



## **Supporting Indigenous Participation in Academic Philosophy in Australasia**

Taylor-Jai McAlister & Adam Hochman

There is a clear gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participation in tertiary education. In their [2021 report](#), Universities Australia found that despite significant growth in the last decade, Indigenous student enrolments remain well below population parity. The [Australasian Association of Philosophy](#) (AAP) has identified a lack of Indigenous students and staff in academic philosophy in Australasia, especially in Australia. The AAP requested their Diversity Committee to write this discussion paper, focused on four main topics:

1. Identifying barriers to Indigenous participation and engagement in philosophy as an academic discipline
2. Identifying challenges faced by Indigenous students and philosophers already in the discipline
3. Describing current initiatives which address these barriers and challenges
4. Developing further strategies to address these barriers and challenges, including suggesting initiatives that the AAP should support, coordinate, or pursue

The following was written by Taylor-Jai McAlister—an Aboriginal psychologist and philosophy PhD candidate at Macquarie University—and Dr Adam Hochman, convenor of the AAP’s Diversity Committee and senior lecturer in Philosophy at Macquarie University. It was written with input from the Diversity Committee and a range of Australasian philosophers who have a commitment to making philosophy a more diverse and inclusive discipline<sup>1</sup>. We will address the four points above in turn.

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## **1. Barriers to Indigenous participation and engagement in philosophy as an academic discipline**

Barriers to Indigenous participation in academic philosophy include the historical racism of the education system in general and philosophy in particular, the focus on Western subject matters and modes of knowledge, financial difficulties, and other practical hurdles.

It is important to recognise from the outset that Indigenous people have long been fighting for the recognition of Indigenous philosophy. As Professor Irene Watson writes,

The impact of colonisation on the past and present lives of First Nations peoples of Indigenous Australia is well known. The Indigenous relationships with our natural world are not so well known, however. The “domestication” and “assimilation” of Indigenous peoples are on the main agenda of the Australian state and within that process of assimilation the richness of Indigenous law, knowledge and philosophy is largely ignored, or treated as if those Indigenous ways of being are of minor interest. (Watson, 2014, p. 509)

The education system has a history of complying with racist policies in Australia. Until the 1960s, education for Indigenous people was restricted beyond secondary schooling. This was justified by a belief in biologically determined inferior intelligence in Indigenous peoples (Nakata, 2007).

Similar beliefs about Māori people were used to justify their relative lack of formal education in Aotearoa/NZ (Theodore et al., 2016). Māori people were not legally excluded from attending universities, but they faced significant barriers to accessing higher education. It wasn't until the mid-20th century that Māori students began to enrol in universities in significant numbers.

Turning to academic philosophy, one barrier to Indigenous participation is the historical racism of the discipline. Some early modern philosophy is explicitly racist, and there is relatively little diversity in philosophy in terms of demographics compared to other disciplines. The late Charles Mills quipped that philosophy is like Antarctica: cold, distant, and very, very white.

Philosophy in Australasia is largely focussed on Western Philosophy, rather than on Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Many Indigenous scholars and their allies have described the impact that devaluing Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous students' experiential knowledge has on the participation of Indigenous students (e.g., Day et al., 2015; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003; Watson, 2015; Watego et al., 2021).

As Professor Deborah Brown notes in our communication, philosophy “invokes hostility from its association with Western Civilisation studies and because it is perceived as relying on analytical methods that are antithetical to Indigenous ways of knowing, which emphasise interconnectedness and relationality. This narrative... needs to be changed, reflecting the contributions of non-Western philosophies (e.g., Islamic, Asian) to philosophy’s development as a discipline and philosophy’s own interests in relationality, but we do need to do the work to engage more thoughtfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philosophies and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander thinkers”. As Dr Simone Thornton adds, we must also reckon with the fact that “certain Western philosophies have been used and continue to be used to justify aspects of colonization” (personal communication). Thus, an important step in supporting Indigenous participation in philosophy is a process of decentering Western and making room for Indigenous epistemologies to contribute to philosophical discourse.

The topics on offer in philosophy departments may dissuade some Indigenous students. As Dr Nicolas Bulot explains, “Prominent Indigenist academics in Australia, such as Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Queensland University of Technology) and Professor Martin Nakata (James Cook University), cite and discuss philosophers. They have found methods for developing their Indigenist critiques of colonial and Western traditions in the writings of philosophers of historiographical archives and of the historical study of social power. For example, a continental figure such as Michel Foucault figures prominently in their writings” (personal communication; see Moreton-Robinson, 2000, 2011, 2015; Nakata, 2007). Dr Bulot believes that “the methods of historiographical inquiry deployed by Indigenist writers have not attracted much interest among AAP philosophers” and that this may partly explain the participation gap.

