

A historical overview of responses to Indigenous higher education policy in the NT

Progress or procrastination?

Catherine Street, James A. Smith, Kim Robertson, Shane Motlap, Wendy Ludwig & Kevin Gillan

Charles Darwin University

John Guenther

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

The number of Indigenous people enrolling in and completing higher education courses in the Northern Territory slowly continues to climb. Since the first policies supporting the Australian Government's self-determination policy that encompassed training of Indigenous teachers in the Northern Territory, Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education have played vital roles in increasing opportunities for Indigenous people to participate and succeed in higher education across all industries. From a policy perspective, these institutions are responsible for implementing Indigenous higher education policies at the local level in order to ensure that practice is guided by policy. Yet, there are other factors at play when considering policy implementation. This paper will provide a historical narrative around the institutional responses to national Indigenous higher education policies and summarise how implementation has often been constrained by parallel economic and socio-political forces.

Keywords: Indigenous, education, higher education, policy, history, Northern Territory, university.

Introduction

Over the last fifty years, the number of Indigenous people enrolling in and completing higher education courses nationally has steadily increased (Department of Education and Training, 2015; Pechenkina, Kowal, & Paradies, 2011). Some measures emerging from higher

education policies that have assisted in this include financial and academic support, enabling and bridging courses, aspiration building and orientation programs, increasing the Indigenous academic and professional workforce, and strengthening Indigenous governance within universities (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012). A vast array of national and state or territory government policies have been developed and implemented over time

to direct action within the institutions responsible for higher education delivery. However, Indigenous higher education student enrolment, success and completion figures are still well below parity with those of the non-Indigenous population (Department of Education and Training, 2015).

The ongoing disparity highlights that a vital part of policy success is dependent on the policy implementation process. In the Northern Territory, the Indigenous population constitutes approximately 30 per cent of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The higher education system in the Territory, therefore, has an important role to play in supporting and enabling Indigenous higher education aspirations and outcomes. It would be telling, then, to investigate how higher education institutions have endeavoured to translate national and Northern Territory government policy into action. In the Northern Territory, two institutions are primarily responsible for providing higher education – Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Although CDU and Batchelor Institute have different histories, student cohorts and programs, they have both played a significant role in providing higher education opportunities for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. This paper will outline the evolution of CDU and Batchelor Institute's strategies for Indigenous higher education over the past fifty years and how they have been influenced by national and Northern Territory government policy frameworks and contexts. It will also reflect on the impact of a progressively deregulated higher education industry and the resulting policy focus on outcomes, performance and accountability.

When conducting policy analysis, it is critical to articulate how the term 'policy' is being applied (Jones, 2013). The term 'policy' can be interpreted in many ways, however, most definitions can be classified into two categories (Maddison & Denniss, 2009). The first is the view that policy is the result of authoritative or authorised choice, that is, governments devising policies through a hierarchical process. The second is the view that policy is the result of structured interaction. These interpretations of policy recognise that policy is produced as a result of compromise of multiple interests, through complex horizontal relationships. The analysis presented here fits with the latter, that is, it has attempted to describe Indigenous higher education policy responses in the Northern Territory taking into consideration the complex and multidimensional influences that impact on the outcomes of policy.

For the purposes of this article, Indigenous refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and/or Australian First Nations people.

Background

Charles Darwin University

Adult education began in the Northern Territory in 1950 with the delivery of adult education classes in Alice Springs, and then in Darwin in 1951 at Adult Education Centres (Webb, 2013). Webb (2013) reports that enrolments grew quickly at these centres in the 1950s and 1960s, and momentum developed in the discussion around the need for a university in the Northern Territory. Darwin Community College was established in 1974 as a post-secondary teaching institution, initially delivering courses in fields such as technology and science, applied arts, commerce, teacher education and linguistics (Darwin Community College, 1974). Over the past five decades, course offerings have grown to include a much larger array of courses such as health, education, business, law and more recently, Indigenous knowledges. Darwin Community College evolved into the Darwin Institute of Technology (1984-1988), Northern Territory University (NTU) (1989-2002), and finally to CDU in 2003.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Batchelor Institute was established in the early 1970s in response to changes in government policies towards self-determination and self-management. Since 1974 the Institute (originally the Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre, then from 1979 Batchelor College, and from 1999, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education) has played an important role in building the skills and capacity of Aboriginal teachers and teaching/teacher assistants across the Northern Territory and other parts of Australia. It has had a particularly strong role in the development of the remote teaching workforce. From 1990, Batchelor College was recognised as a higher education institution (Batchelor College, 1991). The College then progressively increased its offerings of diploma and advanced diploma courses but maintained a continued focus on the discipline of education.

