

'Our Story. Our Future.' was created by proud Wiradjuri, Wotjobaluk, Yuin and Gumbaynggirr artist Luke Penrith and Maluiliilgal people, Badu Island artist Naseli Tamwoy.

Census data and partnerships vital to bolstering Indigenous tertiary success

University can seem daunting or unachievable for many young people. University of Sydney is using Census data to smooth the pathway to university for new and potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. University of Sydney partners with GO Foundation, an organisation founded by Adam Goodes and Michael O'Loughlin, that supports and creates opportunities for Indigenous youth through education.

"The GO Foundation looks at how we can get more young people on campus and experiencing what university is like", said Mark Heiss, Head of Scholarships at GO Foundation.

"Positive role models share their experiences and raise aspirations for GO Foundation Scholars, showing them different pathways. It's a good opportunity to demonstrate that university isn't a scary place. It's a place where you can be well supported," Mark added.

Census data plays a pivotal role in connecting communities with campus life. Mark explained that GO Foundation uses Census data to understand where large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are located. Census data also reveals trends between Indigenous Australians' completed education levels and employment rates which informs the GO Foundation about career progression.

"We can use that data to highlight the importance of our university scholarships in creating a progression from university into the workforce.

"If we want to be represented, we need to be counted. We spent so long not being counted, so here is an opportunity where we can be," Mark said.

University of Sydney also partners with the Lloyd McDermott Rugby Development Team to connect young people with university through sport. Tom Evans, Director of the Lloyd McDermott Rugby Development Team, said it's important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth focused on a career in sport to have a 'plan B' career option.

"We create an environment where kids coming through sporting communities think of themselves as more than one dimensional in terms of their career options. So if something happens in their lives - for example if they were unable to play sport again - there is a back-up plan that they have been working towards," Tom said.

Tom believes that Census data is critical in terms of fostering this engagement and having these yarns.

"We use Census data for all kinds of things, including knowing where to hold events. This then allows us to connect and participate in these discussions at a community level," Tom said.

Liam Harte, Director at University of Sydney's Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Indigenous Services and Strategy says it's important that everyone participants in this year's Census.

"It's essential that mob participate and stand up and be counted in the Census. Having the data from the Census helps us to develop programs and create opportunities for us all," Liam said.