



## **Developing Academic Literacy from an Indigenous perspective**

### **Key Words**

indigenous culture, academic literacy, new ways of learning, student diversity

### **Abstract**

Charles Darwin University (CDU), as the only tertiary institution in the Northern Territory has a unique student cohort which brings with it the need for Academic Language and Learning (ALL) practices that cater for the diversity of these students, and also one that provides inclusivity and authentic cultural experiences for them. One cohort of students to which tailored academic literacy and English support is needed, is that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. At present there is limited understanding of the range of levels of academic literacy and English, which often results in 'generic' bridging and preparatory academic support programs being delivered to these students. There is therefore a need to an approach that values indigeneity, culture and new ways of learning to be considered (O'Sullivan, McRae-Williams & Elvin, 2015). This paper presents a case study that highlights how an introductory academic preparatory program can be tailored to embed strong indigenous cultural values while improving academic literacy skills. In order to support students' academic capabilities as they commence tertiary study, a series of preparatory workshops were designed and delivered, based on the Aboriginal 8 ways of learning approach (Yunkaporta, 2009). Within this approach workshops were constructed to include culturally appropriate strategies such as story sharing and learning maps. In the delivery of the program lecturers provide clear deconstructions of the task at hand, followed by reconstruction, to allow all components to be seen as a whole and in isolation. The academic literacy program also incorporates non-verbal and hands-on activities to allow students to reflect on their learning and link it to their knowledge and culture. This case study demonstrates this importance of valuing diversity and culture when developing academic literacy and provides preliminary qualitative student feedback on their perceptions on the authenticity and validity of the program as part of the university experience.

### **References**

O'Sullivan, S. McRae-Williams, E & Elvin, R. (Ed.) 2015. Finding the Common Ground: Narratives, Provocations and Reflections from the 40 Year Celebration of Batchelor Institute. Batchelor NT: Batchelor Press.

Yunkaporta, T. (2009). 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning. Retrieved from <http://8ways.wikispaces.com/>