



Original research

The experiences of Australian indigenous nursing students: A phenomenological study

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1. Introduction

Education and learning are central to all people from all communities across the world, but access and achievement may be inhibited for a variety of reasons. Indigenous Australians have been identified as being among the three most disadvantaged groups in Australian higher education. Indigenous Australians are more likely to have difficulty accessing tertiary education and learning (Australian Bureau of Australian Bureau Statistics, 2008; 2011). Reasons related to difficulties accessing tertiary studies being difficult include, living in remote locations, low socioeconomic circumstance, financial hardship, academic readiness and aspirations (Bradley and Noonan, 2008; Pechenkina et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2011).

Of note, there has been little growth in Indigenous nursing student participation in pre-registration university courses in Australia over past decades (Department of Education, 2009). As such, there continues to be a significantly lower number of Australian Indigenous registered nurses compared to non-Indigenous (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008). West, Usher and Foster (2010a), asserts that increasing the number of Australian Indigenous nurses in the health sector would have multiple benefits such as expanding the number of healthcare employees who are able to facilitate “Walking in both World’s”. Having healthcare workers that “Walk in both Worlds” could facilitate improved health outcomes for Indigenous people as western medicine would be delivered by a well-educated and culturally capable Indigenous workforce. Additionally, increasing the number of Indigenous healthcare workers would provide more role models for younger Indigenous peoples (West et al., 2010b).

Historically, learning and education of Aboriginal people in

Australia has been influenced by the misperception that being part of a disadvantaged group affected Indigenous people’s cognitive and linguistic ability (Cole and Means, 1981; Partington, 2002). Further, Pechenkina et al. (2011), perceived Indigenous students’ ability to achieve and learn is impeded by financial hardships, health problems, racist attitudes and low levels of Indigenous students’ academic readiness and aspirations. Completion rates remain at 2.6 per 10,000 Indigenous students compared to 4.8 per 10,000 non-Indigenous students (Aboriginal, 2014). However, the low number of Indigenous healthcare workers in Australia is inconsistent with other countries with Indigenous peoples such as New Zealand (Wilson et al., 2011).

Although there is an identified need to increase the number of healthcare workers in Australia, there exists a lack of clarity surrounding factors that impede successful completion of tertiary studies by Australian Indigenous nursing students. Therefore, this paper presents findings from a qualitative study that explored the experiences of Australian Indigenous nursing students. The study was deemed significant as it sought to provide evidence where little research has been undertaken. Presently, there is limited information surrounding the experiences of a group of Australian Indigenous nursing students in addition to limited qualitative data surrounding factors that may assist Indigenous nursing students succeed at university.

2. Literature review

For decades, low representation of Indigenous nurses in Australia and participation and retention of undergraduate nursing students in universities has been problematic (Pechenkina, 2014; Pechenkina and Anderson, 2011). Studies have identified a correlation between the

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health of Australian Indigenous people, health issues faced by the Indigenous people and improvements that could be achieved through increasing the number of Indigenous people employed in health professions (Usher et al., 2005b). An increase in health professionals could be attained by implementing suitable culturally specific learning strategies and support networks to ensure Indigenous students have the best chance of success (Pechenkina and Anderson, 2011; West et al., 2010a).

The majority of literature surrounding the best approaches or ways of learning for Indigenous students is dated but articulates the need to understand the strong link that exists between culture and how people think and learn (Cole and Means, 1981; More, 1990; Evans, 2009). Past literature surrounding the learning styles of Australian Indigenous people suggested that Indigenous students learn more effectively when learning includes imagination, kinaesthetic, contextual, person orientated and co-operative strategies (Craven et al., 2005; Nichol, 1998). More recently, Chilisa (2012), proposed the acquisition of knowledge by Australian Indigenous people was deemed as occurring through listening, reviewing, observing, sharing, conceptualising and engaging with elders.

Rigby et al.'s 2011 qualitative exploratory study, identified that Australian Indigenous tertiary students lacked knowledge of academic expectations together with the challenges these expectations presented. Furthermore, a lack of pre-entry knowledge was outlined as one of the identified barriers to student success (Rigby et al., 2011). Further, Rigby et al. (2011) claimed many educators lacked an understanding of Indigenous learning styles as well as lacked flexibility to change delivery styles. University lecturers also reported that Indigenous students were less able to speak or write good grammar (Usher et al., 2005a).

