

# Welcoming Universities

A network to inspire and support Australian universities to develop a culture and practice of welcome, inclusion and belonging within their institutions, in the community, and across the higher education sector.



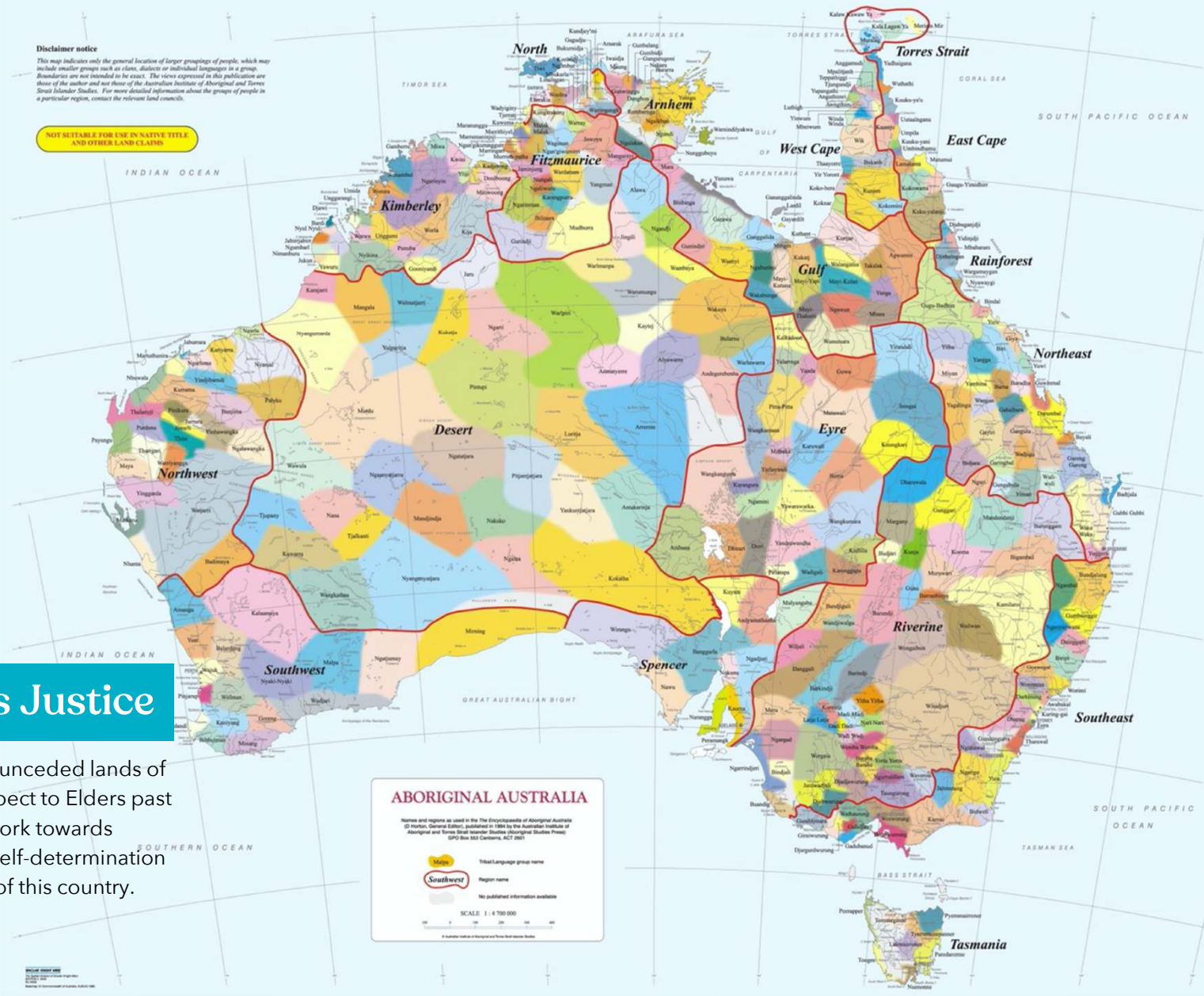
**The International Student Experience: sharing  
student centric perspectives on studying at  
Australian universities**



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Welcoming Universities, Welcoming Australia

**Disclaimer notice**  
 This map indicates only the general location of larger groupings of people, which may include smaller groups such as clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. Boundaries are not intended to be exact. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not those of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. For more detailed information about the groups of people in a particular region, contact the relevant land councils.

