

Shaping our future: voices and insight from Indigenous leadership - a 'Students First' Symposium

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Mark Heiss [00:00:51] I see we've got nearly 200 people in the room. Couple more to come. Good to go? Alright. Yiradhu marang muddyi-galang. Yuwindhu Mark Heiss. Bala-dhu Wiradyuri-giyalang. My name is Mark Heiss, I'm a Wiradjuri man, born and bred on Gadigal land here in Sydney. And I'm very pleased to be here at the Shaping Our Future: voices and insights from Indigenous leaders. This first Studiosity symposium of its kind for 2024 looking at the Universities Accord and higher education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As I said, I'm Mark Heiss. I'm the head of Scholarships at the GO Foundation and I would like to pay my respects to the Cammeraygal people on whose lands I'm coming to you this morning. Pay my respects to Elders who have held the traditions, knowledge, custodianship of the land, the waterways, the skies and the dreaming for millennia. I'd also like to acknowledge all the lands you guys are coming in from at the moment. I can see the chat is going wild. It will be great for the next 15 seconds. You have the opportunity to type into the chat where you're

beaming in from this morning. Hello Rebecca Harcourt. Honor Job. Wow, Linda Collard. Some. Some really familiar names here. This is beautiful. So you might see on my on my shirt that I work for the GO Foundation and the GO Foundation is proud to partner with Studiosity. At GO we provide scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students on their journey through education, right from primary school through to university. As part of that, we are fortunate enough to partner with Studiosity and Studiosity very generously give their help to our young people who are looking for support. Studiosity help us and our young people gain the confidence that they need to ask for help in their learning. I'd also like to acknowledge that Studiosity recently have had their Innovate RAP endorsed by Reconciliation Australia.

Mark Heiss [00:03:25] So well done to Jack, Chris, Sarah, Evelyn and all the team, here at Studiosity, Mike as well. Well done and we hope that your next RAP journey is as good and is as fulfilling as the one has been so far. I have the pleasure of chairing this high-powered, accomplished and very good looking panel for the next 60 minutes where we'll have a great look at the education sector in a higher education setting. We'll dive into and discuss the desire for equity and access to success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education. You'll hear commentary, you'll hear personal story, you'll hear expertise. We'll talk about the Accord, and you'll also get to ask some questions to this very wonderful panel. I believe that we have over 450 registrations, so just a few housekeeping things. I can see that lots of people are writing in the chat and that is perfect for comments. And if you want to say hello to anyone else, you might recognise that in the session this morning. However, if you'd like to ask the question, please use the Q&A function. We won't be able to monitor the chat, but we can really easily monitor the Q&A function. So if you're looking to ask a question to anyone on the panel, please, pop it in that and we'll be sure to take care of it for you. Without further ado, I'd like to give a quick oversight and then get the panel to introduce themselves. So first of all, we have Professor Braden Hill, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students Equity and Indigenous at Edith Cowan University, and he's a man with much experience in the higher education sector and in particular is an expert, a national leader and indigenous a LGBTQIA+ research. Braden, we'll come back to you in a second. Also on the panel is Sarah Scott, a student studying at the University of New South Wales, studying a Bachelor of Social work and Criminology. Keep Sarah Scott's name on the forefront of

your brain because I'm telling you, this lady is going places. Her star is on the rise. I'd like to acknowledge that Professor Leanne Holt was supposed to be with us today. She's the inaugural Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous at the University of New South Wales and has been around higher education for 25+ years. And she asked me to round that down, so not to give too much away in terms of her age, but Leanne has become very, very unwell over the course of the long weekend. So we do acknowledge her absence and hope that Leanne has a speedy recovery. Finally, your final panel member, Adam Goodes, who is the co-founder of the GO Foundation, former Australian of the Year, and has won numerous other accolades as well. But most importantly, he gets most highly commended for his impeccable taste in the people that he hires to work at the GO Foundation. Thanks for joining us Adam. I'll now go round the room now and ask the panel to introduce themselves. Tell us who you are, where you're from, and what it is that we need to know about you. Braden. Can I kick off with you please?

Prof Braden Hill [00:06:29] Yeah, thanks, so. Braden: I'm a Nyungar Wardandi man from the south west to Western Australia with ties to a bunch of mobs in Nyungar nation. I won't go into all the families, but I am Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Students Equity and Indigenous. For those outside of universities, my nephew describes that as "you're a deputy principal for a university" and I think that's a good way of characterising it. So I'm responsible for all the indigenous matters at our university as well as the student experience for ECU, which we're really proud of. Will kind of brag a little bit in that we're very proud of the fact that our students at ECU, our indigenous students, are the most successful in our state. And it's been because of really strong Indigenous-led programs that that make that work. So yeah, that's me. I'm really looking forward to the discussion. I'm going to have to carry a lot of the weight now that Leanne's away, I was going to rely on her. But look, I'll see how I go. But yeah, thanks. Thanks for having me.

Mark Heiss [00:07:19] Thanks, Braden and we know that you're going to do a terrific job. Sarah.

