

Indigenous Student Success Program

2023 Performance Report

Organisation	RMIT University		
Contact Person	Nicole Shanahan		
Phone	03 9925 6016	E-mail	nicole.shanahan@rmit.edu.au

RMIT ISSP Performance Data on Student Access, Participation and Success

Table 1. Commencing Indigenous students for All RMIT Higher Education, 2016-2023

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Commencing Students	68	87	91	95	94	78	100	63

Table 1.1 EFTSL for All RMIT Higher Education Indigenous Students

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
EFTSL -all	122.88	147.88	157.00	152.25	168.63	165.75	161.13	135.88
EFTSL -regional/remote	35.88	46.38	44.63	42.75	44.63	39.75	37.50	37.75

Table 2.1 Indigenous student retention rates (%)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Retention Rate	73.53%	63.86%	69.51%	73.12%	77.01%	70.83%	58.51%*	N/A**

*2022 is preliminary as metric also uses the following year 2023 which is yet to be verified by June 2024

**2023 is not available as retention rate for this year also requires data in following year 2024

Table 2.2 Indigenous student success rate (%)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Success rate	83.74%	81.95%	84.09%	80.83%	84.30%	78.01%	79.26%	83.24%

Table 3. Indigenous student completions

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Award completions	18	46	47	41	47	49	48	NA*

*2023 to be available by June 2024

Please note: where 2023 data is listed, it is preliminary to be verified in June 2024.

1. Declaration

In providing this Performance Report, it is acknowledged that it is an offence under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* to provide false or misleading information.

2. Enrolments (Access)

Access and Engagement

The Indigenous Outreach program within the Ngarara Willim Centre (the Centre) delivered 17 engaging aspiration sessions to 633 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary students from metro, regional and rural locations throughout the year.

10 on-campus experiences were designed and delivered that engaged 165 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary students. The experiences were planned and delivered to align with each school or community group aspirations. 6 of these sessions were delivered to Victorian regional locations and 4 were delivered to national participants.

7 off-campus visits were delivered across Western, Southwestern, Northern and Southern regions of Victoria, engaging with 468 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander secondary students.

The Centre continued to engage with the Koorie Education workforce and Toorong Marnong to plan and deliver sessions to inform students and community of programs and study opportunities at RMIT.

Through these engagements, we received insightful feedback from schools, student and community including:

- Schools had barriers with staffing and resourcing to visit RMIT campuses. The Centre will explore opportunities to develop RMIT workshops and activities to take out to schools.
- Students and teachers found the merchandise and flyers useful (both digital and hard copy). The Centre plans to combine flyers into an A5 booklet for easier handling at expos and events.

The RMIT Goulburn Valley Area Indigenous Engagement Plan was developed in 2023 and prioritised RMIT's engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and community within the Goulburn Valley area, with a specific target on the Shepparton region. Programs across the University made a commitment to delivering services to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people in Primary and Secondary Schools and Community within the region. The plan was a collaboration led by the Centre in consultation with the regional Koorie Education Workforce, RMIT's Domestic Student Recruitment team, RMIT's Equity and Inclusion 'I Belong' Program and RMIT's STEM and Women in STEM Outreach programs.

The Centre progressed further in building meaningful relationships with local Aboriginal Community organisations with the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with the [Koorie Heritage Trust](#), the [Weenthunga Health Network](#), [3KND Aboriginal Radio](#) and [Ganbina](#). These partnerships based on reciprocity, support the delivery of programs and activities across the Indigenous Student Lifecycle, with a focus on outreach and recruitment activity.

2023 has seen 63 Indigenous students commencing study in RMIT Higher Education programs (see Table 1). RMIT received 23 Indigenous access program applications throughout 2023. The Ngarara Willim Centre worked closely with applicants, providing individualised support throughout their

application and entry processes into their desired course of study, with 17 of these applicants commencing study during the 2023 academic year.

The Centre's Senior Advisor - Indigenous Access and Engagement continued to directly support all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants in their aspirations, application, and enrolment processes, ensuring applicants are aware of the Indigenous Access Program, scholarships and information regarding the Centre and the access to support services throughout their studies.

