

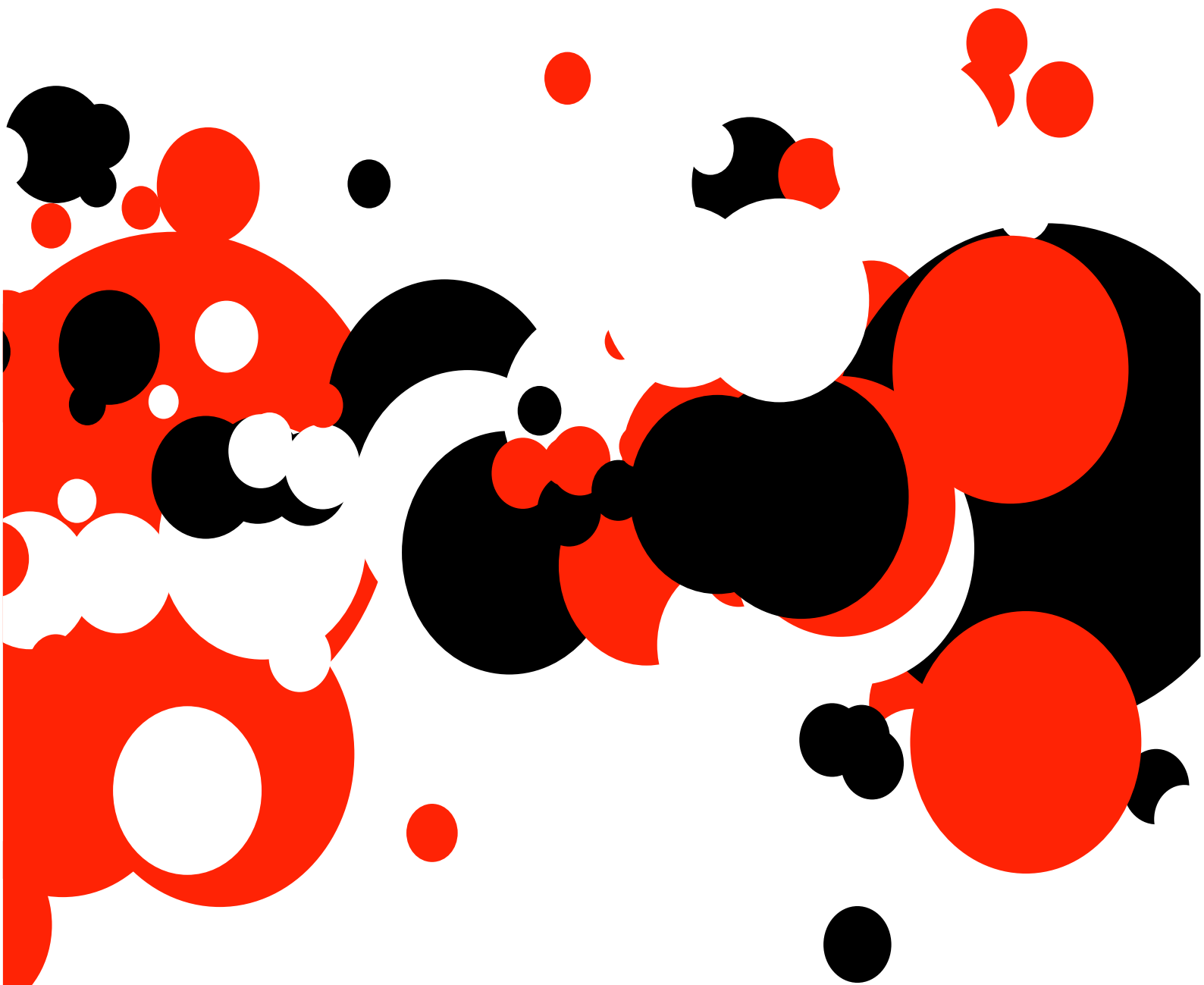
Jumbunna Institute for
Indigenous Education
and Research



GO Foundation Scholarship Program

Final research report

October 2024



Research into the Goodes O’Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) Scholarship Program was undertaken by the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney.

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Acknowledgement of Country

The authors of this report acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the various communities across NSW on whose Country this report was written. We acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders, and leaders, past and present.

A note on terminology

The report uses the terms Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous people interchangeably recognising the diversity of communities and nations nationally.

