

# VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

## BATHELMUN YALINGWA

### STRATEGY 2017-2020

(SHINE BRIGHT)

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STRATEGY



**Gamadji**  
GROW

**Dambunmon**  
SHARE

**Jerrboongun**  
CONNECT



**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY**  
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

## Acknowledgement of Country

Victoria University (VU) acknowledges the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) and Wathaurung (Wadawurrung) on our Melbourne Campuses, and the Gadigal and Guring-gai people of the Eora Nation on our Sydney campus. These groups are the custodians of University land and have been for many centuries. As we share our own knowledge practices within the University may we pay respect to the deep knowledge embedded within the Aboriginal community and their ownership of Country.

We acknowledge that the land on which our campuses stand is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. The Kulin and Eora people's living culture had, and has, a unique role in the life of these regions. VU supports the aim of Reconciliation Australia to build better relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the benefit of all Australians. It is important that staff, students and visitors understand and respect the significance of recognising the traditional owners of University land.

## Warning to Indigenous Australians

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this document may contain images or names of deceased persons.



Traditional dance by Wurundjeri dance troupe at Moondani Balluk event.



## Vice-Chancellor's Foreword

Victoria University has a vision to be the University of Opportunity and Success. Our core promises are to deliver high quality learning opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to enable them to create personalised career success, and to undertake high impact research that shapes healthier, smarter and more sustainable communities.

Our commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is built into our strategic vision and mission, and it is in this spirit that I am pleased to support the Victoria University Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020. This Strategy provides a framework for a university-wide and community approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation - particularly in our heartland, the West of Melbourne, where we are embedding ourselves as an integral part of this thriving area.

We acknowledge the Ancestors, Elders and families of the Boonwurrung, Waddawurrung and Woiwurrung of the Kulin as the custodians of University land in Melbourne. As traditional owners, the Kulin have left their cultural footprints in the landscape. The University respects their unique role in the life of this region, and will continue to work with the Kulin and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members in the spirit of reconciliation to share and grow the cultural heritage of the west.

This Strategy encompasses all aspects of University activity and aims to create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff. Our goal is to assure their success, to increase engagement with Aboriginal culture and enhance cultural competency, and to provide an environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students can thrive.

As a Vice-Chancellor who has seen first-hand the transformative power of education to individuals and to society, I am excited to enact the objectives of the Strategy. There is so much the University can do to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and community members, and I look forward to seeing what we achieve.

**PROFESSOR PETER DAWKINS AO**  
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT



Paola Balla, Artist in Residence at Moondani Balluk and the inaugural Lisa Belleair Research Scholarship holder.

Wall art by Kathy Adams (deceased) at St Albans campus, Moondani Balluk.

# Executive Summary

The Victoria University Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020 (the Strategy) outlines the commitment of the University to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' opportunity and success, particularly in our heartland, the west of Melbourne. This commitment not only encompasses the success of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff but also the role we play as a regional leader in raising awareness and addressing challenges.

As a tertiary education institution, which privileges learning and teaching and is focused on giving any student, from any background, the opportunity to undertake further study and help them achieve their best, Victoria University (VU) wants to be renowned as open, culturally inclusive and supportive of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so they can realise their full potential. At the same time, the University, working in partnership with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, must build cultural awareness and understanding among our non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so they can truly be effective global citizens.

The University, through our applied and translational research and regional engagement, will actively champion and acknowledge Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history. VU will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities to address areas, issues and causes of relevance to

the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially their social, health and economic wellbeing.

VU acknowledges the importance of place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities and as we transform our physical campuses for the 21st century, the University will ensure that these are spaces that are welcoming and inspirational to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that we serve.

The Strategy is framed across three key aspirations:

**GAMADJI (GROW)** – Growing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in tertiary education and assuring their success by being an open and excellent university.

**DAMBUNAMON (SHARE)** – Sharing Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history and ensuring that it is acknowledged and celebrated throughout our university and our community.

**JERRBOONGUN (CONNECT)** – Connecting Aboriginal culture to our people and spaces in a meaningful way, to build a strong and culturally aware University environment.