1970s

Darwin Community College

During the early 1970s Darwin Community College set up its teacher education program for Aboriginal teachers

in line with national self-determination policy at the time (Darwin Community College, 1973). Successful completion of this training at the time led to attainment of an Aboriginal Schools Teaching Certificate, which qualified students to teach in remote schools only. The School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) was also established when Darwin Community College was set up in 1974. Bilingual education was part of the bigger picture of Aboriginal people's need to control their own lives, to express their identities, and to shape their communities through their own aspirations (Devlin, Disbray, & Devlin, 2017). Units delivered by SAL became an integral part of teacher training at Darwin Community College and the Aboriginal Teacher Education College, equipping teachers with the skills they needed to learn, and to most effectively communicate and educate their own students. The push for adult vocational training opportunities by the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs led to Darwin Community College opening offices for adult education delivery in Katherine and Nhulunbuy in the late 1970s (Darwin Community College, 1979). There were also annexes in operation at Tennant Creek, Pine Creek, Batchelor and Alyangula (Darwin Community College, 1975). In total, vocational non-award courses were being delivered in around eight remote communities at this time (Darwin Community College, 1977).

In light of the increasing influence of national consultative bodies such as the National Aboriginal Consultative Group (NACG) and the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), there was an internal proposal in 1978-79 to set up an Aboriginal Education Committee to provide advice to the Darwin Community College Council (Berzins & Loveday, 1999). However, this proposal did not progress due to what some believed was ongoing conservatism within the Northern Territory Government and Darwin Community College in regard to Indigenous self-determination (Ludwig, 2017). NAEC's advocacy around Aboriginal education as a subject area influenced an early proposal for a School of Aboriginal Studies in the late 1970s, which also failed at this time (Berzins & Loveday, 1999). Although some early advocacy efforts to implement strategies put forward at the national level were not successful, there was progress in other areas. An extension to Abstudy, an Australian Government scheme established to provide financial support for Indigenous tertiary education students, allowed for the development of specific courses for Indigenous students such as the Certificate of General Studies for Aborigines. This course resulted in graduates gaining matriculation level equivalency and was an enabler for entry to

award courses, or employment within the Australian and Northern Territory public service (Department of Education, 1981). There were 28 enrolments in the first intake of this course in 1980 (Department of Education, 1981).

Aboriginal Teacher Education College

In 1972 the Vocational Training College was established at Batchelor, utilising the recently closed accommodation facilities of the Rum Jungle uranium mine. At the time, training courses were run for Aboriginal students from around the Territory. The move to Batchelor was seen as a better alternative: 'being located outside Darwin, for the mainly remote area students, was the comparative tranquillity of the semi-rural setting plus the opportunity for students to get on with their studies without the disruptions of city life' (Uibo, 1993, p. 9). An assistant teacher training program run at Kormilda College was also relocated to Batchelor at the start of 1974. The name Aboriginal Teacher Education College was coined in 1974, and training was carried out for first and second year Assistant Teachers. Third and Fourth year training was still conducted at Darwin Community College. Vocational courses ceased in 1976 leaving just teacher education.

Within this context of self-determination and equity, the Aboriginal Teacher Education College began offering its Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program in 1976. Remote delivery was, in part, a response to the high dropout rates of students required to relocate to Darwin to complete their training (Reaburn, Bat, & Kilgariff, 2015). The aim of this staged program in the first instance was to qualify remote school teacher assistants, and then provide a bridge into stage two and three teacher education programs. In the early years, most students were existing Department of Education staff. As Abstudy became more accessible, 'private' students began enrolling. In 1979, the name 'Batchelor College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE)' replaced the previous Vocational Training College and the Aboriginal Teacher Education College.

1980s

Darwin Institute of Technology

The Aboriginal Task Force was launched in 1980 at the Darwin Institute of Technology and had an 'unwritten policy of Aboriginalisation in teaching, support and administration' (Calma, 1984, p. 2; Darwin Community College, 1980). Key activities of the task force included

establishing common room facilities, building a number of student residences and developing more courses specifically for Aboriginal students (Berzins & Loveday, 1999). In 1984, through negotiations with the Northern Territory Department of Education, NAEC and Batchelor College, an enclave support system was established within the Faculty of Education for Aboriginal students who were transferring from Batchelor College to complete their final year of a Diploma of Teaching at the Darwin Institute of Technology – as it had just become known. This arrangement had been determined through negotiations around 1980 with the Aboriginal Teacher Education College, Darwin Community College and the Northern Territory Department of Education (Uibo, 1993). In total, over 400 Indigenous students were enrolled in vocational and higher education courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology in 1984 (Calma, 1984). After further internal advocacy the Darwin Institute of Technology, as it was then, created the Division of Aboriginal Education in 1988; this later became the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies (Calma, 1984; Darwin Institute of Technology, 1988). It was noted as early as 1980 that although there was much activity that focused on Aboriginal education and research, Darwin Community College still had no formal Aboriginal education policy (Berzins & Loveday, 1999; Calma, 1984).

