Memorandum of Understanding

Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
Representing the Salt and Freshwater peoples of the Biripi Nation

and

Charles Sturt University
Port Macquarie Campus

Working together in the spirit of reconciliation and social justice to realise the aspirations and potential of Indigenous learners

This Memorandum of Understanding between the Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (Hastings AECG) and Charles Sturt University (CSU) Port Macquarie Campus, represents a shared commitment to achieving equitable access and successful education and training outcomes for Indigenous Australian students.

It provides a framework founded upon the principles of mutual respect and empowerment, which embodies the values, commitments and recommendations of CSU’s Reconciliation Statement and Indigenous Education Strategy.

The strategies contained within this Memorandum of Understanding are comprehensive and proactive in nature, and address the areas of teaching and learning, including the creation of pathways to CSU and the incorporation of Biripi cultural knowledge, language and history into University curricula and pedagogical practices; cultural awareness training for staff working with Indigenous students and the Biripi and Hastings Aboriginal community; research; leadership and accountability; and meaningful and mutually beneficial community and School engagement with the University.

The strategies contained within this Memorandum of Understanding reflect acknowledgement that:

‘One of the most fundamental of the ‘pre-conditions’ necessary for achieving long-term sustainable change in Indigenous educational outcomes...is the widening of Indigenous involvement in the life and governance of the University. This requires commitment to a whole of institution approach, including increasing the University’s engagement with Indigenous
communities...pro-active provision of Indigenous student services, and the inclusion of Indigenous culture and knowledge as a visual and valued part of University life and decision-making’ (CSU Indigenous Education Strategy, p22).

The Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and Charles Sturt University (Port Macquarie campus) commit to working together to implement the strategies contained within this Memorandum of Understanding with cultural integrity.

Both parties agree that:

- this Memorandum of Understanding merely constitutes a statement of the mutual intentions of the parties with respect to its content and does not constitute any binding obligations;
- they can withdraw from this Memorandum of Understanding at any time;
- they can collaboratively work together to amend this Memorandum of Understanding at any time; and
- any agreement for cooperation in relation to specific activities will be documented in a separate and formal agreement.

Professor Ross Chambers  
Head of Campus Port Macquarie Campus

Hastings Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
Educational Access and Culturally Inclusive Teaching and Learning
Together we will:

Undertake a range of activities to strengthen and extend CSU’s partnerships with secondary schools and providers of vocational education and training in the Hastings and mid-north coast region in order to increase the entry of Indigenous secondary school leavers and vocational education students into CSU courses (Recommendation 12 of CSU Indigenous Education Strategy);

Work with local Schools and TAFE to develop pathways to study at CSU for Indigenous students within the region and provide appropriate services and support for Indigenous students who wish to stay in Country while undertaking a degree through a CSU campus other than Port Macquarie;

Contribute to the facilitation of multiple entry and exit points and innovative undergraduate and postgraduate courses which specifically meets the employment needs of mature-age Indigenous peoples and recognises the prior learning and work experience of Indigenous non-school leaving students (Recommendation 13 of CSU Indigenous Education Strategy);

Ensure the incorporation of Biripi cultural knowledges, histories and perspectives into University curricula offered through the Port Macquarie campus and provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to participate in cultural immersion activities in partnership with Biripi Elders and organisations (Recommendation 15 of the CSU Indigenous Education Strategy);

Facilitate the development of a range of Biripi teaching and learning resources and associated cultural protocols for use to support the appropriate teaching of Biripi cultural heritage and history;

Support the employment of Biripi Elders and relevant community members to provide guest lectures on Biripi cultural heritage, history and issues of concern to the community today and the delivery of education programs in Aboriginal Studies and social justice issues, utilising Hastings AECG to identify appropriate content and issues to ensure local relevance and accuracy of representation;

Commit to the development of a Biripi Language and Cultural Heritage course similar to the Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language and Cultural Heritage offered by CSU which was developed in collaboration and partnership with the Wiradjuri Council of Elders,

Establish an annual CSU scholarship for an Indigenous student studying through the Port Macquarie campus of CSU and designated awards for Indigenous students who excel at their studies and promote Indigenous student achievements at local and regional levels (Recommendation 9 of the CSU Indigenous Education Strategy).

