Professional education in postcolonial democracies: Indigenous rights, universities, and graduate attributes

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This paper examines the nexus between Indigenous rights, the modern university, and graduate attributes and theorises the potential of the university in postcolonial democracies to address Indigenous rights in its professional education programs. It posits the postcolonial professional as one who has been educated about internationally recognised human rights and economic justice mechanisms, provisions and frameworks within a supportive university policy environment that has focussed both academic work and the formulation of graduate attributes in order that new professionals, emerging from the modern university, will have the skills and knowledge to proactively contribute to the engagement of the professions within postcolonial states.

In an era where government funding for universities is becoming increasingly tied to them being able to help businesses and governments to achieve desirable socioeconomic outcomes, and with myriad government policy drivers focussed on improvement of provision of opportunities and services to Indigenous and other traditionally oriented communities globally, this paper investigates the link between graduate attributes and a university's organisational culture to examine the capacity of professional education in the modern university and the new graduates it produces to reorientate from a colonial to a postcolonial engagement with Indigenous peoples. The paper describes international corporate social justice and Indigenous rights mechanisms and their significance for the education of professionals. The paper finds that a university focus on graduate attributes has an influence.

Keywords: Australian universities, graduate attributes, Indigenous rights, postcolonial professional education.

…then they said we were obstructing Progress
But we knew the rhythm of our days
And knew we were not obstructing Progress…
<div align="center">(Walker, 1991, p. 322-3)</div>

The work of universities and academics is, in part, the education of the next generation of professionals in addition to its role of contributing more broadly to the advancement of human knowledge. The starting point of this chapter is the problematic of the postcolonial professional and her/his skills and knowledge about Indigenous rights and lifeways. Where, in their university course, do they learn professional skills and knowledge they can rely on to ensure that they are cognizant of the rights of Indigenous peoples as afforded by international mechanisms and agreements? The phenomenon of 'postcoloniality', the lived experiences of diverse peoples who were previously colonised or the coloniser is in a process of translation within universities and professions around the world. In attempting to understand how professional education is being approached with regard to Indigenous rights, this paper will take graduate attributes as its lens, and examine the Australian university system by way of example as the context. By analysing universities in Australia with a critical eye to any specific aspirations pertaining to professional education in the Indigenous/non-Indigenous domain, this paper will build on earlier work, (Ma Rhea, 2002, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011) that has argued that there needs to be significant engagement by universities in order to rethink Indigenous presence and aspiration within the work of professional education and the professions.

Whether graduates eventually work for the public or private sectors, engaging properly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is part of being a competent, capable, postcolonial professional. Increasingly, governments and global corporations are requiring all tenderers, contractors, and sub-contractors to show evidence of their commitment to Indigenous economic development and employment. Responsible leadership and management of companies must now involve strategic planning, risk management and a sound understanding the operating context of their business. Big business has need for well-educated professionals who can demonstrate skills and knowledge to work effectively with Indigenous people and Indigenous people have rights that are recognised internationally regarding the access to their ideas, their material and intangible cultural artefacts, their land and waterways. Most important, Indigenous peoples have the right of access to benefit sharing and to protection of their resources and intellectual property.

A note on terminology

The descriptor 'Indigenous' is a word used internationally to recognise the rights of all Indigenous peoples. As a legacy of colonisation, Australia's original inhabitants were called Aborigines. By distinction, the people of the Torres Strait were known as Torres Strait Islanders. Over a number of years there have been preferences expressed by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be known collectively as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, or distinctively as Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people rather than as Indigenous people. In this paper, when referring to the international context, I will use the descriptor 'Indigenous' and when referring specifically to the Indigenous peoples of Australia I will use the descriptor 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander'.

The term 'professional education' is being used to encapsulate the work done by universities to prepare graduates for specific professions rather than for general degrees. This notionally covers such professionals as teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, police, engineers, scientists, dentists, and actors. More broadly, it includes any degree that enables a graduate to enter the workforce with the skills and knowledge recognised by their intended profession and asks what graduate attributes might be deemed important in the Indigenous domain.

