



DEVELOPING GLOBAL CITIZENS

Position Paper

Imagine...

Imagine all Australian students learning from the Martu people of the Western Desert region, who offer a compelling case for the wisdom embedded in Indigenous knowledge systems. The Martu practice of millennia-old fire stick farming continues today, evolving with current conditions of Country. These techniques are remarkably effective in mitigating wildfire risks and promoting biodiversity conservation (Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, 2025). Exploring slow-burning practices in eastern and inland areas would further highlight how Indigenous knowledges adapt to local environments and have great relevance to national and global understandings of contemporary land management practices.

Our Position

Ngarrngga recognises the profound value that the histories and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples hold for Australian society. The endurance of Indigenous knowledge systems over thousands of years is a remarkable testament to the resilience and adaptability of human cultures. With increasing globalisation and mobility, Australian students need to be prepared to face a rapidly changing world with flexible thinking and access to a wide diversity of knowledges and expertise.

As inhabitants of this planet, we are confronted with unpredictable global environmental, social, economic, and technological challenges that are inextricably intertwined with and have a role in addressing. These issues are, and will continue to be, pressing problems for the global community to tackle. Indigenous knowledges can contribute significant cognisance in addressing some of these critical issues, and thus as global citizens, we have a responsibility to know, hear and understand these histories, cultures, and knowledges.

Are Current Educational Challenges Too Much for the Integration of Indigenous Content?

Critics argue that the complex current educational landscape, including declining standards, and teacher shortages, challenges the integration of Indigenous content into the curriculum. An ongoing ideological battle over curriculum content and priorities has led to contentious debates about what should be taught in schools. Compounding these issues are global pressures for performance improvement, primarily measured through standardised assessments, which have narrowed the definition of education's purpose.

These systemic pressures, critics maintain, create a challenging environment for effectively prioritising and embracing Indigenous content in the curriculum, as educators and policymakers struggle to balance competing demands and limited resources.

Addressing Critical Global Issues

Embracing Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies presents an opportunity to reimagine education's intended aspirations, broaden its scope, and catalyse transformational change to deepen rather than simplify learning. Indigenous knowledge systems, refined over 65,000 years, exemplify extraordinary adaptability and resilience.



These epistemologies offer invaluable insights that could equip future generations to address pressing global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and social inequity. This sentiment is echoed in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, which affirms the government's commitment to supporting all young Australians in understanding their responsibilities as global citizens and knowing how to drive positive change (Education Council, 2019, p.6).

Developing Intercultural Skills

Studying Indigenous Australian traditions and oral histories provides students with insights into how language and narratives shape cultural identities and preserve knowledge. This engagement develops essential skills in active listening, empathy, and appreciating multiple perspectives, which are crucial for effective intercultural communication. Students can learn to challenge their own assumptions and biases, fostering respectful interactions with people from diverse backgrounds; a vital skill in our multicultural society. As members of a global community, it is increasingly important for Australian students to develop these intercultural awareness and skills throughout their education.

Calls to Action

We challenge **educators, educational leaders, and educational institutions**, from early childhood centres to universities, to critically examine their curricula, teaching practices, and institutional cultures to identify and address any biases, stereotypes, or marginalisation of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges, as well as identify opportunities to strengthen this work.

We urge the **Australian government and education authorities** to provide adequate funding and resources to support initiatives, which aim to amplify Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in education.

References

Education Council. (2019). Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. <https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>.

Kanyirrimpa Jukurrpa. (2025). Annual Report 2024-25. 250725+-+KJ+-+Annual+Report+24-25-KJ-LT-165_DIGITAL_Low+Res.pdf <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0804757105>

Transforming Our Society

"...if we can change the language and perspectives of our children... to be able to celebrate what [First Nations'] culture [s] offer ... a clearer perspective from [First Nations] people's viewpoints ... hopefully [this] has impact in the community."

– Practicing teacher,
Ngarrngga research