Activities to support the bilingual policy were ongoing; linguistics units offered by the SAL had become a compulsory part of Batchelor College's teacher training course. The SAL was then transferred to Batchelor College in 1989 (Uibo, 1993). The NACG and the NAEC in the 1970s and 1980s emphasised the need to develop the Aboriginal education workforce. Equal opportunity legislation passed in the mid-1980s and the Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs (Miller, 1985) encouraged the institution to examine staff policies regarding recruitment and promotion, although explicit strategies in this area only became discernible in the early 1990s.

Batchelor College

In 1983, Batchelor's teacher training program included a third year, leading to an Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools). Students wishing to complete

a full diploma were then required to enrol with the Darwin Institute of Technology. Dissatisfaction with this arrangement led to a partnership between Batchelor and Deakin University, discussed later. By 1986, enrolments in Batchelor's teacher education programs were reported to be 126 (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1986). Enrolments saw a fivefold increase in the period from 1987 to 1991, up to about 700 (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1992).

Batchelor championed 'Both Ways' learning and fostered a culture of participatory action research with Aboriginal educators in the early 1980s (White, 2015). Both-Ways is a philosophy of education that 'brings together Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts, and embraces

values of respect, tolerance and diversity' (Ober & Bat, 2007, p. 69).

By 1988, two-thirds of Batchelor's teacher education students were enrolled in RATE (Kemmis, 1988). Batchelor College recognised the need for teacher education programs

that in the first instance empowered graduates to be '... resources for other community members by extending options and assisting their communities make decisions more effectively as they move towards self-management' (Batchelor College, 1985, p. 2). While not explicitly mentioning policy, the language of 'self-management' reflects the driving policy position of the Australian Government in the early 1980s. The 1985 proposal for an Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools), cited above, quickly developed with a partnership with Deakin University to accredit training at the standard of a three-year higher education qualification (the D-BATE program). This ultimately led to Batchelor being recognised as a higher education institution in 1989 (Batchelor College, 1988, 1997; Roche & White, 1990).

1990s

Northern Territory University

The influence of 'equity' and 'access' policy and policy discourse became evident in the late 1980s and early 1990s. An equal opportunity unit was established in 1988 in response to national equal opportunity legislation and equity funds were used for setting up initiatives such as Aboriginal Liaison Positions (Northern Territory

The recognition of Batchelor College as a higher education institution allowed for an expansion in the number of courses and the development of higher level courses. Enrolments in diploma courses increased from 46 in 1992 to 529 in 1996.

University, 1995). Marking NTU's first major efforts to foster Indigenous self-determination in governance and decision-making, the Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Aboriginal Liaison Committee (ALC) were set up within CAIS, the Centre for Aboriginal and Islander Studies. The AAC was to advise Council on Aboriginal issues, employment and research, while the ALC was set up to develop the NTU Aboriginal Education Strategic Plan, which was released in 1992 and aligned with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan (Northern Territory University, 1992). CAIS at this time was delivering a range of TAFE courses and two higher education enabling courses through Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP) funding. Aboriginal Student Services was established within CAIS in 1992 for the provision of academic and personal support to students.

In 1993, work began on developing an Aboriginal Studies course and units (Northern Territory University, 1993). This evolved in light of then Prime Minister Paul Keating's 1992 Redfern speech, which had brought 'reconciliation' to the forefront of Aboriginal affairs discussions, and several other reports (Department of Employment Education and Training, 1989; Northern Territory University, 1993, 1994; Yunupingu, 1995). By the late 1990s, Aboriginal Studies units had been included in the curricula of degree programs across NTU (Northern Territory University, 1999a).

By the mid-1990s, national vocational education and training (VET) standards had shifted towards competency-based training. These and other changes to VET, increased competition from other higher education providers, and a reduction in Australian and Northern Territory Governments funding had put added financial pressure on the university (Northern Territory University, 1997). In line with national requirements NTU established a business model to strategically coordinate and report against its activities, as demonstrated in various strategic plans (MCEETYA, 1995; Northern Territory University, 1998b, 1999b, 2000b). In 1997, NTU began reporting against access, participation, retention and success for students in equity groups, including Indigenous students (Northern Territory University, 1997). It must be noted that the inclusion of Indigenous Australian people within an equity framework is contentious (see, for example, Bunda, Zipin, & Brennan, 2012), however, this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. To assist in increasing revenue, NTU began to develop a stronger focus on international activity.