The Centre remained firmly committed to increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in tertiary education. 2023 saw changes made to our Indigenous eligibility requirements, expanding the range of evidence accepted as Indigenous eligibility documentation, in the form of a Confirmation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage, or newly designed RMIT Statutory Declaration and specific Indigenous supporting documentation. The changes ensured that opportunities have their intended impact and are compliant with Indigenous specific funding guidelines.

The Centre worked closely with the RMIT Direct Admissions team to identify challenges students face when progressing through tertiary study and the impacts of systems and communications in the application process. Through identifying barriers, changes were immediately made to the applications process to enhance the promotion of the Indigenous Access Program through the direct application system. The implementation of these changes will ensure all students are aware of the Indigenous Access Program and the supports available to assist their entry into RMIT programs.

In 2023 we prioritised the review of communications that were sent to students who are unsuccessful in their application process. It was found that this process can have negative impacts on students who are trying to progress into tertiary education. To address this, changes were made to the communications that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students receive to ensure that they are aware of alternative pathways and supported into their chosen program at RMIT.

The Centre worked closely with the Conversions team to improve the communications and information sent to students throughout the 'offer to acceptance' and the 'acceptance to enrolment' processes. This communication included the provision of contact information for the Centre for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander applicants and outlining available support options.

Community engagement and increasing access to higher education through vocational education pathways remained a high priority. RMIT worked with the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative to progress the delivery the Diploma of Community Services to Wathaurong staff offsite in Geelong.

Scholarships

2023 saw 151 individual students assisted with scholarships worth \$1.265m (see Table 4 and 5).

In 2023, a new philanthropic donor invested in Indigenous student's education with the Santa Singh and Balwant Kaur Scholarship. This scholarship has a preference to assist Vocational Education sector students who will progress into Higher Education.

The Coursework Scholarships Office has a process of making scholarship offers prior to program offers, which has enabled students to know what financial assistance is offered to support them throughout their study. This includes accommodation-based scholarships which are worth over \$125k of non-ISSP funding, aimed to assist commencing students.

Whilst there were no postgraduate ISSP scholarships allocated in 2023 (outlined in Table 4), there were significant scholarships and grants listed in Table 5 that supported post graduate student success.

Table 4. ISSP Scholarships – breakdown of 2023 payments

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total ¹	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
Enabling ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Undergraduate ³	\$167,540	34	\$160,603.20	23	\$6,000	3	\$334,143.20	60
Post-graduate ⁴	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	\$167,540	34	\$160,603.20	23	\$6,000	3	\$334,143.20	60

Table 5. Other scholarships/grants (new and continuing students)

Scholarship name	Number of recipients	2023 Total value
Aboriginal SEWB School - study	8	\$109,764.23
Aboriginal SEWB -tuition	8	\$57,495.20
Calleo Indigenous Scholarship	6	\$54,560
Carey Lyon Scholarship	1	\$7,500
Cedar Royal Melbourne Accommodation Scholarship	15	\$236,883
Evelyn Boekemann Scholarship	1	\$7,500
Gama-dji Grant	30	\$15,000
George Alexander Foundation Scholarship	1	\$8,000
Gerard Driesen Scholarship - Art	1	\$10,000
Indigenous Empowerment Grant - ISSP	8	\$16,000
Indigenous Juris Doctor Scholar	2	\$15,480
Indigenous Resource Grant	14	\$19,625
Indigenous Student Success Grant	43	\$21,500
Marion Fletcher Textiles Schol	1	\$7,000
Ngarara Willim Grant	45	\$117,224
Ngarara Willim PGRD CW Schol	5	\$28,500
Ngarara Willim Community Grant - Wurreker	9	\$18,000
RMIT Equity Notebook Grant	29	\$34,401
RMIT Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship	6	\$9,346.38
RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship -HE	24	\$58,470
RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship -PG	2	\$2,640
RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship -VE	23	\$46,500
Scape Accommodation Scholarship Carlton	2	\$19,632
Santa Singh and Balwant Kaur Scholarship	2	\$10,000
STEM Women in Engineering Scholarship	1	\$5,000
Study Support top up payment	16	\$16,000
William Cooper Prize	2	\$6,000
Grand Total	305	\$958,020.81