This strategy is underpinned by the Victoria University Strategic Plan, 2016-2020 and aligns with Universities Australian Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020.

# Introduction

As the University of Opportunity and Success, our vision and mission is to provide educational opportunities for any student from any background and to undertake applied translational research with impact, uplifting the communities in which we operate.

The vision of the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit is to create a culturally safe environment, share Aboriginal<sup>1</sup> knowledge, and translate and embed Aboriginal practices into all our work, research and curricula.

VU, since its establishment as a university in 1991, has had a deep commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in education, research, community engagement and employment at the University.

This commitment was originally expressed in 1998 when the University worked closely with the Aboriginal community in Echuca to design and deliver the Bachelor of Education (Nyerna Studies) to meet the educational needs of that community.

This strategy builds on the foundation of work that has occurred since then and provides an institutional framework for the University to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve participation and outcomes at VU, in our heartland, the west of Melbourne and beyond.

<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal refers to the Aboriginal/Indigenous/Torres Strait Islander community and individuals of/or living in South East Australia.



## SUCCESS STORY

**Marjorie Jean Mason**, is from Wilcannia, NSW. Bakandji river people. After completing Mumgu-Dhal Tyama-Tiyt through TAFE, Marjorie has gone on to complete a higher education degree, finishing a Bachelor of Arts (Kynandoo) in 2016. Marjorie is currently halfway through a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and is writing a thesis on her mob, the Bakandji people.

# A brief history of Victoria University's Indigenous Engagement

1991

- Establishment of Victoria University

1992

- Establishment of the Koori Development and Support Unit within the Equity and Social Justice Branch
- Establishment of the Koori Education Committee (KEC) of Academic Board

1997

- Establishment of a Western Suburbs LAECG (Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group)
- Renaming of KEC to Ngaga Jindi Woraback Committee of Academic Board

1998

- Finalisation of the Australian Indigenous Inclusive Curriculum Project (Commonwealth funded)
- Establishment of the off-campus Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education (Nyerna Studies) program

1999

- First Fire Festival, Iramoo Grasslands and Reconciliation Rocks Festival at St Albans Campus
- VU Indigenous graduation stole designed

2000

- Implementation of the Wurreker Plan on Vocational Education Indigenous programs with State Government

2001

- Launch and first graduation of the off-campus program Bachelor of Arts/ Education (Nyerna Studies) in Echuca

2003

- Final report of the Indigenous Employment and Career Development Working Party

2006

- Establishment of the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit
- Replaced Nyerna Studies program to Bachelor of Arts (Kynindoo)
- Launch of the Yannonait Employment Strategy (YES)



2009

- Moondani Balluk moves into own cultural space at the St Albans Campus
- Signatory to *Toorong Marnong Higher Education Accord* agreement with the Victorian Vice Chancellors Committee and Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated

2010

- First delivery of the Mumgu-Dhal Tyama-Tiyt program

2011

- Completion of the *Managing in Two Worlds* governance training project with Aboriginal Victoria, Sir Zelman Cowen Centre, Victoria Polytechnic, School of Education, and Moondani Balluk

2012

- Finalisation of online cultural awareness program *WhichWay*, a collaboration between People and Culture School of Education, and Moondani Balluk.

2013

- Establishment of an Aboriginal Academic Board position elected by and from Indigenous staff.
- Release of the Victoria University Indigenous Participation Strategy

2014

- Launch of Boonmarat Leewik online site, a collaboration with Sir Zelman Cowen Centre, School of Education, and Moondani Balluk, and funded through Community Heritage Grant
- Completion of the Teachers and Education Support Staff Online Training project with Department of Education and Training School of Education, and Moondani Balluk.

