

Building confidence and getting out of your comfort zone: Creating easier pathways for Indigenous and remote prospective JCU students

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Dr. Sue Muloin



Student Equity (Cairns)



INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

- While nationally, Indigenous enrolments at university has steadily increased since the early 1990s, the numbers still remain at a much lower rate than non-Indigenous enrolments.
- There is a widening gulf between Indigenous people living and working in mainstream Australia and the minority living in welfare-dependent urban and rural regions and remote communities (Lane, 2009).
- There continues to be a high rate of attrition among Indigenous students enrolled in university degree courses in Australia.



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Indigenous CONNECTIONS Program

- Y12 secondary school students from Cairns and Townsville regions.
- Three day/two night on campus familiarisation program involving staff from other disciplines (e.g. Law, Creative Industries), support staff (e.g. student equity, counsellors) and student mentors.
- Main aim is for students to gain a sense of what university entails and to improve their confidence to enrol at university.



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UNIPREP Thursday Island (TI)

- Targets mature age people, with priority given to nationally identified equity groups (including Indigenous prospective students).
- One week course offered at JCU study Centre on TI in the Torres Strait.
- Skills gained include academic reading and writing, learning skills, information on support services and increased confidence to undertake university studies.



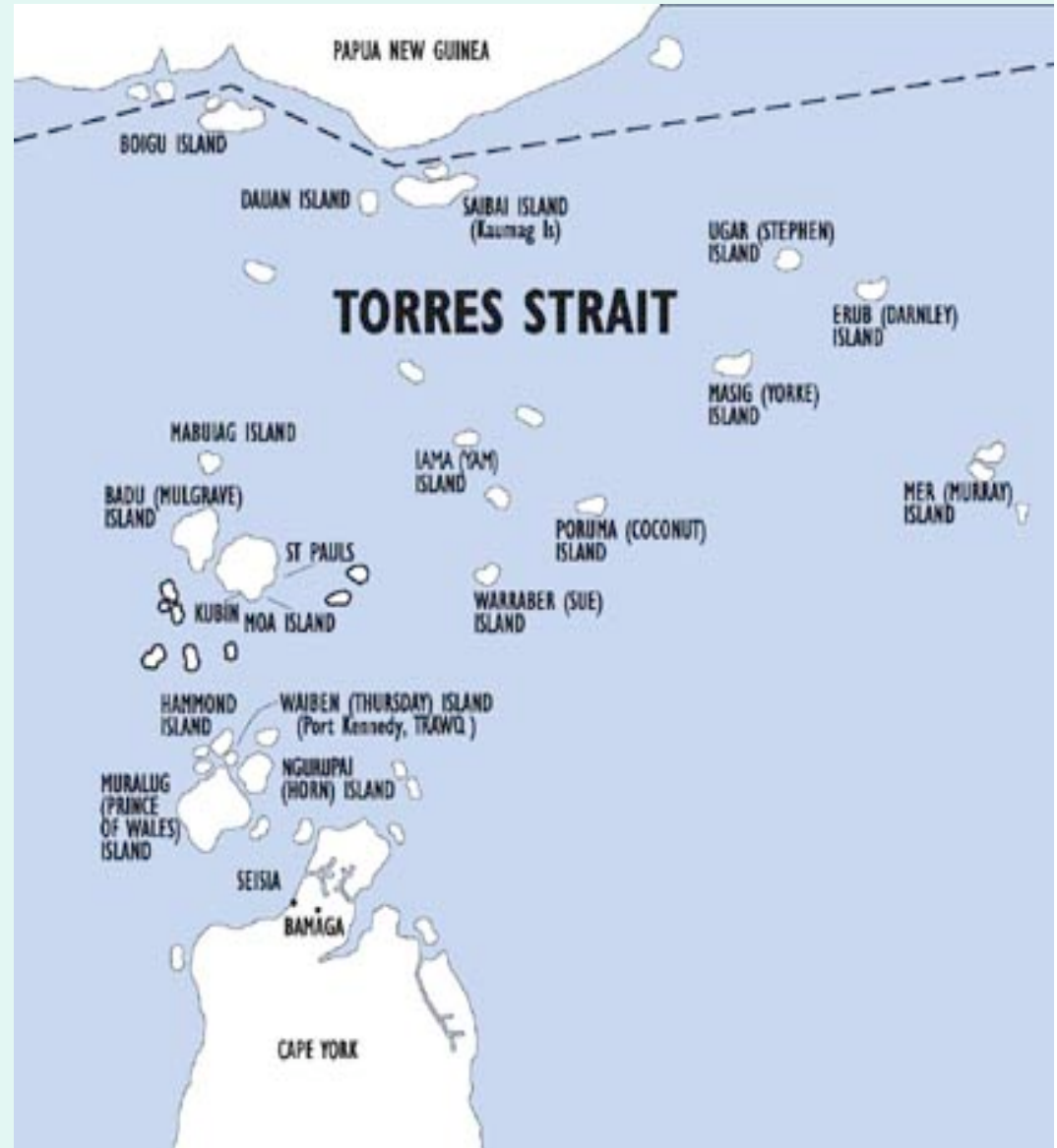
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Map of Torres Strait



CHALLENGES: *CONNECTIONS* AND *UNIPREP TI* PROGRAMS

CONNECTIONS:

- Finding a suitable time
- Accessing students in class
- Lack of time by school staff to nominate students
- Ongoing funding
- Staff resources

UNIPREP TI:

- Finding a suitable time
- Cost
- Distance
- Staff resources



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BENEFITS OF *CONNECTIONS* & *UNIPREP TI* PROGRAMS

CONNECTIONS:

- Familiarisation with campus and staff
- Increased confidence to enrol at university
- Dispelling of myths about university



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UNIPREP TI:

- Demonstrated improvement in preparatory skills and confidence
- Opportunity to liaise and collaborate with staff and the community in a remote location
- Positive and realistic views about university

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CONNECTIONS: Participant comments

“Overall the program was very FUN! I learnt a lot about uni and enjoyed every moment of this program.”

“Gave me useful information about uni. Meeting other people. Food, we had to eat a lot to think but we got very tired sometimes.”

“Science experiments because it was fun and interesting. Afternoon at Lake Placid because we learnt while having fun. Food because we were always full – thanks Wendy!! Info because I learnt a lot over 3 days.”

“Thank you so much for the whole 3 day experience. Enjoyed it so much and started to realise that I can do uni because there is a lot of help.”



“The program really helped me choose what I want to do in the next coming years.”

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UNIPREP TI:

Participant comments

“Excellent in role playing as a student.”

*“The activities – because it broke down what they were talking about.
Mind maps – because it got me to understand it better.
Essay – learning how to write easily.”*

*“...I found UNIPREP has given myself direction in entering uni to
further my education in my career studies.”*

“...the sense of knowing that WE CAN DO IT if we apply ourselves.”

*“I have been able to recognise what skills I have and what
skills I need to gain or improve.”*

*“Gives me more
understanding towards
what’s expected at uni.”*



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Final Comment...

Education standards and expectations of Indigenous students' performance need to improve, with more targeted programs to raise literacy and numeracy levels. Working collaboratively to raise aspirations and encourage Indigenous people to view university participation as a choice, especially in remote communities, will help to improve access to higher education.



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AUDIENCE DISCUSSION

1. What are some successful examples of 'alternative pathways' into higher education for Indigenous students?
2. What are the challenges faced by Indigenous students once they are enrolled and studying at university?
3. What are some examples of 'best practice' initiatives in retaining Indigenous students?



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