I use the term 'postcolonial democracy' as a grounded phrase with social, economic, political and historical specificity, such that there was a period of violent territorial colonisation, a period of subjugation of the colonised, a 'liberation/loss of empire' period with a final colonial rupture leading to the evolution of democratic states within the postcolonial era. Postcoloniality in this sense translates the 'now', the time after colonisation. For the work of universities within postcolonial democratic states, it proposes a break with past academic ways of categorising the human activities in this world through linear historicity, 'high' politics, grand narratives and self-serving colonial justifications and methodologies, asking the previously unaskable and thinking the previously unthinkable about recognised international Indigenous rights (Ma Rhea, 2002; see also Moreton Robinson, 2003, 2008).

The overarching observation arising from this approach, and the subsequent analyses made, is that there is a complex process emerging globally that is leading to a shift in the way that we think about professional education regarding Indigenous matters at universities. This paper will chart the process, identifying a series of push and pull factors that eventually leads, at least theoretically, to the education of the professional about Indigenous rights and lifeways. Analysis has found that these push and pull factors guide, frame, cajole, and demand change in the way that professional education is conducted within universities such that graduate attributes might now include a specific readiness on the part of a graduate to engage appropriately with Indigenous people.

GUIDING THE APPROACH TO GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES: INTERNATIONAL CORPORATE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS MECHANISMS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE EDUCATION OF PROFESSIONALS

Postcolonial democracies are in transition, a period of moving beyond the time of colonisation when local professionals are taking over the reins from distant colonial administrators. An insistent concern, widely theorised by, for example, Bernstein (1971, 1996, 2000), Bishop & Glynn (1999), Delpit (1993; 1995), and Hall (1980), and evidenced in this collection of papers, has been that local professionals are still attempting to preserve out-dated colonial structures and the logic of the system still supports the approaches favoured by old colonial powers. In parallel, there has been an emerging international consensus about how to protect, preserve, and maintain

the rights of Indigenous populations that were subjugated to colonial systems but not extinguished.

The postcolonial world has witnessed an increase in international-level agreements between nation states that have been designed to improve human life. While non-binding, they serve as an important aspirational reminder for the peoples of the planet. Historically, the rights of Indigenous peoples were subsumed under each nation state. This proved to be problematic because there was not necessarily any reason for the nation state to recognise such rights particularly in negotiations about mining and other resource rights, and about access to and control of services.

In July 2000, the UN Global Compact was launched, heralding a desire at the international policy level for greater alignment between the objectives of the international community and those of the business world (UN Global Compact, 2008). The UN Global Compact espoused ten principles to guide corporate practice in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption drawing from already established agreements made by its member nation states: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992); The International Labour Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998); and, The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2005). This has gone some way towards identifying the rights basis for later developments regarding the specific rights of Indigenous populations.

THE UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ('UN DRIPs', 2008) addresses both individual and collective rights, cultural rights and identity, rights to education, health, employment, language, and others. The text says Indigenous Peoples have the right to fully enjoy as a collective or as individuals, all human rights, and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law. Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals, and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their Indigenous origin or identity. Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By that right, they can freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development. They have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions, while retaining their rights to participate fully, if they choose to, in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the state.

ILO 169

The United Nations Development Group *Guidelines on Indigenous People's Issues* (2008) recognises the pivotal importance of the International Labour Organisation's

(ILO) *Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples*. It is 'the foremost internationally legal instrument which deals specifically with the rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples, and whose influence extends beyond the number of actual ratifications' (ILO, 2003, p.i). It provides a specific framework for policy development that ensures the rights of Indigenous Peoples are recognised in education (See Ma Rhea & Anderson, 2011, for fuller discussion).

This paper observes that the process of educating a professional in a postcolonial democracy needs to have, as its starting point, a conceptual understanding of the international rights framework as outlined under the UN *DRIPs* (2008) and the International Labour Organisation's *Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples* ('ILO169'; 1989). The education of the next generation of professionals will influence the extent to which these re-recognised rights will be implemented and become part of the emergent postcolonial future. In addition, without a guiding framework arising from the Global Compact, UN *DRIPs*, and other mechanisms such as *ILO169*, it will be difficult to achieve consensus on the rights and social justice framework to support the professional development and learning needs of graduates from universities such that they might contribute to the advancement of Indigenous peoples. The international frameworks provide a much needed 'push' for nation states to have a specific accountability about the human rights of their Indigenous citizens. The 'pull' in the international domain for individual nations is both legal and symbolic. There are some aspects of these conventions and other mechanisms that are becoming legally binding as the power of the international legal framework develops.

