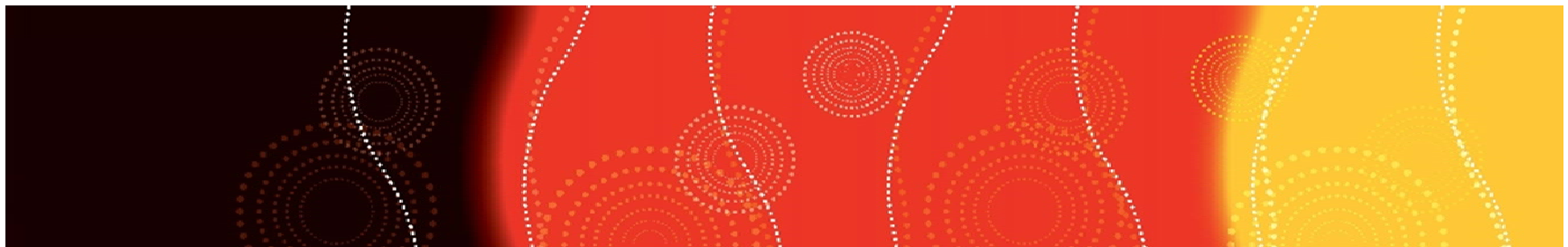




What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts in Australia?

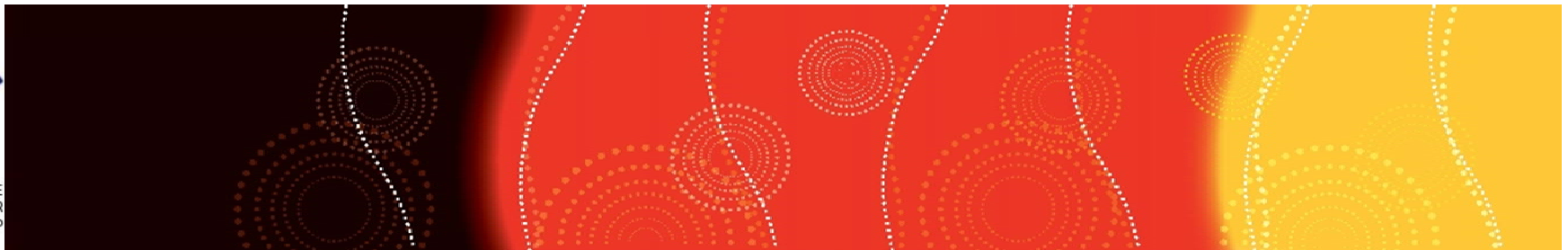
5 September 2017 – AES International Evaluation Conference

Presented by Associate Professor James Smith
Office of Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, Charles Darwin University



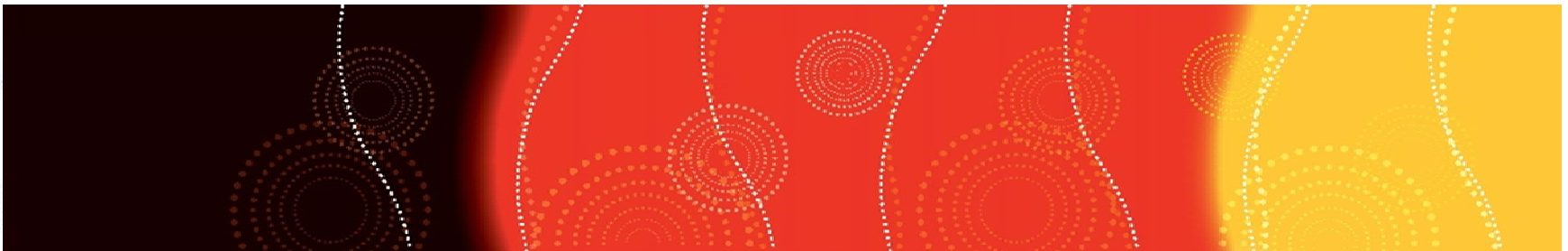
Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to acknowledge that the land we are meeting on is that of the Ngunnawal people, and pay my respects to elders past, present and future.

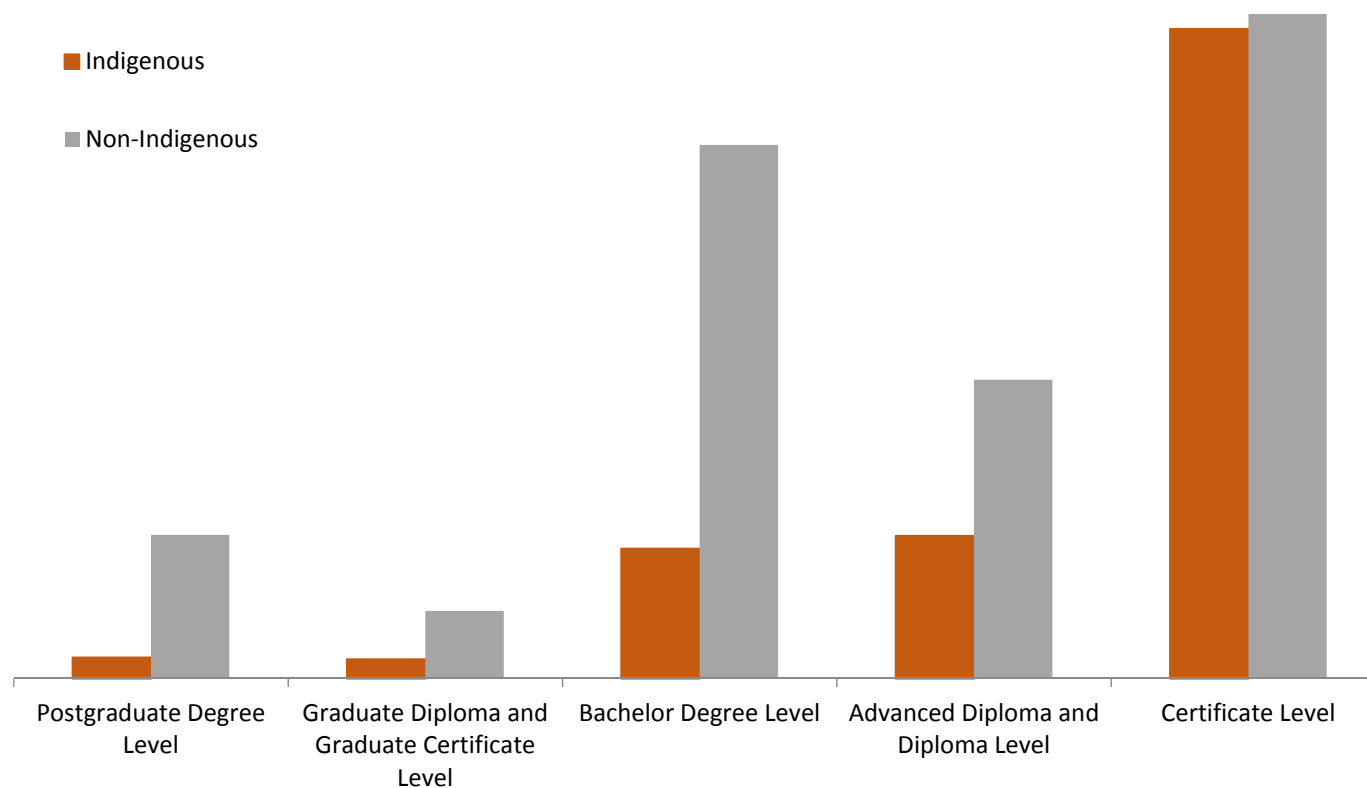


Overview

- What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous higher education?
 - Evaluation in Indigenous contexts
 - Evaluation in higher education contexts
 - Evaluation in equity focused higher education contexts
 - Evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts
- Equity Fellowship
- Preliminary Findings
- Discussion