2015

- Re-signing of the Toorong Marnong Accord
- Establishment of the Aboriginal membership position to the University Ethics Committee
- Launch of the Yulendj Wurrung online and education awareness tool for all staff
- Inaugural Bruce McGuinness Postdoctoral Research Fellowship awarded

2016

- Successful application to Australian Research Council Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities to digitise the Foley Collection
- Inaugural Lisa Belleair Research Scholarship awarded

2017

- Second Lisa Belleair Research Scholarship awarded
- Release of the Victoria University Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020

2008

- Indigenous Listening Day held
- Appointment of Indigenous academic staff in School of Education and Moondani Balluk



Karen Jackson, Yorta Yorta and Director of Moondani Balluk

# Strategic Alignment

## OUR VISION

As the University of Opportunity and Success, we will be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background and uplifting the communities in which we operate.

## OUR MISSION

We will achieve this vision by:

**EDUCATION** Providing high quality, engaging career-based tertiary education at all levels of vocational and higher education with flexible entry and exit points, appropriate pathways, engaging and rigorous curriculum and contemporary delivery; while maintaining rigorous standards and ensuring that all students are supported to meet those standards.

**RESEARCH AND ENGAGEMENT** Undertaking high quality and innovative applied and translational research which results in healthier, smarter and sustainable communities in the west of Melbourne and beyond, and connecting deeply with industry and the community, in turn enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



In 2016, VU's Strategic Plan, 2016-2020<sup>2</sup> was released and in 2017, Universities Australia's Indigenous Strategy, 2017-2020<sup>3</sup> was nationally launched. Consequently, it is timely to refresh our current Indigenous Participation Strategy (2013) to ensure alignment with national, state, regional and institutional priorities. Our performance against the objectives of the 2013 strategy and the lessons we learnt from this have also informed the development of this document.

- improve the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The University outlines a series of objectives and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and achievement to deliver on our commitment, as an outstanding and open university, to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that we serve.

VU's Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020 has adopted the Universities Australia objectives but has privileged success as a key outcome for objective one as well as acknowledging our dual sector nature to ensure our actions are transformative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities:

The figure above outlines the strategic framework within which this strategy operates to enable VU to contribute to equal opportunity, successful careers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff and impactful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and businesses.

- increase the numbers and assure the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in tertiary education as students, as graduates and as academic, research and professional staff;
- increase the engagement of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with Aboriginal knowledge, culture and educational approaches; and

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/about-us/pdfs/vu-strategic-plan-2016-2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/Media-and-Events/media-releases/Universities-unveil-indigenous-participation-targets>



From left: Aunty Joy Murphy-Wandin (Woiwurrung) at smoking ceremony, St Albans; Moondani Balluk staff; craft-making on Weaving Day.

## Our context

Aboriginal people of the Kulin have occupied the Narm (Port Phillip Bay) region for over 30,000 years, evidenced by the archaeological discovery of burial sites and associated artefacts dating from approximately 17,000 years in the Maribyrnong and Werribee valleys. Anecdotal evidence suggests that perhaps only a small number of families of Kulin descent now live in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Data from the 2016 ABS Census shows that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Melbourne's west comprises 0.7 per cent of the total population, which in absolute numbers totalled 4957 persons. In 2016, 9.5 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were attending a secondary school and 5.8 per cent were attending a tertiary/technical institution.

Victoria University now has more than 42,000 enrolled students, which includes approximately 11,600 international students studying our courses onshore or with our partner institutions offshore<sup>4</sup> and around 1990 academics, teaching and professional staff.

In 2016, the University's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student population comprised of 242, of which 125 were enrolled in higher education courses and 119 in vocational education and training. In total, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students represent 0.7 per cent of the entire higher

education domestic students, and 1.1 per cent of the VET equivalent, highlighting that there is still much work to do to improve Aboriginal participation. The University currently reports that 1.04 per cent of our staff have an Aboriginal background.

We are an institution that values diversity and are steadfast in ensuring that our student and staff population reflects the demographics of the community that we serve. To deliver this, the University will, in the first instance, work to make certain that our student and staff Aboriginal population is reflective of the Aboriginal population in Melbourne's west. Secondly, the University will work with Moondani Balluk and College Aboriginal academic staff to engage in understanding the challenges of colonialism, grounding our work in Place and Aboriginal perspectives and identifying self-determining practices.