Executive Summary

The Goodes O'Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) Scholarship Program supports Indigenous students' education aspirations and achievements through strengthening their connection to and pride in their cultural heritage and identity. The Scholarship Program also provides access and opportunities to students via GO Foundations various partners and financial support for school-related purposes to remove financial barriers to school engagement and education attainment.

Recognising the importance of undertaking research and evaluation to document and investigate the Scholarship Program, the GO Foundation engaged the Jumbunna Institute to undertake the research outlined in this report. The research purpose was to identify the experiences, outcomes and impacts of the Program, and thereby provide an evidence base for understanding its effectiveness and possibilities for future improvements. The research involved in-depth interviews with Scholarship Program alumni, as well as parents/carers of alumni and school staff engaged with the Program.

This report outlines the approach and research undertaken and provides final findings and recommendations.

All interviewees expressed exceptionally high satisfaction with the current Scholarship Program. Program alumni, parents/carers and school staff all spoke very positively about the overall Program and the many opportunities and activities it offers. Interviewees expressed awareness and gratitude for the enabling opportunities provided by GO partners through the Program. Particular **strengths** were identified as:

- Program activities and events including cultural and career days, presentation nights, education and employment pathways information sessions, professional networking, opportunities for public speaking
- Affirmation of and connection to culture
- High level of personal support, care and interest
- Inspiring and encouraging role models/mentors from diverse backgrounds
- Meeting and forming relationships with other Indigenous young people
- Financial support.

Interviewees provided consistent feedback that these activities and opportunities were leading to positive outcomes and impacts for the Scholarship recipients, as well as emerging impacts at a wider school/community level. **Outcomes and impacts** included:

- Affirmation of cultural identity/feeling positive and strong about Indigenous heritage and identity
- Increased confidence and wellbeing
- Accessing, pursuing and persisting in further education
- Long-term supportive relationships between Scholarship Program alumni
- Opportunities provided by financial support
- Emerging positive change at school level including school staff taking their learnings back to their school and strengthened relationships between school staff and Indigenous parents/carers

- Emerging impact at the wider community including Scholarship Program alumni themselves taking on mentoring roles in their work or place of study.

There were a small number of Program challenges and opportunities for improvement raised throughout the interviews, with slight tweaks suggested to improve the experiences for GO Scholars. School staff noted that the biggest challenge from their perspective was transport, particularly to attend the cultural days. Importantly, one school staff member noted that the GO Scholarships did not impact the most disadvantaged students within schools, particularly given the requirements for attendance rates, behaviours and support from home commented upon from the referees.

Opportunities for improvement included:

- Provide more opportunities to continue alumni engagement with the GO Foundation after school
- Extend the cultural component as a real strength of the Program
- Split Cultural and Careers Days between Years 7-9 and 10-12 to ensure content is relevant
- Provide more opportunities for family involvement
- Offer financial and non-financial scholarships
- Improving the application process, with one staff member noted the difficulty in getting two referees
- Provide more visits from GO staff to schools.

Based on the strengths, outcomes, impact and opportunities of the Scholarship Program, the following **recommendations** are proposed for consideration.

1. Celebrate the successes of the GO Foundation Scholarship Program, noting the need for the scholarships and the significant impact these are having on the lives of Indigenous youth in Australia. This should be considered externally, through marketing and promotions, and also internally, through team activities.
2. Develop both a financial and non-financial scholarship pathway to increase Scholarship Program numbers, noting that non-financial scholarships will also require time and effort from Scholarship Managers. Non-financial scholarships should match the existing Scholarship Program offerings, just apart from the financial support element for students who do not require it.
3. Consider splitting Cultural and Careers Events based on age/school year cohorts.
4. Leverage GO alumni and parents/carers to support GO initiatives, including mentoring roles for new Scholarship recipients.
5. Reflect on the comment regarding the Scholarship Program not impacting the most disadvantaged students and clearly make a decision as to whether this needs addressing.

1. Introduction

The Goodes O’Loughlin Foundation (GO Foundation) Scholarship Program supports Indigenous students’ education aspirations and achievements through strengthening their connection to and pride in their cultural heritage and identity. As an Indigenous-driven initiative, the Scholarship Program is grounded in first-hand knowledge about how to improve the quality and outcomes of education for Indigenous peoples. Its approach is reflective of the latest research about factors impacting upon these experiences and outcomes, particularly the significance of culture to Indigenous students’ wellbeing, and that students who feel connected to culture are more likely to aspire to school completion and further education. The Scholarship Program offers students access to opportunities with GO partners to broaden experiences of work, study and life opportunities as well as providing financial support for school-related purposes that removes financial barriers to school engagement and education attainment, and enables students to have more rewarding school experiences.