Sarah Scott [00:07:24] Thanks, Mark. Hey, everyone. My name is Sarah, I'm a proud Kamilaroi and Barkindji woman from Bourke. I'm tuning in from the lands of the Bidjigal people, and today I'm just going to be sharing a bit about

my experience as a First Nations person going through uni. So at the moment I'm a full time student at UNSW studying social work and criminology, soon to graduate next year. And yeah, it's just a brief bit about me. Thank you.

Mark Heiss [00:07:57] Thanks Sarah. Adam.

Adam Goodes [00:08:00] Good morning, everyone. Adam Goodes. Proud Adnyamathanha/Narungga man from South Australia been living up on Gadigal/Bidjigal land and coming from those lands today, for the last 27 years, which is just absolutely blows my mind, but really excited to be part of this conversation. Since retiring from an 18 year career at the football, started the GO Foundation over 15 years ago - we're celebrating that 15 years milestone this year. Also started a business - IDIC Indigenous Defence and Infrastructure Consortium, where I help Indigenous business owners tap into infrastructure and defence contracts from a supply chain point of view. So yeah, I'm really excited about the conversation today.

Mark Heiss [00:08:52] Great. Thanks, Adam. I'd like to kick the panel off with this open ended question. And it's one I guess that you could answer with a little bit of opinion and potentially a little bit of research if you feel. Why is higher education important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? In your view, why do you think higher education is important for us mob? I'm going to leave it open to whoever like to get first.

Adam Goodes [00:09:20] Well, I'm probably, well. I definitely am the only one - when we speak about higher education. For me, you know, I was drafted as a 17 year old straight out of high school. The same day I finished my year 12 English exam. So my next big learning that I had to undertake was actually about playing AFL at the highest level. And throughout my 18 year career, I did three diplomas. And I really wanted to make sure that I was constantly having a little bit of a taste of what a career might look like for me. Now, I always remember my mum being around at home. She looked after us three kids as a single parent. You know, I never saw Mum go off to work. I never saw her doing any study. It wasn't until she grew us three boys up that she then went back to work as a nurse, which she was qualified as, as before she started having us children. So for me, actually higher education or wanting to source it was actually because I wanted more knowledge, knowledge that I

couldn't get from my family, couldn't get from the people that I worked around. And majority of that came from me wanting to learn more as an Aboriginal person. So doing a diploma in Aboriginal studies at Eora TAFE, that for me was a big step and it took me eight years to do it, but it really gave me a foundation of learning about what it actually meant to be an Aboriginal person. And from that it gave me the connection to my identity and connection to where my mob was from. And from there I just wanted to just keep learning. And I think the importance for me was that there'd been no one in my family that had been to higher education. So I was breaking through for some of my family members and now my brothers have followed suit and now cousins and nieces and nephews are following suit. So I think for me, we're at the very beginning of, you know, breaking through into that higher education space and seeing the benefits from a community point of view, that we're actually not only uplifting ourselves and we're doing it, but we're actually showing the way for other people in our community that not only is education important, but to constantly learn throughout your whole life is really important no matter where that learning comes from. And I think that's what, you know, we're on this planet to do is to constantly learn from each other and challenge ourselves and acquire skills that can benefit us. You know? And for me, what I've seen in my community and the ecosystems where I live, the more our people have become educated, the more power, the more opportunities that we've created for our own people.

Mark Heiss [00:12:23] Thanks Adam. Braden, Sarah?

Sarah Scott [00:12:26] Yes, similar to Adam. I didn't have my parents go through university; myself being one of the first in my family, along with my older sister, to go into higher education. So for me, my parents have always seen the power of education and have wanted to instill that value in us. I was very fortunate to get a scholarship to go away to boarding school here in Sydney at the age of 12 and did my high school education here in Sydney, which was challenging being away from home and community. But the opportunities that that experience brought me allowed me to see the value in education and having. Just different opportunities available within that space. I feel that education gives us is a tool to advocate for creating meaningful, meaningful change in communities. And it empowers us more to be able to navigate the Western, the Western world and our own world and, you know,

gives us the power to do both and also creates opportunities for leadership roles and opens doors to more opportunities of that where we can influence policy and change and have a seat at the table.

I think that's been one thing as a student that I've recognised in my experience that being in this space has allowed for more of those opportunities personally, yeah.

Mark Heiss [00:14:30] Thanks Sarah. Braden.

Prof Braden Hill [00:14:31] Yeah. Look, I agree with Sarah and Adam. I think it education is empowering because I think it gives us a Sarah says a seat at the table. It gets us into those careers and professions where we can meaningfully make a difference not only for ourselves, but also our families and our communities. And we've for a long time been excluded from that educational system. And I think for us to to step into that is really important from a kind of, you know, adding to that, I think one graduate significantly changes the economic trajectory of an entire family and by extension, community. And it's not all about economics. It is about learning who we are in relation to Western knowledges, remembering and rejuvenating our position in relation to Indigenous knowledges too but also connecting with other really intelligent blackfellas who are going out there to change the world. And I think that's the benefit of a university education is you get that space and time to reflect. It's a bit harder in this day and age with all the pressures that are going on in life, but blackfellas create that space within higher education for one another. And we're really protective of that space because we know how important it is. So yeah, higher education is vital if we're going to get to where we want to be as a as a national community and as local based communities to.

