

Transforming InDigenous Education, *TIDE in practice***Introduction**

Transforming InDigenous Education, *TIDE in practice*¹ calls to the Education System for genuine change and commitment to reform for the welfare and future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. *TIDE in practice* is a pledge to implement culturally responsive pedagogical practice via the delivery of micro-treaty frameworks that unify communities across Australia. *TIDE in practice* is collaborative, consistent, and comprehensive, and is underpinned by country, kinship, and language. Led and designed by Aboriginal Elders, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous Educators, from the Yugambah language region [*Yugambah* Education Working Group, Griffith University, Qld], who are co-committed to transformational practices for Indigenous peoples, we write in response to the Review's Terms of Reference, as advocates for *TIDE in practice*:

1-2: Drive real improvements in student outcomes for First Nations students (including mental health and well-being): Existing literature concurs that culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies can positively affect Aboriginal educational outcomes². Of note, when Indigenous students see themselves in the school curriculum alongside community based cultural practices, students improved comparably to non-Indigenous students, in self-efficacy, well-being, identity, school attendance and academic outcomes³.

3: Support schools and universities to attract, teach and retain First Nations teachers: Leveraging existing infrastructures, developing community trust, fostering co-community responsibility, and investing in localised and specific professional development for all educators, can improve confidence and ability (local literacy) to improve the delivery of First Nations curriculum⁴. Consequently, positive interactions with teachers and schools should attract First Nations community members as future educators⁵ and growing teachers, within and for communities, will support teacher retention.

4-5: Ensure data is used to inform decision making for First Nations student outcomes (including transparent and accountable use of public funding that delivers on national agreements): Beyond, and in addition to, NAPLAN data, School Surveys, and yearly student outcome data; communities should be able to leverage localised and specific data reports (ABS), that are designed for country, kinship, and language regions. Specific data will assist and inform stakeholder decisions, and financial commitments based on need can become transparent, and will account for use of public funds.

Recommendations

The following *TIDE in practice* recommendations are underpinned by four tenets: 1. Commitment, 2. Engagement, 3. Action, and 4. Evaluation. Furthermore, is based on *Yugambah* community consultation (SEQLD) and the responses of 555 participants, including representatives from over 35

universities, 120 schools, and 100 professional educational organisations, who gathered for the Griffith University Creating Futures Summit Series (June 2023), to discuss this issue. The 2023 summit identified four target areas that educators and organisations are currently seeking to transform. 1. Being brave to embrace a change of mindset. 2. Invite and promote connections with community. 3. Decolonise education, and 4. Listen respectfully (to community), at the speed of trust⁶. To move forward accordingly, it is understood that TIDE *in practice* holds a narrative and principles that are based in *Jagun* (Country), and is an active participant in our educational conversation, alongside Australia’s First Nations communities. In recognition that Indigenous Education requires a Transformative shift, we recognise that the coming together of fresh and salt water has long been connected with the possibilities for transformative change in teaching and learning for Indigenous people⁷, and consequently commit to work with the tidal current ebbs and flows of our water ways which feed the needs of *Jagun* (Country), and ultimately shifts our practice, to flow [commit], navigate [engage], rise [action] and mark [evaluate] the TIDE, to transform teaching and learning into ecosystems that better harness and reflect the promise of Indigenous Education. Therefore, aligned to national research and national policy agendas, that are firmly based in understanding and securing education, opportunities, and futures, for our First Nations children, TIDE *in practice* submits four recommendations, underpinned by our tenets, as a living cultural framework:

<p>Recommendation 1: <i>Flowing with the TIDE</i> [Commitment]</p>	<p>Commit to the recognition of living culture. Engage local educators and community members to identify context specific issues and locally specific resource availability pertaining to Indigenous knowledges, for education purposes.</p>
<p>A commitment to understand country and recognise that cultural metaphors speak for and with country. <i>Flowing with the TIDE</i> calls for a pedagogical shift in both thinking and practice. Jarara mobobo, a pedagogy of country, designed for TIDE <i>in practice</i>, is based on Indigenous knowledges, teaching practices and teacher education.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2: <i>Navigating the TIDE</i> [Engagement]</p>	<p>Foster locally specific collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holders to involve community in the education of their youth. Move, ‘at the speed of trust.’</p>
<p>We commit to exploring the ‘brackish water’ of our cultural metaphor, the TIDE’s meeting place where both fresh and saltwater holds its own ecosystem. Indigenous Education is represented by the brackish water, where we engage and come together to explore, learn, and inspire students and teachers. It is recognised that the brackish water is sometimes difficult to navigate due to merging currents, floating debris, and the unknown. Therefore, many hands are required to keep afloat. <i>Navigating the TIDE</i> calls for a First Peoples Micro-Treaty Framework (Network). Ngarra binbiraleh a Net-Casting, designed for TIDE <i>in practice</i>, is based on Indigenous Native Title and/or First Nations language regions, rather than educational system i.e., public/private.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3: <i>Rising with the TIDE</i> [Action]</p>	<p>Drawn from pre-existing resources, collaborative community efforts, and the pedagogy of Country to develop and implement action strategies that are specific to local needs and contexts.</p>

