Nations Workforce Strategy (FNWS) 2020–2025 was a whole-of-university approach aimed to reflect parity across the geographic and demographic catchments of the University's campus footprints.

CQUniversity's prior First Nations Workforce Strategy (2020–2025) represented the University's first formal and institution-wide approach to strengthening the recruitment, retention, and progression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. The 2020–2025 First Nations Workforce Strategy established a solid foundation through initiatives such as the improvements in recruitment practices, integration of cultural competency training across the workforce, and the development of culturally safe onboarding practices. The prior Strategy successfully exceeded its workforce parity target, achieving 3.55% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander continuing and fixed-term employees in 2025.

Equally important were the lessons learned. Initiatives such as structured mentoring, comprehensive traineeship programs, and leadership development pathways highlighted the need for earlier planning, sustained investment, and systematic scalability across all campuses. These insights now shape the priorities for the next phase of workforce development.

In developing the new First Nations Workforce Strategy 2026–2030 (currently going through university's final committee approval process), we undertook a targeted consultation process with our First Nations staff, including a dedicated survey to capture staff insights, priorities, and lived experiences; their feedback has directly informed the direction, actions, and commitments outlined in this document, ensuring the strategy reflects the voices and aspirations of our First Nations workforce.

The First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026–2030) builds on progress made to date, and responds to the evolving aspirations of staff, students, and community. It is closely aligned with the CQUniversity Strategic Plan 2024–2028, the Stretch RAP 2025–2028, the First Nations Research Strategy 2023–2028, and national policy frameworks including the Indigenous Student Assistance Grants Guidelines 2017 and the Australian Universities Accord, which centres Indigenous equity and success at the heart of the tertiary education system. The Accord's national equity agenda recognises the value of First Nations knowledge systems and calls for universities to embed Indigenous perspectives across teaching, research, and workforce development. In aligning with the Australian Universities Accord, our First Nations Workforce Strategy embraces national calls for a stronger, more representative Indigenous presence in academia.



Looking forward, the 2026–2030 Strategy is structured around three interconnected priority areas:

- *Attraction and Recruitment:* Positioning CQUniversity as an employer of choice through stronger pre-employment programs, culturally informed recruitment practices, enhanced advertising and outreach, and ambitious growth in identified and senior First Nations positions.
- *Retention and Development:* Strengthening career pathways through structured traineeship, cadetship and postdoctoral programs, professional development, and leadership training, alongside networking, mentoring, and recognition opportunities that empower staff to thrive. Embedding a new Cultural Safety Strategy, strengthening cultural capability training across all levels of the workforce, supporting supervisors, and addressing colonial load to ensure an inclusive and supportive workplace.
- *Governance and Reporting:* Ensuring First Nations voices are embedded in decision-making, strengthening transparency through robust monitoring and reporting, and building accountability into all policies, procedures, and workforce initiatives.

Together, the actions and deliverables underpinning this strategy will establish an ambitious and measurable agenda for 2026–2030. They will deepen CQUniversity’s commitment to reconciliation, enhance our ability to attract and retain First Nations talent, and enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to contribute, lead, and succeed at all levels of the University. The First Nations Workforce Strategy (2026–2030) sets a clear and ambitious pathway for CQUniversity to continue building a culturally safe, inclusive, and high-performing workforce. The [First Nations Employment webpage](#), contains information for prospective First Nations staff and encourages job applicants or employees to engage via various platforms.

Table 13: Number of First Nations staff employed at CQUniversity 2023-2025

Year	Continuing		Fixed Term/Casual		Total
	Academic/Teaching	Professional	Academic/Teaching	Professional	
2023	9	17	26	36	88
2024	18	24	20	36	98
2025	19	27	25	24	95

The number of First Nations staff steadily rose from 88 in 2023, to 98 in 2024 and is currently sitting at 95 in 2025 (Table 13). As of December 2024, we exceeded our CQUniversity Enterprise Agreement 3.2% employment target, reaching 3.56%. Currently sitting at 3.45% First Nations Workforce, CQUniversity’s new First Nations Workforce Strategy aims to increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to an ambitious 5.5% across continuing and fixed term positions by 2030.

The Talent Acquisition team has played a crucial role in advocating for the consideration of external Indigenous candidates when filling internal vacancies within CQUniversity. This team has been instrumental in fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion within the recruitment process by actively engaging with hiring managers to discuss the benefits of considering external Indigenous candidates. Other reasons for increases include:

- The University’s human resources directorate, People and Culture, diversifying their networks to advertise roles in various Indigenous and community print media, social media platforms and increased professional and Indigenous community networks to ensure more coverage.
- Staff consistently encouraging First Nations community members to apply for all CQUniversity roles, not only Identified roles.
- Internal only vacancies being open to external First Nations applicants.
- Including at least one Indigenous panel member in all interviews of known-to-be-Indigenous candidates, ensuring culturally sensitive and inclusive assessment processes.
- Completion of the First Nations Onboarding Package which was specifically tailored to new First Nations employees.
- Advertising on First Nations specific platforms.

To further support CQUniversity’s Indigenous staff, alumni, and current students through to postgraduate studies and into academic roles and encourage career development, the University has included support within the new Central Queensland University Enterprise Agreement 2023 as per below:



"In order to facilitate progression of existing Indigenous employees who wish to pursue careers in Academia or VET Education, the University provides staff study support for the requisite training qualifications including the Graduate Certificate Tertiary and Adult Education and/or Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (howsoever named) through CQUniversity. Upon successful completion of the above and as availability arises, existing Indigenous employees will be eligible to apply for suitable vacancies and be considered on a merit basis."