Additionally, Indigenous philosophy has long been excluded as ‘myth’, ‘folk lore’ or ‘religion’. As Dr Thornton emphasises in our discussion, “Until ‘philosophy’ includes Indigenous philosophy it will always be a potentially hostile place for Indigenous students”.

While a lack of methodological diversity may contribute to a lack of demographic diversity, a lack of diversity in terms of the content we teach may have a similar consequence. Macquarie University has attracted philosophy PhD candidates from underrepresented groups (e.g., Aboriginal and Black African) partly because it has become a hub for philosophy of race in the region. While we should not assume that Indigenous students will be interested in studying ‘race’ and related topics, some will be. It may be that students from underrepresented groups are attracted to contemporary philosophical topics like ‘race’ due to the comparatively higher representation of underrepresented groups working on them. They may also be attracted to the opportunity to be supervised by philosophers who are able to create a culturally safe environment within the academy.

Indigenous students may face financial barriers to participation in philosophy. Some students are dissuaded from the discipline because they are unaware of the career-paths available to philosophy graduates. Many Indigenous students attend university to gain opportunities and attain financial stability (e.g., Powell & Lawley, 2008). As Professor Brown notes in our communication, “there is a lot of pressure on Indigenous students to enter professional pathways or executive leadership programs. This is understandable as it is important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have representatives in positions of power and influence. Philosophy suffers from not being perceived as connected with ‘job-readiness’ and part of what we need to do as a discipline is change that narrative. The methods of reasoning and argumentation that are the specialisation of philosophy are empowering and have an essential role in emerging or established knowledge economies”.

Unfamiliarity with academic systems and conventions is also a barrier many Indigenous students face (Young et al., 2007). This may be particularly problematic for students who are first-in-family at university.

## **2. Challenges faced by Indigenous philosophers and students in the discipline**

Although Indigenous people who engage in philosophy can provide a unique perspective on philosophical issues and important contributions to philosophy, there are aspects of academia that place limitations on them, including experiences of overt and covert racism, expectations of study and research areas, and overwork for staff and postgrad students alike.

“Can a Black scholar simply be herself within the academy, or is who she is, is her appearance, as she takes herself to be, at odds with the ends of the institution? What are the options open to the Black scholar?” These are questions asked by Dr Bryan Mukandi and Professor Chelsea Watego (formerly Bond) in their “‘Good in the Hood’ or ‘Burn It Down’? Reconciling Black Presence in the Academy” (Mukandi & Bond, 2019). This article offers a rich phenomenological analysis of the navigation of academia in Australia as experienced by two Black scholars, one of whom (Watego) is Aboriginal. We will focus on just some of the many challenges faced by Indigenous students and academics.

Indigenous students in philosophy face many of the same difficulties they face in other disciplines. There is a lower completion rate among Indigenous students compared to non-Indigenous students at the tertiary level of education. This may be caused by the following difficulties: feeling out of touch with their communities; experiencing (more or less subtle) forms of racism on campus, in class, and in set readings; being framed in terms of deficits or in need of

special academic help; and the unresponsiveness of administrative staff to Indigenous students' needs.

Indigenous scholars tend to be grossly overworked. There is often an assumption that Indigenous students and academics are required to enact university commitments to Indigenising curriculums and engaging with local Indigenous communities. They are often turned to for advice on these matters, even if it is not within their job description. This appears to be especially true of Indigenous women. For example, Amy Thunig and Tiffany Jones found that “the in/visibility of burden on Indigenous academic women called on to be the consulted, collaborator, mentor, developer, and deliverer is impacted by ongoing racialised power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics” (Thunig & Jones, 2021).

There is often an expectation that Indigenous academics and students will focus purely on Indigenous issues. They can then find it difficult to venture away from these areas once they have begun to specialise.

Some Indigenous people may, of course, wish to focus largely on Indigenous issues. In this case, it is important to acknowledge that for Indigenous academics there is often little separation between the content of their work and their lived experience. Thus, burnout among Indigenous academics must be considered, as the implications of research on Indigenous issues impacts their communities directly.

### **3. Initiatives that are already in operation within the philosophical community**

Some initiatives addressing these issues have already been put in place by the AAP, schools and community groups, universities, and academics. The following is a sample of these initiatives.