Studies have also indicated that Indigenous student's motivation for completing tertiary studies is closely intertwined with the contribution that they wish to make (and at times must make) as individuals to society and their community (Craven et al., 2005). Additionally, family support has been identified as a key factor affecting retention and attrition rates of Indigenous students. Thus, family support is integral to the community, family dynamic and individual success (Power et al., 2013). Further, Australian Indigenous students experience higher social, emotional and cultural demands from family and the community that impacts on commitment to study and retention and attrition rates (Cameron, 2011). Hinton and Chirgwin (2011) identified that providing family support was an obligation for Indigenous people. Similarly, a study by Wilson et al. (2011) claimed that when family commitments were not a barrier, participants (of Wilson's study) were more likely to achieve highly with their study and assessment requirements. Family support included providing childcare, acknowledging academic demands, and minimising financial hardship. Lack of family support was distinguished as the most significant challenge to continuing to study at university (Wilson et al., 2011).

Indigenous student's satisfaction with learning and teaching support at university is also important in relation to influencing Indigenous students to enter and complete university (Wilson et al., 2011). Kelly and McAllister (2013), suggested that the positive outcomes acquired from feeling supported during tertiary study are noteworthy but, often overlooked. The most significant support strategies include improved tutoring, counseling, mentoring, and intensive support programs for students deemed at risk (Best and Stuart, 2014). A further support mechanism is to ensure culturally appropriate accommodation for students (Cameron, 2011). Furthermore, Rigby et al.'s (2011), participants gave high praise to the employment of Indigenous lecturers and academic staff (and non- Indigenous Academic staff) and the provision of culturally relevant teaching learning support.

Overall, the literature suggests that understanding teaching styles, Australian Indigenous peoples commitment to family and culture is vital to the retention and success of all students. Relevant studies have identified that academic success and program completion requires the provision of support and understanding surrounding students

Indigenoussness (Devlin, 2009; Anderson et al., 2011). Moreover, the literature highlighted the complexities associated with culture and learning. Overall, the need to increase the number of Australian Indigenous health care workers combined with the known challenges associated with tertiary education, authenticates the need for further research (Usher et al., 2005c). Therefore, a qualitative study was undertaken to explore the experiences of Australian Indigenous nursing students.

3. Methodology

Phenomenology was the methodology employed for this study to gain insight into the essence of the individuals' experience and understand the meaning the individuals place on the experience. Phenomenology was designed for the purpose of qualitatively exploring the lived experiences of humans and what these experiences meant (Polit and Beck, 2010, 2014). Phenomenology is considered a philosophical means of inquiry grounded in care and caring philosophy (Reiners, 2012).

There are two different approaches to phenomenology. The original approach to phenomenology is termed Descriptive Phenomenology which was developed by Husserl (1859–1938). Husserl believed that phenomenology was related to consciousness and based on the meaning of the individual's experience and how individuals' thoughts, memory, imagination and emotion create the question "what do we know as persons?" (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

Husserl was primarily concerned with epistemology and argued that objects in the external world exist independently making this information reliable (Dahlberg et al., 2008). Heidegger (1889–1976), who was a student of Husserl's, expanded and broadened Husserl's descriptive phenomenology resulting in the emergence of Interpretive Phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology disregards the concept of 'bracketing' and includes hermeneutics which involves studying the concept of being in the world rather than knowing the world (Flood, 2010).

Key features of interpretive enquiry include 'language' and 'context'. Language is considered the essence of what is said and understood; context is considered the framework of understanding behaviours (Liamputtong, 2013a). Further, hermeneutics is the interpretation of text where language (written or spoken) is explored to reveal the phenomenon (Liamputtong, 2013a). Interpretive phenomenology employs a concept called the 'hermeneutic circle' to explore the language of everyday experiences around cultural mores, behaviours, events, actions and relationships between language and social life (Liamputtong, 2013a; Flood, 2010; Polit and Beck, 2014). The hermeneutic circle is used during data analysis to enable to researcher to move in and out of the data just as one would move in and out of a circle.