3. Progression (outcomes)

The development of RMIT's first Indigenous Student Success Strategy was a critical piece of work throughout 2023, with the strategy to be launched in 2024. This strategy will outline a whole-of-university approach to growing and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in preparation for successful careers and vocations. Through the discovery process of strategy development, a significant focus was placed on gathering insights from students, alumni, staff and Community to inform priorities and actions. Whilst these priorities and actions will address the entire Indigenous student learner journey, a significant impact on progression will be addressed by focusing on student social, emotional and wellbeing support, Community connectedness, and cultural safety.

The Centre continued to deliver on activity to engage with students and to support them into and throughout their study. We delivered our Gama-dji Orientation Program, met with students to progress individual success planning, continued to build on our academic services and tutoring program, improved our Wellbeing program and connection with the Equitable Learning Service.

Gama-dji Orientation Program

In 2023, we further developed our Gama-dji Orientation Program, with continued increase in participation numbers. The successful return to a face-to-face format provided opportunity to build strong connections with students early.

Essential elements of the program involved familiarizing students with vital university services relevant to their first year and facilitating connections with key staff to initiate meaningful relationships. The Gama-dji Orientation Program maintained its strong emphasis on cultural engagement, with sessions featuring our Elder in Research fostering community building at the Ngarara Willim Centre. This initiative not only allows students to explore their culture but also emphasises placing people, connections, and relationships at the heart of the Centre. Group Gama-dji orientation sessions were conducted for the mid-year intake, catering to a smaller cohort of students.

Students participating in the Gama-dji Orientation Program were awarded a Ngarara Willim Grant to support them with start-up expenses. This had an influence on Gama-dji attendance, and students being prepared with program materials and equipment.

Student Success Planning

Transitioning into the second phase of our student success plans was a natural progression following the success of 2022. Commencing students actively participated in the development of personalised student success plans, detailing their academic, wellbeing and career requirements. These plans served as a valuable resource for Student Advisors, enabling them to initiate targeted service referrals and gain insights into the students' long and short-term goals. Throughout the year, Advisors diligently collaborated with students, providing support to help them achieve their goals, encouraging engagement in opportunities that enriched their overall student experience and success within their respective programs. Students were also awarded an additional grant to encourage participation in this process.

We are looking forward to seeing the positive impact that this early intervention and engagement piece has on student outcomes over a 3-year period.

Policy and Process Improvements

Though our ongoing student support, we have identified improvements in relation to the student experience when engaging with student support policies and processes across the university. In 2023, the review of a number of key policies that impact Indigenous students were undertaken which included the Assessment and Assessment Flexibility Policy, the Special Consideration Policy, and the Open Scholarship Policy. The review of academic and administrative policies and processes will be a focus of work in 2024 and will be clearly articulated in the Indigenous Student Success Strategy.

Equitable Learning Service

The Ngarara Willim Centre continued to strengthen the relationship with RMIT's Equitable Learning Service (ELS), continuing their proactive work in providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The ELS dedicated an advisor who works collaboratively with Ngarara Willim staff to remove systemic barriers and provide positive outcomes for students accessing adjustments throughout their study. The ELS focus on a holistic approach, making space for self-determination and promoting wellbeing which encompasses culture and community.

RMIT's ELS recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more likely to face barriers and experience inequity when managing ongoing conditions, ill-health, and wellbeing, and may have limited access to adequate support or culturally safe and appropriate healthcare.

The development of a SharePoint page gave academic staff clearer information on how the ELS provides students with culturally safe and appropriate support and encouraging greater engagement with the team's services. In 2023:

- 9x new student referrals with Equitable Learning Plans (ELPs) created.
- 6x new student referrals with the ELP process started but not yet completed.

