

### 1. Background

ECU's strategic direction, *Engaging Minds; Engaging Communities. Towards 2020*, includes the University's goal to widen the participation and attainment for under-represented groups within the Western Australian community. To this end ECU has developed a *Direction for Inclusive Practice Statement* which includes the following commitment:

ECU is an inclusive university that values diversity and aims to create for students, staff and the broader community an environment free from discrimination. ECU is committed to increasing access and providing opportunities for students who face barriers to higher education.

### 2. Equity outcomes and strategies

#### a) Outcomes for improving performance for equity groups from 2015-2017

- Raise participation rates for people with low socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and people from rural and remote areas.
- Raise completion rates<sup>1</sup> for people with low socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and people from rural and remote areas.

#### b) Strategies for achieving outcomes

- Continue outreach projects into schools and the local community to raise aspirations for higher education within underrepresented groups.
- Increase enrolments through flexible entry arrangements and articulation pathways to encourage wider participation.
- Provide equity scholarships for students from disadvantaged groups to promote success and seek further external sponsors for increased equity scholarships.
- Provide mentoring, peer support, tutoring and continued academic support to ECU students facing barriers to success in higher education.

### 3. Evaluation Plan

This plan will be evaluated annually through:

- A narrative report on the progress of projects and activities undertaken.
- A report against targets in participation and completion for people with low socio-economic backgrounds, people with disabilities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and people from rural and remote areas. Targets are being developed and will depend on funding amounts and internal allocations of these funds. Where the University does not perform well in participation and completion rates, targets will be developed to improve this position compared with State or National benchmarks.

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<sup>1</sup> Completion rates, by definition, incorporate retention and success.

- An evaluation of outreach projects measuring improved aspirations and awareness of the benefits of higher education, including through surveys.

#### **4. Partnerships and collaboration**

ECU will continue to collaborate with a wide range of partners to achieve the goals and targets in this plan. For outreach projects these partners include local primary schools, high schools, and community groups. For flexible entry arrangements and articulation partners include local high schools and State VET providers. To support scholarships ECU will continue to develop partnerships with charities and industry groups. Partners to assist in supporting current students include charities like the Smith Family and community bodies such as AIME. ECU's Engagement Unit will continue to coordinate these partnerships with the goal of increasing participation, promoting higher education to underrepresented groups and serving the needs ECU's communities.