Phenomenology was considered ideal for this study because it seeks to describe the meaning of the experience of people, to understand their experiences and equally acknowledge human and environmental relationships that are integral in the lives of individuals (Polit and Beck, 2014; Reiners, 2012). Interpretive phenomenology aligns with Indigenous people learning from experience such as hearing, seeing, feeling, believing (spiritual), remembering, stories, deciding and evaluating their place in the community, family life and connections to the land and country (Nakata, 2007). Additionally, phenomenology predominantly uses one-to-one interviews to collect data which is reflective of 'yarning'. Yarning is the term used by Indigenous people to relay stories about their beliefs, feelings, memories, and decisions (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010).

3.1. Ethical clearance

Indigenous focused research in Australia requires endorsement from an Elder prior to commencement. Therefore, a female Butchulla elder

endorsed the conduct of this study. Following sanctioning by an Indigenous elder, ethical clearance was obtained from a university Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Ethical approval documentation was submitted, and approval acquired prior to data collection.

Ethical tenets applied included ensuring confidentiality by providing every participant with a pseudonym. Throughout the research process, the preparation of a thesis and this article, participants are only referred to using this pseudonym. All data was de-identified and only the researcher knows the true identity of the participants. No other individuals will be made aware of the identity of any participant. Confidentiality was upheld in relation to storage of data as data is stored on a password protected computer and hard documents kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office (for five years). Furthermore, tacit consent was obtained when the student replied to the email sent to them from the Indigenous Liaison Officer inviting them to participate in the study. Written informed consent was obtained prior to commencement of the interview to indicate a willingness to participate following a verbal explanation about the research. All consent forms were signed by participants, collected by the researcher prior to data collection and securely stored by the researcher.

3.2. Recruitment

This study aimed to recruit approximately 10 Indigenous nursing students overseen by the Indigenous Liaison Officer. The Indigenous Liaison Officer was engaged for ethical reasons such as ensuring the researcher did not have any direct contact with the university students. Further, as the researcher did not have any direct relationship to students, the Indigenous Liaison Officer provided a conduit between the researcher and the students to invite them to participate. As such, purposive sampling or deliberate sampling was employed to ensure the participants had the characteristics required for this study (Higgin Bottom, 2004; Liamputtong, 2013b). Purposive sampling was critical to guarantee the recruitment of Australian Indigenous nursing students.

Students willing to participate contacted either the Indigenous Liaison Officers by email or phone. Unfortunately, recruitment clashed with the end of semester vacation period and only four Indigenous students agreed to participate in this study. Three of the participants were women and one was male. The age of participants varied from 24 to 45 years. Of significance, although small cohorts are synonymous with qualitative research more participants were wanted and efforts to attract more participants through snowballing did not increase participant numbers. The small cohort limited the findings further reinforcing that generalisations are not an outcome of qualitative research. Therefore, findings are not reflective of the general population (Liamputtong, 2013b).

3.3. Data collection

One-to-one semi structured interviews were conducted for 40–50 min using open ended interview questions to promote conversation and build rapport. Semi structured interviews elicit rich data as there is the opportunity to seek clarification and extend the conversation. Interviewing enabled the researcher to *yarn* with the participants to capture the essence of their experiences as Indigenous students (West et al., 2010b). All interviews were conducted in a quiet setting such as an interview room in the library or in the on-campus Indigenous garden. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher to enable the researcher to become immersed in the data to assist with data analysis.

3.4. Data analysis

Data analysis involved preparing a matrix chart and employing Gadamer's hermeneutic circle to identify key themes and subthemes in

addition to using an Indigenous framework. Initially, the principles of Gadamer's hermeneutic circle were applied; the researcher moved in and out of data to gain insight into the participants experiences. Gadamer's hermeneutic circle is useful when trying to understand a phenomenon that is not clearly understood (Ivey, 2013). Additionally, a matrix chart was constructed to assist with organising concepts and identify themes and subthemes. The illustration of the concepts via the matrix chart facilitated comparisons and explanations to evolve ensuring rigour (Laycock et al., 2011; Liamputtong, 2013).