For Indigenous Peoples, the instruments and mechanisms are largely symbolic, but can be used to press nation states to become more accountable. Increasingly, success or failure in the way that a postcolonial democracy implements, for example, Indigenous rights or gender rights becomes a marker of the successful 'modern' state.

NEGOTIATING THE TRANSITION FROM COLONIAL TO POSTCOLONIAL: A STUDY OF THE AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

> We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.
>
> A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.
>
> A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity (Rudd, 2008).

Australia endorsed UN *DRIPs* in 2008. As Dodson (2010) noted, '*The value of human rights is not in their existence; it is in their implementation. That is the challenge for the world and for Australia with this Declaration*'. On 13 February 2008, the Australian Prime Minister Rudd read an apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who had been taken from their families because of the policies

and actions of past Australian governments. As way of moving forward, he placed a particular emphasis on education and its role in achieving reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. The 'Apology', as it has come to be known, represents a change in Australian Government response to its role in Australian history and the ripple effect of the Apology continues to be felt in policymaking.

In parallel, during 2007 and 2008, there was a gathering momentum of national collaboration between State and Territory Governments under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) that culminated in the adoption of six targets to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians over the next five to twenty years. This work has become known as 'Closing the Gap' and its impact has been significant at the systemic level in guiding policy engagement between the government and universities on the one hand, and with the professions on the other.

At the level of the university, the Australian government is having significant impact. Funding is being increasingly tied to Australian universities providing evidence that they are engaging proactively with the 'Closing the Gap' agenda, an agenda that touches all professions. In parallel, government funding in areas such as education, health, and housing is being tied to this same agenda. This policy and funding nexus is creating a significant push for universities to change the way that they educate their students in the skills and knowledge that are necessary for them to become employable graduates.

Drawing on organisational change literature that argues that any significant organisational change requires cascading sponsorship (see, for example, Hofstede, 2001; Kotter, 2007; 2012; Kotter and Cohen, 2002; Vermeulen, 2011), and given the university processes by which graduate attributes come to be identified and shaped by each university, this paper assumes that a specific graduate attribute attending to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters would suggest*, ipso facto*, that there were broader institutional influences at work. Therefore, there are three aspects that have been examined for this paper: universities that specifically address Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters within their Graduate Attributes statements; universities that mention Indigenous matters within their strategic plans; and, universities that have adopted a Reconciliation Action Plan. There is some cross-over between these categories and, arguably, all contribute to the overall university approach to how it educates its future professionals about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and lifeways (for full list of university websites, please see Appendix 1).

NAMING OF EXPLICIT GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES REFERRING TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

At the time of writing (December 2012) there were 6 universities of 39 that specifically mentioned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters in their statements about

graduates qualities and attributes or in the examples they give of how a student might demonstrate these.

Curtin University has a number of Graduate Attributes, the eighth of which is *Demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding. Within this attribute is explicit mention of recognising the* importance of cultural diversity particularly the perspective of Indigenous Australians.

Griffith University has a number of Graduate Attributes, the fifth of which is *Competent in Culturally Diverse and International Environments. Within this graduate attribute, explicit mention is made of* 'Awareness of and respect for the values and knowledges of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Peoples'.

James Cook University frames its Graduate Attributes statements with an overarching list of Graduate Qualities to be fostered, one of which is an understanding of Indigenous Australian issues and cultures.

RMIT has a number of Graduate Attributes, the fourth of which is *Culturally and Socially Aware*. Within this attribute there is further explanation:

> Graduates of RMIT University will have developed cultural, social and ethical awareness and skills, consistent with a positive role as responsible and engaged members of local, national, international and professional communities.

There is explicit reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the examples of how students might demonstrate this attribute:

- Show understanding of the social and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia through active engagement with individuals and communities

- Analyse and examine issues of social justice and equality with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and individuals

The University of the Sunshine Coast has a number of Graduate Attributes, the third of which is Engagement which acknowledges diversity within any community including indigenous perspectives, cultural, intellectual, physical and mental well-being, social and socioeconomic factors.