NOT SUITABLE FOR USE IN NATIVE TITLE AND OTHER LAND CLAIMS



## First Nations Justice

We live and work on the unceded lands of First Nations. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and work towards reconciliation with, and self-determination for, the First Peoples of this country.

## Welcoming Universities

Welcoming Universities is a network to inspire and support Australian universities to develop a culture and practice of welcome, inclusion and belonging within their institutions, in the community, and across the higher education sector.

We work in 4 key ways:

- Knowledge Sharing
- Partnership Development
  - Celebrating Success
- Standard and Accreditation



## Context

Welcoming Universities was developed in the midst of the pandemic, when the sector was experiencing:

- Declining international student numbers.
- Reckoning with the reliance on this 'market'.
- Support issues for onshore international students.
- Attempting to speedily go online.
- Job losses and casualization of workforce.
- Black Lives Matter protests and discussions, and associated questions about leadership, methodology and curriculum.
- Lack of student support – culturally specific and mental health
- Poorer student experience outcomes.
- Wider structural questions and complexities even prior to the pandemic.



## Return of international students

- Mid – late 2022 and then first semester 2023 international students returned in much higher numbers than anticipated.
- New branch of complex issues arose impacting international students – both within universities, but also across the wider society.
- Extensive media coverage of these issues, plus then further evidence of these and other complexities through government inquiry into international education and tourism.
- Students sharing their perspectives in forums and in some media, plus experts expressing deep concerns about the system.
- Increased work hours of covid concluded in July.
- Studies on food insecurity (Monash) and mental health (Deakin and UoM).