The Scholarship Program is operational in almost 100 primary and secondary schools in Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. In 2024 it is supporting over 660 students, including students in six universities across Australia.

The GO Foundation recognises the importance of undertaking research and evaluation to document and investigate its Scholarship Program, and thereby engaged the Jumbunna Institute to undertake the research outlined in this report. The research purpose was to identify the experiences, outcomes and impacts of the Program, and thereby provide an evidence base for understanding its effectiveness and possibilities for future improvements.

This report outlines the approach and research undertaken and provides final findings and recommendations.

2. The research project

2.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the research was to provide an in-depth understanding of the students’ experience of the GO Scholarship Program and identify its outcomes and impacts in the short, medium and longer terms.

2.2 Research design

The research design was developed in accordance with the values and principles outlined in the *GO Foundation Scholarship Program Impact Measurement Framework*. This Framework was previously developed through a collaborative process between the GO Foundation Scholarship Program Team

and the Jumbunna Institute Research Team. The Framework and the corresponding research design are grounded in the core principles of Indigenous Research Methodologies¹ which involves:

- Establishing authentic, genuine, ethical relationships with those involved in research and evaluation
- Ensuring awareness and respect for Indigenous cultural protocols, values and behaviours is integral to the work
- Ensuring Indigenous people's needs are central in planning the research, engagement and evaluation
- Accountability to the Indigenous participants and their communities
- Maximising the usefulness of the evaluation by using culturally appropriate methods for providing feedback and disseminating the findings to the community.

2.3 Research questions

The key research questions were the following.

1. What is the experience of being a GO Scholarship recipient, including positive and other aspects?
2. What have been the outcomes and impacts for Scholarship Program participants?
3. What have been other Scholarship Program outcomes and impacts, including for recipients' families, schools or communities?
4. How could the GO Scholarship Program be strengthened into the future?

2.4 Research participants and methods

The research investigated the key questions through the following processes.

- (i) Identifying three cohorts of research participants:
 - **Program alumni** – former students who were involved in the Scholarship Program and could therefore describe first-hand what the experience was like for them and how it had influenced them afterwards (outcomes and impact)
 - **Parents/carers** of Scholarship Program alumni who could provide insights into the experience and outcomes/impacts for their children, as well as other impacts upon family or community
 - **School staff** who collaborated with the GO Scholarship Team to arrange students' participation in the Scholarship Program, had ongoing contact with students and families involved and could therefore provide insights into the Scholarship experience and impacts upon school engagement, as well as other possible outcomes/impacts in the school environment.

¹ Smith, L.T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples* (2nd Ed.). London: Zed books; Williams, M. (2018). Ngaa-bi-nya Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program evaluation framework. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 18:1, 6-20; Indigenous storywork methodologies (Archibald (Q'um Xiiem), 2008; De Santolo, et al, 2019).

- (ii) Tailoring the above key research questions to each of the three cohorts to explore these questions from their different perspectives.
- (iii) Undertaking semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each cohort.

The GO Foundation Team assisted with identifying potential interviewees and undertaking the first round of invitations, which were then followed up by the Jumbunna Research Team.

Interviewees were given the option of participating in the interviews via online technology or by telephone. All parent/carer and school staff participants elected to participate in online interviews and all program alumni by telephone. Interviews were up to one hour in duration.

2.5 Data recording and analysis

Analysis of the interviews utilised the following processes.

Interviews were individually facilitated by a member of the Research Team. The online interviews were recorded (visual and audio) and transcribed, and telephone interviews recorded. Notes were also taken during the interview process. Following the interviews, the facilitators met to discuss responses and comments and more deeply engage with the emerging themes from each interview. These were manually grouped in relation to the research questions for each of the cohorts. The Team then met for a further analysis of findings to identify recurring themes in the discussions. To ensure the interviewee's confidentiality, after the analysis interviewees' names were removed from the analysis and replaced with codes as follows:

A – Alumni of the Scholarship Program

P – Parent of Scholarship Program participant

S – School staff engaged with Scholarship Program and participants.

2.6 Jumbunna Research Team

The following Jumbunna staff comprised the Research Team.