University of Western Sydney makes a general statement about graduate attributes that explicitly refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters. It says:

> The curricula of all UWS courses are designed so that students acquire a set of knowledge and skills attributed by the time they graduate. In undergraduate courses, those attributes include skills and literacies to enable lifelong learning, knowledge of Indigenous Australia, coherence and connectedness in learning, intellectual enquiry skills, and the ability to engage with an evolving world. Postgraduate courses are underpinned by attributes aligned with the requirements of the professional fields that students will enter.

The next section pays particular attention to specific Graduate Attributes to examine the content of these attributes. James Cook University focuses its specific graduate attribute on students being able to demonstrate an understanding of Indigenous Australian issues and cultures. University of the Sunshine Coast identifies focuses on Indigenous perspectives in its Engagement graduate attribute. Curtin University has a graduate attribute, *Demonstrate cultural awareness and understanding*. Within this attribute is explicit mention of recognising the importance of cultural diversity particularly the perspective of Indigenous Australians. Griffith University has a graduate attribute, *Competent in Culturally Diverse and International Environments. Within this graduate attribute, explicit mention is made of students having a*wareness of and respect for the values and knowledges of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Peoples. RMIT has a graduate attribute, *Culturally and Socially Aware*. Within this attribute there is explicit reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the examples of how students might demonstrate this attribute such as showing understanding of the social and cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia through active engagement with individuals and communities or analysing and examine issues of social justice and equality with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and individuals. University of Western Sydney makes a general statement about graduate attributes that explicitly refers to knowledge of Indigenous Australia.

Analysis of these statements suggests that students are being encouraged to demonstrate understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, through the lenses of issues, perspectives, knowledge, values, social and cultural heritage, social justice, and equality. All approaches fall under cultural awareness/understanding, cultural competency, or diversity awareness development in the graduate.

MENTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MATTERS IN UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICIES

There is emerging evidence that universities are also embedding Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander matters into their strategic plans and related policies. A range of examples, drawn from 10 universities, is provided below.

Griffith University has an explicit 'whole of university' approach to 'inclusive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education' and to its overall strategic planning, curriculum development, teaching and learning, partnership development and governance regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

James Cook University (JCU) makes explicit reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters in its *Diversity and Reconciliation* Statement saying:

> Embracing the diversity of the communities we serve in two countries, we work with them to create opportunities and enduring benefits for our region and beyond.
>
> Acknowledging the First Nation peoples of the world, their rich cultures and their

knowledge of the natural environment, we pay particular respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Australia.

We are pledged to achieve genuine and sustainable reconciliation between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community.

It also makes an explicit directive in its *University Plan Objective A5 - Offer a socially inclusive learning environment that one of the 'G*raduate Qualities to be fostered is an understanding of Indigenous Australian issues and cultures'.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) makes mention of lifting 'the Indigenous student representation to 1.5 per cent by 2016' in its strategic plans.

Southern Cross University (SCU) has a special clause regarding access requirements for *Indigenous Australian students (their terminology) stating that:*

Southern Cross University recognises that Indigenous Australian people possess skills other than those gained through formal schooling and these will be considered in determining qualification for entry to courses at SCU. Indigenous Australian applicants who believe they may not meet the usual entry requirements are invited to attend a Testing and Assessment program

Swinburne University of Technology (SUT) provides a *Guide to Organising Events at Swinburne University of Technology* that states that:

In line with Swinburne University's commitment to education of Indigenous Australian culture, event organisers should also acknowledge the Indigenous significance of their event. All of Swinburne's Australian campuses are located on the lands of the Kulin nation. As such, an acknowledgment of the specific Indigenous clan who are recognised as traditional owners should be made at the beginning of any event.

University of Newcastle makes explicit mention in its strategic planning of *Expanding Leadership and Initiatives in Indigenous Collaboration stating that:*

The University of Newcastle is recognised nationally for its active support of the aspirations of Indigenous people through access to higher education. More recently, the University has extended its commitment to a "whole-of-university" engagement with Indigenous Collaboration featuring as a goal in the University of Newcastle Strategic Plan. Part of this commitment includes Indigenous Cultural Competency targets for staff and students.