Of these referrals:

- 7x direct referrals from Ngarara Willim advisors and staff
- 1x direct referral from the Indigenous Counsellor
- 3x referrals from Gama-dji Orientation attendance
- 2x engagements with students from introductions from Equitable Learning Advisor presence at Ngarara Willim Centre events
- 2x student self-referral through Student Management Platform and allocation to Equitable Learning Advisor for ongoing assistance

Social and Emotional Wellbeing

Indigenous student social and emotional wellbeing was a focus in 2023. Continuing from 2022, the Indigenous Student Counsellor built strong relationships with Ngarara Willim Student Advisors and students. Student appointments increased with both the Indigenous Student Counsellor and the Counselling and Psychological Service with non-Indigenous counsellors (see Table 6). These counselling services provided coverage across all Victorian campuses (Melbourne, Bundoora and Brunswick).

Student presentations increased in 2023 and showed heightened complexity, with the need for diagnostic testing also increasing. Students gained culturally sound referrals to appropriate diagnostic services both internally and externally which were at low or no cost to the student where possible. We also saw more students requiring examination from external providers for reports and diagnosis for symptoms such as specific learning difficulty (SLD) and ADHD.

Broad accessibility to the Indigenous Student Counsellor was available to students through mediums including phone call, text or other online platforms. This accessibility was seen as being critical to students engaging with counselling services.

Key initiatives that the Indigenous Student Counsellor and Ngarara Willim Centre supported in 2023 included:

- Weekly 'Crafternoons' sessions where students came to the Centre and had the opportunity to connect with the Indigenous Counsellor and Student Advisors to informally chat about anything that was/is on their mind;
- Providing students with social, emotional, and wellbeing packs designed to assist students in preparing for challenging periods throughout the academic year, especially during assessments and exams. These packs featured Indigenous-sourced products, aimed at positively influencing students' well-being before facing the pressures of exams;
- Sessions on navigating The Referendum, as well as other culturally significant days for Indigenous students; and
- Attendance at the Cultural Camp in August, where they supported students social and emotional needs.
- Consulting with RMIT's complex case management review process where it relates to Indigenous Students;
- Providing support and advice for the death of a student process which is now included in RMIT's Sudden Death Response Team (SDRT).

The Indigenous Student Counsellor role was reviewed in late 2023 and re-titled to the Senior Advisor, Indigenous Social, Emotional and Wellbeing. This role was also reclassified at an increased Higher Education Worker (HEW) level after taking into consideration the need and significant impact of the role across different areas of the university.

Table 6. Indigenous student presentations to counselling services, Jan 2023-Dec 2023

Gender	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total
All presentations including single/initial	5	17	2	24
Retention (Repeat or ongoing appts)	3	12	0	15
More than 5 sessions	3	8	0	11

Ngarara Willim Centre Student Engagement Initiatives

The promotion of student engagement at the Ngarara Willim Centre persisted, offering a diverse range of opportunities for students.

- Students, particularly women, expressed a keen interest in acquiring knowledge about financial literacy. In response, the Centre organized a session specifically tailored to Indigenous women, offering them the opportunity to delve into topics such as saving, investing, budgeting, tax matters, and small business management. The session proved highly successful, prompting the decision to continue offering it in 2024.
- Students consistently attended student lunches, with regular student participation playing a crucial role in achieving high levels of engagement.
- With changes to the Indigenous Eligibility process, we provided sessions through AIATSIS to support students who were wanting to investigate their Indigenous Heritage. The session was provided online and again will feature in our 2024 planning.
- Recognizing that our students primarily communicate electronically, we enlisted assistance from our Reconciliation Advisor within the College of Design and Social Context. This advisor connected us with a team that helped us enhance our Canvas page, making it more visually appealing to students and ensuring that information was easily accessible. This is an important communications tool as we are one of the only non-academic areas to have a canvas shell where all our Indigenous students can engage with the latest news, support, and opportunities that Ngarara Willim have on offer.

Student Cultural Experiences

The Ngarara Willim Cultural Camp was hosted on Boon Wurrung country, seeing a group of 14 students connect with traditional owners, engage in cultural activities, and foster meaningful connection. Highlights of the camp included storytelling sessions, guided bushwalks, and hands-on activities such as weaving, traditional tool use, and bush tucker tasting. The Ngarara Willim Cultural Camp proved to be a transformative journey, not only enriching the cultural knowledge and understanding of participating students but also facilitating meaningful connections with the traditional owners of the land.