Professor Lindon Coombes is a descendant of the Yuallaraay people of north west NSW and has over 25 years of experience working across a range of sectors in Aboriginal affairs. He has held senior executive positions in the NSW Government and has been CEO of Aboriginal owned and controlled organisations. Lindon is currently Director of the Jumbunna Research Unit and Industry Professor of Indigenous Policy where he is undertaking a range of projects looking at Treaty, Indigenous self-determination and the provision of policy advice and strategy.

Senior Researcher Dr Tracy Barber has a diverse background across the school, VET, university and community sectors in a variety of roles including research, teaching, policy development, project management and course design. She brings this rich experience to her role in Jumbunna where she works with Indigenous organisations and communities to successfully design and undertake research and evaluation projects. Tracy focuses on applied research and evaluation that can contribute to self-determination and positive change for Indigenous peoples, with an emphasis on cross-disciplinary and cross-organisational collaboration.

Senior Researcher Josh Gilbert is a Worimi man and academic, who shares the narration of Indigenous identity through agricultural truths in light of modern contexts. Josh's work seeks to

connect traditional Aboriginal knowledge and history to current contexts, translating past wisdom and learning to future opportunities. His work combines the old and the new, weaving them together to develop new insights and findings. Josh is currently undertaking higher degree research at Charles Sturt University and was recently recognised within the world's top 50 young gastronomers. Josh is the Treasurer for the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Aboriginal Co-Chair of Reconciliation NSW and is a Director for Indigenous Business Australia and KU Children's Services.

2.7 Ethics approval and data storage

Ethics approval for this work was obtained through the UTS ethics approval process (*UTS HREC REF NO. ETH23-8424*). UTS hosts a NHMRC-registered Human Research Ethics Committee, with an expert Indigenous ethics panel through which all research with Indigenous communities is scrutinised. This requires those undertaking the research activities to demonstrate how they will: respect the specific considerations of Indigenous participants; incorporate consideration for local prudential rules and customs in the research design including recognising the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and implement measures to ensure transparency in the purpose, methodology and dissemination of research findings.

Free, prior and informed consent was obtained before any research processes were implemented. This involved ensuring all participants were aware that their participation was voluntary, that the Research Team was grateful if the participant chose to participate and acknowledged and respected the participant's decision if they chose not to participate.

All data and other materials collected through the research was classified as confidential information and stored in a secure location on UTS premises.

2.8 Limitations of the research

Participant recruitment

The intended number of participants were recruited for the parent/carer and school staff cohorts, however it proved difficult to arrange participation of Program alumni. Originally, the research design included conducting three focus groups of approximately five Program alumni, but this was not possible due to difficulties in organising times that were convenient for all alumni. For this reason, it was decided to switch to individual interviews for this cohort as well as for the parents/carers and school staff. Participant recruitment is an issue for consideration for future research activities, including research methods and communication processes that may be more effective in engaging Program alumni.

Sample size

The intended sample size was met or exceeded for the parent/carer and school staff cohorts (five and seven respectively) but smaller for the Program alumni (five). The Research Team is confident that while the sample size was small, it was appropriate for a qualitative study such as this involving in-depth interviews providing diverse perspectives.

Sample bias

It is noted that there was a possibility of sample bias resulting from the GO Scholarship Team's role in recruiting potential participants, and that there may have been a bias in selecting participants who would speak favourably about the Program. However, the Research Team is confident that this was mitigated by the fact that the GO Foundation initiated the research primarily for its own internal learning and to identify how it might strengthen the Program for future participants. All participants were assured that the interviews were confidential and that they would be de-identified in all published findings, which would have contributed to them speaking openly about the Scholarship Program.

3. The GO Foundation Scholarship Program

3.1 Program objectives and description

A brief description of the GO Scholarship Program's objectives and core components is provided below as background for the research focus.

Scholarship Program objectives are the following.

1. Support Indigenous students to have school education journeys that are fulfilling, rewarding and successful.
2. Inspire Indigenous students to "GO Further" and continue on to further education that aligns with their capabilities and aspirations, either in university, vocational or other education course or programs.
3. Increase Indigenous students' knowledge of and connection to their cultural heritage.
4. Build Indigenous students' confidence and pride in their cultural identity.
5. Increase Indigenous students' connection to and active participation in Indigenous networks and communities.
6. Increase Indigenous students' work and life opportunities and outcomes, and overall quality of life and wellbeing into the future.
7. Empower Indigenous students to be strong and impactful role models and leaders in society.

