

Calling out Racism in University Classrooms: The Ongoing Need for Indigenisation of the Curriculum to Support Indigenous Student Completion Rates

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Abstract

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to experience racism in Australian university classrooms. The *Reconciliation Australia Barometer* report (2022, p. 5) recently noted that experiences of racial prejudice have increased for Indigenous people with 60% of Indigenous people who responded to the survey experiencing at least one form of racial prejudice in the past six months. Many universities are attempting to implement action against racism and there have been concerted efforts to Indigenise curriculum across numerous universities. But there are many challenges and complexities to this process and more work is needed to increase cultural competency of university staff and students. This article explores findings from a National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) funded project that focused on “what works” to support Indigenous students to complete their degrees. This article draws on data from interviews with graduates that highlight the perceived experiences of racism in the classroom from peers and staff and the need for further Indigenisation of the curriculum to improve Indigenous student completion rates. The article concludes by discussing recommendations for universities to create a safer environment for Indigenous students. These recommendations echo previous ones (e.g., Behrendt et al., 2012) yet they have not yet been adequately addressed by universities.

Keywords: Indigenous students; Indigenising curriculum; racism; university completions.

Introduction

While the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students¹ participating in higher education continues to increase, Indigenous student completion rates nationally remain low in comparison to their non-Indigenous peers. The national data indicates that, while Indigenous students typically can take longer to graduate, the nine-year completion rates for Indigenous students remain around 47 per cent — significantly below the 74 per cent for non-Indigenous students (Universities Australia,

¹While acknowledging the diversity among and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in this article we respectfully use the term “Indigenous” to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



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2020, p. 24). Some universities have stronger completion rates than the national average, yet there has been little study of these universities as ‘success models’ (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023; Behrendt et al., 2012; Pechenkina et al., 2011).

This article draws on findings from a National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) research project that focuses on success factors to support Indigenous student university completions. Five universities (four Go8² and one private university) with higher completion rates than the national average were selected as sites to explore success factors for Indigenous student completion. While the primary focus was on ‘success factors’ supporting Indigenous students to complete their degrees, many of the graduates interviewed also discussed the issue of racism, and the lack of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum as key barriers to students completing their degrees. In this article we focus on graduate perspectives on experiences of racism and the need for more Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum.

Who We Are: The Project Team

The project team consisted of six Indigenous researchers and one non-Indigenous researcher. Bronwyn Fredericks led the project and is an Aboriginal woman from south-east Queensland. She has over 30 years of experience working in and with the tertiary sector, state and federal governments, and Indigenous community-based organisations. Katelyn Barney was the project manager and she is a non-Indigenous researcher who grew up on Jagera and Turrubal lands. This project builds on her prior research collaborations with Indigenous researchers and students in higher education. She worked closely with the project team across the universities and with a research assistant Brenna Bernardino who is a Torres Strait Islander researcher in health and education.³ Tracey Bunda is a Ngugi/Wakka Wakka woman who has undertaken research projects on Indigenous higher education and negotiating university equity from Indigenous standpoints. Kirsten Hausia is an Aboriginal woman whose mother is Yamatji from Perth, Western Australia, and has research skills in educational leadership and guidance and counselling. Anne Martin is a proud Yuin woman who has worked with Indigenous university students since the 1990s and has strong expertise in equity-related policy issues. Jacinta Elston is an Aboriginal woman from Townsville. Her research focuses on Indigenous higher education and health. She has contributed many years of service on state and federal ministerial appointments, and to boards of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The team members drew on their individual experience and standpoints to develop the research questions and research design in close consultation with an expert Indigenous reference group. The team view their collaboration as in a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994), a shared space where they negotiated and mediated numerous borders between Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces and move between and across borders through collaboration.

Background

Universities across Australia have committed to improving participation in and completion of higher education by Indigenous students, and the number of Indigenous students commencing and completing university continues to grow (Universities Australia, 2020). However, national completion rates remain significantly lower for Indigenous students than for non-Indigenous students. The impact of racism on student experiences and completion rates can not be underestimated and there have been several studies discussing the experiences of racial discrimination against Indigenous students in schools (e.g., Aveling, 2002; Hogarth & Bunda, 2020; Moodie et al., 2019) and higher education contexts (e.g., Sonn et al., 2000; Veldman & Guilfoye, 2013). As Aveling (1990) notes, “racism is a slippery subject, one which evades confrontation, yet one which overshadows every aspect of our lives” (p. xix). In the Australian context, “racism is not just a thing of Australia’s colonial past” (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2021, p. 24), it is multifaceted in nature and can include: verbal racism (name calling, jokes), behavioural racism (ignored, avoided, stared at), institutional discrimination (unfair treatment), and macro-level racism (denial of Aboriginal views of history, dominance of White values). As Kennedy (2020) argues “racism is deployed to attack, demean, and violate the comfort and safety of a particular individual or group. It is a core means of maintaining white privilege” (para. 1). Further Bodkin-Andrews et al. (2021) note that:

² In Australia, The Group of Eight (Go8) comprises Australia’s most research intensive universities [https://go8.edu.au/about/the-go8#:~:text=The%20Group%20of%20Eight%20\(Go8,Monash%20University%20and%20UNSW%20Sydney](https://go8.edu.au/about/the-go8#:~:text=The%20Group%20of%20Eight%20(Go8,Monash%20University%20and%20UNSW%20Sydney)

³ An additional non-Indigenous research assistant Daniel Griffiths collated and analysed quantitative data provided by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment University Statistics team to provide a comprehensive perspective on completion rates at the five selected universities in comparison to the sector. This data was then discussed and refined in collaboration with the project team (see Fredericks et al., 2022).

racism is not some benign construct that people can simply shrug off and ‘get over’. In its many forms, racism creates a significant and detrimental risk over the physical, social, emotional, economic, aspirational, and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (p. 28)

Elsewhere Seet and Paradies (2018) discuss the differences between “old racism” and “covert racism” and define old racism as overt, blatant, and intentional, whereas covert racism is more difficult to define (and may involve racial micro-aggressions and the denial of the existence of racism) (see Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). Veldman and Guilfoye (2013) note that another example of covert racism is “cultural insensitivity, in which academics may favour Western knowledge to the exclusion of other forms” (p. 4) (see also Sonn et al., 2000). Some scholars have defined this as “institutional racism” or the “hidden curriculum”, in which established laws, customs and practices promote inequality (Margolis & Romero, 1998).

In an interlinked area, Povey et al. (2022) discuss the experiences and perceptions of institutional racism in relation to Indigenous early career researchers. They note that racism is prevalent in the higher education sector and continues to negatively impact the careers of Indigenous early career researchers in Australian universities. There have also been studies of racism in specific disciplinary areas such as social work, with Gair et al. (2015) finding that “experiences of subtle and overt racism as everyday features of [Indigenous student] placements highlight the need to address racism” in social work education (p. 32). There are also similarities and parallels with international contexts, with Bailey (2016, 2000) highlighting Indigenous students experiences of racism in Canadian universities and noting that “subtle, modern racism is playing an active role in the daily lives of Indigenous university students, affecting both their academic and personal success” (2016, p. 1261; see Mayeda et al. 2014 for discussion about Māori and Pacific student experiences of racism in the New Zealand context). As Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016) note “researchers should not ignore the voice of Indigenous Australians in attempting to understand the nature of racism prevalent within Australia today” (p. 796).

Indigenisation of curriculum is one way to address racism because as Bullen and Flavell (2022) explain:

graduates exposed to Aboriginal knowledges (e.g., spirit and kinship) and learning processes (e.g., slowing down, deep listening, storying) grounded in relationships, obligation and connection to country will be better able to build trust and sustain relationships with Aboriginal people, diminishing individual and institutional racism. (p. 1410)

The importance of incorporating Indigenous content into curriculum has been repeatedly emphasised in higher education reports and policy documents. For example, the *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020* (2017) acknowledged the inherent value of Aboriginal peoples’ unique knowledge systems. There has been concerted efforts made at a number of institutions and within different disciplinary areas to Indigenise curriculum (e.g., Al-Natour & Fredericks, 2016; Bunda, 2022; Page et al., 2019). The process of Indigenising curriculum is complex, and numerous researchers have noted the institutional support required, the challenges of poorly taught curriculum that can reinforce stereotypes (e.g., Howlett et al., 2013; Nakata, 2007) and resistance from students particularly from mandatory curriculum (e.g., Hollingsworth, 2016). This article affirms and builds on this research by focusing on Indigenous graduates voices about the need for further Indigenisation of university curriculum and their reflections on perceived experiences of racism in the classroom from peers and staff.