Engage an Elder in Residence for the Port Macquarie campus of CSU to promote and legitimise the role of Elders within the learning community (Recommendation 7a of the CSU Indigenous Education Strategy).

Plan School and community Open Days and other activities at CSU’s Port Macquarie campus to demystify University life and promote aspirations for University study and facilitate Indigenous Education forums for local AECGs and school and Educational Providers within the region (Recommendation 12 of CSU Indigenous Education Strategy).
Collaborate with Schools and Educational Providers within the region to develop a Local Indigenous Education Plan which supports and reflects the goals and aspirations for Indigenous students and community in gaining higher education (Recommendation 12 of CSU Indigenous Education Strategy).

Creating an Inclusive Campus Environment through Indigenous Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Together we will:

- Commit to genuine and meaningful engagement in ways which empower local Indigenous community and stakeholders toward self-determination and promote a sense of place and belonging at CSU Port Macquarie campus;

- Collaborate with Schools and Educational Providers within the Hastings region to develop and implement an Aboriginal Cultural Capability Framework to build knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal cultures and communities in the Lower North Coast AECG Region.

- Work to enable achievement of Recommendation 7 of the CSU Indigenous Education Strategy through the:
  - Provision of facilities on Port Macquarie campus for the establishment of a Community Meeting Place (7b)
  - Construction of murals or other visual displays of Biripi art and culture on campus, including the development of cultural bush walks and walkways with information boards providing information on Biripi relationships to the environment and its various resources (7c)
  - Development of cultural protocols, codes of conduct and policies to guide the University in its engagement with Biripi peoples and Indigenous communities within the Hastings and mid-north coast region (7d)
  - Acknowledgement of Biripi heritage and traditional ownership and custodianship of the land upon which the Port Macquarie campus of CSU is located through observance of a ‘Welcome to Country’ by traditional Elders at University ceremonies and events, and an ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ at the entry to the new campus at Port Macquarie campus and on marketing materials and University websites for the Port Macquarie campus (7e)
  - Naming of University spaces in Gathang language and establish on-campus community events, including celebrations for NAIDOC and Reconciliation weeks, and commemoration of National Sorry Day/Journey of Healing Day (7f).

- Ensure that all CSU staff participates in cultural awareness training or the Connecting to Country program provided by the Hastings AECG, which is specific to the cultures and histories of the Biripi Nation and Indigenous peoples of the Lower North Coast AECG Region prior to engagement with Aboriginal students and community groups.

Indigenous Research

Together we will:

- Actively seek opportunities for collaborative research that benefits Indigenous students and the Aboriginal communities of the Hastings and mid-north coast region;
Develop culturally appropriate research protocols and guidelines for conducting research within Biripi Country and/or with Biripi peoples which are based on the principles of empowerment and nation-building;

Ensure the knowledge generated from CSU research within Biripi Country and/or with Biripi peoples is respected and returned to the community or individual(s) in a useable format;

Develop strategies and opportunities to capacity build the research skills of Indigenous students and community members through participation in relevant research activity.

**Leadership and Accountability**

Together we will:

Establish an Indigenous Advisory group, co-chaired by the Chair of the Hastings AECG and the CSU Director of Inclusion (Indigenous Strategic Practice Leader), comprising the Head of Port Macquarie Campus, the Pro Vice Chancellor Indigenous Education and representatives from CSU’s Indigenous Student Services, a representative from the local TAFE and Hastings AECG and Biripi Aboriginal Land Council, and a local male and female Elder, to meet bi-annually to provide advice to CSU Port Macquarie campus and oversee the implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding, including the development of targets for evaluation and reviews of progress for the vision for Aboriginal education and training embodied within this MOU.

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1 Indigenous is an inclusive term which refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are the traditional owners and custodians of Australia and its islands.