Mark Heiss [00:15:47] Thanks, Braden. And it's such an interesting through line that everyone has spoken about mob or encouragement from the rest of the community. There may be a misconception out there that, you know, aspirations aren't high enough for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, that is entirely not true. That is entirely not true. Our old people want the best for us and we want the best for our young people. Sarah, would you mind telling us a little bit about what it's like being a student at university in 2024?

What are some of your day to day experiences and how are you coping at the moment?

Sarah Scott [00:16:20] Yeah, sure. So a bit of context. I started out UNSW in 2021. I did the UNSW pre programs, which is a program for Indigenous students - an alternative pathway program into university. So I completed that at the end of my high school year in 2020 and it was during Covid, so it was a bit different. It was all online, but. Regardless of that, it was a good opportunity to be able to connect and meet students, First Nations students. That would also be starting with me in 2021. So it was a good way to start my university experience as I already had connections and was able to network through that and it made my transition into university go a lot smoother. But my day to day, I currently live on campus of the university. So it's very convenient and I pay my respects to GO Foundation for - I'm one of the scholars. Sorry, I became one of the scholars last year at the start of last year. But the GO Foundation has been able to support me with my accommodation, helping assist the financially, but has also provided me opportunities outside of my finance, like my accommodation. But I will say by allowing me to have a community outside of UNSW, but pretty much my everyday today experience at uni, I've been able to access the Nura Gili space which is always open. They always have, you know, welcome back events, which is a great way to kind of informally network with other students and also a lot of formal events that recognise Indigenous excellence. They recently had a Indigenous Awards Night for Students, which was great to be in a room full of you know, such blak excellence and being surrounded by others. Also. Sorry, I've got a bit off track. What was the last part of the question Mark?

Mark Heiss [00:19:06] Yeah, look, you've told us a little bit about your experience and then maybe if you want to tell us about, is there anything that would improve your student experience?

Sarah Scott [00:19:15] Yeah, no worries. So I think that there are plenty of opportunities internally, like networking and having, you know, these great connections with mob Nura Gili does a fantastic job at that I think. The only improvement that comes to mind is opportunities for external networking, as I said. I love being a part of GO because it has allowed me to connect with students outside of my university bubble. And I think having opportunities to

be able to do that, you know, connect with other university students outside of this, you know, UNSW would be a great way to improve my experience. For example, I know that they have the Annual indigenous National University Games, which is a sporting event that happens annually and involves universities across Australia. I know that that opportunity allows for everyone to be surrounded by black excellence. And I think that moving it away from sport - although sporting is good, I think it would be a good opportunity to be able to do something of a similar nature outside of sport because the like the. Culture and community that is present at that annual event is just phenomenal. And I think it'd be a great opportunity to have something similar of a similar nature outside of that.

Mark Heiss [00:21:05] Thanks Sarah. Braden do you hear this, I guess with the students at Edith Cowan? That they access the student student support centre, that they they love that idea of connection. And Sarah's last idea, which is quite innovative, that how can we connect more often across universes in potentially not a competitive way. What do you hear from your students?

Prof Braden Hill [00:21:27] Yeah, look, on the competition aspect, I think most Indigenous centres across the country do collaborate really, really well and understand there's a common mission about what we're trying to achieve. And I guess Sarah's point about Nura Gili is right and pretty consistent across the country. Indigenous centres in universities do the bulk of the work around success and that kind of connecting community inside and outside of the universities. So for me, that's really important. Your question about the student experience is a good one nationally, but also at ECU, we know that finance is the biggest barrier to students being able to engage with higher education. So domestically, not just blackfellas, but domestically. Just less than a quarter of our students are on income support of some shape. Right? So we know that I think it's about 25,000 of our students are on ABstudy. Now the maximum amount that you're going to get from ABstudy is about 560 bucks a fortnight, the maximum. Right. So not everybody gets that. That doesn't go very far in this day and age. And so what we hear, what we hear from our students here at ECU, but also across the country, is that there's a major barrier in being able to get to campus, to live on campus, to be able to sustain their studies, because what they're often doing is working at the same

time, right? So they're having to juggle work while they're juggling study. And a lot of our students also have caring responsibilities, whether it be to kids or to older fellas. So there's there's a bit of nuance to that that we have to be sort of conscious of. And so I think what the GO Foundation does is really important because it enables people to buy out work time, right? It enables them to study. And if you think about, you know, the time when universities degrees were free, it's a different consideration in terms of whether or not you undertake study. But I think it's really important for us to think about student experience and success because hand on heart, I don't think blackfellas in the sector want to be loading up our young people with debt. And so we need to get them through their degrees to get them back out, back out to their communities and into the professions that they want to thrive in. So finance is a big one. Family responsibilities, another one. And I guess there's a lot of other system and systemic stuff that we can talk about later, but they're really important to the student experience. But generally blackfellas really like studying at university, but really enjoying something doesn't mean that you always succeed.

