More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI)

Final Report

Pathways into Higher Education: Empowering choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and communities

Australian Catholic University

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Australian Catholic University Pathways into Higher Education project was funded under Round 3 of the MATSITI partnership initiatives to increase the number and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australian schools for 2014-15. The intention of the project was to empower choices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities and to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to become teachers. The project developed technology to provide easy access to information about the teaching profession.

Overall deliverables:

One of the primary concerns that Pathways addresses is the lack of clarification around pathways into teacher education due to a number of community social impacts that restrict parental engagement. There is also general confusion about what support is available for career and study prospects. Pathways is an opportunity to reach a number of students, teachers, parent and communities in urban, rural and remote contexts through a culturally appropriately designed and informative ICT resource. In order to build professional pathways, culturally appropriate and informative consultation it was considered imperative to:

- Promote teaching as a career of choice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at local levels.
- Establish local level partnerships between schools and industries to promote teaching as a career to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Pathways had a number of interrelated outcomes:

1. by undertaking extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities in urban, rural and remote contexts, relevant information on pathways to teacher education were identified to be included in technology developed and trialled.
2. through the consultation process, the most appropriate ways to engage with this information including the use of ICT was identified;
3. by invitation, the Project team engaged with and consulted selected University Indigenous staff in regard to identifying the most relevant University-specific teacher education information relevant to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities;
4. by discussion and collaboration, the Project Team worked directly with the ICT consultant and Aboriginal artist to design and develop a teacher education pathway app relevant and appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities;
5. through the consultation process, the Pathways resource was trialled with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents, education workers and their communities in urban, rural and remote contexts;
6. through established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks, and at key educational forums, including higher education seminars and conferences, Pathways resource will be disseminated.

The project occurred in six stages:

1. Concept development consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities in urban, rural and remote contexts. Project Team travelled to the 3 nominated locations (urban, rural and remote) to hold focus group discussions with each community. The process determined the content priorities and structure for a resource to enhance the pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities.

2. Sunshine Coast University was invited to participate in the Pathways project and to develop linked resources for their MATSITI project through co-hosting a one-day workshop.

3. Design and development of ICT resource. An ICT consultant who previously worked on Indigenous research projects was engaged to assist with the design and develop teacher education pathway resource relevant and appropriate to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers, parents and their communities.

4. Trialling of the Application. The resource was trialled at three sites: urban, rural and remote in 2015 allowing the students, staff and community members to make recommendations for further development.

Dissemination of Pathways resources.

MATSITI will disseminate the Pathways resources through established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks, and at key educational forums.

1.2 Ethics

Ethics clearance has been previously submitted. Final Report was submitted to the ACU Ethics Committee and was signed on in October, 2015. Confirmation can be provided on request.
2 Reform and Innovation

2.1 Degree of reform and innovation of the initiative.

Although there have been several initiatives to increase the number of Indigenous teachers, there has been little use of the current technology. Most young people are familiar with smart phones, ipads and the use of apps. This project developed an app which could be used virtually anywhere it is possible to access the internet and by most phones. It provides instantaneous information on education courses and information about becoming a teacher. There are interesting stories from Indigenous teachers which are encouraging to anyone considering entering the teaching profession. The design is colourful, user-friendly and innovative.

2.2 Description of progress against original project outcomes, deliverables and milestones.

On the 6 March 2014, the Project Officer and Project Leader met with the Queensland Indigenous Consultative Committee (QIECC) Chair Mr Leon Epong to discuss the project overview and to gauge possible participating communities. Under the direction of QIECC, three communities were identified that would provide positive engagement for the project in accordance with the project’s milestones: Charleville, Roma and Balmoral. In accordance with professional and community consultation best practice, the QIECC chair provided names of Indigenous contacts that would assist in the delivery of each workshop which in turn would reduce financial drain on the project budget. Initial pre-workshop consultations for Roma and Charleville were organised with proposed communities through Wayne Williams, Senior Indigenous Officer, Education Queensland.

Community visits were undertaken in May/June 2014. The project team also presented at the Indigenous Careers Expo in Roma and Charleville. Consultations involved high school students, education workers, Principals and Teachers, and Indigenous parents and Community members.

Meetings with Education Queensland’s Indigenous network were held in March, 2014 to discuss the project and to determine the metropolitan site. Personnel included: Aunty Peggy Tidyman (Regional CEC); Lyn Chapman (Regional CEC); Sharon Williams (Senior Indigenous Education Officer) and James Sandy (Education Pathways Officer). As a result of this consultation Balmoral State High School was selected as the urban setting. A dinner and presentation was held on 22 July, 2014 with school students, education workers, Principals and Teachers, and Indigenous parents and Community members in attendance.