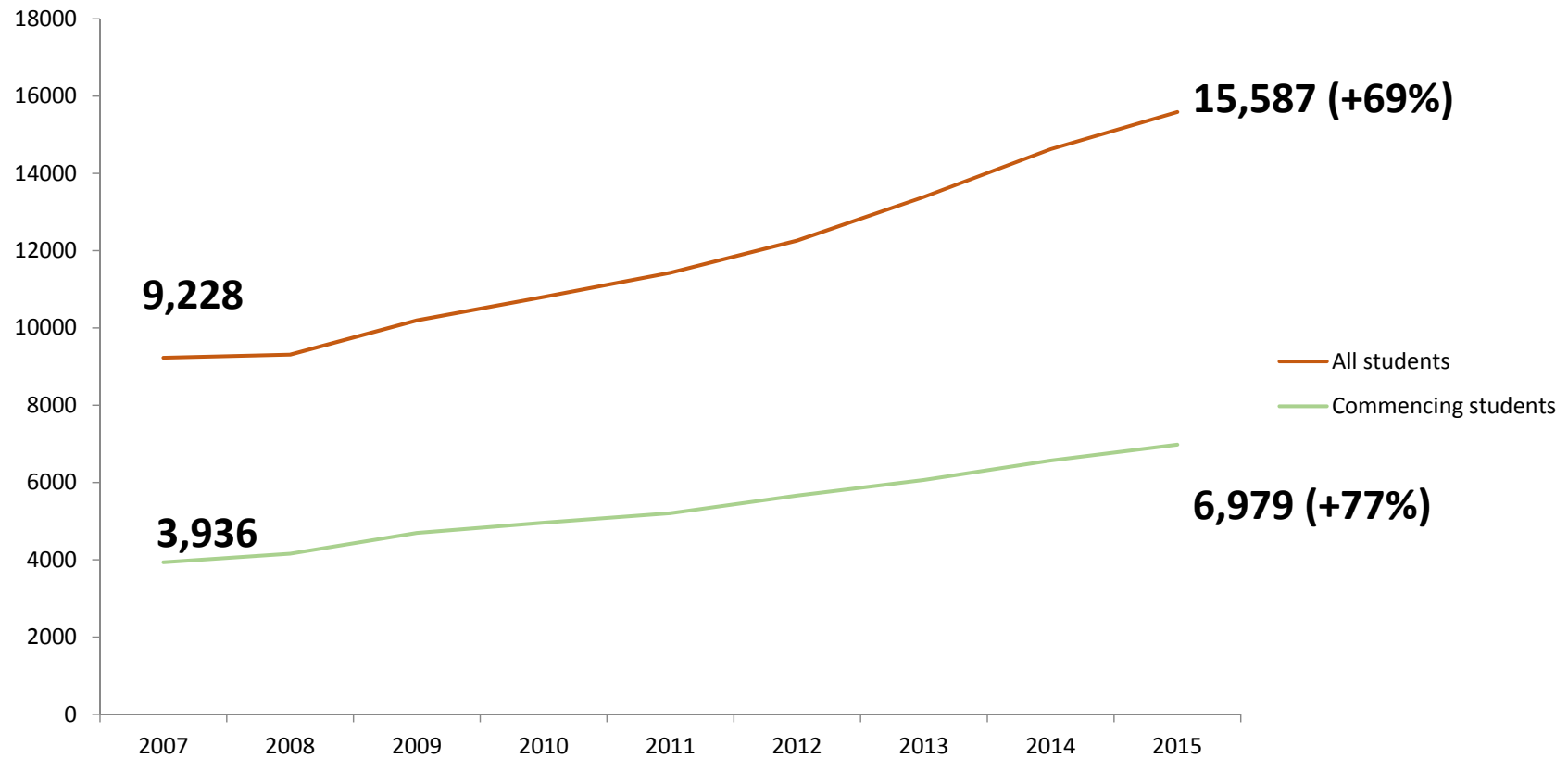


Snap shot of post school education success



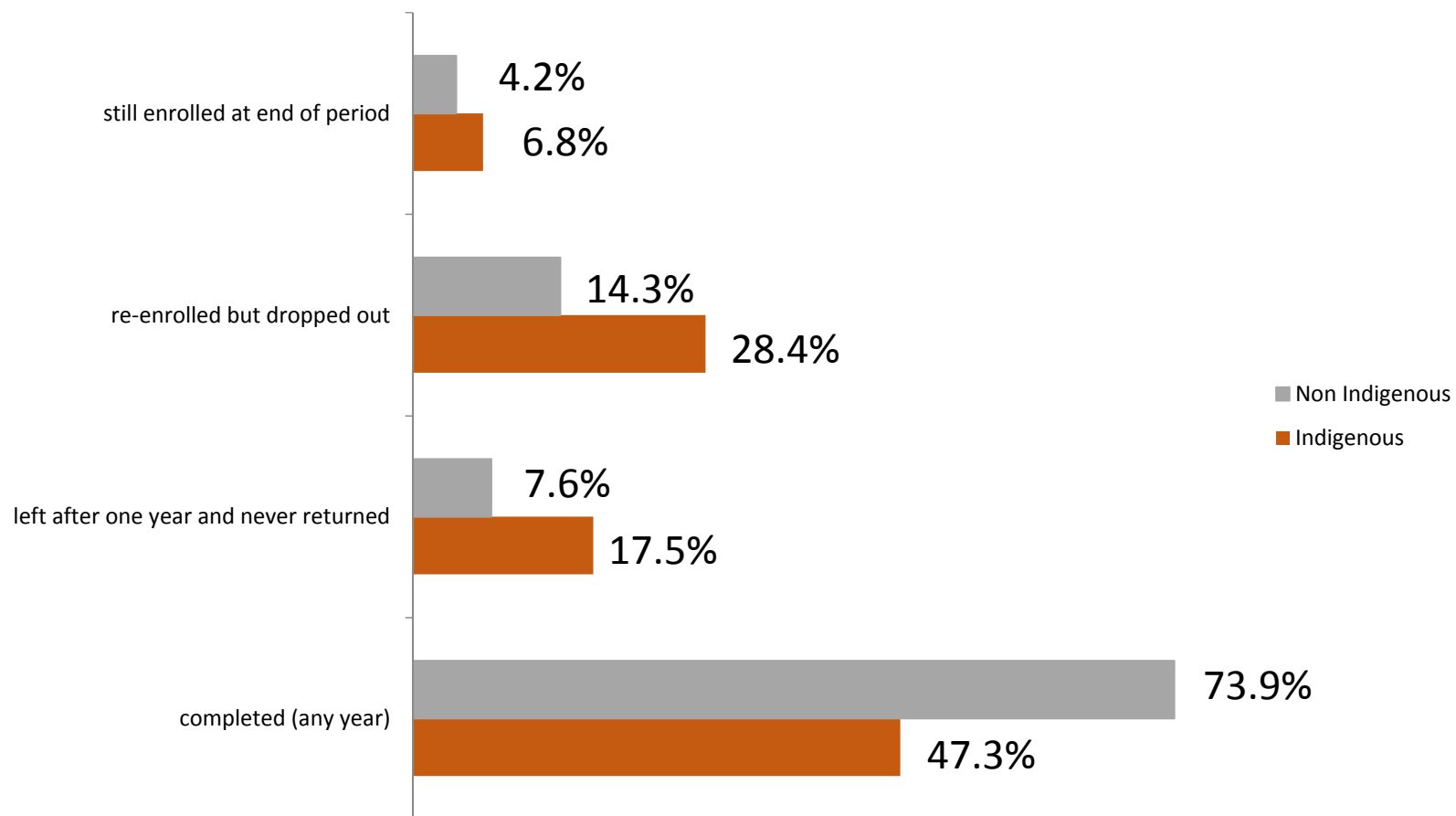
Census: 2011 Highest post-school qualification as a proportion of adult working population (15 – 64 years), Australia 2011

Snapshot of Indigenous students enrolled in higher education, Australia



Source: Department of Education, Higher Education Information Management System, 2015

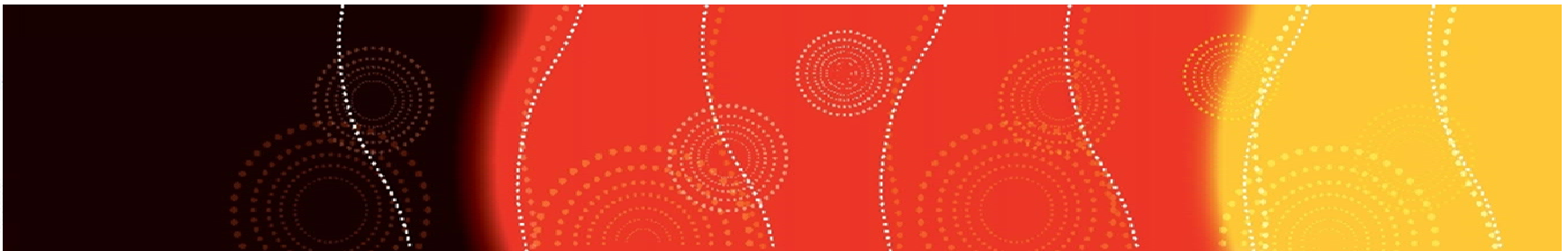
Student progress for students who commenced study in 2006



Source: Department of Education, Higher Education Information Management System, 2015. Cohort study

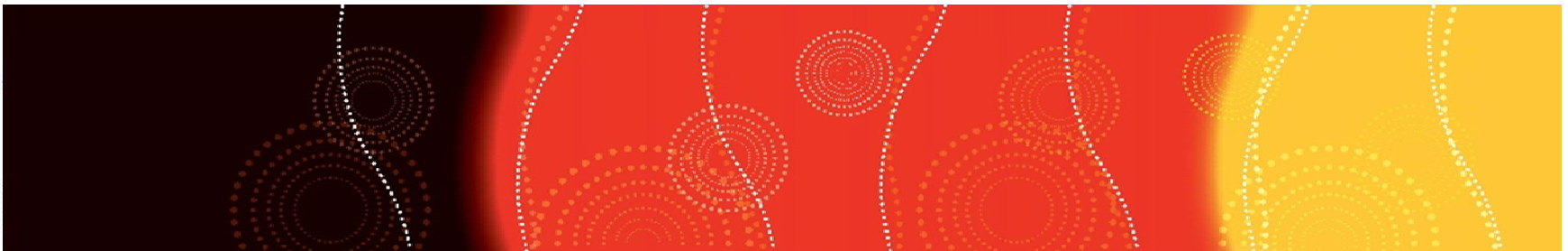
What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous contexts?