A Ngarara Willim Global Experience offered a profound cultural exchange, immersing participating students in the vibrant tapestry of Maori culture while fostering connections and mutual understanding. Set against the backdrop of Aotearoa (New Zealand), the program provided an invaluable opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to engage with Maori traditions, perspectives on education, and notions of self-determination. 8 students participated in cross-cultural exchange and dialogue with students emerging from the program with a deeper appreciation for the diversity and resilience of Indigenous cultures and a renewed commitment to supporting Indigenous empowerment and self-determination both at home and abroad.

Indigenous Learning Success Program

The Ngarara Willim Tutoring Program assisted students throughout the year resulting in a distinction grade average for our students engaging in tutoring. The Program was improved with the implementation of the Ngarara Willim Tutoring Portal. The portal has ensured a smooth and consistent process for students and tutors while also providing more oversight for administration. In 2023, the Learning Success team also worked on implementing phase two integration of RMIT's new work management system, Workday, into the Ngarara Willim Tutoring Portal. This is providing us with a system that incorporates RMIT's financial and human resources requirements to provide a seamless tutoring system and service to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and tutors.

To improve our communications and encourage student engagement with the Ngarara Willim Tutoring Program, the Learning Success team developed promotional videos about the program. These videos demonstrated how tutoring can assist a wide range of students and help them achieve their goals.

The Learning Success team also ran various workshops to upskill students in relevant areas such as the Microsoft Office suites and timetable management. These workshops successfully showed students how to get the most out of the software they are required to use throughout their studies and how to stay calm and on track during busy times.

2023 also saw deeper collaboration with the RMIT Library and Study Support team. This introduced regular sessions with Academic Skills Advisors based at the Ngarara Willim Centre two days a week. These drop-in sessions encouraged student engagement and saw students access the study support who were previously hesitant about utilising consistent tutoring.

Table 7. Tutorial assistance provided in 2023

Level of study	Number of unique students assisted⁵	Total number of tutorial sessions attended⁶	Total hours of assistance⁷	Expenditure⁸(\$)
Enabling	0	0	0	0
Undergraduate	28	536	1847.16	\$136,772.19
Post-graduate	11	47	145.41	\$10,766.82
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	39	583	1992.57	\$147,539.01

4. Completions (outcomes)

Indigenous student success rate increased from 79.26% in 2022 to 83.22% in 2023 (see Table 2.2). Indigenous student completions see a slight drop to 48 in 2022, noting that we are unable to provide 2023 data on completions at this stage (see Table 3).

The development of the Indigenous Student Success Strategy provided a valuable opportunity to gain insights into how we can better support Indigenous students in the completion phase of the student lifecycle. These insights, which will inform priority actions to be incorporated into the final strategy document, included prioritising early identification of students entering their final year of study to allow the provision of targeted academic support, and the importance of RMIT's 'Preparing to Graduate' program in ensuring that students were supported and informed in their post-graduation decision-making.

Careers and Employment

The RMIT Careers Success team continued to work closely with the Centre's Indigenous Careers Officer to support the career aspirations of all students. Engaging with all students to offer and deliver one of one career consultation, career mapping, professional development workshops and promotion of employment and skill development through the Deadly Careers internal website.

Careers and employment initiatives were undertaken throughout 2023 to support Indigenous students with career planning. Specific activity included:

- Delivery of the RMIT Indigenous Careers Fair in April. 10 students, 14 Community members and 15 Industry partners attended the event sharing opportunities, promoting programs, and building connections.
- Graduate program 'Final year' calls to 16 students to support their career aspirations.
- Careers information session held within the Ngarara Willim Centre Gama-dji orientation program engaging 15 students.
- 'Career Ready' program engaged with 44 students.

RMIT's 'Career Ready' program engages with students at the beginning of each academic year to determine how career ready each student is. Students can rate themselves against a scale with four options: 'Deciding', 'Planning', 'Competing' or 'Sorted'. The aim is to get students to the 'Competing' and 'Sorted' stage in their final year of study to maximise their chances of gaining employment or pursuing further study upon graduation. Of a sample size of 44 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their final year of study at RMIT, half of the students were 'Sorted', with employment already in place. This cohort of students were twice as likely to be 'Sorted' or 'Competing' when compared to all other RMIT students.