University of New England (UNE) has as one of its strategic goals to set the standard for social inclusiveness and access for all to higher education that includes innovation in the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly within the New England region.

University of Sydney (USyd) has an explicit strategic plan, *Strategy Ten: Promote indigenous participation, engagement, education and research.* It states that:

The University has a strong commitment to advancing Indigenous education and research and ensuring that it is well supported. Our aim, as a contemporary

> Australian institution, is to ensure that Indigenous issues and knowledge are core elements of our decision-making, teaching, research and community engagement activities.

University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) has embedded its commitment into its Values Statement stating that 'The University is committed to advancing human rights within a tolerant and inclusive community, in which respect for Indigenous peoples is fundamental'.

University of Western Australia (UWA) explicitly addresses some aspects within its strategic planning. An Indigenous Student and Studies Strategy is also in place at UWA. The strategy, *Shaping Our International Future: A Strategic Plan for Internationalisation,* has two goals:

GOAL 1: ENHANCE INCLUSIVITY IN TEACHING & LEARNING

- 1.7 Support programs for Indigenous Studies and Aboriginal students

- 1.7.1 Develop programs in Indigenous Studies with both Australian and international students (on-shore and off-shore) in mind (see also 10.5)

Achieve the development and offering of more Indigenous Studies courses

GOAL 10: ENHANCE EQUITY, MULTI-CULTURALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

- 10.5 Facilitate the study of indigenous cultures from across the world

- 10.5.1 Develop a strategy to further the study of Australian Indigenous culture by local and international students at UWA (see also 1.7)

There are a range of activities undertaken by various universities that highlight their commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Four universities, Griffith University, the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney, and the University of Western Australia have set clear strategic plans for research, collaboration, and teaching that centrally involve Indigenous people nationally and internationally. Both USC and JCU have made values statements that focus on reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Peoples. The remaining universities in this group have operational policies regarding such matters as recruitment of students, student entry-level requirements, and culturally appropriate approaches to public events. A number of universities have Reconciliation Action Plans.

UNIVERSITY RECONCILIATION ACTION PLANS

As Jonas (2011, website) observed, 'It is not possible to talk meaningfully about reconciliation, and the transformation of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians that it aims for, without reference to human rights …. The

treatment of Indigenous peoples throughout Australia's history has not respected these basic principles of humanity'. The new policy-making framework of the Australian government is providing the much-needed push to acknowledge and move to change how the rights of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are recognised.

One such mechanism has been to fund, since 2006, *Reconciliation Australia* mandating it to guide national collaborative effort to turn 'good intentions into actions' (Reconciliation Australia, 2012), by providing a strategic planning tool, the Reconciliation Action Plan, commonly known as a RAP. Its impact measurement report (Reconciliation Australia, 2011) says that the RAP program has grown to include 300 organisations ranging from big corporations to community groups and schools. It estimates that nearly 200,000 students study in schools and tertiary institutions that have a RAP (Reconciliation Australia, 2011, p.4).

Researching the websites of all Australian universities, it was found that there were thirteen of thirty nine universities with a RAP Plan: the Australian National University, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Griffith University, James Cook University, University of Melbourne, University of Ballarat, University of Canberra, University of Newcastle, University of Queensland, University of South Australia, University of the Sunshine Coast, and University of Wollongong. Charles Darwin was committed to completion of RAP plan by June 2012 but it is not yet on their website. There are a number of other universities in the process of developing their RAPs as they become a recognisable marker that a university is, in the spirit of reconciliation and government accountability, putting good intentions into measurable outcomes.

The template for the RAP is the same for all organisations and is produced by Reconciliation Australia. It contains a section, Our Vision for Reconciliation, and then asks each organisation to describe their work and to specify how they will develop their RAP. The Activities are developed in three areas: Relationships, Respect and Opportunities depending on the organisation. While beyond the scope of this paper, the RAPs for universities broadly cover teaching, research and Indigenous employment as their core business focus with different levels of engagement and commitment according to each.