Mark Heiss [00:23:45] Yeah, and you're right. We will circle back to that, Braden. Adam, when you and Michael started the GO Foundation, the focus wasn't necessarily on education. You you found your way to education. What was the reasoning behind that and the growth of the GO Foundation, particularly now we're starting to see more and more university scholarships in place at GO.

Adam Goodes [00:24:08] Yeah, I think when we started the foundation after Michael retired in 2009, we really just wanted to create a vehicle to say thank you to the mob in Sydney that accepted Michael and I into their community. They invited us to all of their events, like, you know, invited us to their homes. We stood alongside them when we needed to and we wanted to do something for the next generation after. You know, if we both went back home to Adelaide after we both retired, that we had a vehicle here in Sydney to say thank you, whether that was for, you know, supporting jumpers for the local sporting teams, you know, helping build homework centres, you know, you name it, we tried to do it. That wasn't very sustainable for us. We wanted to be really clear so that when people called us up for support, instead of us saying, What do you need? We now say: we do scholarships and we're across

three states now, New South Wales, ACT and South Australia back home and we do academic scholarships. You know, it's a lot about a sporting program, and we got to that point because we developed our board and a big part of my vision in everything that I do is, you know, black leadership. Sarah spoke about it, black excellence. You know, we have an Indigenous chair, we have an Indigenous CEO. You know, you are the head of our scholarship program and our vice CEO, Mark, you know, our whole scholarship team is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. You know, over 90% of our board is black fellas. So for us it's about having that lens across everything we do at the foundation and knowing that not only education comes at the heart of it, but culture. You know, a lot of our students have a very similar story to me, and that is, you know. Grew up knowing they were Aboriginal, or coming late and understanding that they're Aboriginal late, later in their lives and we take it upon ourselves to really build that identity for some of our young people through connection to culture and the cultural immersion that we run at GO. So it's not only an education from an academic point of view in the schools, it's actually an education on, you know, what it means to be a modern day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person, which I think is really important and the real strength to our, the work that we do.

Mark Heiss [00:26:38] Thank you, Adam. I can see that the chat is going wild. I can't see all the comments, but there are a few questions in the Q&A as well. So just a reminder, if you have any questions for the panel, put them in the Q&A section and we'll try and get through those. But I do want to turn our attention to the Accord. And of course, the Universities Accord was devised so that recommendations and performance targets would be provided to improve the quality, accessibility, affordability and sustainability of higher education. And I can see that in the comments it does talk a little bit about the experiences of the student, but also system wide changes. So we'll hopefully dip into that as we as we go along. There are 47 recommendations that come out of the Accord, and that is across a bit of the topic that we've talked about: fees, wellbeing, funding, teaching, research and of course the governance, which is an important part for us as well. The point that Adam was just sort of making around his vision of black excellence being all the way through an organisation. It does call for equity with a goal of aligning student population groups, reflecting the composition of Australian society. And we know that and Braden might come at this later that we currently have a

completion rate of about 1.5% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students going to university. We've got a population of 3.7% across the country, so that would be great if we could be lifting our completion rates. Braden, some of the shock jocks out there or social commentators writing in the newspaper might say, Look, let's just give them places, You know, let's just allow - let's make a quota and see if we can get kids through by just giving these places at university. You've touched on this, but why is participation and places at university not enough to guarantee completion?

Prof Braden Hill [00:28:29] Yes, the places at university, are a fundamental part of the Accord. So they're basically going to, under the new system, ensure that if Aboriginal students qualify for a place at university, they'll be funded. So that's a really important change to get to the 3.7% that you mentioned, which is the target, which is essentially really trying to double our numbers by by 2050 is really the intent. I think it's probably important just to reflect on that. We have more than 20 to 23,000 Indigenous students studying in higher education and I think that's important to reflect on, given that even as late as the 1970s, there were fewer than 100 blackfellas studying at universities across the country. So that's important. That trajectory is important to acknowledge and respect, I think, and recognise. I guess when we think about equity in education, I think the way I approach and a lot of us do in the sector is we think about this in a really relational, multigenerational way, right? So when I think about educational leadership around equity for, for our mob, if we want to use equity, I think about my ancestors, I think about my great great grandparents, I think about my grandparents, my parents, the opportunities that I have now and what they didn't have. Right. And I think ok what are the things that we need to address to make sure that those opportunities are enriching and there for our communities now. But more than that, I think about my eight year old nephew and all my all the young people in my family and the generations that come after. So our job as a university is to think about the entirety of the educational landscape, not just when students get to our door. So the participation piece is really important. I acknowledge that that's going to be really, really fundamental. I guess the I think Stacey mentioned in the chat that funding, the needs-based funding, and where funding flows is going to be really important. As I said before, Indigenous centres are vital to not only attracting students to come into universities but also supporting them and really partnering them in on the journey and the

career that they want to go on. But at the moment the dedicated funding that's associated with Indigenous student support is about, it equates to about 1500 bucks per per student, which isn't really going to make a game changing difference. And so universities are going to have to think about what they are going to invest themselves, right? What are they going to do to invest in this ambition to double the numbers? So it's going to be really important. It's really great that the Accord has signalled this out, and I think it's really important to reflect on Indigenous leadership and scholarship that has got us to the point where our government is thinking about this. And I think post-referendum this is really critical, right, because there has to be Indigenous-led agenda on how do we make this happen. So look in short, participation is great. We need to get mob in, but we also need to think about how we're supporting them and how we're leading that work and enabling that work as universities. So yeah, it's a really important and critical time for us, I think.

