



MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC
ABORIGINAL
EDUCATION STRATEGY
2018- 2021

In this publication the word 'Aboriginal' is used in a way which is inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and in preference to the word 'Indigenous'.

Content Warning:

This publication may contain images of and/or references to deceased Aboriginal persons.

Flags:

The Australian Aboriginal Flag was designed by Mr Harold Thomas and the Torres Strait Islander flag was designed by Mr Bernard Namok.



Melbourne Polytechnic would like to acknowledge the Kulin Nation Peoples' traditional learnings and teachings which occurred for thousands of years on the land where Melbourne Polytechnic's campuses are now located.

We pay respect to their Elders, past and present.



1. Advice from the Elders

In June 2017, Aboriginal Elders gave the Melbourne Polytechnic community the following advice about embracing Aboriginal Education:

As Elders we are honoured to have a voice in Aboriginal Education at Melbourne Polytechnic. We know that our contribution will create a culture of belonging, caring and understanding for all Aboriginal students and communities.

It is important to make a connection to all cultures, your own learning, and the land to enable success and knowledge to thrive at Melbourne Polytechnic.

Aboriginal students need to support each other, be respectful, be proud, work hard and have a strong self-belief to be successful. Success is about empowerment and achievement and it is important this is understood in Aboriginal Education.

We believe, if Melbourne Polytechnic staff are supportive, patient and aware of other people and their cultures, it is good grounding for creating trusting and respectful relationships.

“As Elders we are honoured to have a voice in Aboriginal Education at Melbourne Polytechnic. We know that our contribution will create a culture of belonging, caring and understanding for all Aboriginal learners and communities.” – Aboriginal Elders, June 2017



2. The Needs of Aboriginal Students

Aboriginal students come from all over Australia to study at Melbourne Polytechnic. These students are taking risks, often leaving their homes, their families, their communities and their elders, hoping to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Melbourne Polytechnic is committed to empowering and supporting Aboriginal students as they work towards accomplishing their personal goals while upholding their cultural identity, knowing that the positive effects of successful study can impact many.

In a 2016 survey of Aboriginal students, the students identified the top five areas Melbourne Polytechnic could focus on to assist them to feel empowered and achieve their personal goals.

1. Create an environment where I feel safe and encouraged to be myself.
2. Ensure teachers support cultural obligations.
3. Display empathy for external circumstances that affect my study and towards a variety of ethnic, cultural, and/or socio-economic backgrounds.
4. Use class time to ensure I understand class content.
5. Encourage a strong sense of pride of my culture.

This feedback, combined with feedback from other key stakeholders, has been vital in shaping the Melbourne Polytechnic Aboriginal Education Strategy.



3. CEO's Forward

I am pleased to present the Melbourne Polytechnic Aboriginal Education Strategy (2018-2021) which updates Melbourne Polytechnic's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal education.

Beginning in the 1970's, Melbourne Polytechnic has an ongoing history of partnering with the Aboriginal community to provide learning support for Aboriginal students. Melbourne Polytechnic's work in Aboriginal education began as collaboration between staff and community members, setting the educational direction and ensuring course content was culturally valid and appropriate. Additionally, a safe space on campus was created to ensure Aboriginal students felt understood and supported.

The 2018 version of the Aboriginal Education Strategy was again developed via a collaborative approach, which saw local Aboriginal community members and elders, Aboriginal students and Melbourne Polytechnic staff contributing.

The Vision of the Melbourne Polytechnic Aboriginal Education Strategy is:

Through education Melbourne Polytechnic embraces traditional Aboriginal values to create a harmonious and inclusive society.

The Purpose of Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy is:

To support a whole of institute approach to incorporate Aboriginal community values into day-to-day business and empower Aboriginal students and staff to uphold their cultural identity and achieve meaningful outcomes.

Additionally, Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy (2018-2021) is aligned with current government frameworks, including:

- ▶ The Wurreker Strategy¹
- ▶ Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026²
- ▶ Barring Djinang Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian Public Sector³

Progress against the implementation of the actions outlined in this strategy will be reported annually.

As we launch Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy, I wish to emphasise that the responsibility for creating an empowering and inclusive environment for Aboriginal students and staff is a shared responsibility, where all staff and students at Melbourne Polytechnic have a role to play. I ask you to consider how you can contribute to creating a harmonious and inclusive society.



Frances Coppolillo
CEO, Melbourne Polytechnic



¹ The Wurreker Strategy is the Vocational Education and Training (VET) strategy for Aboriginal students developed through the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI) in partnership with the Victorian State Government.

² Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026 is a Victorian State Government strategy to assist Koorie Victorians achieve their learning aspirations across early childhood, schools and further education. It was developed in consultation with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), along with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Victorian Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO).