- Need to produce more high quality evaluations that generate evidence to drive future policy and program improvements (Productivity Commission 2013; Hudson 2016).
- Despite a longstanding focus on respect, reciprocity and responsibility between Indigenous and Western culture, it is acknowledged that new approaches to *evaluation within Indigenous contexts* are required (Productivity Commission 2013; Hudson 2016).
- There are emerging principles, guidelines and frameworks to support Indigenous evaluation work in Canada, New Zealand and to a lesser extent Australia (Roorda & Peace 2009; La France and Nichols 2010; Echo-Hawk 2011, AMSANT 2014; Fred Hollows Foundation 2015).



What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous contexts?

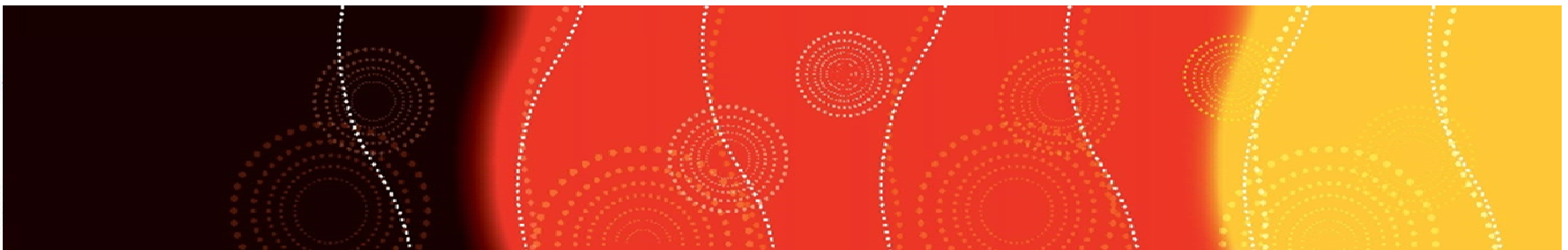
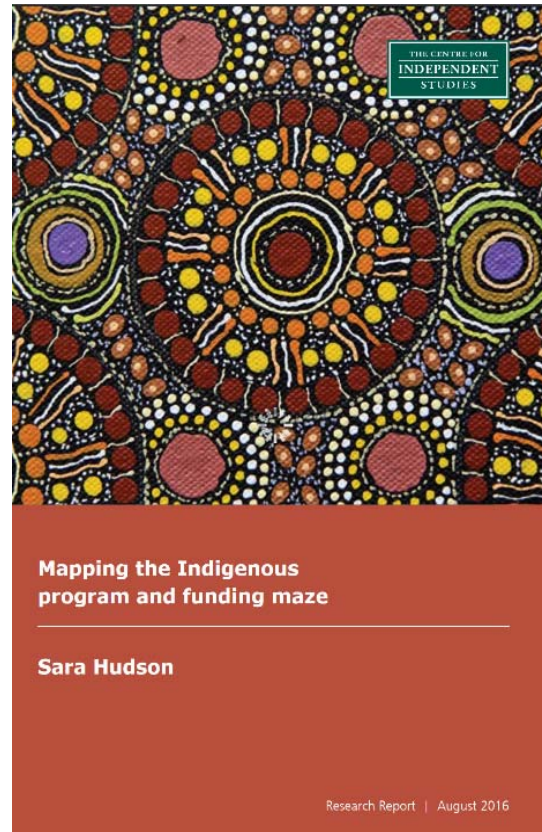
- Gradual acknowledgement of the importance of Indigenous knowledges in improving evaluation practices in Indigenous communities. This has occurred as a result of a parallel dialogue relating to:
 - (a) principles underpinning Indigenous research in Australia (Fredericks 2008; Jamieson et al 2012); and
 - (b) ethical conduct with Indigenous populations (NHMRC 2003; AIATSIS 2011).
- Need to increase the cultural competence of people completing such evaluations (Caldwell et al 2005; Morelli and Mataira 2010; Hurworth & Harvey 2012; LaFrance et al 2012).
- Calls for Indigenous people to lead and actively participate in evaluation work in Indigenous contexts (Garnett et al 2009; Sithole et al 2009)



What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous contexts?

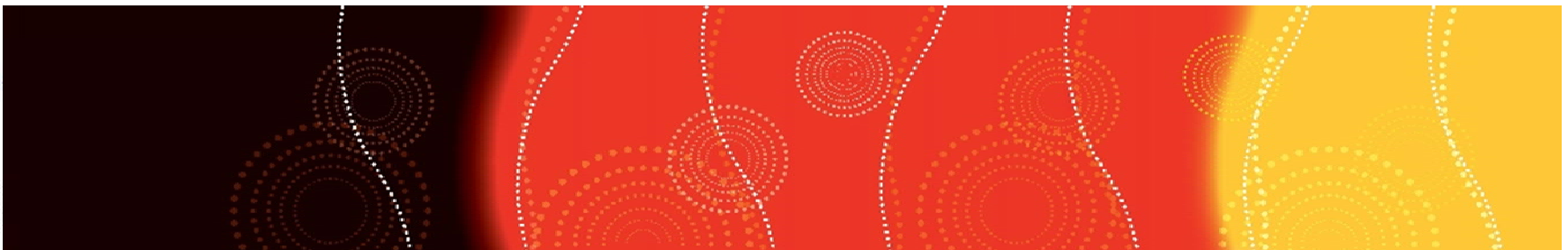
- There have also been parallel calls for more innovative approaches to be used in Indigenous evaluation contexts, including the application of decolonising evaluation methods that are more closely aligned with Indigenous knowledge systems

(LaFrance & Nichols 2010; Morelli & Mataira 2010; Hurworth & Harevy 2012; Hudson 2016, 2017).



What do we know about evaluation in equity focused higher education contexts

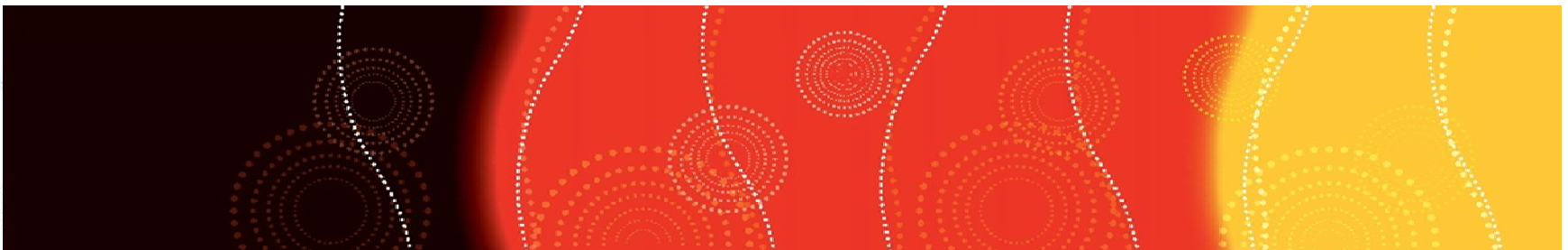
- Paucity of evidence about the effectiveness of equity higher education initiatives in Australia (Naylor et al 2013).
- An emerging evidence-base about the impact of equity initiatives, particularly Indigenous higher education programs (including enabling programs), that are showing great promise (Kinnane et al 2014; Bennett et al 2015; Pitman et al 2016).
- Recent development of an *Equity Initiatives Framework* outlines examples of methods and data sources that can support evaluation work in equity-focused higher education initiatives (Bennett et al 2015).
- However, there is currently no recognition of Indigenous-specific evaluation approaches in higher education contexts.