In the long term we want to meet the Universities Australia targets:

- institutional growth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' enrolment that are at least 50 per cent above the growth rate of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolment, and ideally 100 per cent above.
- three per cent of the total workforce and the employment of at least one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person in a senior leadership role.
- ensure all students encounter and engage with Aboriginal cultural content as integral parts of their course of study.

Finally, as a leading institution in the west of the Melbourne, we will continue to raise the visibility of Aboriginal people, culture and issues through:

- our applied and translational research conducted by our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students;
- deep and reciprocal partnerships with schools, government, industry and the community;
- active advocacy through community and outreach activities.

As the University of Opportunity and Success, we are committed to providing equal opportunity and outcomes for all and for uplifting the communities that we serve.

## Our objectives

**The Victoria University Bathelmun Yalingwa Strategy 2017-2020 encompasses all aspects of University activity, and consists of three key aspirations – to grow, to share and to connect.**

**We want to position VU as an institution that is renowned for deliberate action in raising the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff and for providing an environment that fosters Aboriginal innovation and success. We also aspire to be accountable to Aboriginal cultural values, protocols and norms.**



### SUCCESS STORY

**Pauline Whyman** is a proud Yorta Yorta and Kulin Nations woman, and she completed her Bachelor of Arts (Kynandoo) in 2016. Pauline's work as an actor, writer and director includes the theatre where she has toured internationally, and numerous TV series and films. Pauline wrote and directed an SBS-TV short film, "Back Seat", to much acclaim. Pauline is a two-time Victorian Indigenous Performing Arts Award recipient.

<sup>4</sup> 2016 Annual Report, yet to be published online



# Gamadji Dambunmon Jerrboongun grow share connect

**1.** Growing the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in tertiary education and assuring their success by being an open and excellent university.

Victoria University aims to increase the numbers and assure the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in tertiary education as students, as graduates and as academic, research and professional staff. This aligns with our strategic vision as the University of Opportunity and Success - to be open and excellent, creating exceptional value for any student from any background and uplifting the communities in which we operate.

## OUR HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- 1.1 Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments, aiming for growth rates that are at least 50 per cent above the growth rate of non-Aboriginal student enrolment by 2020.
- 1.2 Create demand through an Aboriginal Student Recruitment Plan, supported by an engagement and communication plan targeting industry, community, schools and Aboriginal media.
- 1.3 Increase our brand and reputation by developing a media and communications plan to promote Aboriginal opportunities at VU and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, alumni and staff success.
- 1.4 Develop and commit to an Aboriginal Research and Research Training Strategy, ensuring the growth and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in higher degrees by research (HDR) participation and success.
- 1.5 Position research activities and strengths to inform and advance knowledge in areas, issues and causes of relevance to the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 1.6 Provide foundation studies with culturally specific courses for delivery in Aboriginal community settings that pathway into further education and employment.

**2.** Sharing Aboriginal culture, knowledge and history and ensuring that it is acknowledged and celebrated throughout our University and our community.

Victoria University aims to increase the engagement of Aboriginal knowledge, culture and educational approaches. We need to foster deeper understanding of Aboriginal history and culture through our curriculum, our staff training and our university activities. It is also vital to ensure that Victoria University is actively engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people. VU is proud of our deep connection with our community, particularly in our heartland, the west of Melbourne.

## OUR HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- 2.1 Develop an Aboriginal competency by ensuring all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their study.
- 2.2 Ensure all staff are encouraged to undertake the Yulendj Wurrung online training program.
- 2.3 Build robust and collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (particularly in the west of Melbourne) as part of the University's broader Engagement Framework.
- 2.4 Develop an annual event, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, that showcases our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and success.
- 2.5 Support an ongoing program of high-quality activities and events to build cultural understanding.
- 2.6 Embed Aboriginal issues within core policy documents, including institutional strategic and business plans.

**3.** Connecting Aboriginal culture to our people and spaces in a meaningful way, to build a strong and culturally aware University environment.