<p>Through the lens of Jarara mobobo (pedagogy of country), supported by Ngarra binbiraleh (community) we become aware of the low TIDE line (low expectations and deficit perspectives) and reach out with the swirling waters of the high TIDE line (to foster strength-based approaches that are locally grounded), to transform teaching and learning into ecosystems that better harness and reflect the promise of Indigenous education. <u>Rising with the TIDE</u> calls for Garalbo Gundalah (all in the boat), the action where we harness the strengths of students, teachers, and community, to empower ground up deliverable change and achieve results together.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4: <u>Marking the High TIDE Line</u> [Evaluation]</p>	<p>Measure and track education and wellbeing outcomes for all students and provide transparent results freely to all stakeholders to influence further decision making and development.</p>
<p>Real change for communities can be measured. <u>Marking the High TIDE Line</u> calls for Yehindu Ngulung [marking ahead], the evaluation that looks for change, such as improved mental health and well-being, improved student outcomes, and Duralehla Nyumba Growing Teachers, which can be demonstrated through data. Concurrently, funding becomes transparent and is accountable, and reporting methods become replicable, which assists with community growth and sustainability.</p>	

Implementation

TIDE *in practice* is replicable on a national scale. In 4 stages and underpinned by the four tenets: 1. *Jarara Mobobo* Pedagogy of Country [Commit] 2. *Ngarra Binbiraleh* Micro-treaty Network [Engage] 3. *Garalbo Gundalah* Working Together [Action], and 4. *Yehindu Ngulung* Marking ahead [Evaluate], each stage steadily encourages communities to become invested in education. The stages work with community and localised context-specific knowledge, leverage existing infrastructure and human resources, and work towards establishing mutually beneficial relationships between communities and educational institutions.

<p>Implementation 1: <i>Jarara Mobobo</i> Pedagogy of Country [Commit] Time: Overarching.</p>	<p>TIDE <i>in practice</i> engages with living culture, and exercises respect for first Nations people’s cultural practices and protocols. <i>Jarara Mobobo</i> (Pedagogy of Country) is established with communities at the beginning of TIDE <i>in practice</i> and commits to providing tools for communities to work towards building, maintaining and sustaining practices of living culture.</p>
<p>Implementation 2: <i>Ngarra Binbiraleh</i> Micro-treaty Network [Engage] Time: 1-2 years and ongoing.</p>	<p>This is a journey of many partners who need to work together to ensure relevant and accurate information and knowledges are shared. All stakeholders (internal and external) to schools and communities work toward supporting professional development, school-based projects, and community projects, where the provision for Indigenous knowledges based on living culture can become partnered and connected.</p>

<p>Implementation 3: <i>Garalbo Gundalah</i> Working Together [Action] Time: 3+ years and ongoing.</p>	<p>Built from a foundation of pre-existing research and resources, <i>Garalbo Gundalah</i> aims to develop new ways to support the incorporation of local knowledges into the curriculum and create a consistent approach across a region. Supporting educators to delve into and explore localised knowledges (giving, sharing and reciprocity) will strengthen all parties ability to work with each other, and promote confidence for Indigenous people in the education system.</p>
<p>Implementation 4: <i>Yehindu Ngulung</i> Marking ahead [Evaluation] Time: 6 monthly reports, and yearly research findings for all tenets.</p>	<p><i>Yehindu Ngulung</i> is a continual review process. Like the ebb and flow of the TIDE, this method ensures concerns are addressed in a timely manner to continue moving forward. Marking the High TIDE and measuring the Low TIDE lines across communities is not a measure to discourage, rather it is a talking point to assist the network as we work together. In <i>Yugambeh</i> language the phrase ‘<i>Wula Bora</i>’ is a localised term for ‘yarning circle’. This is the opportunity for all to speak in a safe nurturing environment that allows and encourages all ideas to be shared, discussed, and actioned.</p>

Action

“Concrete actions are what is required to improve outcomes for First Nations People”.