What do we know about evaluation in equity focused higher education contexts

“Despite significant funding flowing into higher education for programs aimed at improving participation, access and success, there still exists a limited amount of systematic evaluation taking place within the sector. In some institutions (including universities, research centres and centres of excellence), a greater level of onus has been felt in recent years for the need to ascertain whether funding sources such as the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) have led or are likely to lead to positive equity-related outcomes.”

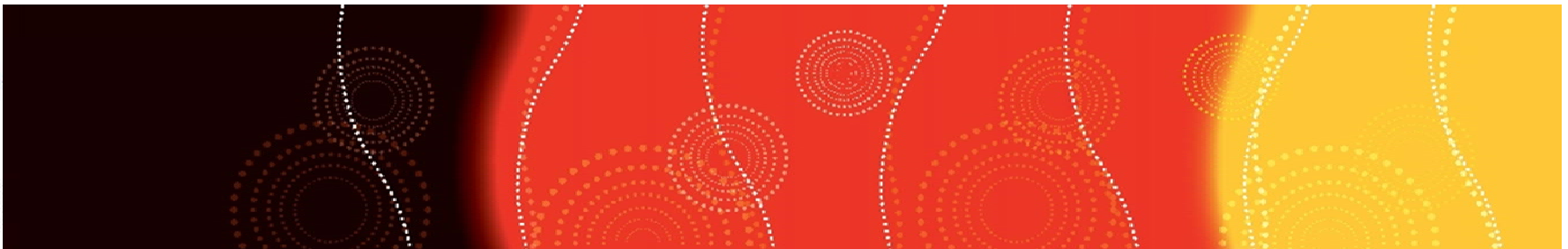
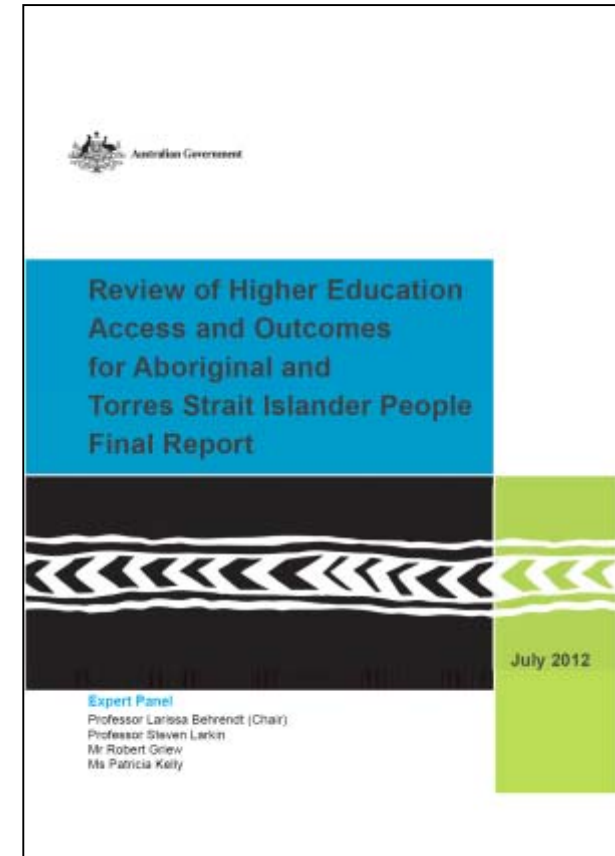
(Downing 2017)



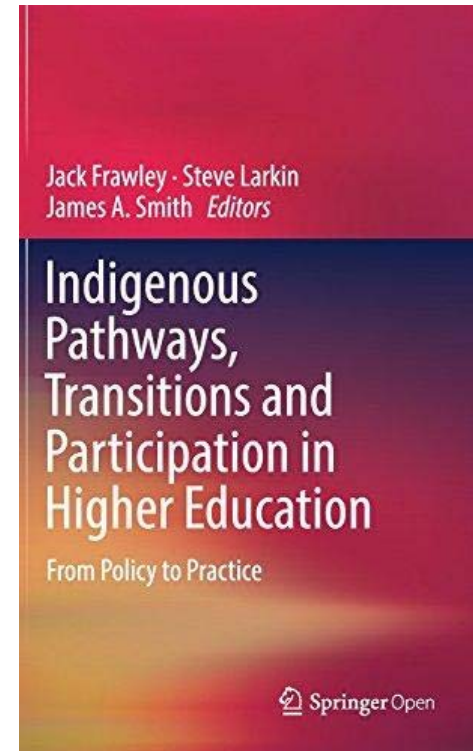
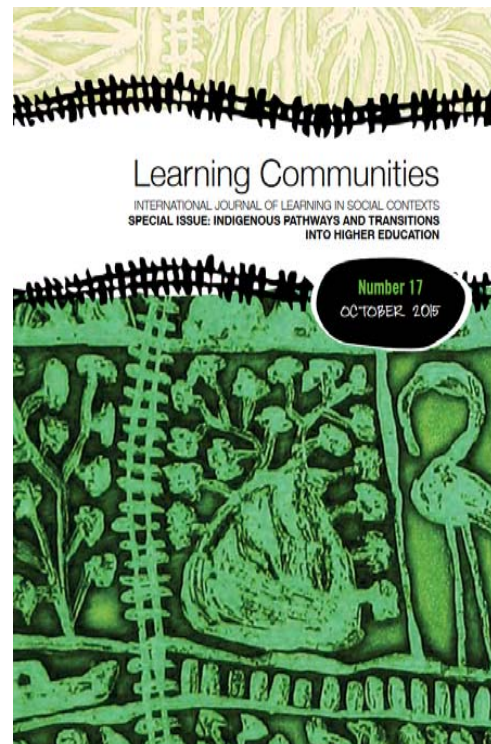
What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous higher education?

“While considerable data was available through departmental program-based reporting to monitor progress, there was not always sufficient evidence to assess the overall success or otherwise of specific programs. In some cases, there were no independent evaluations of programs for the Panel to draw on.”

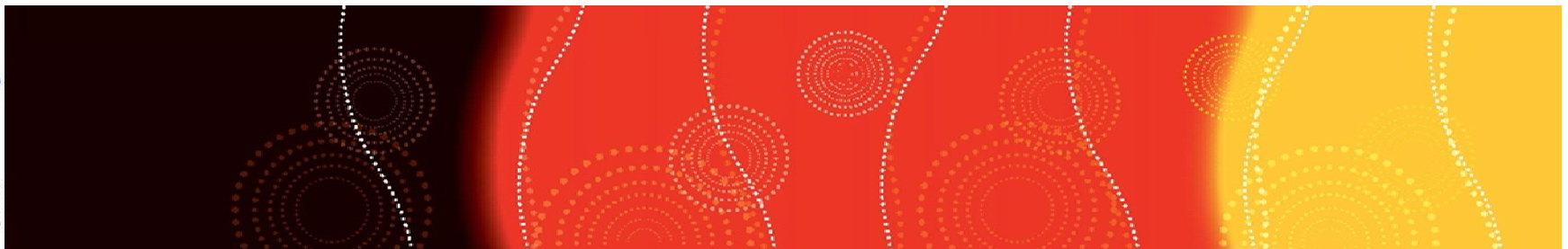
(Behrendt et al 2012, p154)



What do we currently know?

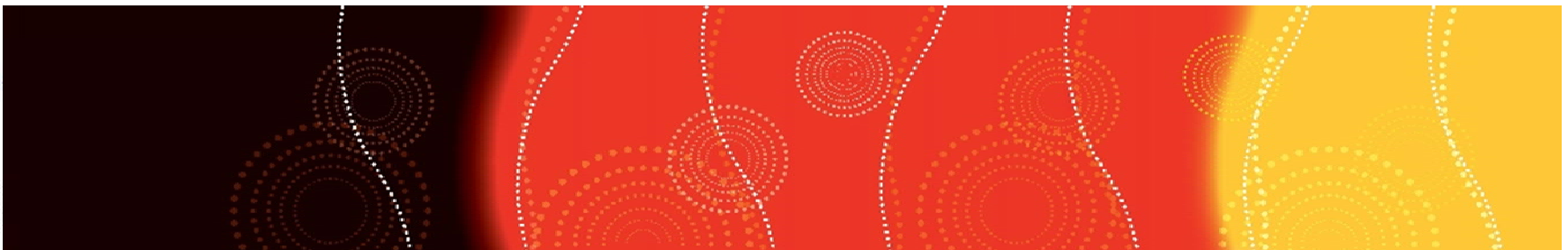


- http://www.cdu.edu.au/sites/default/files/the-northern-institute/cdu_ni_learning_communities_journal_2015_17_read-online.pdf
- <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-981-10-4062-7.pdf>



“One key challenge we face in Australia is to move beyond basic process and impact evaluation approaches about Indigenous higher education pathways and transitions. We need to develop more sophisticated evaluation models that reflect more rigorous, comprehensive and nuanced understandings of what Indigenous higher education trajectories look like, the inherent complexities they bring, how they can best be navigated, and the tangible outcomes Indigenous-specific programs can achieve. This includes the capacity to examine and monitor new and innovative institutional and organisational culture change to reform Indigenous education within higher education settings...emerging evaluation approaches that build on Indigenous knowledge systems could be useful in this regard. These will need to privilege Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies.”