Batchelor College

The recognition of Batchelor College as a higher education institution allowed for an expansion in the number of courses and the development of higher level courses. Enrolments in diploma courses increased from 46 in 1992 to 529 in 1996 (Batchelor College, 1993, 1997). A 1995 external evaluation of the College noted the College's reliance on National Aboriginal Education Program funding, recommending instead pursuit of triennial funding similar to universities' funding arrangements at the time (Baumgart, Halse, Philip, Aston, & Power, 1995). However, the evaluation also recommended that the College's status as a 'continuing entity' (p. 162) be tied to development of its quality assurance processes, with a focus on outcomes. Consequently, the language of Batchelor Annual Reports subsequent to the 1995 evaluation incorporated 'outcomes' and 'quality', where previously these terms were largely missing. The evaluation set in train steps towards the establishment of Batchelor as an independent higher education provider, which ultimately occurred on 1 July 1999 through passing of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Bill in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in June 1999.

The establishment of the Howard Government in 1996, and its shift in emphasis to a need for accountability and practical reconciliation raised some concerns for Batchelor College. The first evidence of this came in the form of changes to Abstudy, which would have adversely affected remote Batchelor students if they had been enacted as originally proposed (Batchelor College, 1998; Stanley & Hansen, 1998). According to the *1998 Batchelor Annual Report*, the changes implemented in 1997 'had a significant and deleterious effect on the operations of college courses and students' capacity to participate in them' (Batchelor College, 1999, p. 16). The following year, the newly named Batchelor Institute reported:

In 1999, the Commonwealth agreed to the adoption of an 'eclectic mode' of administering the travel and accommodation expenses component of Abstudy grants for Batchelor students. The 'eclectic mode' involves funding directly to the Institute and the diversion of some of the funds normally spent on student travel and accommodation towards the provision of more community-based teaching. (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2000, p. 15)

At the time, this granted BIITE more flexibility to be able to meet the needs of its students. Those who wanted to travel to Batchelor to undertake their studies could do so, and those who wanted to stay in their home communities could also still access training and support.'

2000s

Charles Darwin University

With reduced financial support from Australian and Northern Territory Governments, NTU remote education and training delivery had retracted by the year 2000 (Northern Territory University, 1998a, 2000a). An increased focus on and investment in the development of online learning systems and technology to increase access to a wider range of students was prompted by the Australian Government's reduced investment in the sector. The *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* review (Nelson, 2003), reiterated the need for various Indigenous student support measures to be put in place or supported financially to continue. These included the *Away From Base* program and *Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme/Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme*, which were coordinated by the Indigenous Academic Support Unit, which was established at CDU in 2004 (Charles Darwin University, 2004). Cadetships, apprenticeships and a work experience program for Indigenous students were also initiated in 2009 with funding from the Australian Government encouraging efforts to increase the Indigenous workforce (Charles Darwin University, 2006). These programs wound down within a few years after CDU did not allocate ongoing funding. Indigenous student higher education participation - the number of Indigenous students divided by the number of all domestic students - reached its highest point at 6.4 per cent in 2013 and has since dropped to 5.6 per cent (Charles Darwin University, 2013, 2016). Indigenous higher education student success - the student progression rate for Indigenous students divided by the progression rate for all other students - peaked in the early 2000s at 77 per cent (Charles Darwin University, 2003). From then it declined and in 2015 sat at approximately 58 per cent (Charles Darwin University, 2015a).

The *Growing Our Own* program - a partnership between CDU and Catholic Education NT - was established at CDU in 2009 with Australian Government funds supporting the *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Teachers Initiative (MATSITI)*. The program has seen some success in training of Indigenous teachers in Catholic schools across the Northern Territory (Charles Darwin University, 2009). *Pro Vice-Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership* position was established at CDU in 2008 and the first appointment made; notably the most senior Indigenous academic in the country at that time (Charles Darwin University, 2008). It is presumed this role was established in response to a number of

policies advocating for leadership opportunities for Indigenous people in higher education, although there is no particular policy that stands out as being influential. In 2010, a partnership between CDU and Batchelor Institute was brokered by both the Australian and Northern Territory Governments to establish the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE). The ACIKE partnership was created to address institutional economic circumstances, rather than in response to government policy at the time. The ACIKE partnership was established with \$30 million from the Australian Government to deliver higher education and other activities for Indigenous students (Charles Darwin University, 2009).