## Seeking student voices

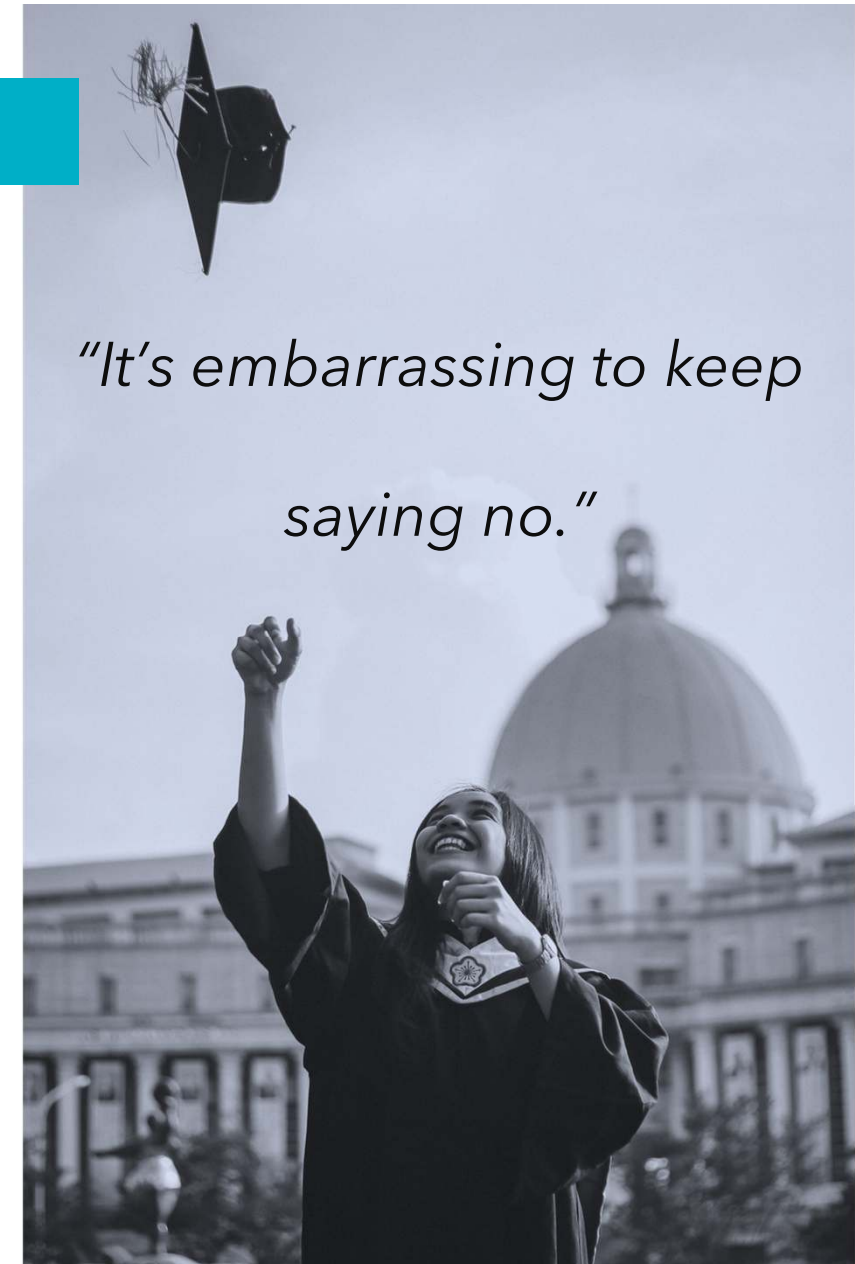
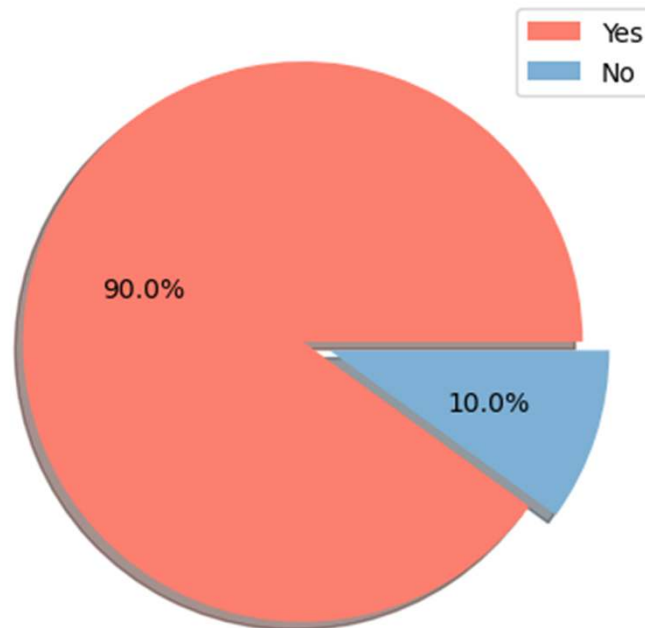
- We felt international student voices weren't being foregrounded or listened too extensively.
- We wanted to hear those voices, learn and grow from them.
- Feed this knowledge into Welcoming Universities, more robust initiative, and standard and accreditation grounded in lived experience.
- Undertook this comprehensive contextual review.
- Helped us develop student centric and student voice focused data collection process.
- This is our current phase.



## Preliminary findings – Cost of Living

- 83% of respondents said that cost of living in Australia was higher than they expected.
- 34% said that they are unable to afford basic needs.

Do you feel anxious about the cost-of-living crisis?



## Preliminary findings – Cost of Living

- 60% of students said that their university does not provide assistance for students in financial distress.
- 70% of students don't know about other assistance programs that they can access outside university