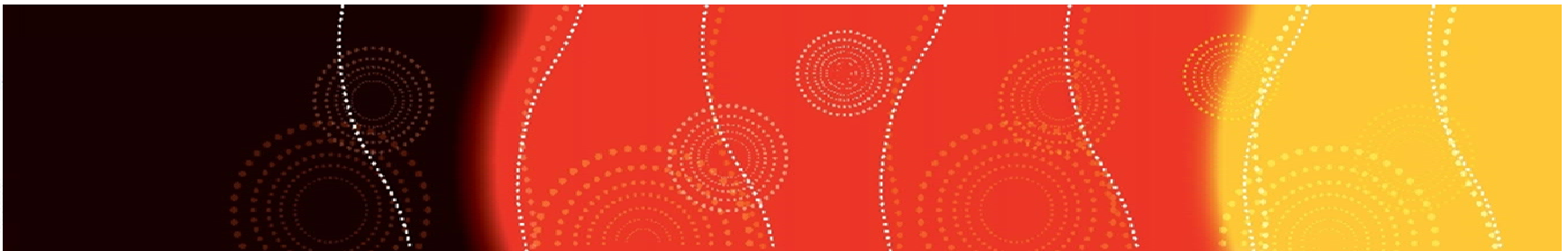
(Frawley, Smith & Larkin 2015, p10)



2017 NCSEHE Equity Fellowship

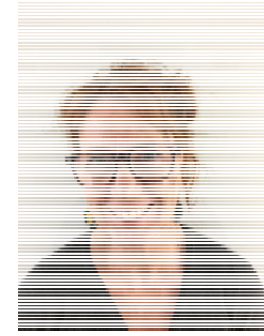
Aim:

To investigate ways of strengthening the evaluation of Indigenous Higher Education (HE) programs and policies in Australia



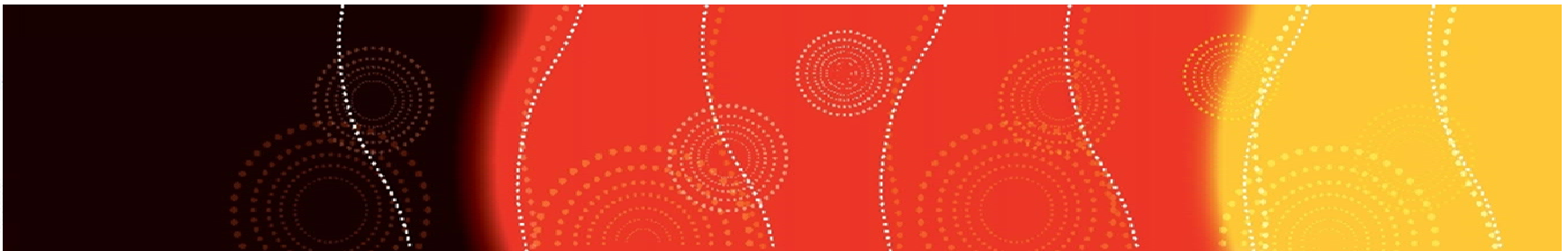
Chief Investigator

- Assoc Prof James Smith



Associate Investigators

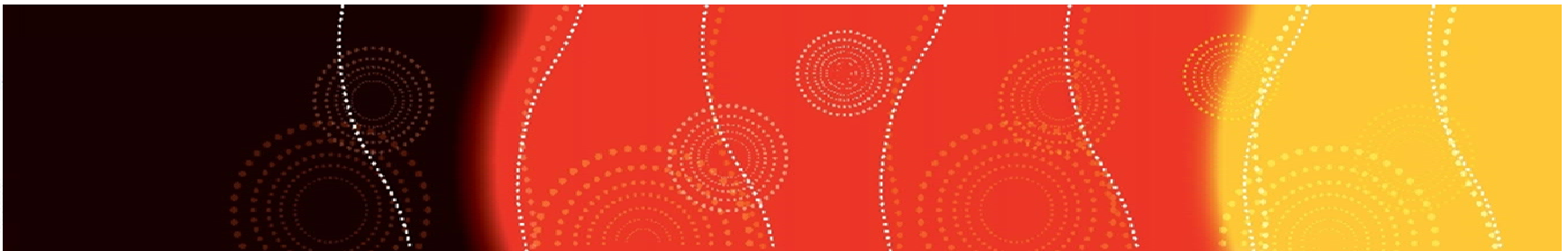
- Ms Kellie Pollard
- Ms Fiona Shalley



2017 NCSEHE Equity Fellowship

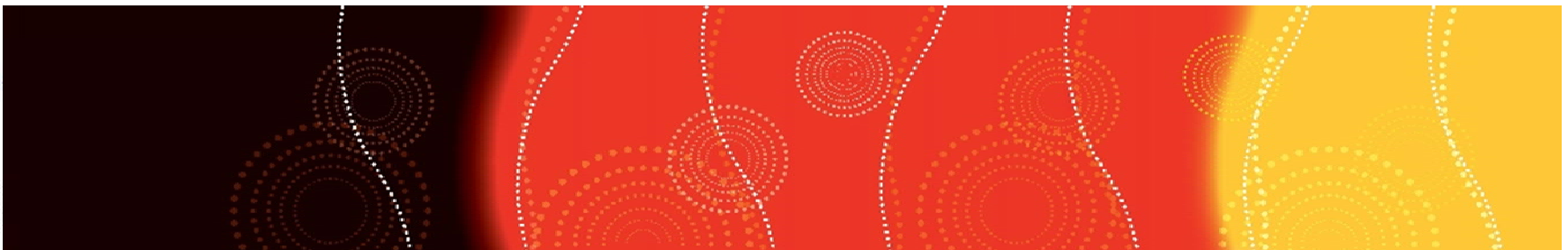
Rationale:

- Evaluation evidence is important for informing policy and program development and implementation within government and HE institutions
- There are unique considerations in the Indigenous HE space
 - Behrendt Review (2012) – recommended the development of an Indigenous higher education monitoring and evaluation framework
 - HEPPP 2014 National Priorities Pool Grant – ‘building an evidence base about Indigenous pathways and transitions into HE’
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council (2016) – recommended development of an Indigenous Higher Education Performance Framework



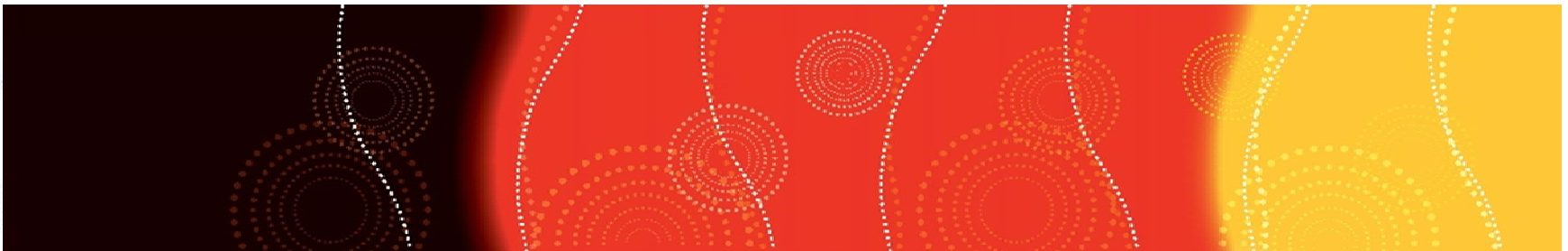
2017 NCSEHE Equity Fellowship

- What do we know about the quality and utility of evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts in Australia?
- What are the current challenges and opportunities associated with planning and undertaking evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts in Australia?
- What are the enablers and barriers associated with using evaluation evidence to inform policy and program development and reform aimed at supporting Indigenous participation and achievement in higher education in Australia?
- What strategies might be useful for strengthening evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts in Australia?