For some universities, there has been long involvement in these issues and their work is now reflected in the structural endorsement of the work as evidenced by RAPs, policies, strategic plans and specific Graduate Attributes. In 1988, ECU made a statement of reconciliation that 'recognises that a significant outcome of European settlement has been the social, political, economic and educational disadvantage suffered by many Indigenous people in Australia'. The university formalised its RAP in 2012 making the following statement:

> ECU's vision, as articulated by the University's Strategic Directions document: Engaging Minds; Engaging Communities. Towards 2020, is for students, staff and graduates to be highly regarded as ethical and self-reliant contributors to

more prosperous, inclusive and sustainable communities. ECU's values of Integrity, Respect, Rational Inquiry and Personal Excellence underpin this vision and this Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

For others, the RAP is a very recent activity and a first step in beginning to make the structural adjustments that are needed in order to shift the way that the university engages in this work. More detailed discussion of these RAPs will be made in the section below that examines the integration of Indigenous matters into core university business.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table one (below) provides a summary of the findings with regard to the extent to which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters are evident in Graduate Attributes statements and where there is additional evidence or organisational response in strategic plans, policies and RAPs. In total, of 39 universities within the Australian system, six make specific reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters within their Graduate Attributes statements. Of note, three of these universities, Griffith University, James Cook University and the University of the Sunshine Coast, also have commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their strategic planning or policies and have a RAP. Curtin University has a RAP. The two remaining universities, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and the University of Western Sydney only mention Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters in their Graduate Attribute statements but have no evidence of specific policies, strategic plans or a RAP.

Specific in Graduate Attributes n=6	In Strategy/Policy n=10	With Reconciliation Action Plan n=13
		Australian National University
Curtin University		Curtin University
		Edith Cowan University
Griffith University	Griffith University	Griffith University
James Cook University	James Cook University	James Cook University
	Queensland University of Technology	University of Melbourne
	Southern Cross University	University of Ballarat
	Swinburne University of Technology	University of Canberra
	University of Newcastle	University of Newcastle

Specific in Graduate Attributes n=6	In Strategy/Policy n=10	With Reconciliation Action Plan n=13
	University of New England	University of Queensland
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology	University of Sydney	University of South Australia
University of the Sunshine Coast	University of the Sunshine Coast	University of the Sunshine Coast
University of Western Sydney	University of Western Australia	University of Wollongong

Legend

	Evidence	Number of Universities
	Specific Graduate Attributes, Strategy/Policy, and RAP	3
	Specific Graduate Attribute and RAP	1
	No specific Graduate Attributes but has Strategy/Policy and RAP	1
	Specific Graduate Attribute only	2
	Strategy/Policy only	6
	RAP only	8

It is important to note, 18 of the 39 universities have no publicly accessible information about their approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters. This will be discussed further below.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS OR CULTURAL AWARENESS/ UNDERSTANDING?

This paper began by proposing that the professional education of students at universities in postcolonial democracies is in a process of transition as the emerging international consensus on the reassertion of Indigenous Rights impacts on the way that nation states engage with their Indigenous populations. Taking Australia, a postcolonial democracy as its focus, analysis was made of the publicly available information from the 39 university websites about graduate attributes and whether there was any evidence that universities were articulating an explicit expectation of their graduates

about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and lifeways[1]. The research also examined other aspects of university activity such as policies, strategic plans, and the development of Reconciliation Action Plans as markers of commitment to and embedding of rethought approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters.

As can be seen from the above discussion, only 21 of Australia's 39 universities provide evidence in these areas that could be examined. Of those 21 universities, only 6 have explicit graduate attributes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and these attributes are singularly focussed on developing cross-cultural awareness, understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, issues, knowledge and values within a social justice framework. Arguably, graduate attributes need to be developed from broader university policies and strategic plans and there are more universities involved at this time at this level of work. Three of the 10 identified already have demonstrated the integration of their higher level planning with their RAP and graduate attributes are a reflection of this work. There is some evidence that those universities with RAPs are also increasingly involved in determining how their RAP commitments might be reflected in graduate attributes as an explicit aspect. Even so, there are few universities as yet involved in this work and much development to be undertaken.