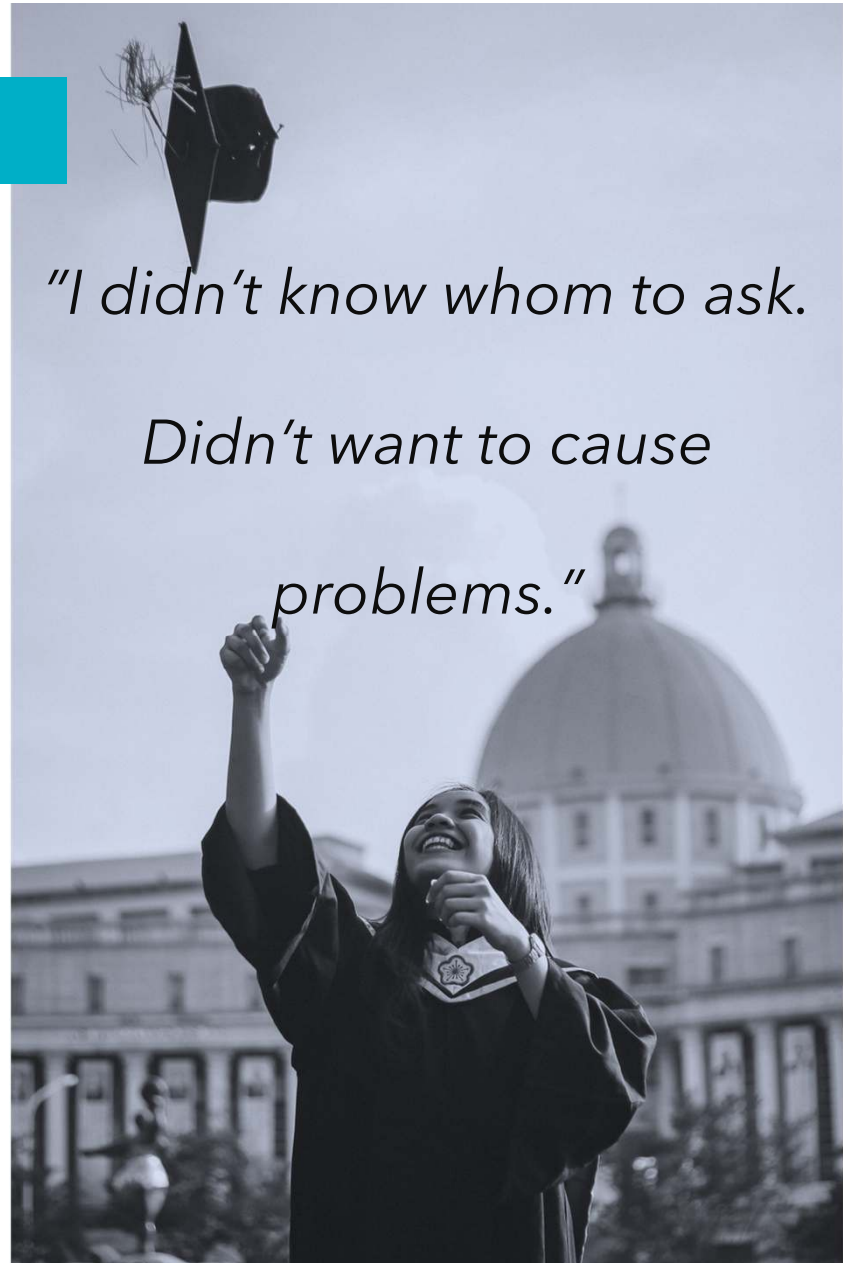
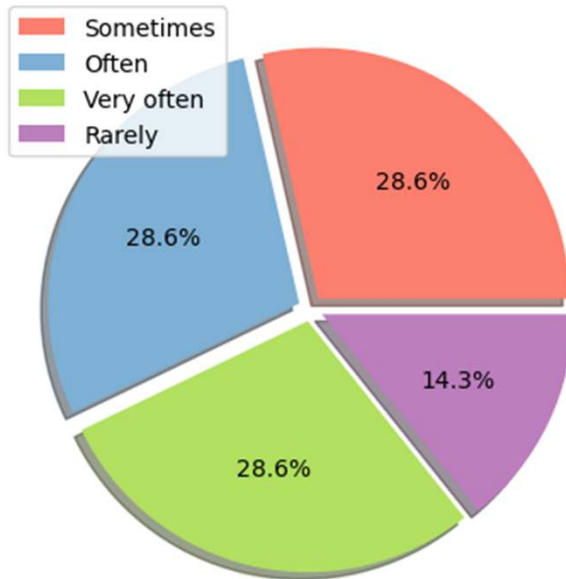
*"Sometimes I am too ashamed to ask for help at the university. They expect me to have have money and not ask for help"*



## Preliminary findings – Belonging

- 78% of students report university contributed to the environment where they feel they belong.
- Most respondents social network predominantly consists of people with the same ethnic and linguistic background

Do you experience loneliness since you began your studies in Australia?





## Setting the Standard: Welcoming Universities

- Increase the impact of cultural diversity and inclusion initiatives for the University and its community;
- Develop a positive and welcoming reputation;
- Support the development of culturally safe strategies that promote wellbeing for students and staff of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds;
- Enhance the profile of desirable higher education destinations;
- Provide a mechanism to plan for learning, improvement and change; and,
- Assess progress over time.