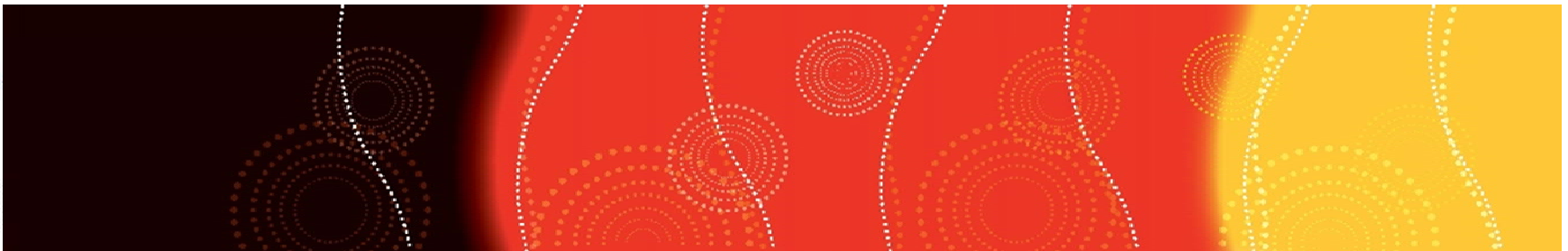
Project Status

- CDU Human Research Ethics Committee approval obtained in Feb 2017 (HE17005)
- Two secondments with Department of Education and Training
- Fieldwork:
 - Completed 15 interviews with policy-makers working in Indigenous and/or Equity policy and program contexts in DPMC and DET
 - Completed 13 interviews with Indigenous leaders/scholars in HE education across Australia
- Overseas Study – July 2017



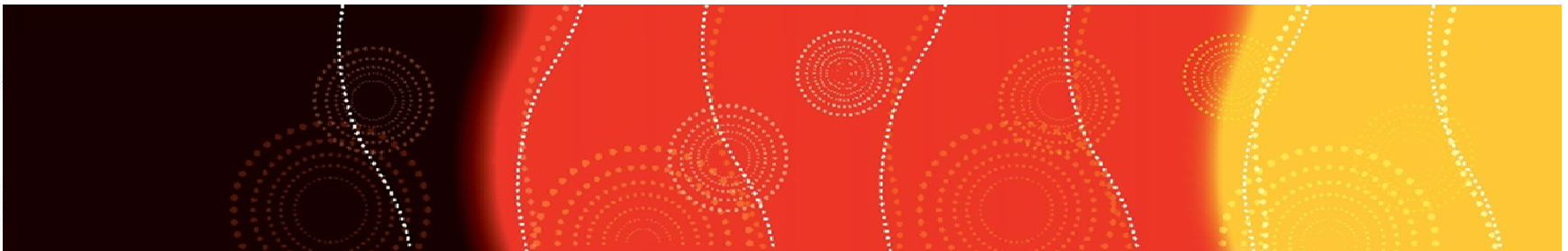
Preliminary findings

- Conflation between the terms 'evaluation', 'monitoring', 'review', 'performance', 'measurement' and 'reporting'
- Tension between preference for quantitative data vs qualitative data
- Perception that quantitative data (particularly Indigenous student data) is important, but redundant without context
- Narratives/stories perceived as particularly important to Indigenous Leaders



[We need different types of data] other than the standardised data collection mechanisms of the Federal Department of Education and Training, which are numerically based and fairly basic. And really not substantial enough for what we need.

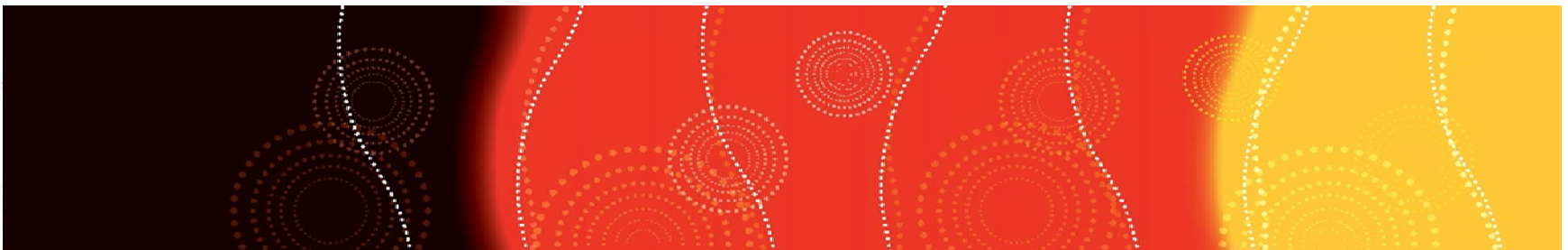
University data collection in relation to Indigenous students is often as a result of the need to report and acquit to commonwealth funds rather than necessarily as a mechanism for accurate reporting and evaluation for our own purposes.



I think that if evaluation only relies on quantitative data, it raises questions about the quality of that – about the kind of discussions - it goes to the quality of discussions, considerations and decisions that you can make just off quantitative data.

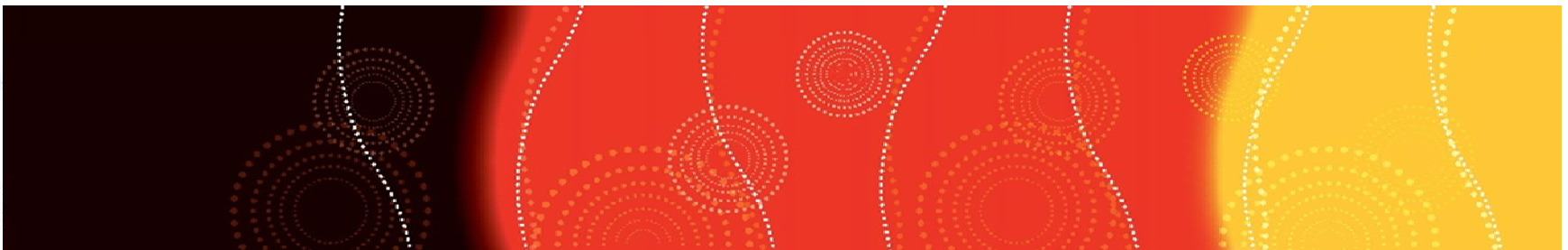
So it's always been about, okay, we need to get the numbers and we need to get some narrative to go with that.

So the numbers are really important. And then you've got to try and capture the depth and the complexity of what those numbers mean.



If you limit what you know about Aboriginal education to those evaluative factors and you seek statistical evidence of compliance on how the problem is to be represented, you only get the story that you want to get. If the story is represented differently, that these students have a whole range of other aspects that tell us bigger and insightful stories about their success or their incompleteness, you then get a fuller picture about what's going on.

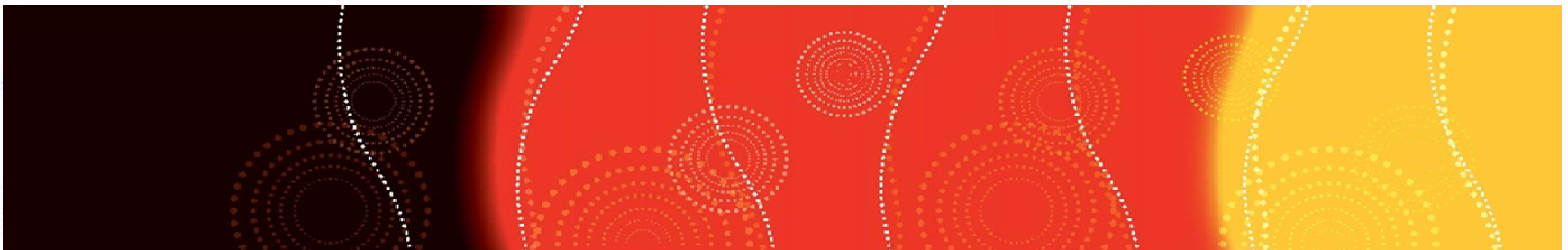
You're not going to capture that in a Likert scale.



But where it is important is when you sit down and say when you look at these numbers what does it tell us? And what does it tell us about the relative priority of action?

I think the main thing is that if we're evaluating a particular set of realities then we have to understand that there's different ways of seeing that and understanding it. It's not that one's right or wrong.