Mark Heiss [00:31:25] Thanks Braden. And then the idea of getting them in, to the whole panel, what is it that we can do to help young people or older people see that university is a possibility so that we are looking at aspiration, participation, success? Is there outreach? Sarah, how did you how did you first decide that you were going to move to Sydney and, and engage in education and then higher education?

Sarah Scott [00:31:54] Yes. So as I said earlier, my parents kind of always instilled that value of education within me. But I was fortunate enough to have my older sister be the first person in our family to go into university. So I personally kind of followed in her footsteps in kind of navigating that space. Because to be honest, I didn't have too much support between high school and going into University of how how to go about that, that transition. So I was actually very fortunate enough to have my sister be able to navigate me through that experience. And, you know, I wasn't too sure exactly what I wanted to study, but I knew that I wanted to go through into university and have, you know, higher, higher education qualifications, because I knew through my high school experience that by getting those qualifications, I could see in the future that I would have many more opportunities open for me. So I chose to do something that I have felt passionate about, which is helping people and essentially ended up choosing to do social work. And I've

enjoyed it. I loved it. The Nura Gili Centre has made my experience here really good and sustainable and like having the accommodation scholarship and being a GO Scholar has allowed me to, you know, have all this support behind me so that I can thrive and survive at uni.

Mark Heiss [00:33:58] Thanks Sarah. And Adam. One of the components of the GO Foundation scholarship is around access and opportunity and culture as well. But certainly that idea of access and opportunity, you and Michael see that as really important.

Adam Goodes [00:34:11] Yeah, it's so true, Mark. And I think just picking up on a couple of things that Sarah's just mentioned and also Brother Brad that, you know, role modelling is so important. I came to the Sydney Swans Football Club not having a father around in my life, never being surrounded by men, always raised by my aunties, and then I was thrown into a majority white change room. But in that white change room I had Michael O'Loughlin, Troy Cook, Robby Ahmat. For the first time in my life, senior Aboriginal men who were already doing the same journey that I wanted to be on, and that role modelling for me was made so much easier because I could just follow. I didn't have to be the tip of the spear. I didn't have to be that lightning bolt. And that's what's going to make it so much easier for our mob in this next 20,000 plus students that we're going to get across all the universities that everyone's dialling in from today. It's up to everyone on this call to go, well, what can we do at our universities and in our communities to make it easier to connect these young people with culture, with community, if they're not from those areas? Because that's going to actually make them feel part of the system and part of the culture of where they are. I'm 27 years in Sydney now. I have a strong connection to this land I'm on now. This is my home. It's not my Country, but this is my home and I don't see myself leaving this even though my Country is back home in South Australia. And I think for all of us on this call today, we've got a great opportunity to help people continue their educational journey, just like Sarah is by sharing our journeys through education and the challenges and, you know, showing empathy when we need to, but more importantly, form relationships with these young people so that when times are tough, they can ask the question to you, they can come to you and tell you what's going on in their lives so that, you know, you can

sometimes just listen, but sometimes be able to support them and point them in the direction of help.

Mark Heiss [00:36:28] And Braden, thank you Adam. And Braden that outreach work at ECU would also be very, very powerful in getting young people to just aspire and feel comfortable going to university.

Prof Braden Hill [00:36:38] Yeah, absolutely. That kind of work is really important. I really respect Sarah's story about how, you know, she had her parents really driving her. I, I kind of did, I think, when I think about my journey. I only knew, though, what a university was because my grandmother used to clean at one and she used to bank at one. And so just by being in that context, I was like, okay, there's something after high school, right? So that outreach work is really important because it signals possibility,] I think where we have to move things and I think this is something that's missing in the Accord a little bit - is how are we going to sustain meaningful relationships, particularly with schools from as early, early on, early, early on, all the way through to a potential pathway at university. And I think the Accord is a little bit quiet on that. And I think we probably need to think about how how we do that. But those relationships are important, it has to be a relationship based way of working. So instead of a scattergun approach of trying to get everybody, you have to think about intentionally, who are the schools, who are the communities that your institution is working for and partnering with in order to make sure that pipeline isn't leaky? Because we you know, we've seen the latest NAPLAN data. Our kids are about 83%, let's say, reading 83% national median standard or above. By the time they get to year six, that drops to something like 60, 60 odd percent. That's not good enough. Something happens in that pipeline. So our job is not only just to sell education, our job is to make sure that we prosecute the argument for why mob should consider going to university. And so that can only be done in trusting relational ways that's led by blackfellas in academia I think. That that's the big opportunity and we're already doing this work, but we need to think about how we accelerate it.

