

Western Sydney University **INDIGENOUS STAFF**

December 2024

Overview

Western Sydney University were awarded a SAGE Cygnet Award for demonstrating their progress towards equity, diversity, and inclusion, and the impact of this work.

This document showcases Western Sydney University's initiatives to improve equity, cultural safety, and career progression for Indigenous staff within the university. It highlights the institution's journey to address systemic barriers, enhance governance, and foster cultural recognition and inclusion.

Actions

- Implemented the first Indigenous Strategy (2020–25) to embed cultural recognition, and governance, and to champion Indigenous excellence.
- Established Indigenous leadership roles (e.g., DVC Indigenous Leadership) and committees like the Elders Advisory Committee to embed Indigenous voices.
- Introduced initiatives like the Indigenous Centre of Excellence and the Ignite Traineeship Program to enhance community connection and development.
- Improved academic and cultural policies, such as the Academic Promotions Policy, to recognise Indigenous contributions and incentivise allyship.

Barriers

- Under-representation of Indigenous staff: In 2017, only 1.7% of staff identified as Indigenous, which was especially low in senior-career academic and Executive roles.
- Gaps in workplace experiences: Indigenous staff reported lower positivity rates in involvement, flexibility, and recognition compared to non-Indigenous colleagues.
- Absence of standalone Indigenous strategy and Indigenous Knowledges, and loss of senior Indigenous leaders in 2018 created a significant leadership gap.





Impact

- Positive shifts in workplace culture, with Indigenous staff feeling greater belonging and recognition.
- The Indigenous Strategy is seen as transformative, valued for meaningful implementation and signalling increased cultural importance at WSU.
- Strengthened senior Indigenous leadership aligns priorities, enhances career opportunities, and fosters culturally inclusive leadership.
- Mixed experiences and gaps in cultural competence among non-Indigenous staff highlight areas for improvement.

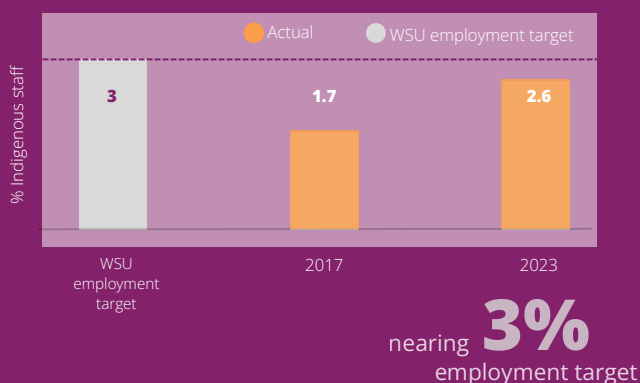
Outcomes

- Increased Indigenous staff representation from 1.7% (2017) to 2.6% (2023), nearing the 3% employment target.
- Indigenous staff positivity increased substantially across every workplace equity indicator, e.g. 70% of Indigenous staff in 2023 reported job satisfaction, up from 65% in 2018.
- Indigenous staff feel that the Indigenous Strategy is well socialised (90% familiar) and reflects their priorities for advancing Indigenous equity at WSU (73%).

“ I really strongly hold and express this, that I think Western Sydney [University] is a leader in terms of Aboriginal leadership right from the top, and that feeds through right down to our students.

WSU Indigenous staff member

2.6% Indigenous staff representation at WSU
↑ up from 1.7%



Limitations and future actions

- Increase non-Indigenous staff training and engagement with Indigenous priorities to close gaps in cultural competence.
- Develop more localised strategies to address unique challenges across campuses and faculties.
- Continue monitoring progress with intersectional data to ensure inclusive outcomes.

More Information

Read the the full application:

<https://sciencegenderequity.org.au/application/cygnnet-award-application-supporting-indigenous-staff-western-sydney-university>

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