Minister Burney, 2023 (CCTG Implementation Plan)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education has long been the subject of reform in Australia. Identified by direct instruction⁸, resource⁹, pedagogical¹⁰, and/or community engagement¹¹ all programs offer differing approaches in the effort to transform Indigenous education and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Yet, concerning discrepancies, as identified by the 2023 Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report¹², remain prevalent. Although Cross-Curriculum Priorities¹³, and mandated Professional Standard for Teachers¹⁴, require educators to know and teach First Nations students and knowledges, many educators still find themselves lacking the resources, confidence, or commitment to prioritise the implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in the classroom. Consequently, the burden falls to Indigenous teachers and/or non-teaching staff, who often find themselves burnt out, overlooked, undercompensated, and insufficient in their efforts to compensate (cite summit). While some of the aforementioned programs have been implemented with some success in a limited selection of Australian schools, there is yet to be a grassroots, whole of country up program, that can speak to identifiable and quantifiable transformational change for Indigenous education.

There are 9,614 schools in Australia, in which 255,796 students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander¹⁵. As an example of TIDE *in practice*, the *Yugambeh* Education Working Group have identified that there are 215+ schools across 4 Local Government Areas on *Yugambeh Jagun* [inclusive of DoE, Independent, Catholic systems] with 7994 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students at these schools. Therefore, *Yugambeh Jagun: Ngarra Binbiraleh* (engaging a micro treaty network) is the start of our conversation. With less than 5 schools with targeted *Yugambeh* language programs, low numbers of Indigenous teachers in schools, and stretched *Yugambeh* Elders and

knowledge holders, the future of TIDE *in practice* on *Yugambeh Jagun is Garalbo Gundalah* (actioning by working together) which includes the future provision of *Yugambeh* wide resources (people, knowledge and access), who are committed to our *Jarara Mobobo* (pedagogy of country), where we can *Yehindu Ngulung* (build and evaluate) the success of our collective efforts.

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Endnotes:

¹ Pendergast, D., Kruger, C., & Reynolds, J. (2023). Communiqué: Queensland Creating Futures Summit: Transforming InDigenous Education in practice, On, From, With and In Country, flowing with the TIDE. Brisbane: Griffith University.

² Burgess, C., Tennent, C., Vass, G., Guenter, J., Lowe, K. & Moodie, N. (2019). A systematic review of pedagogies that support, engage and improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46, 297-318.

³ Kruger, C. (2017). In the Bora Ring: Yugambeh Language and Song Project. An Investigation into the Effects of Participation in the 'Yugambeh Youth Choir', An Aboriginal Language Choir for Urban Indigenous Children. Master of Arts Research Thesis, Griffith University, Australia.

⁴ Lowe, K., Skrebneva, I., Burgess, C., Harrison, N. & Vass, G. (2021) Towards an Australian model of culturally nourishing schooling. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 53(4), 467-481.

⁵ Captain, K. and Burgess, C. (2022) Be that teacher who makes a difference: lead Aboriginal education for all students. Thwaite World.

⁶ Pendergast, D., Kruger, C., & Reynolds, J. (2023). Communiqué: Queensland Creating Futures Summit: Transforming InDigenous Education in practice, On, From, With and In Country, flowing with the TIDE. Brisbane: Griffith University.

⁷ Worby, G., Rigney, L., & Tur, S. (2006). Where salt and fresh waters meet: reconciliation and change in education. In *Sharing Spaces: Indigenous and non-indigenous responses to story, country and rights* (pp. 418-447). API NETWORK.

⁸ Pearson, N. (2021). Yes, DI did it: the impact of Direct Instruction on literacy outcomes for Very Remote Indigenous schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 50(2), 402-411.

⁹ Mortreux, C., & Waite, C. (2019). Narragunnawali*: Reconciliation in Education. Research Report# 11–Hearing from schools and early learning services–August 2019.

¹⁰ Lowe, K., Skrebneva, I., Burgess, C., Harrison, N. & Vass, G. (2021) Towards an Australian model of culturally nourishing schooling. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 53(4), 467-481.

¹¹ Bishop, M., Vass, G. & Thompson, K. (2021). Decolonising schooling practices through relationality and reciprocity: embedding local Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom, *Pedagogy, culture & society*, 29(2), 193-211.

¹² Productivity Commission. (2023). *Closing the gap annual data compilation report July 2023*. <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/annual-data-report/report>

¹³ ACARA. (2023). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures (version 8.4)*. Retrieved 1 August 2023 from <https://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/foundation-year-10/cross-curriculum-priorities/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-histories-and-cultures-ccp>

¹⁴ AITSL. (2017). *Australian professional standards for teachers*. Retrieved 1 August 2023 from <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/standards>

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Schools 2022*. Retrieved 25 July 2023 from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/latest-release>