



NCSEHE

National Centre for Student
Equity in Higher Education



Curtin University

PATHWAYS TO ALLIED HEALTH: INSIGHTS FROM INDIGENOUS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

2020 NCSEHE Equity Fellow Andrea Simpson

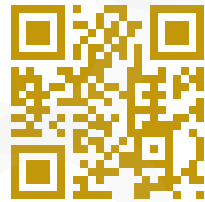
#NCSEHE_Snapshots

Make tomorrow better.



CONNECTING EQUITY POLICY, RESEARCH & PRACTICE

The NCSEHE provides national leadership in student equity, connecting research, policy and practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.



NCSEHE



“Targeted
Fellowships
address
fundamental
issues for
student equity.”

NCSEHE Equity
Fellows conduct
high-impact studies
to advance student
equity research,
policy and practice.

The Student Equity Snapshots Forum
showcases the 2019/20 Fellows’ research.



2019/20 EQUITY FELLOWS
with Dr Cathy Stone,
Prof. Sarah O'Shea
and Prof. Sue Trinidad

2020
NCSEHE
EQUITY
FELLOW

“My Equity Fellowship investigates pathways to higher degree allied health coursework programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

Andrea Simpson is the Head of Discipline for the Audiology program within the School of Allied Health at La Trobe University.

DR ANDREA SIMPSON



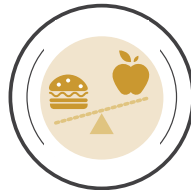
Indigenous people are far less likely to use mainstream healthcare facilities. An important way of addressing this is to increase Indigenous representation in healthcare professions.



INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS REPRESENTATION IN THE ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS



0.5% Psychologists



0.2% Dieticians



0.7% Physiotherapists



0.5% Speech Pathologists



0.6% Podiatrists



0.1% Optometrists



0.1% Audiologists



0.5% Occupational Therapists

Part of providing effective and **culturally safe** treatment involves practitioners forming long-term **relationships** with the communities which they serve.



“

It's less traumatising working from that place of understanding with somebody rather than having to go to a white doctor and them judge everything you say.

Indigenous support unit representative

”



Although Indigenous participation in higher education has increased over the past decade, access to certain professions is still a long way off from reaching parity.

In 2018,

Indigenous enrolments accounted for just over two per cent of the student body.

However, within allied health, only one per cent of student enrolments identified as Indigenous.

2%

1%



Students have a strong sense of responsibility to their family and wider community and want to make a difference.

A SENSE OF

BELONGING

AND

**PRACTICAL
SUPPORTS**

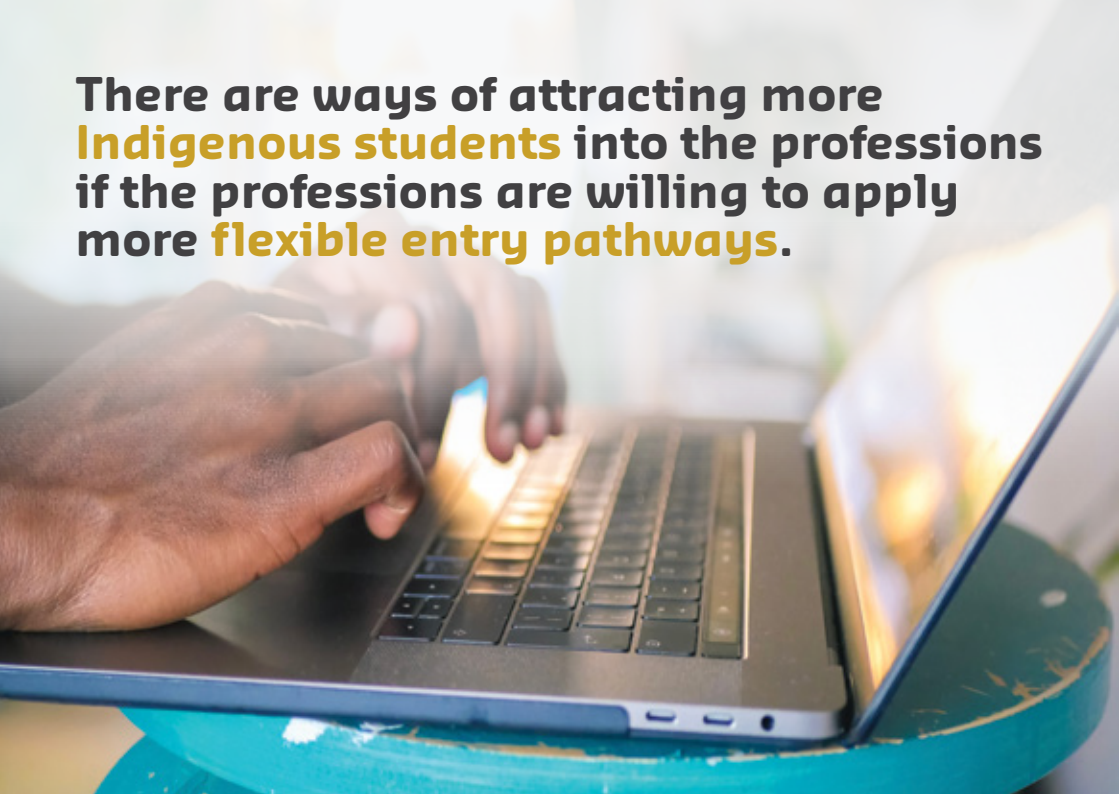
ARE ESSENTIAL IN GETTING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS THROUGH THEIR STUDIES.



Cathy's choice of degree was limited as there were only a handful of degrees which offered her the flexibility she needed.

Qualified social worker Cathy studied while caring for seven children, managing complex personal challenges and surviving on ABStudy.

There are ways of attracting more **Indigenous students** into the professions if the professions are willing to apply more **flexible entry pathways**.



“

The presence of regional study options and multiple entry pathways correlated with higher numbers of Indigenous students.

Andrea Simpson

”

Many graduates had been the only Aboriginal student in their study program and were surrounded by non-Indigenous colleagues in their workplaces.



“

Working in a predominantly ‘white’ profession does not always feel like a safe place to be.

Focus group participant

”



Small gestures can make students feel seen and heard. Acknowledgement from a lecturer, understanding from a peer, or an image of Aboriginal heritage.

Retaining students in these professions requires **cultural safety** practices embedded throughout the course, and is not just the responsibility of the Indigenous **support** unit.



Young people like Laila can provide the shared cultural narrative so important for quality healthcare provision.

“

After I qualify, my dream is to set up a mobile clinic and travel back to my community in WA.

Laila, Aboriginal woman studying Audiology

”

“During complex and changing times, the NCSEHE Equity Fellows have exceeded all expectations to produce impactful and quality research for the equity field.”

**NCSEHE DIRECTOR
PROFESSOR SARAH O'SHEA**



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