Dadirri, an Indigenous framework was used to provide a deeper consideration of the data. Implementing the Dadirri framework involved deep listening, contemplating and thoughtfulness in order to reach a deep understanding of the transcripts. The Dadirri framework is also useful during the phase of analysing data because it provides a means to understanding the self in relationship to others because the researcher is required to truly listen. Deep listening is pivotal to developing ideas and awareness (West et al., 2012). Implementing the Dadirri approach also enables the researcher to respectfully and reflectively discover the essence of the participant's experiences during tertiary studies.

4. Results

Analysis of data revealed three key themes with each key theme consisting of two subthemes (see Table 1). The first key theme revealed that participants claimed they felt different and their experience at university impacted on their cultural wellbeing and Indigenous identity. The second key theme reflects the revelation that the participants encountered *internal conflict* surrounding community and cultural responsibilities resulting in a lack of engagement with peers, the university and the wider community. The final theme related to *misperceptions* that the participants identified as influencing their experience at university.

4.1. Feeling Different

Feeling Different was experienced by three out of the four participants and evolved because the participants perceived they had little capacity to regulate what was happening within the university environment and this environment was *different*. Further, Charla, Jone and Jilayne stated that because there were very few Indigenous nursing students they felt different and this negatively impacted on their experience and affected their confidence and adaptation as a student. Jilayne revealed that she felt different because there was a stigma associated with being Indigenous because non-Indigenous students perceived “they get everything, they get extra help and they have an advantage over others”. Charla stated she did not want assistance from the Indigenous Support Unit at the university because “non-Indigenous students say that Aboriginal people get everything and it's not fair”.

A similar concern was echoed by Seth who said, “non-Indigenous students think that Indigenous students get everything for free; they think we get it easy”. Seth commented that he was aware of the Indigenous Support Unit but stated, “even though I knew the Indigenous Unit at the university would provide help to me, I did not want to be seen as receiving tutoring for free and be seen as getting special treatment”. Jilayne and Charla did not access university support

Table 1

EXPERIENCES OF INDIGENOUS NURSING STUDENTS			
Themes	Feeling Different	Internal Conflict	Misperceptions
Subthemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural wellbeing ● Indigenous identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of Engagement ● Community/Cultural responsibility and Conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparedness ● Similarities

because they did not want the other students to treat them differently, even though they knew they would benefit from the extra help available from the staff and Charla wanted to protect her cultural wellbeing.

Cultural Wellbeing blended with the other subtheme of Indigenous Identity due to noteworthy comments made by the participants. For example, Jilayne said “I feel there is a lack of understanding of Indigenous culture with the other non-Indigenous students and some of the lecturers”. Jone claimed that “there was a lot of stereotyping and negativity towards Indigenous people in the class setting; this is why I don't like to identify as Indigenous”.

Comments from the other two participants indicated they employed strategies to protect their cultural wellbeing. For instance, Charla stated that “there was always the chance of being singled out if you identify as being Indigenous because as an Aboriginal you get free stuff”. Therefore, as a means of protecting her wellbeing, Charla did not access any resources offered by the university to avoid her culture being obvious to others and she withheld her Indigenous identity.

The subtheme, Indigenous Identity related to participants questioning and trying to make sense of themselves as students. For instance, Jone stated “because I am unable to openly acknowledge my Indigenous identity, it feels like everything I know does not fit in with the culture of the university”. Two participants perceived that their Indigenous identity was often questioned in terms of their appearance because they did not have a stereotypical Indigenous/Aboriginal appearance in relation to the colour of their skin. Because they did not ‘look’ Indigenous Jone and Charla perceived their Indigenous Identity was challenged by other students. For instance, Jone said.

I don't like to openly identify to other students about my Aboriginality and I know of other Aboriginal students who do not identify as Indigenous when they enroll because they do not want to be singled out in class or asked questions about how fair they are just because their skin is not dark.

A fundamental finding from the theme of Feeling Different was that the participants viewed that their cultural wellbeing and Indigenous Identity were an issue that caused mixed emotions. The four participants perceived that Feeling Different caused them to challenge their aspirations to achieve as an Indigenous nursing student. Participants constantly questioned whether to disclose their culture because they did not wish to be treated differently to non-Indigenous nursing students which caused them a degree of internal conflict.