Methodology and Theoretical Framing

The project was a one-year project and involved a mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative methods) to explore ‘what works’ in effective strategies to support Indigenous student completions. Five universities (four Go8 and one private university) were chosen to focus on because their nine-year Indigenous student completion rates were higher than the national nine-year completion rates for Indigenous students of 47 per cent. As Pechenkina et al. (2011) highlight, Go8 universities tend to have higher Indigenous student completions than non-Go8 universities. The project involved documenting evidence to demonstrate success factors that support Indigenous student completions at these five universities and to highlight areas to strengthen Indigenous student completion rates at universities more generally. Indigenous reference group meetings were held during the project to ensure additional expert Indigenous feedback were interwoven through the project. The team also held an online national roundtable to share the findings from the project and receive feedback on proposed strategies and a conceptual model of best practice to strengthen Indigenous student completions.

This project received ethical approval from The University of Queensland Human Research Ethics Committee (ethics number: 2020/HE002936). Potential participants for this study were identified with assistance from the reference group, and staff at the key case study sites. Following this, potential participants were initially invited in writing and/or via phone to take part in the study by the key stakeholders at the sites. An information sheet and participant consent form were provided to the

participants at this time. There were 12 graduates interviewed from university A, 11 from university B, three from university C, three from university D and six from university E.

All recorded interview data was transcribed by a transcription service and then de-identified with names, locations and institutions replaced with codes. The transcripts were provided to participants for review and approval. The transcripts were then imported in Nvivo 12 and underwent line-by-line coding by two team members to enable the identification of themes. The themes were repeatedly examined and analysed for consistent themes and sub-themes. This process was complemented by reflective journals that involved interrogating and examining the themes. The themes and sub-themes were then discussed with the larger team and reference group for feedback and then shared at the online national roundtable.

Our article is informed by Goenpul scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson's (1999) discussion of race in the Australian academic context which:

centres being white as normal, but invisible, and white superiority and internalised dominance is hidden by the concept of ethnocentrism. White self-centredness allows white academics and students to unconsciously accept that they are better and know more than those who are positioned as the non-white other. (p. 4)

As Moreton-Robinson (1999) notes, whiteness confers privilege and dominance to white people where race only belongs to non-whites who are constructed at the margins and “more often than not, the Indigenous other” (p. 3). Our work is also informed by Smith and Tuck (2016) and Tuck and Gazambide-Fernandez's (2013) analysis of how internationally universities and curriculum continue “to enforce colonization and racism... [and how curriculum] has continued to absorb, silence and replace the non-white other, perpetuating white supremacy and settlerhood” (Tuck & Gazambide-Fernandez, 2013, p. 73). This is internationally relevant because in the United States context, Smith and Tuck (2016) note that “life on predominantly white college campuses” can include “a mixed bag of racial microaggressions and racialized aggressions” and they emphasise the need to “decentre whiteness” in university curriculum (2016, pp. 14-20).

Graduate Voices on Experiences in the Tertiary Classroom

Thirty-five Indigenous graduates from across five universities were interviewed as part of this project. While the interviewees undertook diverse degrees, including health, communication, and science, 14 had studied for a Bachelor of Arts.

Being called out to speak as ‘Indigenous experts’ in the classroom: “You’re like the token black kid in the class”

Many of the graduates interviewed reflected on their experiences in classrooms being asked by academics to speak on behalf of Indigenous people:

It was mostly experiences like being called out in class as to speak to a universal Indigenous experience or being called out to act as a representative of a cultural ideal or some way of being. Then not just by students, by staff, and having smaller, I guess, more innocuous experiences like that that can lead to additional stress and more, I guess, isolation in some ways in the classroom environment. (Bachelor of Arts graduate)

A lot of the time, as soon as anyone else finds out you're Indigenous, they're like “Ah, ah, what do you think about this? What do you think about this” – because you're like the token black kid in the class and you've got to answer all the questions and stuff. (Bachelor of Science graduate)

So it was always like in the classes like that where someone knew you were Indigenous and called on you in a tute to answer and speak on behalf of all Indigenous people ... got a bit traumatised in class, and didn't want to go back because of that. (Bachelor of Arts graduate)

This points to the “fascination with the Aboriginal presence, hence the need to look directly and for longer ... and establishing the codes for the ‘encounter’” (Bunda, 2017, p. 93). Further, as Moreton-Robinson (2020) notes, “Whiteness opens up and forecloses certain ways of reading the Indigenous ‘Other’” (p. 252). Similarly, Tuck et al. (2010) note that in predominantly white university classrooms the “centrality of privilege, power and control” can be evident in the desire to consume “the other” which reflects “the history of appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous knowledge and people” (pp. 71-72). In the Australian context, Indigenous students make up only 2.04% of all domestic enrolments and in 2021 just 1.4 per cent of Australian university staff – both academic and non-academic – were Indigenous (Universities Australia, 2022).