Indigenous elder A/Professor Mary Graham has been a long-time advocate for Indigenous Philosophy. She and Dr Lilla Watson – also an Indigenous elder – were early champions of Indigenous and comparative philosophy at the University of Queensland. A/Professor Graham has given numerous talks at UQ's World Philosophy Day events promoting diverse and inclusive philosophy that integrates Indigenous knowledges. A/Professor Graham, along with A/Professor Gilbert Burgh, Dr Thornton and A/Professor Michelle Boulous Walker, make up the Australian Philosophy Research Group (APRG). The APRG “brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to create ethical Place responsive research through dialogue”. It is home to the Mary Graham Archive, where her published works and public talks on Indigenous philosophy can be accessed. A/Professor Graham is author of Some Thoughts about the Philosophical Underpinnings of Aboriginal Worldviews (1999), among many other works.

As [A/Professor Krushil Watene](#) tells us, an Indigenous Philosophy course is being introduced at the University of Auckland next year, and Indigenous concepts will be embedded into many of their existing courses (MA courses on Indigenous Philosophy are also being developed). A/Professor Watene offers supervision on Indigenous Philosophy, and she tells us that others will be providing this in the near future. She was the previous convenor of the AAP Diversity Committee, and helped to organise a range of diversity in Philosophy symposia supported in Aotearoa/NZ (e.g., [the Diversity in Philosophy Symposium: Albany 18-19 August 2017](#)). A/Professor Watene has written extensively on Māori and Indigenous philosophy. Her chapter *Indigenous Philosophy and Intergenerational Justice*, for example, can be read [here](#) (Watene, 2022). She tells us that her research assistant is putting together a database on Pacific Philosophy, which we will share when it is ready.

The AAP diversity committee has put in place various initiatives to address some of the barriers to Indigenous students:

- The APP and the Diversity Committee run a yearly “Prize for Innovation in Inclusive Curricula”, offering an annual monetary award of \$500 for the development of innovative approaches to teaching philosophy. This prize is intended to encourage academics to critically consider how philosophy is presented and to implement practices of teaching that challenge the well-known disparities of representation in the discipline. While this initiative is not specifically designed to encourage the teaching of *Indigenous* philosophies, applicants often do this, and it has encouraged the diversification of curricula in the region.
- The AAP’s Diversity Committee has created a list of “[Resources for developing inclusive curriculum](#)”, available on the AAP website.
- The University of Melbourne chapter of [Minorities and Philosophy](#) (MAP) created a list of [resources on Indigenising Philosophy](#). MAP’s mission “is to address structural injustices in academic philosophy and to remove barriers that impede participation in academic philosophy for members of marginalized groups”. MAP is not solely focused on supporting Indigenous students, but it can provide a welcoming and supportive space for them.

There has been some effort to work with Indigenous students much earlier, both in schools and in the community:

- Dr Bullock and Professor Robert Wilson have begun to explore ways to adapt the Philosothon format to make it more appealing to Indigenous youth. They advertised Philosothon Project grants, giving special consideration to applications in the Northern Territory from Indigenous teachers and students.
- The project “Truth and Silence” was an event in the Philosophy in Action webinar series and the Australasian Philosothon project. It was organised in the context of a collaboration between the Philosophy in Community Committee of the Australasian Association of Philosophy, Charles Darwin University, and the University of Western Australia. Truth and Silence was a celebration of the diverse philosophies of the Northern Territory.
- The Eurekamp Oz! camp programs, run by Philosophical Engagement in Public life (PEiPL, founded by Professor Wilson), encourage Indigenous participation by explicitly including Indigeneity as a criterion for EO Scholarships, which pay the registration cost for recipients (the policy can be read here), and by contacting agencies and institutions that are known to work with Indigenous youth.

In addition to work with younger children, there has been some work done to encourage Indigenous youth who are readying for university to engage with philosophy. The following is a short selection of such initiatives:

- Macquarie University offers The Critical Thinking Unit pathway, which provides the opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students commencing year 11 to enrol into a first-year philosophy unit at Macquarie University. Students complete the unit ‘PHIL1037: Critical Thinking’ via distance education, with structured engagement and support from Walanga Muru (who seek to support and assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) and Macquarie University.
- The University of Queensland Critical Thinking Project (UQCTP) supports the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students through the following programs that focus on building academic capabilities and preparedness for university. Professor Brown describes the programs the UQCTP supports:

- o “**Solid Pathways** (2013-present): A critical thinking program for high-achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary school students in public schools.
- o *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aspirations Program* (ATSIAP, 2018-present): A university and employment pathway program for students (schooling years 7-12).
- o *Senior Intensives*: Discipline-specific experience days for junior and senior secondary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- o *WRIT1999: Effective Thinking and Writing*: An intensive, bonus-ranked, UQ *Enhanced Studies Placement* (ESP) course, focused on preparing students for university by giving them intensive training in critical thinking, argumentation, and research and academic writing skills (schooling year 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students)”.