In 2023, a review was undertaken into the resourcing required within the Ngarara Willim Centre to maximise the impact that the Centre can have in providing students with valuable career development programs. A major outcome of this review was a need to ensure that there was a careers-focused role that provided greater leadership and strategic advice to internal and external stakeholders. This resulted in the appointment of an elevated role in late 2023 of the Senior Advisor, Indigenous Careers and Engagement. This role, which sits on the Office of Indigenous Education, Research and Engagement's Leadership team, will enhance industry and career opportunities whilst also providing tailored advice on career planning and pathways to students throughout their studies at RMIT.

The Centre continued to build on student engagement with RMIT graduation activities and events through promotion and participation in RMIT's Graduation parade and Graduation event. The Centre the Centre hosted a graduation breakfast on the morning of the RMIT parade and graduation, inviting graduates, families and Indigenous staff at RMIT to come together to celebrate the success of each student.

Our annual Deadly Alumni Graduation and Celebration event was again held in December providing the opportunity to celebrate the success of our graduates and awards recipients. This proved to be a positive initiative in engaging with our Deadly Alumni, continued engagement and providing networking opportunities.

The Centre continues to engage with our Deadly Alumni cohort throughout the year encouraging engagement with internal program delivery and opportunities across RMIT through our 'Deadly Alumni' newsletter, social media and email. RMIT commenced the development of a new RMIT Alumni Engagement Strategy in 2023 which will review and enhance our engagement approach with Indigenous alumni through the Deadly Alumni program. This strategy will be completed in 2024.

5. Regional and remote students

RMIT is committed to supporting our Indigenous students who need to relocate from regional and remote locations to study at RMIT. In 2023, we saw a significant increase in purpose-built student accommodation scholarships to Indigenous students from regional and remote areas who need to relocate.

Table 8. Purpose Built Student Accommodation Scholarships to regional/remote students

Scholarship name	Number	RMIT contribution	Donor contribution
Cedar Pacific Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship @ UniLodge Royal Melbourne	15	\$124,779.00	\$112,104.00
Scape Accommodation Scholarship Carlton	2	0	\$19,632.00

RMIT prioritises regional and remote students in our Scholarship Scoring Matrix. We also offer all Indigenous students who apply for a scholarship a Study Support Scholarship and, if relocating to study, a Student Accommodation Scholarship. Student Accommodation Scholarships are offered to regional and remote students ahead of cash scholarships, as the student accommodation provides a fostering community environment with other residents close to the university.

In addition to Student Accommodation Scholarships, RMIT also offered a range of other scholarships to regional and remote Indigenous vocational and higher education students to assist with study costs (see Table 9).

Table 9. Scholarships to regional/remote students

Scholarship name	Number	Value
Aboriginal SEWB Schol -study	4	\$59,820.40
Aboriginal SEWB -tuition	4	\$30,188.20
Calleo Indigenous Scholarship	5	\$44,560
Carey Lyon Scholarship	1	\$7,500
Cedar Royal Melbourne Accommodation Scholarship	19	\$135,479.84
Gama-dji Grant	4	\$2,000
Gerard Driesen Scholarship - Art	1	\$10,000
Indigenous Empowerment Grant - ISSP	5	\$10,000
Indigenous Resource Grant	7	\$11,900
Indigenous Student Success Grant	7	\$3,500
Ngarara Willim Grant	16	\$61,471
Ngarara Willim Community Grant	4	\$8,000
RMIT Equity Notebook Grant	4	\$4,333
RMIT Indigenous Accommodation Scholarship	4	\$5,884.74
RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship -HE	3	\$5,280
RMIT Indigenous Study Scholarship -VE	11	\$24,480
Scape Accommodation Scholarship Carlton	2	\$19,632
Singh-Kaur Scholarship	2	\$10,000
Study Support top up payment	1	\$1,000
William Cooper Prize	1	\$3,000
Grand Total	105	\$458,029.18