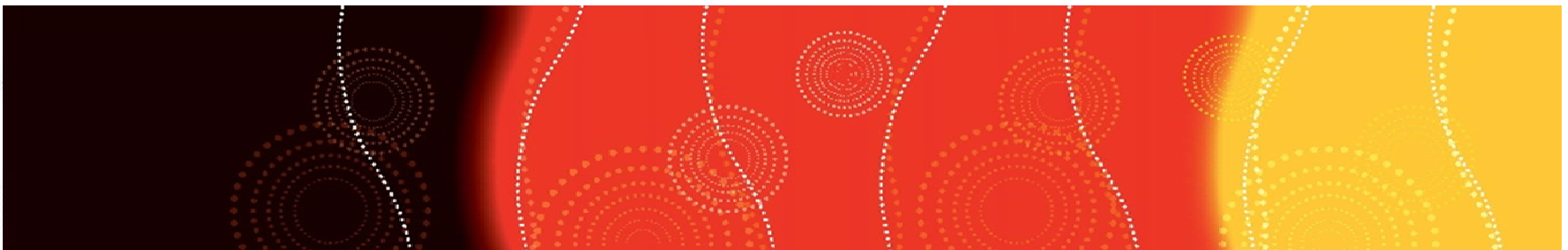
It's really important that we get quality data for a narrative and story to go with things, absolutely in no way does that mean we can't concentrate on getting better numerical data.



There's a lot of discussion around the value of narratives and having successful engagement and whatever but I don't think we do it anywhere near as well as what we could. I don't think we give enough credence to the value of that type of methodology.

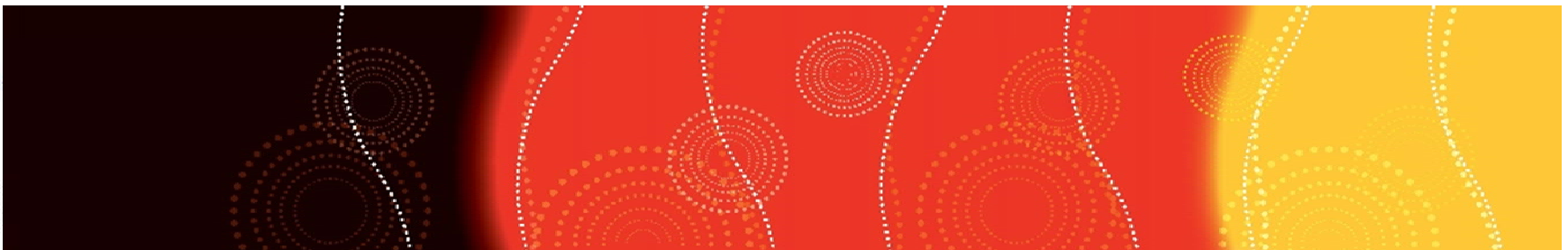
We have to have the measures that speak to the issues we think are important, with the character, the narrative.

In terms of the qualitative components what I try to do is look at the narrative around student engagement.



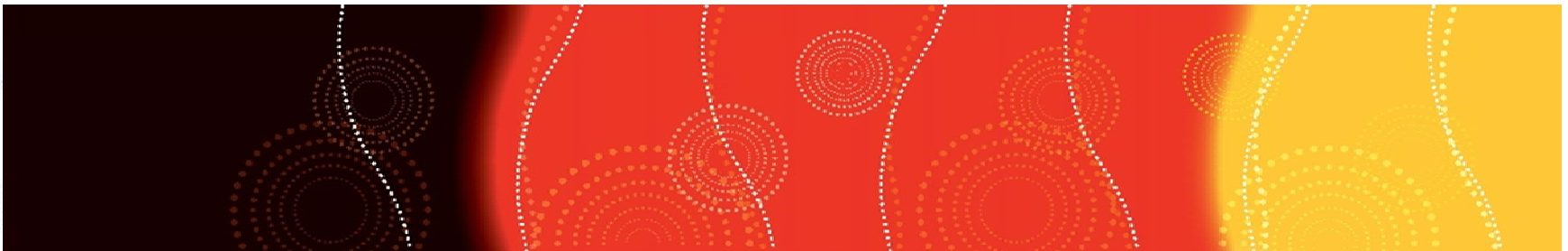
The concept of narrative and storying is much more a part of an Indigenous practice than the hard data in numbers, in the statistics. That's not to say that I dismiss that statistical information; but it's the narrative, it's the story that needs to be important in terms of thinking about the work we're doing in Indigenous higher education.

The qualitative information from people around - a broad range of people around their perceptions of whether or not it's worked or it's got potential, whether people are supportive...making sure that whatever is being done is reflective of the needs and directions coming out of the community.



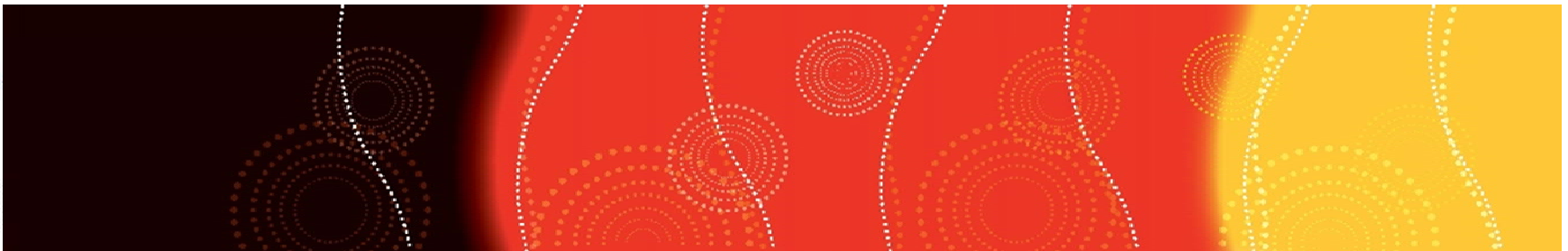
Preliminary findings

- Current funding performance measures need to extend beyond Indigenous student enrolment, success and completion data (noting these are important)
- A holistic framework is preferred that is strengths-based in focus, including one that explicitly deals with 'system levers'



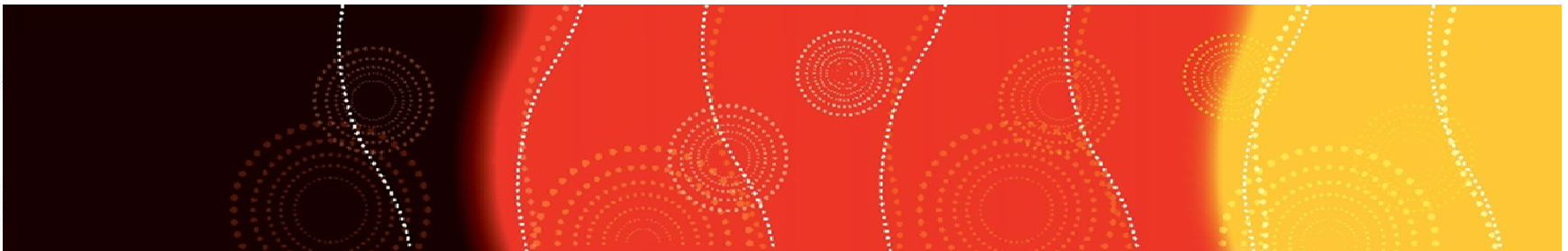
Preliminary findings

- Performance measures could relate to:
 - Quality and scope of Indigenous community and family engagement activities;
 - Quality and scope of Indigenous specific outreach activities;
 - Quality and scope of formal partnership arrangements with Indigenous organisations;
 - Explicit strategies aimed at increasing Indigenous identification upon enrolment;
 - Explicit strategies to enhance Indigenous education and training, including Indigenous curriculum and pedagogies;
 - Explicit strategies to develop Indigenous graduate attributes, build cultural competency and reduce institutional racism;