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

The newly established 'Institute' resurrected the idea that Batchelor might become an Indigenous university in the future. The concept had been discussed in the mid-1980s but was soon abandoned for a number of reasons. A strategic plan developed in 2000 and approved in 2001 articulated a goal for the Institute to gain the status of an Indigenous university. It is unclear whether this was a response to policy or was primarily driven by the Institute leadership and the Council. The 2001 Annual Report stated that 'The Institute is moving towards becoming a university but is taking the steps with caution as it is and will be fundamentally different from any other university in Australia' (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2002, p. 42). The first undergraduate bachelor course was accredited in 2000 with enrolments commencing in 2001. The early 2000s saw a decline in diploma enrolments (possibly transferring to bachelor courses) and a rise in bachelor degree enrolments. Enrolments in enabling courses also burgeoned in the early 2000s, with 224 the peak in 2003. The cautionary note about university status quoted above set the scene for a deprioritisation of this ambition by 2005 (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2006). However, the growth in higher education enrolments was also coupled with a desire to see postgraduate courses established (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2005) and in 2007 a Division of Research was established with graduate certificate and masters courses commencing. In 2008 PhD courses were offered for the first time.

By 2008 it was clear that the Institute was about to undergo significant change. The 2008 Annual Report (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education,

2009) noted that: 'The profile of the Institute will probably change somewhat in the ensuing years as it responds to the challenges it has before it' (p. 5). These comments were prefaced with a note about the Global Financial Crisis and mention of the likely impact of the Bradley Review (Bradley *et al.*, 2008). However, Batchelor Institute's institutional records do not clarify whether it was national policy, or institutional leadership or management decisions that precipitated the changes that the Institute underwent.

In August 2009, Brian McMaster, 'a senior partner at KordaMentha, a consulting firm specialising in corporate reconstruction and reorganisation was appointed by the Council of the Institute as Acting Director' (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2010, p. 10 Vol. 2). This ultimately led to a revision of the *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Act* in 2012, the partnership with CDU and the establishment of the ACIKE partnership as discussed earlier.

2010s

Charles Darwin University

Perhaps influenced by the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council strategic plan that prioritised Indigenous decision-making and governance (IHEAC, 2006), the Vice-Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Committee was established in 2010 to provide high-level advice to the Vice Chancellor and the University in relation to Indigenous matters (Charles Darwin University, 2010b). In 2012, the ACIKE partnership officially began delivery of tertiary education courses including an enabling program, eight undergraduate courses, five postgraduate courses and three postgraduate research courses. Batchelor Institute continued its VET and higher degree by research program delivery, but other higher education courses were delivered through the ACIKE partnership and qualifications awarded through CDU. Accommodation for 72 students was constructed around this time partly through the new Centre's funding. It was during this period that the Office of Pro Vice Chancellor - Indigenous Leadership began to increase its focus on research, with the securing of a number of research grants relating to Indigenous higher education (for example, Duff, Smith, & Larkin, 2015; Frawley, Larkin, & Smith, 2017; Shalley & Stewart, 2017; Street, Smith, Stewart, & Girard, 2017).

The mid-2010s onwards has seen a significant withdrawal of regional and remote service delivery, especially in the VET space (Charles Darwin University, 2016). This was partly attributed to changes to Abstudy that required

students to enrol in whole courses before being eligible for student allowances. By 2010, three-quarters of all CDU students studied partially or fully online; highlighting the university's efforts in expanding access to interstate and international students (Charles Darwin University, 2010a). In 2012 the Australian Government signalled its commitment to a process of deregulation within a student demand driven higher education sector. Significant strategic planning was undertaken in 2014, with the new Connect Discover Grow Strategic Plan released a year later, with Indigenous leadership as one of its five key pillars (Charles Darwin University, 2015b). As of 2017, operational planning is still underway (Maddocks, 2017).

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

For the major part of the 2010s Batchelor Institute has delivered Bachelor programs under the ACIKE partnership agreement. Batchelor Institute also maintained its higher education focus on its enabling programs through its Preparation for Tertiary Success program and through the development of its postgraduate programs. Numbers enrolled in doctoral programs have been small but growing, increasing from five in 2009 to 12 in 2016. Masters enrolments peaked in 2012 (16) and by 2017 had dropped to five (Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 2017). Batchelor Institute continues to explore commercial and international course delivery contracts that build on the growing expertise being developed around customisation of accredited training to Indigenous peoples nationally and internationally.