4.2. Internal conflict

The second major theme to emerge was Internal Conflict which reflected the perceived pressure to do well at university due to being Indigenous. Although being Indigenous can be a motivator, it can also mean that Australian Indigenous students experience more pressure to succeed from family and the community ([The Aurora Project, 2010](#)). It is often commonplace for Australian Indigenous students to travel and live away from their community and family to complete tertiary education. Being away from their community heightens the expectation to succeed despite the anguish associated with relocating and entering university ([O'Toole, 2014](#)).

The four participants commented that they could not readily connect with other Australian Indigenous students and struggled with identifying as a student. Reasons provided for the disconnect included a lack of peer relationships, lack of support from their family and community. Additionally, the four participants claimed that they were not able to relate to their peers at university. Jilayne said, “I do not know any other Indigenous nursing students at this university and I have now been studying here for two years”. Jilayne did not explain why she had not engaged with other Indigenous nursing students and why she was unaware of other Indigenous nursing students. Three of the four participants stated that they experienced a lack of relationships and supportive connections with their peers and the university. Further, two participants (Jilayne and Charla) expressed a strong view that the lack

of connection was key to the disengagement they experienced with peers and their studies. Charla stated.

I was too embarrassed to ask for help because I did not want to be seen as a dumb Aboriginal person. Because of this I did not know where to get help with enrolling and fumbled my way through this process. I became very overwhelmed and felt like throwing it in.

The participant's internal conflict related to their struggle to manage and balance commitments to their culture, the community, family with university. Although participants were motivated by wanting to make a difference to their family, community and the overall health of their people, these factors conflicted with their studies. Three of four of the participants' found their aspirations and dreams to study were challenged because they were unable to complete cultural, community or family obligations. Jilayne, Jone and Charla aspired to making a difference to the health outcomes of Indigenous health and wellbeing believing that their desire to improve the health of Australian Indigenous people gave them the confidence and strength to study nursing and remain at university. However, maintaining cultural identity, family responsibilities in addition to their role in the community placed additional pressure on them as students. Jilayne claimed, “it was sometimes hard and a struggle between family commitments and university commitments”. Jilayne indicated that her family did not understand that she had to attend university and study irrespective of family commitments. Jone added, “sometimes I feel guilty because I should be with my family and not studying”. Jone also explained.

Sometimes it's hard to be at university all the time. When one of our mob is sick or there is a funeral it is very disrespectful not to be there for family. If I stay at university and not go to funerals I struggle and feel distressed. It is hard sometimes and I don't feel supported and understood by my family.

Being valued by family, community and the university is an important part of the student's self-worth, confidence and competence. Charla voiced, “I want to do more to help our mob. I am an Aboriginal Health Practitioner, but I can only do so much. Sometimes I am treated like ‘the driver’ so I want to be more skilled, so I can help our mob”. But, despite wanting to make a difference, there were many misperceptions surrounding the demands of being a tertiary student and the requirements associated with being a member of an Indigenous family and the community.

4.3. Misperceptions

The final theme of Misperceptions includes the subthemes of Preparedness and Similarities. This subtheme reflected the participants experiences as Indigenous students with regard to their aptitude to study. The most prominent misperception was that Australian Indigenous people learn differently. Meaning, there is the perception that contemporary pedagogy does not complement how Australian Indigenous people learn. Contrary to the literature which claims that pedagogy is an issue that affects the success of Australian Indigenous student's completing tertiary studies, these four participants asserted that they felt more comfortable in classes where they were able to blend in with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Furthermore, these participants claimed they learnt better in group settings and enjoyed online studies. Similar to findings by [Boulton-Lewis and Wills \(2001\)](#) and [O'Toole \(2014\)](#) The Australian Indigenous student involved in this study did not learn differently to non-Indigenous students. The participants wanted to achieve the same as non-Indigenous students and similarly, questioned their preparedness to attend university.

The sub-theme of Preparedness and Similarities emerged from the data due to the consistent and significant dialogue from the participants surrounding their limited knowledges about university and study skills requirements. Findings revealed that the lack of preparedness to commence university is similar (if not the same) as non-Indigenous students. For example, Jilayne stated, “it was a struggle; it was really hard to learn how to write essays and do assignments”. Another participant

stated, “I didn't know anything about university. When I got accepted, I was so surprised and had no idea about what to do, who to ask for help from. It was very overwhelming”.