There has been some public philosophy which engages in discussions of particular interest to Indigenous communities and in which they have expertise:

- Professor Wilson organised Eugenic Thinking in Australasia with historian and archaeologist Professor Jane Lydon in 2021. As he explains, “The first of these 2-hour recorded events, ‘Eugenics and Indigenous Australia’, featured Laureate Fellow Lynette Russell and Peter Read, who coined ‘stolen generations’. But the others also covered relevant themes—for example, the second on immigration, borders, and children, included discussion of child removal practices that have devastated Indigenous communities. Here working together with those with Indigenous expertise and those working from an Indigenous standpoint has been crucial”.

Academics within philosophy have developed various initiatives to address the barriers to Indigenous students:

- A/Professor Francois Schroeter describes two initiatives he has developed as an undergraduate coordinator. First, “Offering individual mentoring to talented FN [First Nations] Philosophy students”. Second, “Introducing a module ‘Philosophizing on FN land’



in the Philosophy capstone. This module is grounded in testimonies of FN Philosophy students explaining what it's like for FN students to study Philosophy at Melbourne". He also told us about plans to introduce further First Nations modules in other philosophy subjects at all levels, and to create a continuing position in Australian First Nations philosophy in the next 5-10 years.

- A/Professor Tracy Bowell has supervised a PhD student on Māori concepts of mental (ill)health that used metaphysics (Māori and European) as an analytical tool. As she explains, "I supervised with another philosopher from the department, Dan Weijers, and Carl Mika, a Māori colleague then in our Education faculty, but now at the University of Canterbury. I've also written a couple of pieces with Carl (as yet unpublished) one that brings some feminist epistemological ideas to bear on issues of epistemic marginalisation for Māori epistemic subjects, and another reflecting on the process of working together as feminist philosopher and Māori philosopher. That's not to highlight my work, but to say that if at all possible, working in partnership with indigenous colleagues and students is both productive and, I think, ethically and culturally desirable".
- Dr Bullock is chief investigator for "Indigenist Archaeology: New Ways of Knowing the Past and Present", an Indigenous-led ARC Discovery Indigenous Project based on collaborations between several Indigenous researchers and communities. The Principal Investigator of the project is Wiradjuri archaeologist Dr Kellie Pollard. The project involves research in Indigenist archaeology, Indigenous ontologies, and philosophy of science. The project aims, among other tasks, to express and recognise important and transformative philosophical contributions made by Indigenous persons and communities.

#### **4. Strategies the AAP could support and pursue to address these barriers and challenges**

As A/Professor Schroeter emphasises, it is important as a first step for Philosophy to recognise how far behind we are on these issues (compared, for instance, to Anthropology or Social Sciences). We must also resist the temptation to rush ahead and try to make up for lost time, as good intentions alone can produce poor outcomes. We suggest that the AAP can work towards addressing these barriers by engaging in meaningful reconciliation actions, diversifying the curriculum and philosophical research, developing mentoring programs, and partnering with other organisations.

The AAP should consider creating a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) through Reconciliation Australia. As stated in the Reconciliation Australia website, they are an “independent not-for profit organisation, the lead body for reconciliation in Australia”. They “promote and facilitate reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples... Based around the core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, RAPs provide tangible and substantive benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, increasing economic equity and supporting First Nations self-determination”. There may be many benefits of starting a RAP, including the development of protocols of cultural safety aimed at minimising the risk of racist incidents during academic events involving Indigenous people. Further, Reconciliation Plans ensure that there are people within an organisation that are invested in and responsible for actioning certain items, making reconciliation a shared priority.

The AAP should also consider explicitly making avowals and disavowals (beyond Acknowledgements to Country) that speak directly *to* Indigenous students and philosophers, rather than *about* them. There is a short statement about inclusivity as a part of the “values statement” on the AAP website, and this could be extended.