Discussion

In summary, the histories of CDU and Batchelor Institute tell stories that have similarities and differences. CDU grew out of adult education centres established in the 1950s and became an institution that would provide both VET and higher education for residents of the Northern Territory in response to a growing population base. Its efforts in Indigenous education developed momentum in the 1980s and early 1990s but have gradually been overshadowed by a growing need to source a broader range of students from interstate and internationally to sustain its operations. CDU at the present time is focusing on 'growth and sustainability' (Maddocks, 2017). Batchelor Institute was established specifically to develop the remote Indigenous teaching workforce and has a strong history of education and research in the Northern Territory Indigenous context. It has confronted

many challenges in its efforts to maintain its position as an institution for Indigenous education in a competitive market. Both CDU and Batchelor Institute continue to deliver higher education courses for Indigenous Australian people within the Northern Territory and interstate but are experiencing financial challenges in the face of an increasingly deregulated higher education industry (Charles Darwin University, 2016). It could be argued that Batchelor Institute and CDU's current financial concerns are part of an inevitable cycle caused by real declines in public funding to the VET sector generally and to the Northern Territory more specifically where in the period 2011-2015, allocation of government funds declined by 24 per cent (see Table 5A.10 in additional tables, Productivity Commission, 2017).

In terms of policy, the efforts of both institutions to increase opportunities for Indigenous students were clearly driven by self-determination policies of the 1970s and then access, participation and equity discourses in the 1980s, with Aboriginal teacher training being a key focus area (Street *et al.*, 2017). CDU and Batchelor Institute in the early 1990s were implementing innovative education and access programs, but changes to the VET and higher education sectors then occurred in the 1990s in parallel with reductions in financial support provided by government. This had a significant impact on both institutions. After the early 2000s, it is more difficult to draw clear links between national policy and institutional strategies focused on Indigenous education, with the exception of some strategies concerning Indigenous leadership and governance. From the 2000s onwards, it appears that the financial status of both institutions had a stronger impact on Indigenous higher education strategy than the national policies in place at the time. Despite good intentions from policy-makers and policy-users alike, it seems that market forces have become the key driver of these institutions. For CDU this is particularly evidenced by increasing international enrolments, increasing from 215 in 2005 up to 2447 in 2015 (Department of Education and Training, 2017).

The promotion and implementation of strategies to increase participation and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, over the last five decades has often come, not in response to a particular policy, but rather as a direct result of the leadership and advocacy of key Aboriginal activists. At times, policy has enabled and supported this leadership and at other times, it has tended to stymie it. Funding is a key instrument of policy and that has also tended to either promote or limit opportunities for Indigenous participation in higher education. However,

funding for equity-based programs is sometimes not sustained over the longer term, or their impact is eroded over time as other priorities take precedence.

Accountability in the higher education sector has, in part, improved as a result of increased competition brought about by government policy. To continue to be considered a reputable institution by students, higher education providers must act responsibly and utilise their finances effectively. This, in one sense, has positive results for students as it, in theory, ensures a certain level of quality. Accountability in the Indigenous higher education sector – or rather the means by which it is measured – though, can also bring about challenges.

Indigenous advocates have called for increased accountability in the education sector so that funding for Indigenous education is used responsibly (Behrendt *et al.*, 2012). However, accountability measures utilised at present are a narrow range of indicators that do not comprehensively assess efforts to retain Indigenous students and staff. For example, at present participation, retention and success are the most common indicators upon which Australian Government funding is allocated. These measures do not demand transparency around the 'overall success or otherwise of specific programs' (Behrendt *et al.*, 2012, p.154). Frawley, Smith and Larkin (2015) argue that what is needed is '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' (p.10). Further research is required to determine the impact of the approaches taken at present to evaluation in this setting and to investigate possibilities for implementing more holistic evaluation frameworks (Smith *et al.*, 2018).

Conclusion

Over a period of only fifty years or so, CDU and Batchelor Institute have made significant contributions to increasing the number of Indigenous people who have enrolled and completed higher education courses. Their efforts from the 1970s up until approximately the 2000s were clearly linked to by national Indigenous education and higher education policies. From the 1990s, the effects of corporatisation of the sector began to impact on activity around Indigenous education. It became increasingly obvious that the two institutions were challenged in being guided by national Indigenous

higher education policy to improve outcomes for the Indigenous population. It appears that at present the more pressing issue is to continue to sustain their own operations. This review has highlighted key actions of CDU and Batchelor Institute throughout each decade since the 1960s. It has also outlined the likely influences on their approaches to policy implementation. More research is required to investigate the influence of economic and socio-political forces in higher education in relation to meeting the needs of Indigenous students and staff to facilitate future success for both institutions and their students.

Catherine Street is a PhD candidate with the College of Indigenous Futures, Arts and Society, CDU.