This is also in part linked with the small numbers of Indigenous students in some degrees and classrooms with students noting they were often the only Indigenous students in their class:

I was the only Aboriginal person all the time and so I found that a little bit strange 'cause I thought, "gee, this degree programme is all about land use, and you know little bit of environment" and all these things which totally relate to Country and I thought "where is everybody?" (Bachelor of Regional and Town Planning graduate)

I was still the only Blackfella in all of my classes as I was doing literature and creative writing, which is traditionally not necessarily what our mob go to. (Bachelor of Creative Arts graduate)

I honestly thought I was the only blackfella in there for at least six months of my [university] journey – it was pretty bad. I actually hated going there; I would skip classes all the time to not go into [university] because I couldn't see myself at the uni because I couldn't see other mob there. (Bachelor of International Relations graduate)

Being the only Indigenous student in the classroom will remain until universities proactively address the need to strengthen Indigenous student numbers to reflect population parity. These lived experiences highlight the need to continue to build cohorts of Indigenous students within degrees and is supported by Pidgeon's (2008) assertion that an Indigenous model of retention would recognise the role "community play in supporting educational success of Aboriginal students" (p. 351; also see Barney, 2018).

Racism from peers and staff: "Micro aggressions and then blatant, just blatant bad behaviour"

Racism in university classrooms was discussed by many of the graduates. In some cases, the perceived racism was from their peers:

There is racism in classes ... I had students go, "Oh, you must have got scholarships for coming here" when they worked out that I was Indigenous, or "Oh, did you take a bridging pathway?" "No, I actually got here the same way that a lot of people in this room got here"... Other students that even unintentionally make comments like "colonialism was good for Indigenous people". (Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts graduate)

I'd hope that any Aboriginal person at university [doesn't] have to go through some of the things that I went through. And there should have been mechanisms that were more shoved in undergraduate students' faces like bad behaviour, racism ... from other students. Yeah, just stuff like micro aggressions and then blatant, just blatant bad behaviour. (Bachelor of Regional and Town Planning graduate)

Some graduates also discussed experiences of perceived racism from staff:

A couple of the teachers themselves ... one specifically would always say to international students "Oh, so the poor black kids have to do that kind of activities" – it was just really not great. (Bachelor of Arts graduate)

I guess the racism at a university like [this] that is full of people with white fragility and white privilege, has always hung over my thinking around what I actually received from [this university]... People being blatantly racist and really showing their white fragility in the way they operated towards me. (Bachelor of International Relations graduate).

I literally, just had too many scenarios through my degree where I'm very glad that I was a white passing person and not somebody who looked more visible 'cause that would have made me even more uncomfortable to talk about some of the things they just have no right to talk about. (Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences graduate)

Some [people] employed as tutors.... clearly have a racist bone within them, so they immediately were going to discriminate ... That really bothered me. (Bachelor of Regional and Town Planning graduate)

These findings highlight the difficult and at times traumatic experiences of Indigenous students in university classrooms. As Moreton-Robinson highlights, "White academics while absorbing an attitude of superiority can accept their self-centredness because they rationalise it as not being based on race hatred – therefore they are not racist" (1999, p. 4) yet as Bullen and Flavell (2017) assert "non-Indigenous academics must become active allies with a willingness to be vulnerable and open" (p. 593). As Rochecouste et al. (2016) argue "universities need to take responsibility for the attitudes of their staff ... [it is not] acceptable for the educator to single out an Aboriginal student" (p. 15).

Lack of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum: “I wish Indigenous knowledge had been a little more present”

Many of the graduates also highlighted the lack of Indigenous perspectives included in the curriculum of their courses:

Culturally I'd say that I wish that Indigenous knowledge had been a little bit more present in some of my studies, I guess, that it was more a part of the university culture. (Bachelor of Arts graduate)

The notion that content that involves the human experience or involves discussion of history and culture doesn't necessarily speak to an Indigenous world view or account for the Australian Indigenous knowledge systems and experience and history and that in and of itself can be a problematic space to exist within. (Bachelor of Arts graduate)

Like all courses that are, or degrees that aren't set up to include us I guess? Like we've always gotta bend them backwards for that course, but that course won't even bend slightly for us? ... that can get a bit, bit draining for mob. (Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences graduate)

Similarly, Day et al. (2015) note that that “Indigenous students’ engagements with Indigenous course content (or its omission) often amplify the affective aspects of learning” which in turn can cause isolation, stress and anxiety (p. 504). Certainly, more Indigenous perspectives in the classroom are needed to support Indigenous students’ learning outcomes. Further as Fredericks et al. (2015a & b) point out, learning content in university contexts often “reflects very little, if any, Indigenous perspectives” (2015a, p. 1).