³ Barring Djinang Aboriginal Employment Strategy for the Victorian Public Sector is the 5 year Aboriginal Employment Strategy designed by the Victorian Public Sector Commission to enhance attraction, recruitment and retention of Aboriginal staff.

4. The History of Aboriginal Education at Melbourne Polytechnic

Melbourne Polytechnic has a long history of contributing to Aboriginal Education. The Koorie Services Centre (previously known as the Aboriginal Services Unit) was established in the late 1970s as the result of a group of local Aboriginal community members coming together. These students were undertaking training as Aboriginal Welfare Assistants in a range of areas such as Community Services Victoria Regional offices, Family Group Homes and Youth Services. The certificate qualification they were studying would later become the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Welfare Studies. The Advanced Diploma course was one of the first accredited courses in Victoria to be managed and delivered by Aboriginal people within a mainstream setting.

The Koorie Services Centre (KSC) and Melbourne Polytechnic's senior management developed a strong partnership ensuring there was a safe learning environment for all, with validation of course content, and Aboriginal staff and community taking a leadership role in setting the educational direction. The KSC staff and community members developed over 10 accredited courses that were Aboriginal specific and soon became a community hub.

By 2009, Melbourne Polytechnic adopted a new model in response to the changing expectations of enrolling students. While the teaching enclave offered Aboriginal students the security of a known learning environment, it was apparent that the limitations of a narrow band of Aboriginal specific courses, often without direct employment or further study pathways, were limiting rather than expanding the educational options and employment possibilities for Aboriginal students.

In light of this, the KSC shifted from being a teaching unit to a student support unit, with the objective to support Aboriginal people to gain access to courses that support their individual goals, career and employment aspirations, and continue to create a safe space on campus. With this new model the number of Aboriginal students and their course completions increased, and employment outcomes improved.

In 2018, as Melbourne Polytechnic solidifies its commitment to Aboriginal education, the partnership between the Aboriginal community and Melbourne Polytechnic is as strong as ever, with both collaborating to develop this strategy.

"I enjoyed when Aboriginal Community members came in to talk about Aboriginal culture and what it means to the community and the impacts that society has on our community...their history and how it's impacted them."

- Student, Diploma in Community Services Work

5. The Strategic Planning Process

Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy (2018-2021) was developed using the combined input of the local Aboriginal community, Melbourne Polytechnic students and staff.

The Strategic Planning sessions were held with two groups; one group included members from the Aboriginal community as well as students, and industry and educational representatives, with the second group engaging Melbourne Polytechnic staff from a variety of Schools and Departments.

These two groups of stakeholders met separately, allowing for open and honest conversations with each group being taken through the same series of facilitated exercises. An interesting thing to come from having these conversations with these two groups separately was that, even with different backgrounds and educational experiences, both groups had a very similar understanding of the current strengths of Melbourne Polytechnic regarding Aboriginal education and also the opportunities for improvement, growth and change.



6. The Values Underpinning the Aboriginal Education Strategy

While Melbourne Polytechnic is underpinned by a set of values, the Aboriginal community who assisted with creating the Aboriginal Education Strategy also articulated the values of the local community.

In recognition of the shared responsibility of both Melbourne Polytechnic and the Aboriginal Community in implementing Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy, both sets of values are included.

MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC VALUES	COMMUNITY VALUES
Authenticity: Trust and openness.	Advocacy: We voice the needs of the Aboriginal and Melbourne Polytechnic communities.
Courage: Taking on challenges and thinking outside the square.	Collaboration: We create partnerships and seek input from others.
Future Focused: Demonstrating progressive thinking and solutions focus.	Empathy: We have an understanding and awareness of people's journeys and their needs.
Operational Excellence: Commitment to quality and continuous improvement.	Equality: We make sure all voices are heard and create opportunities for a fair process.
Ownership: Demonstrating accountability, initiative and a 'can do' attitude.	Inclusiveness: We provide a sense of belonging.
Shared Commitment: Shared purpose and capacity to collaborate effectively.	Integrity: We uphold and honour the Aboriginal community and Melbourne Polytechnic's values and processes.
	Trust: We build trust through mutual respect and honesty.

"The chance to talk participate in discussions about Aboriginal affairs and life experience was really respectful."
 - Student, Certificate IV in Leadership and Management