Contact: Catherine.street@cdu.edu.au

Associate Professor John Guenther is Research Leader at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Professor James A. Smith is Adjunct Professorial Research Fellow, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, CDU, and Adjunct Professorial Fellow, National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education.

Kim Robertson is Senior Analyst, Indigenous Policies and Programs, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, CDU.

Shane Motlap is Analyst, Indigenous Policies and Programs, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, CDU.

Wendy Ludwig is Director of Operations, Office of the Pro Vice Chancellor – Indigenous Leadership, CDU.

Kevin Gillan is Adjunct Professor at the School of Education, CDU.

Acknowledgements

Funding for this research was provided by the Australian Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the project Reference Group to this research.

References

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2017). 3101.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population Estimates, 2016 - Preliminary. Canberra: ABS. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3101.0Feature%20Article1Mar%202017?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3101.0&iss ue=Mar%202017&num=&view>.

Batchelor College. (1985). *A Program of Teacher Education Leading to the Award of The Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools)*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1988). *A Proposal to Develop Batchelor College as an Institute of Aboriginal Tertiary Education. A response to the Commonwealth Government's Green Paper on Higher Education*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1991). *1990 Annual Report*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1993). *1992 Annual Report*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1997). *1996 Annual Report*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1998). *Submission to the Review of the Aboriginal Study Assistance Scheme (Abstudy)*. Batchelor: Batchelor College.

Batchelor College. (1999). *1998 Annual Report*. Batchelor: Batchelor College. Retrieved from http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/10070/259217/1/1998%20Annual%20report_Web.pdf.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2000). *Batchelor College 1 January-30 June 1999, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, 1 July - 31 December 1999 Annual Report*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Retrieved from http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/10070/259218/1/1999%20Annual%20Report_Web.pdf.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2002). *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Annual Report 2001*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2005). *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Annual Report 2004*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2006). *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Annual Report 2005*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2009). *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Annual Report 2008*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Retrieved from http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/10070/259270/1/2008%20Annual%20Report_Web.pdf.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2010). *Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education Annual Report 2009*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. Retrieved from http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/jspui/bitstream/10070/259271/1/2009%20Annual%20Report%20Vol1_Web.pdf.

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. (2017). *Indigenous Student Enrolment Data*. Batchelor: Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

Baumgart, N., Halse, C., Philip, H., Aston, J., & Power, A. (1995). *Meeting the Needs of Indigenous Communities: Evaluation of Batchelor College*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Behrendt, L., Larkin, S., Griew, R., & Kelly, P. (2012). *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: Final Report*. Retrieved from https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/review_final_report_2012.pdf

Berzins, B., & Loveday, P. (1999). *A University for the Territory: The Northern Territory University and Preceding Institutions 1949-1999*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.

Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.

Bunda, T., Zipin, L., & Brennan, M. (2012). Negotiating university 'equity' from Indigenous standpoints: a shaky bridge. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16, 941-957.