The analysis presented in this paper suggests that there is a commonality of approach to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters into intercultural or cross-cultural skills development involving the development of, or changing of, students' personal attitudes, expectations and understandings of the 'other' culture. This focussing of professional development into the 'intercultural space' is seriously limited. Further, it allows emerging professionals to regard Indigenous matters as an optional extra and a personal choice of whether to engage or not. This analysis and a broader review of the associated policy environment in Australia indicates that there is an emerging strategic planning and policy framework that works to guide universities in the professional education of their graduates but that there is no evidence that these developments are guided by a rights-based socioeconomic framework even though Australia is a signatory to the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. By using a rights-based approach, it is possible to move the development of professional skills and knowledge of university graduates from the zone of making a conscience vote towards them realising that it is a vital part of their readiness as competent, capable, postcolonial professionals.

None of this is evident in the current approach being taken to Graduate Attribute statements that appear to remain confined in the old colonial approach to 'cross-cultural awareness'. While this may be a necessary first step, recognised as 'Relationships' in the RAP process, it is an insufficient stopping point in the journey to developing full recognition of, and respect for, the rights of Indigenous peoples and graduate professional capacity to meet them.

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1   As mentioned earlier, this research was concluded in December 2012

POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

This paper argues that the newly emerging graduate from a university needs to be thought of as a postcolonial professional, as one who has been educated about internationally recognised human rights and economic justice mechanisms, provisions and frameworks, regardless of level of study, or course of study undertaken. The Australian university system gives a good example of the danger of not taking an explicit rights focus in the formulation of graduate attributes, in that any reference to Indigenous matters is done through a 'cultural awareness and understanding' approach rather than through the more advanced 'respect and reconciliation' approach that is achieved, for example, by using RAPs. If there is to be an effective transition from the colonial to the postcolonial in order that new professionals, emerging from the modern university will have the skills and knowledge to contribute to the reengagement of the professions within postcolonial states, then Australian universities like their counterparts in other parts of the world discussed in this collection, will need to proactively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples about university governance, teaching, research, collaborative partnerships, ethics, and structural changes to ensure that the attributes and qualities of its graduates properly reflect the rights and aspirations of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that these attributes are closely integrated with whole of university strategic planning, policy development including Reconciliation Action Plans and clearly linked to the standard expected in their future professions.

CONCLUSION

Universities have clear leadership responsibility with regard to developing in its students an understanding of the raft of international frameworks that protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the big picture, they need to know of the work being undertaken, for example, by the ILO and by the UN Global Compact (2008). Professionally and personally, there are a number of key cross-cultural skills that would benefit them for their future careers. This work needs to be embedded across all courses of university study. There will, of course, be some courses that will develop specific expectations of their students in line with requirements of registration to their professional associations.

Indigenous people want cultural and economic rights and to develop economically secure and sustainable futures for themselves and their families. Developing partnerships with Indigenous people and delivering high quality professional service requires more than cross cultural awareness and understanding. It requires a grounded respect for Indigenous people and their lifeways, through undertaking a process of reconciliation with Indigenous people regarding the past colonial legacy. This involves gaining a good understanding of history, strong intercultural skills and knowledge of the values, issues and aspirations of Indigenous peoples. In this respect, these aspirations, and the skills and knowledge of professionals to support them, need to become part of the fibre of the postcolonial Australian university in the professional education of its students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1. UNIVERSITY LINKS *(AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2012)[2]*

Australian Catholic University

- http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/217455/SP_2012-2014_ Compressed_for_web_090712.pdf
- http://www.acu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/217455/SP_2012-2014_ Compressed_for_web_090712.pdf

Australian National University

- http://about.anu.edu.au/__documents/strategic-plans/anu-2020-strategy.pdf

Curtin University

- http://planning.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/reconciliation_plan_2008-2013.pdf

Charles Darwin University

- http://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/CDU_Strategic_Plan_2012-14_web. pdf
- http://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenousleadership/majorprojects.html
- http://www.cdu.edu.au/indigenousleadership/majorprojects.html

Charles Sturt University

- http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/144414/csu-indigenous-education-strategy.pdf
- http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/124106/F1500-CSU-Strategy-2011_WEB.pdf
- http://www.csu.edu.au/acad_sec/academic-manual/docs/l20.pdf
- http://reconciliation.anu.edu.au/rap/anu_rap.pdf

Curtin University

- http://otl.curtin.edu.au/learning_teaching/graduate_capabilities.cfm
- Edith Cowan University
- https://www.ecu.edu.au/about-ecu/indigenous-matters/statements
- http://www.ecu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/220114/ECU-Reconciliation-Action-Plan.pdf

Griffith University

- http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/451925/Attachment-2.