Such a statement should acknowledge Indigenous Sovereignty. As Dr Bullock writes in our correspondence,

Indigenous Sovereignty has become a central reference point for Indigenous struggles, and it is a central concept in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, which reads: ‘*Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from ‘time immemorial’, and according to science more than 60,000 years ago. This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature’, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown*’. Indigenous voices have contested the colonial description of the Australian continent as *terra nullius*. Their struggles culminated in their 1992 victory in *Mabo and others v. Queensland (No. 2)*, which recognised for the first time that Indigenous people had rights to their land governed by their own laws and customs pre-dating colonisation by thousands of years. As long as the AAP remains silent about the fundamental historical fact of Indigenous Sovereignty, then Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will have reasons to suspect that the institution, despite its overt discourse of inclusiveness, does not acknowledge ancestral connections to country and Indigenous land rights.

Dr Bullot suggests that future constitutional texts of the AAP could refer to the Uluru Statement from the Heart as a way to signal that the AAP acknowledges that “the Sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples over the lands of the Australian continent remains unceded”. In addition, following Indigenist scholars and figures such as Charles Mills (see Mills, 1997), Dr Bullot emphasises the importance of “historical truth-telling about the possible collaborative roles of some philosophical institutions and philosophers in failing to recognise Indigenous Sovereignty”.

Alongside these measures, the AAP should encourage consistent and meaningful efforts to decentre European thinkers from philosophy curriculums. Diversifying the curriculum can make philosophy more relevant to those from underrepresented groups. Regarding this issue, Professor Brown recommends the AAP talk to Indigenous elder A/Professor Graham, who – as mentioned above – works on Indigenous Philosophy and strategies for Indigenising the curriculum. The AAP could also reach out to Warrimaay historian Professor Victoria Grieve Williams, author of Aboriginal Spirituality: Aboriginal Philosophy (2009).

As Dr Paul-Mikhail Catapang Podosky recommends, diversifying the curriculum should involve a commitment to a diversity of knowledges and expertise, which celebrates the achievements and intellectual contributions of People of Colour and other minorities in general. Dr Podosky suggests that it may be useful to think in terms of an “over-representation of whiteness in addition to an under-representation of colour. This opens different interpretive frames and expands the space of possibility for remedial thinking” (see Fforde et al., 2013). (Note, however, as Dr Podosky explains, “if the spaces in which diverse content are explored still feel, or indeed are, exclusive, hostile, unfriendly, unsafe, racist, etc., then diverse content is not worth all that much. It will not help with the retention of students, solving the pipeline issue, and generally making philosophy a respectable space for diverse perspectives and radical anti-colonial thought”).

The AAP could work with Indigenous thinkers to develop guidelines for including Indigenous knowledges in philosophy curriculums and reducing barriers to Indigenous student involvement. These guidelines could include engaging with Indigenous education support units to ensure cultural support is woven into philosophy degrees, and engaging with Indigenous studies departments and Indigenous academics to explore the barriers that exist in specific institutions. The AAP could also continue to organise and support Indigenous Keynotes at the AAP conference, as well as sessions about Indigenous philosophies and diversifying the curriculum.

Promoting research on Indigenous issues is a more delicate task. As A/Professor Schroeter writes, Indigenous people “must set the agenda and proceed at their own pace”. Dr Bullot’s ARC Discovery Indigenous Project with PI Dr Pollard may serve as a model for philosophers who aim to

advance work on Indigenous philosophy. Dr Pollard is an archaeologist with a long-standing interest in engaging with the tradition of analytic philosophy of science and the philosophy of cognitive science. Potential collaborations may involve the social sciences, other humanities departments, and education faculties. It is worth noting that while there may be relatively few Indigenous philosophers in Australasian philosophy departments, there are Indigenous scholars doing philosophical work in other departments.

The Australasian Journal of Philosophy (AJP) and the more recent Australasian Philosophical Review (APR) are venues over which the AAP has direct influence. Special editions of the APR focused on Indigenous philosophies and related topics would be useful. The AJP could also adopt measures to encourage Indigenous philosophers to submit their work. The Journal has recently committed to implementing the Barcelona Principles for a Globally Inclusive Philosophy, which is a move in the right direction.

Diversifying philosophical research and the curriculum may have a limited effectiveness if philosophy is seen by Indigenous students, families, communities, and leaders as without career prospects. The AAP could encourage Indigenous students to study philosophy by informing the public more broadly about the career prospects of philosophy graduates, which are in fact excellent. For a brief discussion, see Moore Park College's page Do Philosophy Majors get Jobs? The AAP could create a similar resource.