- Calma, T. (1984). *Aboriginal Education 1985–1990*. Darwin: Darwin Institute of Technology.
- Charles Darwin University. (2003). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2004). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2006). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2008). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2009). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2010a). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2010b). *Vice Chancellor's Indigenous Advisory Committee Terms of Reference*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2013). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2015a). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2015b). *Connect Discover Grow: Charles Darwin University Strategic Plan 2015–2025*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Charles Darwin University. (2016). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Darwin Community College. (1973). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Community College. (1974). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Community College. (1975). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Community College. (1977). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Community College. (1979). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Community College. (1980). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Darwin Community College.
- Darwin Institute of Technology. (1988). *Annual Report 1987/88*. Darwin: Darwin Institute of Technology.
- Department of Education. (1981). *Survey on Aboriginal Access to Tertiary Education*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Education and Training. (2015). Higher Education Student Data. Appendix 2 - Equity Groups [Excel Spreadsheet]. Canberra: Australian Government. Retrieved from: <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/41746>.
- Department of Education and Training. (2017). uCube. Canberra: Department of Education and Training. Retrieved from <http://highereducationstatistics.education.gov.au/Default.aspx>.
- Department of Employment Education and Training. (1989). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy: Joint policy statement. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education and Training.
- Devlin, B., Disbray, S., & Devlin, N. (2017). *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory*. Singapore: Springer Science + Business Media.
- Duff, A., Smith, J., & Larkin, S. (2015). *Evaluation of the Indigenous component of the IntoUni program*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Frawley, J., Smith, J.A., & Larkin, S. (2015). Beyond Bradley and Behrendt: Building a stronger evidence-base about Indigenous pathways and transitions into higher education. *Learning Communities - Special Issue – Indigenous Pathways and Transitions into Higher Education*, 17, 8–11.
- Frawley, J., Larkin, S., & Smith, J. (2017). (Eds). *Indigenous Pathways and Transitions into Higher Education: From Policy to Practice*. Singapore: Springer.
- IHEAC. (2006). *Improving Indigenous outcomes and enhancing Indigenous culture and knowledge in Australian higher education*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Jones, T. (2013). Understanding Education Policy. *SpringerBriefs in Education*. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-6265-7
- Kemmis, S. (1988). *A study of the Bachelor College Remote Area Teacher Education Program 1976–1988: final report*. Geelong, Vic: Deakin Institute for Studies in Education.
- Ludwig, W. (2017). Personal communication with Street, C on 21 November, 2017. Darwin.
- Maddison, S., & Dennis, R. (2009). *An Introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Maddocks, S. (2017). Start of the Year Address. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- MCEETYA. (1995). A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2002. Canberra: MCEETYA.
- Miller, M. (1985). *Aboriginal employment and training programs: report of the Committee of Review*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Nelson, B. (2003). *Our universities: backing Australia's future*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Northern Territory Department of Education. (1986). *Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory: a situation report, June 1986*. Darwin: Northern Territory Department of Education.
- Northern Territory Department of Education. (1992). National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander education policy: the Northern Territory strategic plan: document of consultation, 1993–1995 triennium. Darwin: Educational Resources Unit, Northern Territory Department of Education.
- Northern Territory University. (1992). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1993). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1994). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1995). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1997). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1998a). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1998b). *Strategic Directions*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1999a). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (1999b). *Strategic Directions*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (2000a). *Annual Report*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Northern Territory University. (2000b). *Strategic Directions*. Darwin: Northern Territory University.
- Ober, R., & Bat, M. (2007). Both-ways: the philosophy. *Ngoonjook*, 31, 64.

- Pechenkina, E., Kowal, E., & Paradies, Y. (2011). Indigenous Australian Students' Participation Rates in Higher Education: Exploring the Role of Universities. *Indigenous Education*, 40, 59-68. doi:10.1375/ajie.40.59
- Reaburn, S., Bat, M., & Kilgariff, C. (2015). Looking for a new Common Ground: a reflection on Batchelor Institute's teacher education training programs for remote Aboriginal education professionals in the Northern Territory. *Finding Common Ground: Narratives, provocations and reflections from the 40 year celebration of Batchelor Institute* (pp. 29-40). Batchelor: Batchelor Press.
- Roche, V., & White, L. (1990). *Evaluation Report on the Remote Area Teacher Education Program Implementation of Stage Two of the Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) in 1989*. Batchelor: Batchelor College Educational Media Unit.
- Shalley, F., & Stewart, A. (2017). *Aboriginal English language literacy and numeracy in the NT: A statistical overview*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Smith, J.A., Pollard, K., Robertson, K., & Trinidad, S. (2018). What do we know about evaluation in Indigenous higher education contexts in Australia? *International Studies in Widening Participation*, 4, 2, 20-33. Retrieved from <https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/86>.
- Stanley, O., & Hansen, G. (1998). *ABSTUDY: An investment for tomorrow's employment. A Review of ABSTUDY for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission*. Woden, ACT: ATSIC.
- Productivity Commission. (2017). *Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. Report on Government Services 2017*. Canberra: Productivity Commission. Retrieved from <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2017/child-care-education-and-training/rogs-2017-volumeb.pdf>.
- Street, C., Smith, J., Stewart, A., & Girard, A. (2017a). *Whole of Community Engagement Initiative: Final Evaluation Report*. Prepared for the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- Street, C., Guenther, J., Smith, J.A., Robertson, K., Motlap, S., Ludwig, W., Gillan, K., Woodroffe, T., & Ober, R. (2017b). The evolution of Indigenous higher education in Northern Territory, Australia: A chronological review of policy. *International Studies in Widening Participation*, 4, 2, 32-51. Retrieved from <https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/index.php/iswp/article/view/80>.
- Uibo, M. (1993). *The Development of Batchelor College 1972 - 1990: An Historical Account*. (Master of Education Studies), Northern Territory University, Darwin.
- Webb, C. (2013). *An Eventful Journey: The evolution of Charles Darwin University*. Darwin: Charles Darwin University.
- White, L. (2015). Finding common ground with Indigenous and western knowledge systems and seeing common good for all present and future Australians: Where is the common ground if we are going to find it? *Finding Common Ground: Narratives, provocations and reflections from the 40 year celebration of Batchelor Institute* (pp. 8-19). Batchelor: Batchelor Press.
- Yunupingu, M. (1995). *Final report of the national review of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.