Similar to any student commencing university, Charla said, “I had no real idea about what tertiary study was, even though I had a family member who was attending university. I had no idea about the discipline that it would require”. Similarities in other areas identified by the participants included, Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous students experience family demands and commitments as well as the need to manage time and finance. Therefore, the misperception that Australian Indigenous students are different or dissimilar to non-Indigenous students is not completely accurate. Many of the things that non-Indigenous students experience when they enter university are equally commonplace for Indigenous students.

5. Discussion

This research led to the identification of three major themes and six sub-themes. Feeling Different emerged as the first major theme because the participants felt different due to their cultural wellbeing. Additionally, they felt as though their Indigenous identity was challenged. Historically, cultural wellbeing around identity, stereotyping and feeling different has conditioned Australian Indigenous people to be wary, defensive and non-challenging (Usher, 2011). This study also identified that the participants experienced internal conflict which led to a lack of engagement by participants in addition to the participants struggling with being unable to meet family and community responsibilities.

Experiencing internal conflict resulted in the participant's ineffective use of resources offered at the university. Literature indicates that it is important to provide an Australian Indigenous student with support whereby students can access services such as study skills, computers, tutors and internet (Hossain et al., 2008). However, the participants of this study indicated that even though they were aware of available resources, accessing them was not an option due to not wishing to be identified as Indigenous. The reluctance to utilise support networks was identified by West et al. (2012) who reported negative experiences was largely experienced by Australian Indigenous nursing students with regard to their peers and the institution.

Finally, the findings from this small cohort indicated there is an underlying lack of preparedness for Indigenous students entering tertiary study which. The participants identified they lacked knowledge of the academic skills that were required of tertiary students. However, the participants revelations are not dissimilar to non-Indigenous students entering and coping with university. As such, the misperception that Indigenous students learn differently or do not have similar experiences as that of non-Indigenous students was a key finding that requires further investigation.

6. Conclusions

Australia has seen little growth in Indigenous nursing student participation in pre-registration university courses in Australia over the past decade. As such, there is a lower number of Indigenous registered nurses and healthcare workers compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts (Stuart and Gorman, 2015). Literature indicates that improving the number of Indigenous nurses in the Australian health sector will have multiple benefits. For instance, an increase in the number of Indigenous healthcare employees, who are able to facilitate “Walking in both Worlds”, will make a positive difference to health outcomes (West et al., 2010a).

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of four Indigenous students enrolled in a Bachelor of nursing program. This study employed semi structured interviews as a mean to yarn with participants to gather rich data. Data analysis enabled major themes and subthemes to emerge to provide insight into the experience of

tertiary education for Indigenous nursing students in Australia. Notwithstanding, there were limitations to this study with the key limitation being the unexpected and unfortunate small number of participants. The recruitment of participants was another limitation as the researcher was reliant on the Indigenous Liaison person to email students and this was undertaken during semester break when it was unlikely students would access their email. Finally, a significant limitation was that students may have been reluctant to participate in this study due to a perceived risk or repercussions if they identified as being Indigenous.

The lack of generalisability due to the small cohort is renown in qualitative research (Liamputtong, 2013b). As such, it is acknowledged that the findings from this study represent a snapshot in time and are not representative of all Australian Indigenous nursing students attending universities. However, this research highlighted that cultural wellbeing, reluctance to identify as Indigenous and lack of engagement were common issues for these participants. These four participants experienced some internal conflict influenced their journey as a university student. Furthermore, a lack of awareness and understanding by non-Indigenous students of the unsolicited support provided to Indigenous students together with cultural norms and customs, impacted on the participants' willingness to access support mechanisms to enhance their education experience.

This study identified that there are a number of similarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in particular a lack of preparedness to commence university. Additionally, Indigenous and non-Indigenous university students struggle to meet university, family and community commitments and finances, time management. However, the most significant finding was that Indigenous students included in this study responded to the same teaching and learning strategies and methods as non-Indigenous students. Finally, a deeper and more thorough study into the true learning styles and approaches to learning of Indigenous peoples warrants further research. If Australia is serious about increasing the Indigenous health professional workforce through tertiary education, recruiting and retaining Indigenous students is paramount.

Declaration of competing interest

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