# Setting the Standard: Welcoming Universities

Leadership

Antiracism, social and cultural inclusion

Teaching, learning and research

Places and spaces

**CATEGORY** 1.0 Leadership

**PRINCIPLES**

Welcoming Cities respectfully acknowledge the past, present and emerging traditional owners, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the traditional custodians of this land, and respect their culture and identity which has been a continuum with the land and sea for millennia.

Welcoming Cities seek to engage local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as leaders in welcoming activities.

Welcoming Cities recognise the importance of cultural diversity and inclusion and seek to advance and institutionalise that work through collaboration with local, national and international agencies.

Welcoming Cities engage existing communities in understanding who their neighbours are and why welcoming work is important.

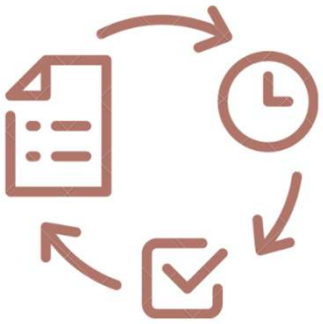
Welcoming Cities bring together the voices and experiences of both existing and migrant communities in defining a welcoming agenda and platform.

**CRITERION**

<b>1.1</b> The local council recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of this Nation and seeks to engage local Indigenous communities in welcoming work. <b>Demonstrated by:</b>	<b>1.1.1</b> Actively seeking research, consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.	<b>1.1.2</b> Facilitating opportunities for migrant communities to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
<b>1.2</b> The local council partners with diverse stakeholders to promote a welcoming culture through advocacy and communication activities across various platforms. <b>Demonstrated by:</b>	<b>1.2.1</b> A public resolution declaring the local council a public resolution declaring the local council to be a welcoming community, and an explanation of what this means.	<b>1.2.2</b> Presenting resolutions that communicate positive migrant, business and contributions.
<b>1.3</b> The local council supports and promotes activities and initiatives that nurture connections between migrant and existing communities. <b>Demonstrated by:</b>	<b>1.3.1</b> Encouraging activities and initiatives that connect people from migrant communities and justify from existing communities.	<b>1.3.2</b> Identifying and facilitating opportunities that bring together representatives from migrant communities and existing communities to discuss community issues.
<b>1.4</b> The local council incorporates cultural diversity and inclusion in strategic, business and community plans and monitors their progress. <b>Demonstrated by:</b>	<b>1.4.1</b> Engaging diverse stakeholders from both migrant communities and existing communities, in the development, implementation and assessment of the plan.	<b>1.4.2</b> Developing a stakeholder reference group that reflects the diversity of the community.
		<b>1.4.3</b> Assessing the progress of the local community and using that feedback to improve the plan.

**INDICATORS**

# Setting the Standard: Welcoming Universities



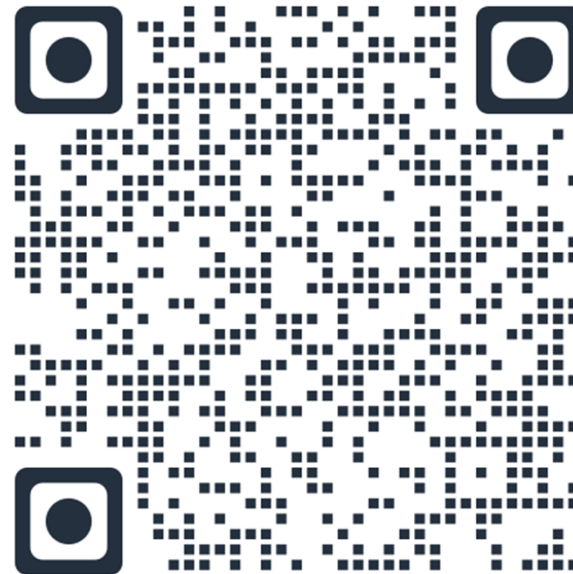


# Welcoming Universities Network

- **Knowledge Sharing.** Supporting Universities to access and share evidence-based research, resources, policies, and case studies.
- **Partnership Development.** Facilitating & resourcing multi-sector partnerships to maximise learning, reach and impact.
- **Celebrating Success.** Recognising universities that demonstrate leading practice and innovation in welcoming and inclusion efforts.
- **Standard + Accreditation.** Setting the National Standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in higher education.




## Public Consultation and Collaboration



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“Communities where everyone can participate  
and find a sense of belonging.”

Welcoming → Belonging