Mark Heiss [00:38:26] If you are in a school setting, as I know some people on the call are, or if you are in a university setting, you need to rewind the last two minutes of this video when you get it and listen to everything that Braden

just said, because there is one really significant piece of the puzzle right there. Want to go back to the Accord again for a second and this will probably cross over a bit between Adam and Braden, but Braden the Accord does sorry. This is a question actually from one of our participants from Murdoch University. Thinking about the Accord, what is self-determination for mob, and what does it look like in a university setting? Braden I'm going to throw you first, then Adam. And indeed, Sarah, you might want to have some comments to follow.

Prof Braden Hill [00:39:13] So look, indigenous self-determination in this respect is about - the lights have gone off here. So I've gone a bit dark so I have to do a bit of a wave. It's not going to work. So Indigenous self-determination is about thinking about who's leading the indigenous agenda within your institution and how much of a say and a voice do they get in the broader aspect of what's going on? So we have a lot of universities that have roles like mine whose job is to be at that table. Often I'm the only one at the table, right? And that's that's very, very common in all sorts of organisations. But the benefit is from the top. So me sitting at the top table all the way down through our organisation, there's a line from the bottom to the top if you like, that's black all the way through the black line from top to bottom. To Adam's point, you know, our staff and students know that there are blackfellas that they can talk to without having to explain too much. We just get it and we can move on and do what we need to do. So it's about who has the resource, who makes the decisions and who sets the priorities. And so if you can show that you have indigenous leadership at all levels and good engagement through all those levels, then you're getting closer to self-determination. But that's within the institution, right? So as long as blackfellas are setting the black agenda, you're good. Outside of that context, though, self-determination is about giving people like Sarah the opportunity to complete their qualifications, engage in that fully, but go and do determine for themselves what that means for them, but also their families and communities. What's the impact that Sarah wants to have as a social worker? We are providing that form of self-determination at the individual level that hopefully expands into the community level too. So it's a really important aspect in the Accord and one that I think if I'm honest, some white fellas get a bit scared about because they hear separation. They hear, you know, giving over control and power. That's not about that's not what we're doing here. It's

about how do we set agendas and lead for ourselves and our good allies follow and support. I think that's the important agenda here.

Mark Heiss [00:41:13] Adam anything to add, Sarah?

Adam Goodes [00:41:15] Yeah, that was beautifully said, brother Bradley. And, all I would add to that is, you know, I totally agree with everything you said and, you know, self-determination for me and our young people at times is out of their control. And I think, you know, one thing that I wanted to set up through the GO Foundation was to create a network of support that mirrored this network of support that Michael and I have had at our football club. Now, that was done, that support was done by all non-Indigenous people, albeit our local Aboriginal community that wrapped their arms around us, invited us to all those events and included us. And that combination made it so much easier for Michael and I just to rock up and do the work that we had to do. And that's what we're wanting our students to do, is to rock up to university, do the work, you know, feel comfortable not to worry too much about where their, the roof over their head or where the food's coming from, that they can actually come to their studies and be the absolute best that they possibly can. I think that's the responsibility of all of us to be able to create those environments for our young people and also for us as Indigenous leaders to make sure that we keep putting up our hands for those roles that are influencing our communities, that are influencing non-Indigenous people, to give our opinions on what's best for, you know, some of those young people.

Mark Heiss [00:42:51] Thanks Adam. Sarah.

Sarah Scott [00:42:53] Yeah. I'll just jump on to what Adam and Braden have said. But. I think having opportunities within the university to - sorry leadership opportunities within the university helps. Like allows me personally has allowed me to build and empower myself towards self-determination. Like I've had many leadership leadership opportunities here at UNSW. I've been able to represent the Social Work Student Association as the First Nations officer, be a residential advisor at my college and be an Indigenous mentor there as well. And also. Sorry. Sorry. Yeah. Just having these opportunities to be able to engage and build upon leadership skills has

personally allowed me to work towards achieving self determination for myself.

Mark Heiss [00:44:11] Thanks Sarah. I'm going to take a question from the chat, ah sorry from the Q&A. So remember if you have a question, please pop in the Q&A. Really keen also to see things popping up in the chat so thanks for that. For the team. Would you agree that the cultural load for Indigenous students whilst in the education domain can be a major distraction for their education, for their educational journey? So we're talking about cultural load that you guys that are at university experience throughout the day verses trying to actually complete your degree. My default would be to go to Sarah here but Braden I'm actually going to go to you first and I wonder if there's anything you hear from the students at ECU?