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2   Subject to revision and update

pdf

- http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/274723/academic-plan.pdf
- http://www.griffith.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/290691/Ethical-behaviour.pdf

James Cook University

- http://www.jcu.edu.au/policy/allatoh/JCUDEV_007031.html
- http://www.jcu.edu.au/soca/public/groups/everyone/documents/presentation/jcu_105180.pdf
- http://www.jcu.edu.au/research_innovation/public/groups/everyone/documents/advice/jcu_096433.pdf
- http://www.jcu.edu.au/curriculumrefresh/resources/JCU_084564.html

La Trobe University

- http://www.latrobe.edu.au/about/downloads/Future-Ready-Strategic-Plan-2013-2017.pdf

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

- http://mams.rmit.edu.au/7ubueffp958h.pdf
- http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=x559uexupoz
- Southern Cross University
- http://www.scu.edu.au/teachinglearning/index.php/7
- http://www.scu.edu.au/equity/download.php?doc_id=2644&site_id=140

University of Ballarat

- www.ballarat.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/58820

University of Canberra

- http://www.canberra.edu.au/planning-quality/strategic-directions
- http://www.canberra.edu.au/university/governance/attachments/reconciliation-action-plan.pdf

University of Melbourne

- http://www.murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/files/miip/2011%20RAP%20with%20RA%20logo.pdf

University of New England

- http://www.une.edu.au/vc/vcoffice/strategic-plan/finalstratplan_2011_2015.pdf
- http://www.une.edu.au/policies/pdf/graduateattributes.pdf

University of Newcastle

- http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Divisions/Vice-Chancellor/New%20Directions/StrategicPlan.pdf
- http://www.newcastle.edu.au/Resources/Institutes/Wollotuka/Indigenous%20Collaboration/rec-action-plan.pdf

University of Notre Dame

- http://www.nd.edu.au/downloads/university/strategic_plan_12_feb2010.pdf
- http://www.nd.edu.au/qmad/gradattributes.shtml

University of Queensland

- http://www.uq.edu.au/about/docs/strategicplan/StrategicPlan2012.pdf

University of South Australia

- http://www.unisa.edu.au/Student-Life/Teaching-and-Learning/Graduate-qualities/Indicators-of-graduate-qualities/
- http://w3.unisa.edu.au/unisanews/2012/december/story5.asp

University of Southern Queensland

- http://www.usq.edu.au/planqual/quality/stratplan

University of Sydney

- http://sydney.edu.au/strategy/plan/download.shtml

University of the Sunshine Coast

- http://www.usc.edu.au/.../0/GraduateAttributesGuidebook2012.pdf -
- http://www.usc.edu.au/university/governance-and-executive/strategy-quality-and-planning/reconciliation-action-plan/

University of Western Sydney

- http://www.policies.uws.edu.au/download.php
- http://www.uwa.edu.au/university/?a=2004886
- www.uws.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/401936/OPC_Performance_Plan_2012_Final.pdf

University of Wollongong

- http://www.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@spq/documents/doc/uow090598.pdf

- http://staff.uow.edu.au/content/groups/public/@web/@eed/documents/doc/uow129730.pdf

Dr Zane Ma Rhea has worked in Indigenous communities over the last 30 years in various capacities. She is recognised internationally for expertise in comparative education and for improving the quality of education services to Indigenous peoples using a rights-based framework, focusing on teacher professional development, organizational change management, and the preservation of Indigenous knowledge in mainstream schooling through meaningful school – community – university partnerships with Indigenous families. She teachers across the Indigenous Education program at Monash Univeristy, undertakes research in workforce development, and supervises a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars undertaking research in the fields of Indigenous Education and Leadership. Zane.MaRhea@monash.edu