Table 10. ISSP Scholarship data for remote and regional students⁹

	Education Costs		Accommodation		Reward		Total	
	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.	\$	No.
A. 2022 Payments	\$182,296	27	\$93,730.79	14	n/a	n/a	\$276,026.79	41
B. 2023 Offers ⁹	\$100,800	8	\$171,000	11	\$6,000	3	\$277,800	22
C. Percentage ¹⁰ (C=B/A*100)							100.6%	
2023 Payments	\$135,184	26	\$160,603.20	23	\$6,000	3	\$301,787.20	52

6. Eligibility criteria

Indigenous Education Strategy

2023 has seen 63 Indigenous students commencing in RMIT Higher Education programs throughout the year (see Table 1), this is lower than what we saw in 2022. We were pleased to see that student success rate increased from 2022 to 2023 (see Table 2.2 and Table 3). The 2023 numbers for student completions and student retention rate are not available at this time.

RMIT's [Knowledge with Action 2031](#) strategy commits the RMIT to growing and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in preparation for successful careers and vocations. To enable a whole-of-university approach to this commitment, we have been developing RMIT's first Indigenous Student Success Strategy through to 2025. This strategy will be foundational in supporting Indigenous student success and has seen extensive collaboration, involving engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, alumni, staff and community, as well as internal RMIT stakeholders who will drive the priority activity within the strategy. There has also been strategic alignment with RMIT's Education Plan, amongst other existing RMIT plans that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

[RMIT's Education Plan to 2025: Learning through Life and Work](#) was finalised in June 2023 and operationalises the first horizon (three-year period) of Direction 1 – Learning through life and work, of the *Knowledge with Action 2031* strategy. An initiative within this plan is the delivery of curriculum that is centred around an agreed set of RMIT Capabilities. A focus of this initiative is the development of student Program Learning Outcomes, one of which is the facilitation of students completing their programs as 'Ethical Global Citizens'. This includes the articulation that students actively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives, world views and lifeways.

To further promote the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in curricula, graduate attributes and teaching practices we have developed a resource to support staff to embed Indigenous perspectives in their learning and teaching practice. *The Principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Learning and Teaching* is a resource aligned to RMIT's Education Plan through value-driven aspirations for active engagement with global citizenship, diverse peoples and knowledges systems, and sustainability. It is designed for RMIT educators to support inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives, world views and lifeways as significant knowledge systems in learning and teaching. This resource will be launched by mid-2024.

The promotion of cultural capability continued throughout 2023 for both staff and students. Staff engaged in of the RMIT professional development modules *Cultural Safety at RMIT* and *Advancing Reconciliation*, as well as the *AIATSIS Core Cultural Learning Program*. Students were able to grow their cultural capability through [RMIT's On Country Global Experiences](#), which included a series of experiences including online micro-credentials partnered with physical and virtual cultural immersion opportunities.

Indigenous Workforce Strategy

In 2023 we continued the implementation of RMIT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Future Workforce Strategy (2021-2025), and completed a review of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan (2021-2023) to support the seven areas of action:

1. Building our workforce (attraction, recruitment, branding and value propositions)
2. Retention
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership
4. Culture, safety and wellbeing
5. Supporting fulfilling careers
6. College and Portfolio accountability
7. Strengthening our Indigenous Staff network.

A number of key initiatives have been undertaken to support the implementation of the Indigenous Workforce Strategy including the ongoing employment of a specialised recruiter, the development of local area employment plans for all College and Portfolios, and the review of internal policy and procedures to strengthen the application of cultural ways of working and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination held within the Indigenous Staff Network (ISN).

Work commenced to create RMIT's third Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan (2023-2026) through which RMIT will continue to explore innovative entry level opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who want to pursue a career in higher education. This includes the continuation of our existing employment programs (predoctoral fellowships and research fellows), implementation of a graduate development program and early research into innovative programs such as a bachelor level apprenticeship position, traineeships, and gap year internships. This plan will be an enable RMIT's Indigenous strategic commitment to Indigenous staff, in alignment to the *Knowledge with Action 2031* strategy. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan will be launched in April 2024, with a public link to the plan to be made available shortly after.