Prof Braden Hill [00:44:53] Yeah. Thanks, Mark. Gningala, thanks for the question. I know Gningala. We I think it's a great question because we know that in the schooling system, research shows that about 42% of Indigenous students encounter racism from their peers. Right. Often Aboriginal folk, first time they experience racism is when they step into school because you go from community and family into school. And then that's always, you know, a complex conversation with family back home because it's a new experience. More worryingly, though, Indigenous kids say about 20% of racism, 20% of students experience racism from their teachers, ok? From their teachers. So when we think about cultural load that our students are bearing, it's one that we know well, unfortunately. And by the time you get to university, you you have skills and ways of adapting and working with that, but it doesn't change. So when students get to university, not many universities ask their students about whether or not they experience racism. We did a few years back and it was about I think 18% of students could identify moments where they felt they experienced racism at the university. So of course it exists, right? Racism is, is a structural problem that exists. It's not going to vanish, you know, kind of kind of in thin air. So we have to confront that because at the moment, what we focus on is are kids going to school? Because attendance seems to be the number one driver for outcomes. And it is right. But we don't stop and ask why might they not want to be at school, Right? If you've got a 1 in 5 chance that your teacher might be racist towards you, I think there's a very good reason why kids go 'nah, stuff it'. Now, for us to actually address this

stuff, we have to be able to have conversations about race and conversations about racism. And I think Adam, Adam's played a really good national role on raising that profile and raising that conversation because it's too critical for us to just neglect.

Mark Heiss [00:46:52] Thanks, Braden. Sarah, did you wanna make any comments?

Sarah Scott [00:46:57] Sorry.

Mark Heiss [00:46:59] Did you make any comments, I guess, from that question regarding this? Is there a perception around cultural - a perception or reality around cultural load having an impact on, you know, educational experiences for a young person at university?

Sarah Scott [00:47:15] Cultural load. I think sometimes there is, you know, a bit of that. Sorry. Cultural load. I think in my experience, though, I've personally always wanted to be involved and put my foot in that door. So for me personally, I haven't necessarily felt that load, but I feel that some of my peers can often feel that from, you know, just identifying as First Nations that they feel that they have to, you know, represent or speak on First Nations issues of is that kind of answering the question a bit or.

Mark Heiss [00:48:13] Yeah. I think if you have decided that you want to step into that area of taking on responsibility and educating those around, that's that's fine. We have a young person on a GO Foundation scholarship in I believe her second and possibly third year of a med degree and Braden, had to essentially pull the lecturer up on something that was really inappropriate during a lecture. And this is someone teaching, you know, I guess what we would call a really important echelon of medical students going through university to go out and work with communities of all different nationalities and backgrounds. But. More power to our young lady who was able to stand up and make a point and then I think taught the class, from what I understand, for the next couple of minutes to help the lecturer out a little bit.

Prof Braden Hill [00:49:07] But I think just really quickly on that. Right. This is an example of how racism in education is a problem for everybody, not just

black fellas, because you have no you have academics who probably learned through the 70s, 80s and 90s where there was no mention of Indigenous anything. And when it was mentioned it was poorly done, which meant that when they go back to teach they don't have that knowledge to rest on to. So then they're relying on a 17 year old in the class to do that work. And that's the load that I think is an unfair load. So yeah, thanks for raising that.

Mark Heiss [00:49:36] Yeah. Yeah. This could be a really important question as well. It's from Claire because we know that we make up 3% of the population - 3.7% of the population. And it is, what are some of the practical ways I can be a non-Indigenous ally following the lead of our nation's, sorry, following the lead of our university's Indigenous staff and students without adding additional load for them? So what are some of things, and Adam I might go to you first, I see that you've come off mute - a non-Indigenous person can do to be a really great ally for our people.

Adam Goodes [00:50:07] Yeah, I think the biggest thing and it sort of comes off the back of the cultural load is that you should never presume oh you're a blackfella. Can you help us on our RAP committee? Can you help us with our NAIDOC day or our breakfast tea that we're going to - or can you connect me with local mob here? You know, you can't just presume that that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person wants to do that, has the answers that you require and you know, that can make the people feel really uncomfortable when doing so. It's I'm my experience is very much like Sarah is that you know I've always put my hand up. I've always made sure that I front up and put on those committees and, you know, start those alliances with our non-Indigenous brothers and sisters, because I had a club room filled with people who just did not know anything about Aboriginal people. And Michael, myself and the other brothers of that football club, we took it upon ourselves to educate them. So the best way to for me to answer that question, Claire, is, you know, how are you hearing the voices of those Indigenous people at your university as employees? Are you creating spaces for them to come together just as a group, to have conversations to, you know, if they want to report back any of the challenges or support that you guys can do? For me, that is a great way to not only give our people a voice, but you also creating a forum for them to come together. And that to me is a really great space, just like we're doing today. You know, I can just see black fella faces on

this screen and I feel like this is a very safe space to be able to talk about things. And that's what it's like for our people when we see our own mob, whether it's in the meeting room or on a screen like this, we feel comfortable to share the challenges, the things that we need, how we could be better supported. So I would really, you know, turn that back to Clare and the rest of the universities out there that how are you creating spaces to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Mark Heiss [00:52:24] Thanks. I can ask the question again, and that is around how - and Sarah, Braden, if you will. How can non-Indigenous brothers and sisters be an ally for higher education and our people in education?