7. Summary of Melbourne Polytechnic's Aboriginal Education Strategy (2018-2021)

VISION	Through education Melbourne Polytechnic embraces traditional Aboriginal values to create a harmonious and inclusive society.				
PURPOSE	To support a whole of institute approach to incorporate Aboriginal community values into day-to-day business and empower Aboriginal students and staff to uphold their cultural identity and achieve meaningful outcomes.				
VALUES	MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC VALUES Authenticity: Trust and openness. Courage: Taking on challenges and thinking outside the square. Future Focused: Demonstrating progressive thinking and solutions focus. Operational Excellence: Commitment to quality and continuous improvement. Ownership: Demonstrating accountability, initiative and a 'can do' attitude. Shared Commitment: Shared purpose and capacity to collaborate effectively.		COMMUNITY VALUES Advocacy: We voice the needs of the Indigenous and Melbourne Polytechnic communities. Collaboration: We create partnerships and seek input from others. Empathy: We have an understanding and awareness of people's journey and their needs. Equality: We make sure all voices are heard and create opportunities for a fair process. Inclusiveness: We provide a sense of belonging. Integrity: We uphold and honour the Aboriginal community and the Melbourne Polytechnic's values and processes. Trust: We build trust through mutual respect and honesty.		
GOALS	COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY	IMPROVING CULTURAL SAFETY	FOSTERING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE	BEING VISIBLE
OBJECTIVES	<i>Melbourne Polytechnic creates and strengthens supportive and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to achieve positive outcomes for all.</i>	<i>Melbourne Polytechnic protects a learning environment for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal staff to uphold a strong cultural identity.</i>	<i>Melbourne Polytechnic provides a safe and supportive pathway for Aboriginal students to achieve meaningful outcomes.</i>	<i>Melbourne Polytechnic provides Aboriginal students with experiences that align with their cultural identity while enhancing their graduate attributes.</i>	<i>Melbourne Polytechnic increases the cultural imprint of Aboriginal voices, knowledges, symbols and values through shared environments, experiences and learning opportunities</i>
STRATEGIES	Increase involvement of Aboriginal community members in educational decision making.	Ensure a culturally safe environment exists for Aboriginal students and staff. Establish expectations in relation to cultural safety for all students and staff.	Provide tailored support programs, mechanisms and services for Aboriginal students to enable successful and sustainable participation at Melbourne Polytechnic.	Offer Aboriginal students the chance to explore new interests and take advantage of opportunities beyond the classroom.	Establish the Koorie Services Centre as the authoritative voice on Aboriginal education and cultural issues for Melbourne Polytechnic.
	Strengthen partnerships with the school sector and the community to enhance Indigenous students' prospects for enrolment at Melbourne Polytechnic.	Build a culture of committed leaders who understand and promote cultural safety and an appreciation of Aboriginal knowledge, history and culture.	Increase enrolment, retention and course completion rates for Aboriginal students.		Encourage Aboriginal students to participate fully and achieve their goals.
	Further develop partnerships and collaborations with community, industry and government regarding Aboriginal training needs.		Develop and deliver culturally relevant training consistent with local occupational, industry and regional needs.	Ensure recognition of Aboriginal heritage is visible.	

Aboriginal Education Strategy

Goal 1: Collaborating With Community

OBJECTIVE:

Melbourne Polytechnic creates and strengthens supportive and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to achieve positive outcomes for all.

STRATEGIES:

1. Increase involvement of Aboriginal community members in educational decision making.
2. Strengthen partnerships with the school sector and the community to enhance Aboriginal students' prospects for enrolment at Melbourne Polytechnic.
3. Further develop partnerships and collaborations with industry and government regarding Aboriginal training needs.

ACTIONS:

- ▶ Establish an 'Aboriginal Cultural Hub', with membership to be made up of Elders, Aboriginal staff, alumni, current students, non-Aboriginal staff and industry.
- ▶ Maintain positive relationships with Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECG), Local Indigenous Networks (LIN) and other community groups.
- ▶ Develop an information pack about being an Aboriginal student at Melbourne Polytechnic and a program of secondary school visits and information sessions.
- ▶ Establish an 'Aboriginal Course Ambassador Program', which is to include visits from 'Ambassadors' to secondary schools.
- ▶ Liaise with Melbourne Polytechnic's Industry and Government Partnerships Unit to ensure community needs are met.
- ▶ Engage with the community via Melbourne Polytechnic's Skills and Jobs Centres.
- ▶ Develop guidelines for Melbourne Polytechnic staff to follow when developing partnerships or collaborating with industry and government regarding Aboriginal training needs.
- ▶ Identify opportunities where it is appropriate to deliver training in community and organisational settings outside of Melbourne Polytechnic.
- ▶ Develop and launch an 'Aboriginal Small Business Community Hub'.

Cultural safety is about feeling safe to be who you are and to let people know who you are."

- Student, Certificate III Individual Support



Aboriginal Education Strategy

Goal 2: Improving Cultural Safety

OBJECTIVE:

Melbourne Polytechnic protects a learning environment for Aboriginal students and Aboriginal staff to uphold a strong cultural identity.

STRATEGIES:

1. Ensure a culturally safe environment exists for Aboriginal students and staff.
2. Establish expectations in relation to cultural safety for all students and staff.
3. Build a culture of committed leaders who understand and promote cultural safety and an appreciation of Aboriginal knowledge, history and culture.