As well as objectives directly relating to Program participants, the GO Foundation has the following wider objectives.

1. Build strong and effective Indigenous networks and communities.
2. Contribute to creating more culturally safe and inclusive work and study places.
3. Increase the impact of Indigenous culture across society.

Core Components of the GO Scholarship Program

The following core components collectively aim to achieve the Program's objectives.

Cultural and aspirational activities

This involves connecting Indigenous young people with Indigenous leaders in the community from diverse social and professional backgrounds. The aim is to inspire and motivate Indigenous students and strengthen their education and employment aspirations by providing role models of successful

Indigenous people achieving across a variety of areas. This relationship also builds Indigenous students' knowledge of and connection to their Indigenous culture and heritage, and pride and confidence in their Indigenous identity.

Access to a wide variety of work, study and life opportunities

These opportunities aim to broaden Indigenous students' awareness of and interest in potential cultural, education and employment pathways and careers. Along with cultural and aspiration-building activities, students engage with supportive Indigenous and other educational and professional networks and build personal and professional connections that can facilitate successful outcomes into the future. Opportunities include information about and facilitated access to post-school education and employment pathways, work experience, paid internships and professional development through GO's alumni network.

Financial support for school-related purposes

This support aims to remove financial barriers to school engagement and education attainment, and enable students to have a more rewarding school experience. Scholarship funds can be used to access educational requirements and resources such as uniforms, textbooks, study resources, stationery, excursions, IT support and resources and nutrition.

4. Strengths, outcomes and impact of the Scholarship Program

The following section outlines the strengths, outcomes and impacts of the current GO Scholarship Program. All research participants spoke very positively and highly of the GO Scholarship Program, particularly school staff, with some comparing the GO Scholarship Program to other Indigenous based programs in their school.

GO is the most professional program we work with. Other programs are very inconsistent. I was really impressed. (Int S4)

GO is an aspirational program. We needed connections that didn't let students down and GO provides us this. (Int S2)

GO is amazing with students- better than other programs. (Int S1)

All interviewees – Program alumni, parents/carers and school staff - reflected positively on the lasting impact of the Program, including increased student confidence, strengthened identity and cultural grounding and strengthening and increased understanding and pursuance of career opportunities.

4.1 Program Strengths

Program activities, events and messages

Program alumni, parents/carers and school staff all spoke very positively about the overall Program, including the strong messaging about the importance of education, and the many diverse and rich opportunities and activities it offers. Positive references were made to the cultural days, presentation nights, family days, career days, speakers and role models from diverse backgrounds,

attending events such as Bangarra Dance Theatre performances, opportunities for public speaking and other leadership roles.

I just think the diversity of having different speakers in and the children learning from a real mix of, you know, from fire management to art to business to science. I think that is a real strength. (Int P4)

The corporate partnerships are great, particularly beyond Year 12. These give all kids exposure to different industries. (Int S3)

And we went down and there was a ceremony for past GO Foundation kids who've done well and they were up on the stage, you know, being rewarded for such a fine effort. And it's uni or....they'd progressed....some had gone to TAFE, some had got apprenticeships, it was a really, really nice evening. (Int P5)

Cultural days are their strengths so students can learn and meet new people from other Aboriginal Communities and stand up and speak without being shame. (Int S7)

The GO Program has been marvellous. I love their cultural connection days – Adam and Michael are so clear and aspirational. (Int S3)

Students really benefit from the connection days and feel a bit special. I like the idea of them being part of something bigger. (Int S1)

Affirmation of and connection to culture through the Program

A major identified strength of the GO Scholarship Program is its focus on culture, which was described as woven throughout the Program. This was particularly highlighted by parents/carers and GO alumni.

One parent explained that the cultural component of the Scholarship Program was the most important aspect for her child, one that she highly values and thinks is critical for the wellbeing of Indigenous young people:

....so that the most important day she wanted to go [were] cultural days. And I think I get that myself when I do workshops....more culture, more culture, more culture. That's just what our kids are yearning for, especially kids that have been disconnected from culture. So yeah, it was that, they were highlights when she participated in those days. (Int P4)

Another interviewee explained that her mother had been part of the Stolen Generation and she did not talk about the past or history. Her daughter was keen to find out more and:

....being connected with GO....probably gave what we might have been missing because we didn't have that connection with Country....through activities like the cultural days about who comes from where....for us it's been an amazing path. (Int P3)

This parent also noted a strength of the Program is the integration of community and culture throughout:

And I just think all that support and that community, you know, you got the community and Adam and Michael know people in high places....they've got this networking and community and culture all in one. (Int P3)

Alumni shared that the cultural days and learnings throughout the Program created a grounding and connection to culture.