This approach, often referred to as "Grow our Own", aims to cultivate talent from within the University's First Nations alumni pool, particularly in competitive fields of expertise in research and academia such as health and education.

6.3 INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

CQUniversity meets the Indigenous Governance Mechanism responsibilities through the FNSSC. The FNSSC maintains a majority Indigenous membership, with 4 of the 5 current members identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, including the Chair, Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, Prof Adrian Miller, and the Deputy Chair, Associate Professor Thomas Doering. Members include management, senior academic and professional staff, with union representatives from the University's Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) also in attendance where First Nations Workforce Strategy matters are being addressed.

The FNSSC Terms of Reference (ToR) clearly articulate its responsibility for advising, recommending, and monitoring of ISSP funding, as well as monitoring the First Nations Workforce Strategy and First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy, and providing advice on university policy relating to First Nations matters. The ToR were updated in 2024 to enable improvements to the Committee's responsiveness to its functions and responsibilities. Updates included changes in membership to increase the involvement of senior Indigenous staff for improved capability in the provision of strategic guidance on ISSP funding allocations and advice on high-level policy documents relevant to Indigenous matters within the University. Membership numbers were also reduced to improve the FNSSC's responsiveness to the timeframes of priority Committee business. The FNSSC meets approximately every 2-3 months.

The FNSSC held five (5) meetings in 2025. In addition to the standard items for discussion listed in previous ISSP reports, the committee also considered, discussed, contributed to, and resolved a range of key issues, including:

- Review of the Draft First Nations Workforce Strategy 2026-2030.
- Review of the Draft First Nations Cultural and Intellectual Property Protocol, • First Nations Workforce Strategy matters, including reviewing and monitoring progress in achieving strategic outcomes.
- Discussion, First Nations representation on Scholarship Panel.
- Continuation and expansion of the in-depth analysis of the impact of ISSP-funded Scholarships on First Nations student success.

The annual self-evaluation process undertaken by the FNSSC provided an opportunity for members to review the Committee's performance and suggest areas for improvement. This self-evaluation indicated most respondents felt that the committee performed very well against its ToR and there was high-level of satisfaction regarding the secretariate support. Suggestions for improvement included providing ISSP funding recipients with opportunities to attend FNSSC meetings to present project updates. Policy review activity within the FNSSC has remained minimal throughout 2025.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People engage in a range of decision-making processes at CQUniversity. The Vice-President Indigenous Engagement held the following roles in 2025:

- Chair, Student Equity and Amenities Funding Committee
- Chair, Reconciliation Action Plan Committee
- Chair, First Nations Success Strategy Committee
- Member, Academic Promotions Committee
- Ex-officio member of the University Management Committee
- Ex-officio member of the Academic Board
- Ex-officio member of the Strategic Planning and Projects Committee
- Rights of Audience and Debate of the University Council
- Rights of Audience and Debate of the Joint Consultative Committee
- Rights of Audience and Debate of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee
- Director of Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy



Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from throughout the University are active participants in a range of other decision-making activities at CQUniversity including:

- Two members of the Curriculum Committee
- Member of the Education Strategy and Innovation Committee (ESIC)
- Member of the Student Success Committee
- Member Campuses of the Future
- Member of the University Management Committee (UMC)
- Rights of Audience and Debate of the JCC
- First Nations representation on the Student Representative Council

6.3.1 STATEMENT BY THE INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

The FNSSC undertakes an ongoing process of self-evaluation and improvement to enhance its oversight of ISSP-funded programs. In 2025 it expanded its monitoring efforts, initiating an in-depth assessment and analysis of the impact of key ISSP funded projects on student success. Enhancements were also made to the Committee's capacity to provide advice on strategic directions for increasing outcomes from ISSP funded projects.

The influence of the FNSSC in University-wide programs and policies that support First Nations students, staff and communities continued to strengthen in 2025 through its involvement in the development of policies such as the First Nations Research Strategy and the First Nations Education and Student Success Strategy. The FNSSC also holds a significant role in oversight and monitoring of the First Nations Workforce Strategy. Noting strategy development is underway, the FNSSC will continue to provide updates as key milestones are reached. The Committee also continued its consultative role in the provision of ISSP funded services and products that are incorporated into general business University-wide.

With the CQUniversity Innovate RAP 2022-2024 now concluded, the University has continued to demonstrate its commitment to delivering education, training and research that empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The majority of the Innovate RAP deliverables were successfully completed by its conclusion, and this important work now continues through the current CQUniversity Stretch RAP 2025-2028. The ISSP funded programs overseen by the FNSSC contributed significantly to the achievement of those RAP actions and deliverables.

I look forward to collaborating with the Committee as it continues to encourage and oversee successful and innovative programs and products aimed at providing rewarding and culturally safe study, employment and engagement experiences for First Nations staff, students, and the wider community.

Professor Adrian Miller, Chair - First Nations Success Strategies Committee, Vice-President Indigenous Engagement, BMA Chair in Indigenous Engagement, Director of Jilbay First Nations RHD Academy. Email: vp-ied@cqu.edu.au

References

*Kalsbeek, D.H, (2013) *Reframing Retention Strategy for Institutional Improvement: New Directions for Higher Education*, Number 161, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco.

#Wood, D., Gray-Ganter, G. and Bailey, R. (2016) 'Pre-commencement interviews to support transition and retention of first year undergraduate students', *Student Success. Queensland University of Technology*, 7(2), pp. 21–31.



Additional information for completing the template

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 These 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 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 Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

⁷ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

⁸ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁹ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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).

¹² This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.