Victoria University aims to improve the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This can be achieved by connecting Aboriginal culture to the ethos of the University, creating a welcoming, culturally aware and rich environment that recognises and celebrates Aboriginal people. This also includes our physical spaces, ensuring that VU offers campuses that our students and staff will be inspired by and proud of.

## OUR HIGH-LEVEL OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

- 3.1 Raise the visibility of Aboriginal people and culture across VU and commit to creating learning and working environments that are respectful and welcoming and that embed Aboriginal views, knowledge and voices, especially in the design and amenity of our campus spaces
- 3.2 Encourage the recruitment and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workforce by providing opportunities to gain professional qualifications, work skills and experience in a wide range of jobs at our various campuses.
- 3.3 Provide induction for all new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and ongoing cultural safety support
- 3.4 Provide professional development opportunities and specialist targeted support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- 3.5 Recognise the additional workload of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in pastoral care, community engagement and cultural load, and reflect this in workload planning, performance assessments and promotion processes.

Aboriginal plants and flowers of Iramoo (top to bottom): Clustered Everlastings, Golden Billy Buttons – Pycnosorus Chrysanthes, Native Flax - Linum Marginale, Showy Podolepis – Podolepis Jaceoides.



## Moondani Balluk

Moondani Balluk means 'embrace people' in the Woiwurrung language of the Wurundjeri people.

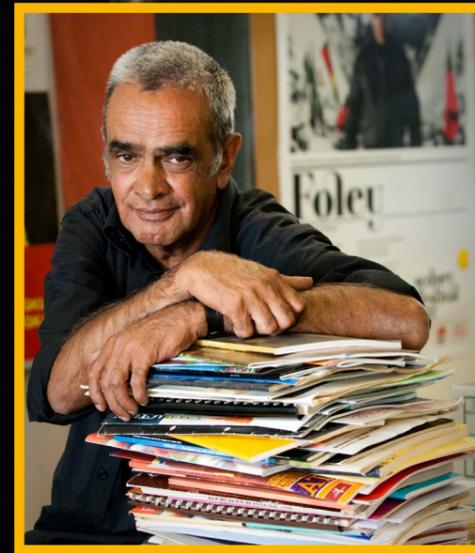
Our vision for the Moondani Balluk Academic Unit is to create and foster:

- A culturally sensitive environment that welcomes, nurtures and recreates community based on relationship to land, culture, law and elders;
- Sharing of Aboriginal knowledge and to integrate Aboriginal practices into its curricula, research and work;
- Respect for all people through mutually engaged relationships;
- A commitment to pursuing political and social justice, equity, and access to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Accountability to Aboriginal cultural values, protocols and norms.

The importance of this Strategy's principles of Grow, Share and Connect should not be underestimated. These principles will provide a culturally safe space and environment that is vitally important to Aboriginal staff and students as it works to lessen our cultural load of being seen as experts while we walk the path between "blak" history and reconciliation.

The principles also provide an opportunity to all people within the University to further their understanding of the politic of being Aboriginal. In growing, sharing and connecting with Aboriginal knowledges and history, we can transform people's understanding from an interpersonal and institutional level about Aboriginal lives that will provide a better informed public able to challenge and critically engage in eliminating injustice and disadvantage. The success of this Strategy will make an important contribution to this institutions teaching and learning, research and engagement activities and to Australia's social fabric.

## Aboriginal History Archive



The Aboriginal History Archive is built around the Foley Collection.

This is an extensive archive of almost 500,000 items, collected over the past 45 years by Aboriginal activist/academic and Moondani Balluk researcher Professor Gary Foley.

The Archive documents over half a century of Aboriginal activism in Australia's contemporary political history and adds the Aboriginal voices that are central to this complex era. Documented issues include the emergence, development and rise of the Aboriginal Black Power, land rights and self-determination movements in Australia.

The Archive includes:

- correspondence
- manuscripts
- press clippings
- photo collections
- video recordings
- radio programs
- campaign ephemera and significant artefacts
- collections of other key figures.



## CONTACT

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