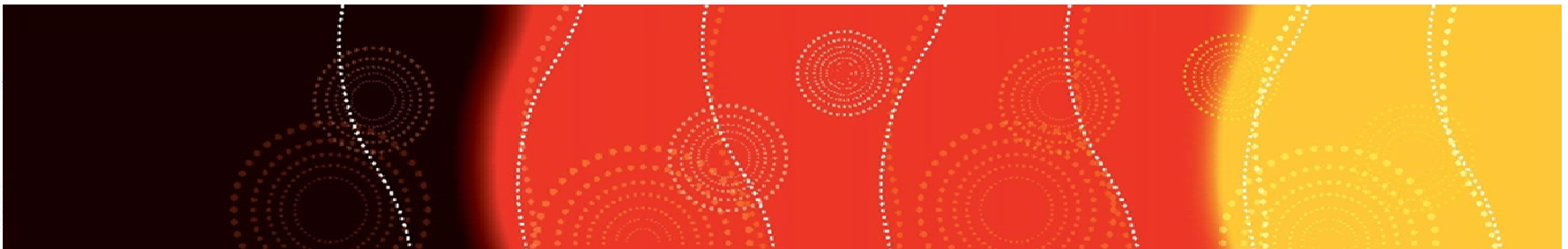
Preliminary findings

- Performance measures could relate to:
 - Quality of Indigenous enabling course enrolments and completions;
 - Success of Indigenous workforce strategies;
 - Success of Indigenous research strategies;
 - Evidence of genuine Indigenous governance and leadership;
 - Evidence of adopting a Whole of University approach (e.g. individual accountability within executive/management contracts);
 - Indigenous student financial support (AFB/Abstudy)
 - Stories of Indigenous student success
 - Pathways across the education continuum (between VET to HE; from undergrad to postgrad)
 - Attempts to achieve parity need to be contextualised in relation to each university's Indigenous cohort

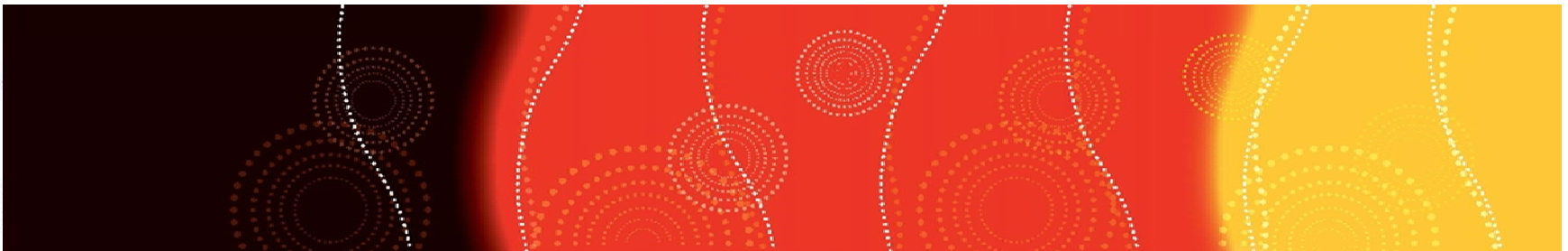


Preliminary findings

- Preference for a framework that dovetails with:
 - Proposed Equity Evaluation Frameworks (such as that to be developed through HEPPP)
 - Other relevant education evaluation frameworks (i.e. early years, K-12), with increased potential for data-linkage
 - Evaluation frameworks in other sectors (i.e. ATSI Health Performance Framework), with increased potential for data-linkage
 - Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017-2020
 - National/International university accreditation processes (i.e. TEQSA, WINHEC)
- Accountability is important:
 - At the individual level (i.e. senior executives achieving Indigenous focused KPIs)
 - At the institutional level (i.e. universities demonstrating Indigenous 'excellence')
 - Among the private sector (i.e. organisations increasingly working in the 'Indigenous HE space')
 - At the national level (by the Australian Government as a major funder)

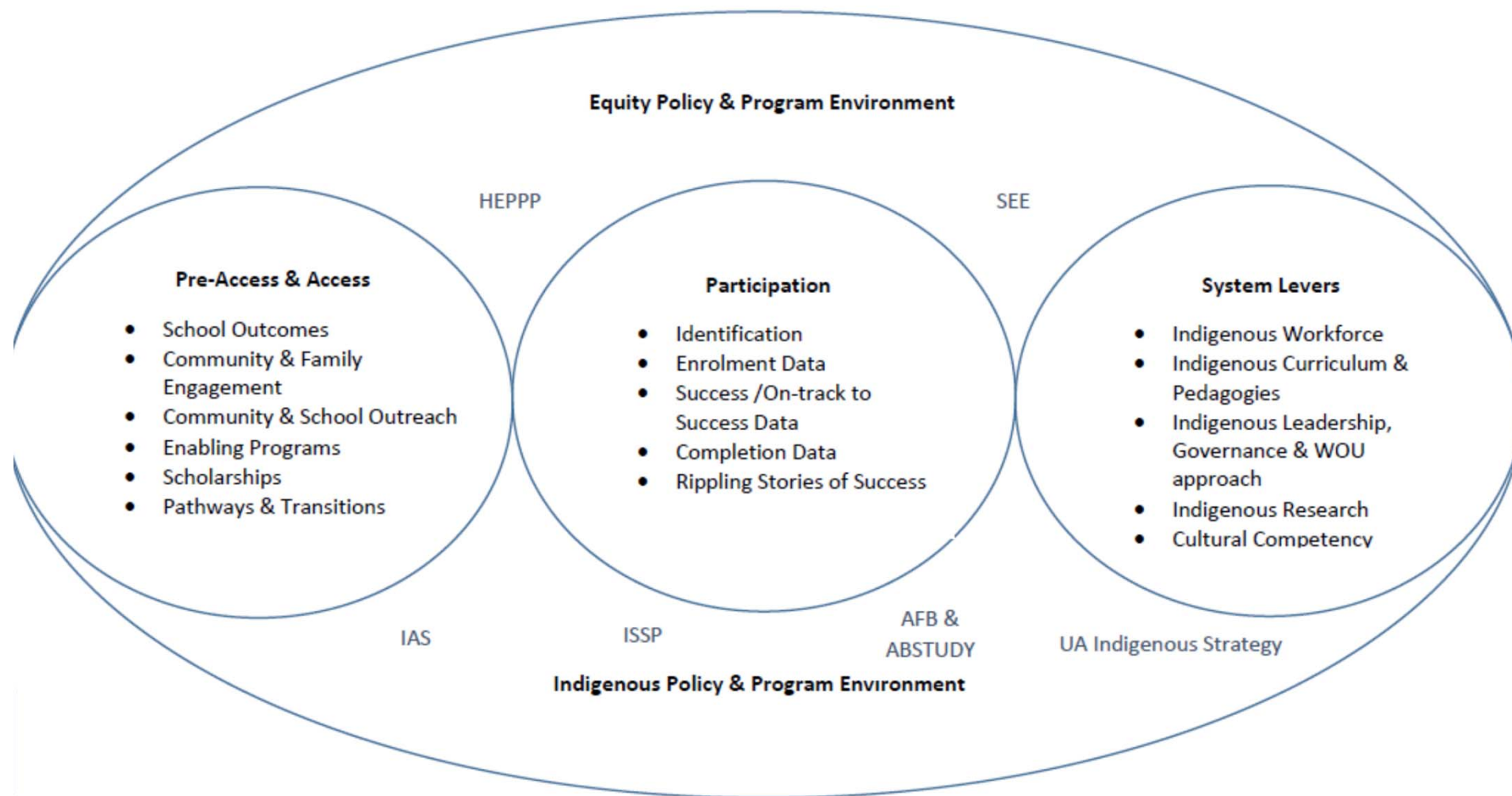


I think about the university as an organisation and the processes that it uses and I think about sharp, hard lines that go up and down and sideways. But what I - and when I think about Indigenous practice, I think of much more softer edges. So flowing lines and circles and concentric circles and weaving.

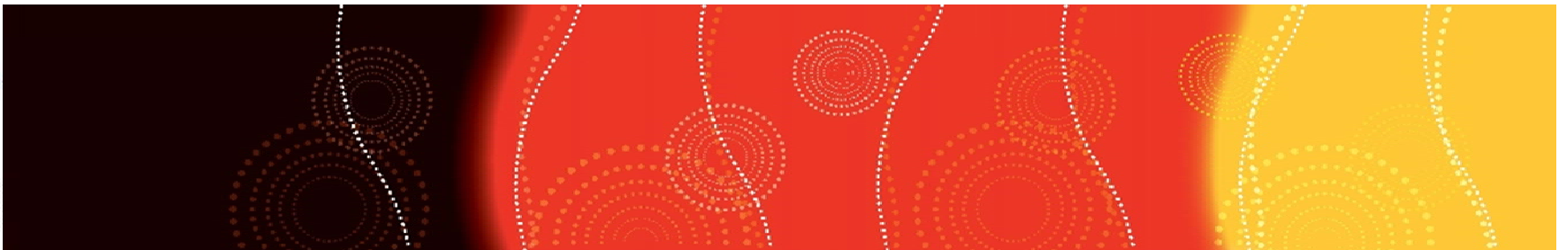


Conceptual Map of an Indigenous Higher Education Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

June 2017



Open Discussion & Questions



Thanks and Contact Details

Associate Professor James Smith
Office of Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership
Charles Darwin University
Email: james.smith3@cdu.edu.au
Mob: 0455 088 501