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Indigenous students continue to experience racism in university classrooms. Qualitative comments from student interviews highlighted their experiences of racism. These experiences of racism are similar to those noted elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Bunda, 2017; Gair et al., 2015). As Povey et al. (2022) point out:

despite extensive impact studies over the past two decades documenting the insipid and debilitating health, social, and emotional impacts of racism on Indigenous peoples in Australia, racism remains a key factor impacting negatively on the lives of Indigenous Australians at all levels of education. (p. 1)

Certainly, racism can be so subtle that it is often denied by the general population (Elias et al., 2021; Seet & Paradies, 2018), yet keenly felt by Indigenous students. Pilkington (2013, p. 5) argues non-Indigenous academic staff may see themselves as being “non-racist” by virtue of being in an institution that is perceived to be a liberal environment committed to equality yet, as Moreton-Robinson (2020) reminds us “racial codes are always present in whatever we do and think” (p. 252). Many of the graduates interviewed noted that they were at times called out in class by lecturers to speak on behalf of Indigenous people. These experiences align with Day et al. (2015) who point out that Indigenous students can experience “anxiety/stress associated with the expectation that Indigenous students are Indigenous knowledge ‘experts’ [which provides] additional emotional burdens and layers of challenge that can complicate the academic aspects of learning” (p. 504). Rochecouste et al. (2016) highlight Aboriginal centre staff perspectives of students’ experiences and note that students reported being singled out in class and “encounter explicit racism on university campuses, but more often they are concerned about the implicit cultural insensitivities pervasive in academia” (p. 2081).

The qualitative data from graduates presented in this article demonstrate the lack of Indigenous perspectives included in curriculum that the graduates experienced while they were students at the five university sites. This is supported in the literature in relation to Indigenising curriculum. Raciti (2022) notes that often university “courses attract First Nations peoples but they do not ‘see themselves’ represented in the curriculum” (p. 211). Further as Bullen and Flavell (2022) note Indigenous students are often “marginalised and Othered within” curriculum (p. 1410). Many of the graduates noted that much more work needs to be done within the universities they studied at to improve the focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and knowledges and draw further on Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum and content. Important work has been undertaken by universities to develop frameworks and design principles to guide Indigenisation of curriculum (e.g., Bunda, 2022; Howlett et al., 2013). Yet as Raciti (2022) notes “there’s a seemingly persistent reluctance to embed Australian Indigenous knowledges (yes, plural) and perspectives (also plural)” in some disciplines (p. 211). Elsewhere, Raciti et al. (2018) found that non-Indigenous academics may be open to Indigenising curriculum but had fears about a lack of guidance, student resistance or misappropriating knowledge (also see Tuck et al., 2010). In addition, as Bunda (2017) highlights, “there is the danger of the knowledge being used inappropriately or being appropriated by white academics and students in ways that Aboriginal communities are unable to control” (p. 95). Non-Indigenous staff can have concerns about finding resources, not

knowing how to reach out to Indigenous community members or of simply getting it wrong.⁴ Collins-Gearing and Smith (2016) use the metaphor of the need to “burn off” the disciplines to Indigenise curriculum in order to “clean up the landscape so that new, transformative possibilities may grow” (p. 159). We concur with their suggested process which involves: 1) “preparing for the burn off” by surveying the approaches of others to the challenge of Indigenisation across disciplines at a national level (p. 161); 2) “lighting the flame” by consulting with colleagues (p. 3); “burning off” by “transforming the course structure, pedagogical approach and assessment” (p. 164); and 4) “surveying the burn off” to reflect on the changes in pedagogical practice. An interlinked area here is cultural competency training for staff and students but as Page (2014) notes there is little evidence of the impact of current efforts to increase individual cultural capability.⁵

Limitations

There are inevitably some methodological limitations to this research. The qualitative aspects of the research involved graduates being asked for their views based on their experiences and these responses are by nature subjective. Each of the five university sites were originally considered case studies for comparative purposes; however, due to the small sample, we have analysed the themes in the data across the five university sites rather than comparing them. However, a consistent lived experience within the sample correlates with the wider body of available scholarship and literature regarding Indigenous student completions and student success and informs the findings included within this article. The research process was also highly collaborative, for example, members of the Indigenous reference group provided input and critical feedback on the interview questions, data analysis, development of strategies and confirmed that the data collected achieved representativeness. Care has been taken to ensure that findings derived from qualitative interview data are also supported by other research and/or other relevant data.