ACTIONS:

- ▶ Establish the Koorie Services Centre (KSC) at Preston as a safe gathering place for Aboriginal students to connect and drop-in.
- ▶ Provide cultural safety and inclusive practices training for staff, Executive and Board members.
- ▶ Mentor teachers in creating content relating to cultural safety and ensure Aboriginal teachers co-teach sessions if required.
- ▶ Develop and refine Cultural Safety Moodle module that can be used in different settings by teachers.
- ▶ Celebrate and promote examples of good practice in supporting Aboriginal students across Melbourne Polytechnic.
- ▶ Identify staff to champion change and get involved with the 'Aboriginal Cultural Hub'.
- ▶ Promote participation by staff and students at local Aboriginal community events.



Aboriginal Education Strategy

Goal 3: Fostering Educational Opportunities

OBJECTIVE:

Melbourne Polytechnic provides a safe and supportive pathway for Aboriginal students to achieve meaningful outcomes.

STRATEGIES:

1. Provide tailored support programs, mechanisms and services for Aboriginal students to enable successful and sustainable participation at Melbourne Polytechnic.
2. Increase enrolment, retention and course completion rates for Aboriginal students.
3. Seek employment opportunities for Aboriginal students who are nearing completion of their course.
4. Develop and deliver culturally relevant training consistent with local occupational, industry and regional needs.

ACTIONS:

- ▶ Provide Aboriginal support staff for Aboriginal students and inform Aboriginal students about the Koorie Services Centre.
- ▶ Provide a variety of tailored services which empower Aboriginal students to complete their studies.
- ▶ Assist Aboriginal students to articulate to higher level programs.
- ▶ Grow engagement with large and small employers, and industry.
- ▶ Provide support to ensure Aboriginal students are job ready and have access to employment opportunities.
- ▶ Organise opportunities for Aboriginal students to connect with industry and assist students to attain Aboriginal specific work-placement, if requested.
- ▶ Design and deliver training programs aimed specifically at Aboriginal students.
- ▶ Create a staff mentoring program to empower non-Aboriginal staff to developing culturally relevant curriculum.
- ▶ Ensure Koorie Services Centre Coordinator attends Learning and Teaching Committee meetings.

“Studying at Melbourne Polytechnic has prepared me in a way where it gives me more confidence in doing my work... the confidence to know what I’m talking about.”

– Student, Certificate IV in Community Services Work

Aboriginal Education Strategy

Goal 4: Enhancing Student Experience

OBJECTIVE:

Melbourne Polytechnic provides Aboriginal students with experiences that align with their cultural identity while enhancing their graduate attributes.

STRATEGIES:

1. Offer Aboriginal students the chance to explore new interests and take advantage of opportunities beyond the classroom.
2. Encourage Aboriginal students to participate fully and achieve their goals.

ACTIONS:

- ▶ Develop and promote a calendar of significant Aboriginal cultural events.
- ▶ Deliver Aboriginal specific cultural events at Melbourne Polytechnic.
- ▶ Encourage participation by Aboriginal students in Melbourne Polytechnic activities.
- ▶ Offer Aboriginal students the chance to become ‘Aboriginal Course Ambassadors’.
- ▶ Develop a program of Aboriginal guest speakers - e.g. politicians, athletes, actors and alumni.
- ▶ Hold celebratory community ceremonies for Aboriginal graduates.



Aboriginal Education Strategy

Goal 5: Being Visible

OBJECTIVE:

Melbourne Polytechnic increases the cultural imprint of Aboriginal voices, knowledges, symbols and values through shared environments, experiences and learning opportunities.

STRATEGIES:

1. Establish the Koorie Services Centre as the authoritative voice on Aboriginal education and cultural issues at Melbourne Polytechnic.
2. Involve community members in sharing Aboriginal culture and knowledge.
3. Ensure recognition of Aboriginal heritage is visible.
4. Ensure inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives across all aspects of Melbourne Polytechnic activities.
5. Celebrate and promote achievements of Aboriginal students and staff.

ACTIONS:

- ▶ Publish protocols for staff who are engaging with Aboriginal community groups.
- ▶ Promote the consultation services that the Koorie Services Centre can offer Schools and Departments.
- ▶ Provide assistance to program areas in accessing Aboriginal community speakers and guest presenters.
- ▶ Develop protocol for Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country.
- ▶ Rename and rebrand the Koorie Services Centre with an Aboriginal name.
- ▶ Identify opportunities for acknowledging the traditional owners of the land across all campuses.
- ▶ Foster sustainable employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal staff at Melbourne Polytechnic.
- ▶ Share success stories of Aboriginal students, alumni and staff.

"I'd like to let everyone know, that anything is possible to be achieved... Always try your best and hardest in all aspects in life, only yourself can stop you from achieving what you want, never give up. But remember to always laugh, maintain who you are and never forget where you came from." – **Student, Student, Diploma of Business**