At the invitation of the Dean of Education, the Project Team attended the meeting of the Indigenous Advisory Committee for the Sunshine Coast University on 17 July and 23 September to share information on the ACU and SCU respective MATSITI projects. From this meeting it was agreed that the two projects would assist one another by being part of the Indigenous Education Conference, an annual event. The Conference was held at
the University at Sippy Downs on Saturday 25 October, 2014. Professor White was a guest speaker and presented a paper on Indigenous education. Following the presentations, the Project Team facilitated a workshop around the development of the app and received excellent input from workshop participants which included faculty staff, classroom teachers, students and community.

**Development and trialling of the App**

The Project team met regularly throughout 2014 and 2015 with Information Technology specialist to develop the application based on the information collected through the consultations. The initial work on the app was completed in early January, 2015 but the app was further refined from January to October as feedback from consultation forums was taken into account.

*Universal Responsive Design for All Devices – One Design Fit into Multiple Devices*

The Indigenous Teacher Education Web App is based on Responsive web design (RWD), One design fits all and platforms. The site aimed at crafting site to provide an optical viewing and interaction experience-easy reading and navigation with a minimum of resizing, panning, and scrolling-across a wide range of devices from desktop computer monitors to mobile phones or tablets.

Teacher Education Web App also provides a powerful content management backend, allowing system administrator update the very easy and push to all devices.

Following are some screen captures, same content page on Mobile, Tablet and Desktop, provide optimal viewing experience.
The Aboriginal design incorporated in the app background was provided by Gooreng Gooreng Artist Maxine Zealey who is also featured on the app as a teacher under *Stories*.

**Trialling the App**

Due to school and community commitments the application was trialled only in two of the participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

- **Community 1. Ngutana-Lui - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Studies Centre in Inala, Brisbane.**
  
  A number of senior education staff including teachers and tutors attended the trial workshop at the Ngutana-Lui - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Studies Centre in Brisbane. The project received positive feedback only resulting in minor changes to the website and its content.

- **Community 2. Charleville State High School**
  
  Principal, teaching, and administration staff along with the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community attended the trial workshop at the school. Participants were pleased with the content of the application and webpage who also provided positive feedback.

It was believed sufficient feedback had been received from these consultations.

### 3 Capability

This project is an excellent example of collaboration to produce a resource that involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation from start to finish. The Project team utilised their existing networks and developed further relationships with teachers, parents and communities throughout the life of the project. Although some of the Personnel changed throughout the project it was supported and remained authentic throughout.

### 4 Project Outcomes and Benefits

At this stage it is not possible to estimate how many current or prospective Indigenous teachers are supported by this project. Once the app is in general circulation, its usefulness could be gauged by how well it is known and used in the general community. Specifically a survey could be conducted of beginning teachers to ascertain if and how the app assisted them with information on teacher education.
Feedback to date, from teachers, students and community has been extremely positive about the app. The app has been found to be user-friendly and the information provided has been described as easy to understand and clearly presented. The design including the Aboriginal components were appreciated.

In addition to the production of a very useful resource, this project gave a voice to the community who appreciated the opportunity to have input into the design of the app. A spin-off was that the Project Team now has a better knowledge and understanding of apps and how to create them. The artist also used technology to produce the design and is now encouraged to utilise this medium to share culture.

**Risks and Issues:**

As to be expected it was difficult to organise times to visit schools and arrange consultations during the school term as academic diaries are very full. However gaining access through contacts well known in the school and communities aided in getting schools on side. Additionally, regular contact with Principals and/or Indigenous Education workers strengthened the relationship and made sure that communication was clear and events organised. The Roma and Charleville consultations took place during the day; Sunshine Coast university event was on a Saturday and the Balmoral dinner was held on a Tuesday evening. The latter was particularly well attended and a dinner provided. One of the lessons learned was to match the workshops to community events and to provide a meal or refreshments. Risks to the project include Project Team consistency/employment. However, IPPE have committed to supporting this project to completion. Another risk was changes to school staff and Community liaison e.g changes with Principals required re-establishing the project on the School agenda. A variation to the original plan during the project which could have been quite disruptive to the project was that due to an internal structure the project team were transferred from the Centre for Indigenous Education and Research to the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education. This was particularly complicated in managing the finances and transfer of project responsibilities.

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### 5. Financial

The major cost for this project was for the consultation process to receive input from the Indigenous communities, the costs associated with the employment of a Project Officer and the Technology specialist. The other team members participated as an in-kind contribution to the project. Administration costs were waived by the DVC Research Australian Catholic University who provided offices for Project Staff, office equipment, telephone, postage and storage. Camera and other equipment was provided by the Institute for Positive Psychology and Education (ACU).

### 6. Sustainably

The project can be sustained with minimal cost. Only requirement is a regular update on the weblink and a current contact person.
7. Report recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The App is disseminated to all schools and Guidance officers for distribution to Indigenous students.
2. The App is included in Tertiary Admissions Information.
3. The App be further developed to include information on postgraduate courses in education.

8. Appendices

Financial report

Financial cost of the project was used on:

- Project team salary
- Workshop costs
- Travel to Communities
- Development of the App
- Artwork

See Financial Statement for full details.