In our development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan throughout 2023, we placed the ISN central to our quality assurance at all stages of development. Multiple engagement and feedback sessions were conducted with the ISN and governance was led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Committee (ATSIEC), with 78.5% of members being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This consultation and central role of both the ISN and ATSIEC continues through implementation to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and voices continue to be captured as our journey continues to evolve.

At the end of 2023 RMIT had 59 FTE Indigenous staff and 35 PTE Indigenous staff. Our employment category representation was 63% Professional and 37% Academic. The types of roles on offer have increased in diversity of categories, internal mobility, and flexible workplace arrangements. We also had 23 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Academics, with four of these being senior academics in the positions of Senior Lecturer in Environmental Engineering; Principal Research Fellow - Digital Inclusion and Engagement in Indigenous Communities; Elder in Research; Associate Professor, Design & Social Context.

RMIT's Indigenous representation by headcount (as at December 31, 2023) was 1.11% which is above parity with the Victorian Indigenous population (1.0% in the 2021 census). This data includes fixed term and ongoing staff members but excludes casual staff. With casual staff included, headcount representation is 0.98% of the total workforce.

While targets and quotas are not the focus on RMIT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Plan, we have set an aspirational target of 2% representation by the end of 2026, which marks the end of the plan. RMIT's focus is on providing high quality career development opportunities and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the knowledge that creating a workplace where our people feel culturally safe and have opportunities to thrive, we will ensure we are retaining and growing our exceptional Indigenous workforce.

Indigenous Governance Mechanism

RMIT is in the process of reviewing the Indigenous Governance Committee to align with the university's new strategic context. In this process, we have been considering the purpose, scope and membership of the Indigenous Governance Committee, with the establishment of the committee shifting to 2024. In the interim, the PVC IERE leads decision-making and represents Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander views to the senior executive and University Council, informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff, students and Communities.

6.1.1. Statement by the Indigenous Governance Mechanism

I am pleased to provide this statement as a member of the RMIT University Executive Leadership and the senior Indigenous appointment at the university.

The Ngarara Willim Centre through the Senior Manager Indigenous Education, Nicole Shanahan directly reports to me. As described within the body of this report, the Centre staff have continued to provide programs aligned to the purposes and intentions of the Indigenous Student Success Program guidelines.

RMIT University allocates the entirety of the ISSP funding allocation to work undertaken by the Ngarara Willim Centre.

As the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education, Research and Engagement I enjoy ongoing interaction with the Vice-Chancellor and all members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Committee to ensure the University's aspirations for pragmatic and impactful outcomes are achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across our core business. The Ngarara Willim Centre through the leadership of Senior Manager Indigenous Education is focused on providing an excellent student experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and continues to maintain extensive relationships with communities across Victoria and interstate. We look forward to the finalisation and implementation of the Indigenous Student Success Strategy in 2024, which will be a significant step in enabling a whole-of-university commitment to support Indigenous student success at RMIT.

Professor Gary Thomas
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Education, Research and Engagement

Additional information for completing the template

¹ This figures provide for the total number of students receiving scholarships and expenditure for those scholarships. For the student count, in cases where a student receives more than one scholarship, the student would only be counted once in the total (consequently the total figure may not be the sum of the preceding columns). For the expenditure, the total should be the total of the preceding expenditure columns.

² Include payments to all enabling students, including remote and regional students.

³ Include payments to all undergraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁴ Include payments to all postgraduate students, including remote and regional students.

⁵ Total number of unique students supported by tutorial assistance (if students have attended multiple tutorial sessions, still count them as 1 student).

⁶ Record total number of tutorial sessions attended by students (each class a student attends counts as 1, the same student may attend multiple tutorial sessions throughout the year).

⁷ Record only hours of instruction received by the students (do not include staff planning or organising time).

⁸ Include any costs associated with providing tutorial assistance, including staffing costs, materials, facilities etc.

⁹ Record all verbal and written scholarship offers for the 2023 calendar year, including those offers that were not accepted by the student. Record the 2023 component of new scholarship offers and the planned 2022 value of previously awarded scholarships (including continuing scholarships).

¹⁰ This data confirms the university's compliance with Section 21(3) of the Guidelines.