As A/Professor Howell explains, to attract Indigenous students, philosophy needs to feel relevant to them, and they often need to see other Indigenous people studying it and teaching it. (At the moment, many institutions do not have the pipeline for this.) A common feature of student support in universities is peer to peer support for Indigenous learners. These are organised on different bases, but where they are organised along disciplinary lines, an effective step may be to have Indigenous philosophy students in those roles. As A/Professor Howell explains, “‘by Māori for Māori’ is a common way of expressing the kaupapa (approach, method) that’s considered successful”.

The AAP could assist in the development of mentoring programs that provide insight into the possibility of philosophy as an avenue for Indigenous students. For example, Macquarie University's Warana program connects academics with high-achieving undergraduate students to break down barriers for their entry into further study and academia. These types of programs introduce academia to Indigenous students who may be the first-in-family to attend a university, and thus provide insights into the inner workings of a university, academia, research, etc. Note that, as Ushana Jayasuriya (Diversity Committee) emphasises, it is important that mentoring and support isn't deficit focussed.

A/Professor Schroeter offers the following suggestion regarding mentoring programs: “When I mentor FN undergraduate students, I consider them experts who are sharing their knowledge of Indigenous experiences with me. It is good practice to pay students for the work they do in such programs, since they are in fact helping us build our professional capacity. We have funding at Melbourne for such initiatives. But this type of funding may not be available at other institutions. Perhaps the AAP could try to organize a fund (find suitable donors – preferably not BHP) to help foster such mentoring programs”.

Alongside mentoring programs, the AAP could also develop partnerships with programs from other disciplines that aim to increase Indigenous participation in academia. For example, the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project ([AIPEP](#)) provides frameworks for universities guiding curricula and workforce transformation, as well as building the capacity of the general psychology workforce to work in a culturally appropriate manner. The advocacy of this project, as well as the people within this project, has significantly contributed to cultural responsiveness becoming a core competency within all psychology degrees in Australia. Importantly, this project is led by [Professor Pat Dudgeon](#), who is the first Aboriginal psychologist in Australia, and is highly respected within the Indigenous community.

Productive relationships could be forged with other organisations which aim to promote pathways towards higher education for younger children. Initiatives with Philosophy for Children ([p4c](#)) that focus on Indigenous and low socioeconomic communities could be useful. Another approach would involve working to include more students from marginalised groups in the Australasian Philosothon.

The AAP’s Diversity Committee is working to help establish a MAP regional network. Currently, the MAP chapters do not have much communication or coordination. The AAP could help to support this endeavour.

Professor Brown writes, “I think the schooling sector is very receptive to engaging with university disciplines that support the General Capability of Critical and Creative Thinking (ACARA) and it might be time to reach out to other Departments of Education, including the Federal Department... The work we have accomplished in Queensland is a good example of what can be achieved in collaboration with schools, Elders, and communities. Whether our work in the UQCTP results in more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Philosophy programs remains to be seen, but we have at least demonstrated to the students the benefits of philosophical and critical thinking and that is all for our collective good.”

## Conclusion

In this discussion paper, we have described several barriers to Indigenous participation in philosophy. Some of these have to do with impacts of colonialism and racism in general and in the education system in particular, and some have to do with philosophy as a discipline and how it is perceived. Some initiatives addressing these issues have already been implemented by the AAP, schools and community groups, universities, and academics. We have suggested further ways in which the AAP may support Indigenous participation in philosophy in the region.

As Professor Brown writes, “Whatever strategy we adopt in the AAP, we have to be prepared to play a very long game and possibly rethink our own cultural and disciplinary practices. Combative philosophy practices are particularly antithetical to Indigenous learning practices, which are highly collaborative. And, of course, the hiring of First Nations philosophers must become more of a priority in philosophy organisational units than it has been. It takes a long time to establish and maintain relations of trust both with communities and with government departments and it is hard to do this work without local institutional investment. It is worthwhile to try to get one’s line managers on-board and help them see how philosophy can make considerable contributions to its RAP [reconciliation action plan]”.

Creating a sense of belonging for Indigenous students and staff is key to making sure they feel that the University is *their* place and it works for them. This means designing and changing some things to make them work better for those learners and scholars rather than expecting them to meld themselves entirely to the ways of the institution. It is clear that Philosophy is lagging behind other disciplines in terms of Indigenous participation. We hope that this document will provide some guidance to those wanting to make the discipline more inviting to Indigenous students and staff both for their sake and for the sake of philosophy as a field.

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