Prof Braden Hill [00:52:42] It's such a it's such a difficult question that I get asked often. And I think when I've responded to this before, my honest answer is sometimes I only know it when I see it. So I worked in universities for a long time. It was only in 2019 when I moved to ECU, there was a non-Indigenous colleague who asked the questions that I would normally have to ask, right? So in this instance it was "where is the indigenous content in your curriculum?" Or where is "where are your efforts around outreach and engagement?" And I thought, sheesh, I don't have to be the one asking this. And so for me, that was allyship. But sometimes it's so rare that I don't know how to do it. I can only tell you what it looks like. And so it's taking that respectful intervention that takes a load off blackfellas always having to be the ones raising the questions. For me in my context, that's always been very helpful, but I don't know what the answer is. I just know it when I see it. It's not very helpful. I know. I'm sorry. And actually, the person I'm talking about, Angela Hill, who's no relation, is the person I'm talking about who raised that question. So hi Angela.

Mark Heiss [00:53:53] Good on you Braden. Sarah feel free to pass or did you wanna make any comments.

Sarah Scott [00:53:59] I think just taking your own initiative, I know that in some, well many education settings there's not opportunity to learn from. To learn about indigenous issues and matters. So I think taking your own initiative to find out that information or become knowledgeable of even just your local Indigenous community, I think is a great way to do that. And also

creating opportunities where Indigenous voices can be heard and privileged and having opportunities for leadership to enable that to happen.

Mark Heiss [00:54:50] Thanks, Sarah. We're getting close to time but there is 1 or 2 quick points I wanted to make. One is a question from Darren. How important is Indigenous knowledge content in ensuring the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at university? Adam I'm going to go to you first because I guess you know with your diplomas you were doing a lot of Aboriginal studies. What was the impact on that? And then love to hear from the rest of the panel.

Adam Goodes [00:55:13] Yeah, I'm a little bit torn about that question Mark because I got a WhatsApp message yesterday about an article in the newspaper and the headline was "New South Wales will remove 65,000 years of Aboriginal history from its syllabus". You know, they're going to stop educating students in New South Wales from 2027, in years 7 to 10 on Aboriginal history. That's pre colonisation. So we're actually stopping the information flow to the majority of our students in New South Wales. So if you want any more of that information, you have to find that and resource that. And we're taking that skill set away from our teachers to be able to educate more about our true history in this country. It's such a backward step. And you know, for me, I was motivated because I wanted to learn more about myself as an Aboriginal person. I just didn't have that because of our family's history and stolen generation. So for me, the importance of upskilling has just been something that I've been constantly used to. I've never been at the tip of anything from an education point of view. Even in my best years of my football career, I always knew I could still improve. And I think in that not only have I driven myself, but I've driven a whole heap of people underneath me to do the same. You know, my brothers, my cousins, my family members, you know, other players in the in the football team following my steps. So for me, this space is so important. This conversation today is so important. And, you know, I'm I think the people that we need to listen to are the people we have on this, the students, you know, Sarah, who's at the schools, and Brother Braden, who is a voice, sometimes a lone voice in his area. So we've got to create more opportunities not only for the students, but for our students to go out and get careers and then fill roles that like Brother Braden's filling over there in Western Australia.

Mark Heiss [00:57:24] Thanks, Adam. Sarah, Braden?

Prof Braden Hill [00:57:27] So I think, again, because we haven't done this work well for generations, we're all impoverished because of it. Right. Whether you're black or white, I think we have to be able to be comfortable with having those difficult conversations about the reality we find ourselves in that are historical. In order for us to think about what the future is going to be and how we do that. But there has to be a sense of responsibility and ownership about how we've got to where we are now. And some of the conversations that someone said in the chat are kind of taking us back. I just want to highlight two things. I posted two links in the chat. One is around a professional network for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working in universities. The other is a report that I'm releasing to you guys early that talks about what do we do next in university. So I just want to share that and bring that to everybody's attention here as well. Bit of a plug for myself there.

Mark Heiss [00:58:17] No that's great. Thank you. And we will share that afterwards in case. Thanks, Evelyn, in case anyone doesn't get it. So we've hit time. Ladies and gentlemen, the final point I wanted to make is it's old research now, but some 2016 research from the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education showed us that university scholarship holders are nearly 10% have a nearly 10% higher retention and success rate than non scholarship holders. So we know that there's a number of different pieces of the puzzle, but with that financial piece, and Sarah's recently just finished an unpaid placement and that's been part of part of discussion over the last couple of months. Scholarships could be one piece of the puzzle as well. And that's where Adam and Michael look to do their best work. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. Can we please - well we can't do a round of applause. But I will thank our panel very, very much on behalf of all 450 people that registered. Have a great afternoon. Braden, Adam, Sarah, thank you very much for joining us. Thanks for your expertise. And we'll see you again very soon.

Adam Goodes [00:59:23] Thanks Mark.

Mark Heiss [00:59:24] Thank you.

Adam Goodes [00:59:25] Thanks everyone.