Conclusion

The voices of graduates included in this article highlight that university is still not necessarily a safe place for Indigenous students. Danger and a lack of cultural safety can be found in classrooms when Indigenous students are called out as “experts”, when peers question their identity and ask culturally insensitive questions, and when lecturers do not include “meaningful, appropriately developed and appropriately resourced” Indigenous content in curricula so that Indigenous students can see themselves in the curriculum (Universities Australia, 2022, p. 55). As Bunda (2017) writes elsewhere, “cultural safety within the university is a necessary first step for Aboriginal students to succeed. Yet this is not the overwhelming experience of students” (p. 94). The graduates interviewed as part of this study successfully completed their degrees despite the layers of racism they experienced. Their resilience and persistence was demonstrated in their resistance to their learning environments and many of the students found a sense of community and belonging within the Indigenous centre/unit at the university (see Fredericks et al., 2022; Fredericks & White, 2018). The *Call it Out: First Nations Racism Register* is an important online register collected by University of Technology Sydney (UTS)’s Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research to report racism and discrimination experiences for Indigenous people (Allison & Cunneen, 2022). The interim report (2022) noted that “listening to Aboriginal voices was ... identified as crucial to addressing racism at an individual and community level”. As Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016) highlight:

the racism that current and future generations of Indigenous students may be forced to endure is not limited to blatant name-calling and threats of assault, but rather racism extends across multiple inter-personal dimensions and levels such as institutional and macro racism that need to be recognised. (p. 801)

The findings of this research demonstrate that universities must continue to focus efforts towards educating academic staff and students to be more culturally competent through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives within curriculum. Indigenisation of curriculum requires institutional support and it also requires critical self-reflection by non-Indigenous educators. Building communities of practice within universities could be useful to undertake the “complex, challenging and sometimes daunting work of Indigenising the curriculum” (Williams et al., 2022, p. 105). As part of the project, recommendations were developed for universities and include:

- University academic staff should ensure their classrooms are strongly anti-racist and address any issues of racism within the classroom.

⁴ A new podcast series by two of the team members Tracey Bunda and Katelyn Barney to address these concerns and provides case studies of how staff at The University of Queensland are Indigenising the curriculum across the disciplines (see <https://indigenisingcurriculum.podbean.com/>)

⁵ We will explore the importance of cultural competency for staff and students in a future publication.

- University leadership needs to ensure more cultural competency training opportunities for academic staff, professional staff, and students.

It is important to note that these recommendations are not particularly new and echo previous recommendations from the *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report* (Behrendt et al., 2012) which recommended that, “Universities need to build their cultural understanding and have strategies to reduce racism” and that “University culture needs to change to counter prejudice where it occurs” (p. 143). The *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020* (2017) also called for universities to commit to having “processes that ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study, by 2020” (p.14). Despite important work occurring in universities to embed Indigenous content within university courses it has yet to be implemented strongly across all universities. Our recommendations also align with the recent *National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report* (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2022) which recommends that there is need to “develop anti-racist curricula that decentre White and European knowledge, culture, and ways of being, and embed Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing” (p. 13). Collectively the authors stand with the many positive and practical recommendations of the reports that have proceeded this article. There is enormous frustration felt by many Indigenous scholars and their non-Indigenous allies whose voices are not heard and rendered silent by this inaction to implement national recommendations.

Universities need to do better to provide safe spaces, a sense of belonging, “decentre whiteness” (Smith and Tuck, 2016, p. 20) and continue to address racism in classrooms, and within their university environments (Fredericks et al., 2022). To echo Tuck and Gazambide-Fernandez’s words (2016) we need to “to force the hidden hand of the racism that lurks at every turn” and guarantee student’s safety within the classroom (p. 83) Otherwise, why would they stay? As Gainsford and Evans (2017) note, “it is at the curriculum level where authentic change can be set in motion” (p. 68). Indigenisation of curriculum benefits all students because it enhances understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing in science, history, the arts, health, the environment, law, and should be done in conjunction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holders to enrich all students learning experience, to teach non-Indigenous students to transform future relationships with Indigenous peoples and most importantly allow Indigenous students to see themselves within the curriculum.

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