The GO Program helped me ground myself with my identity and culture. (Int A5)

(The Program) helped both of us connect with culture more, being surrounded with other mob, helped us connect with other mobs and learn different things and traditions with other groups. (Int A2 and A4)

I have found through GO that there's a supportive Aboriginal community in Sydney. (Int A3)

Other events were referred to as strengthening connection to culture such as attending Swans football matches, with one parent describing highlights for her daughters: 'standing on the field with the Swans, running through the banner...being at the Marn Grook round' which all made her daughters feel 'super connected' (Int P3).

In the context of describing the benefits of the GO Scholarship Program, two parents noted that their children's Aboriginal heritage was questioned in other settings, including at school, because of their skin colour. One GO Alumni also shared the importance of the GO Scholarship Program in relation to the cultural load placed upon Indigenous students at school.

We were the only Indigenous family at my school. The school were trying to engage me through tokenistic efforts and GO helped me to address this. (Int A5)

Parent descriptions of the GO Scholarship Program indicated that it provided a culturally safe space of support and affirmation for their children, where identity did not need to be justified or explained. This space is created through the cultural activities, interactions with Indigenous role models and mentors as described above, relationships with the GO Team, and being with other Indigenous young people.

High level of personal support, care and interest provided through the Program

All research participants talked extensively about the high level of personal support and care provided by the GO Foundation, citing many examples of this.

....they've always been very supportive on every level...So there's this feeling that kind of like everybody has your back and sort of knows who you are....(Int P1)

....the relationship that's formed between GO staff and the children, it's very personal. They really know every single student and their strengths and their weaknesses, and they take the time to invest in that. (Int P4)

People finally had belief in her and were proud of her. It changed her life. (Int S2)

I lost my Grandma during high school....[The GO Program] gave me someone new to yarn with. I could go to events and connect socially and get support to navigate high school. (Int A5)

In particular, the support and interest provided by the Scholarship Program founders were mentioned frequently as well as of the current and previous CEOs and the Program's Head of Scholarships. This included examples of support to scholars and families in challenging situations including following a serious accident and securing a last-minute visa to commence overseas studies, as well as ongoing interest and care and regular check-ins by text message or phone call. One school staff member shared:

Mark is very approachable. GO didn't wipe their hands of students when they left our school, they still got a laptop for two students. (Int S3)

There were constant positive referrals to being part of the GO family:

GO has made their own little GO family. (Int P2)

It's a nice little family, especially for someone that doesn't have anything. (Int P3)

It kind of feels like another family. (Int P4)

Once a GO Scholar, always a GO Scholar. (Int S5)

Inspiring and encouraging role models/mentors

All interviewees spoke positively about the GO Scholarship Program providing inspiring and encouraging role models. Parents referred to the diversity of role models in the Program, and one parent described her daughter benefitting from having positive male role models. The Program founders were mentioned frequently as role models providing care, leadership and inspiration.

....they're both quite humble and walk with humility. The kids, the kids really love that and look up to them....They feel a bit special that they're getting to spend some one-on-one time with these two very kind, generous people. Because when they do share, they actually share from the heart....the films they shared as well had quite a big impact on the kids. (Int P4)

School staff also highlighted the importance of accessing inspiring and encouraging role models and mentors through the GO Program.

GO provides access to Indigenous role models and allies. It boosts Aboriginal aspiration. (Int S3)

Students really relate to Charlene and her story. (Int S1)

Meeting and forming relationships with other Indigenous young people

A major strength of the Program is that it brings Indigenous young people together, providing a space where they feel they belong, and for them to support each other.

It's just about the engaging and like being with mob. They just feel like they're one mob. (Int P2)

I think just being around other kids like her. When we had GO days, she was very, very shy, but it was really nice for her to be around fellow students and form those bonds and relationships. And then she'd always get really nervous before we'd go down. But I think when she was there, it was just like this huge exhale. So it really had an impact on her, yarning to these other kids about what subjects they're picking, if they needed any help. (Int P4)

The dinners and awards are nice, I really love it. It's nice to be engaged with mob and learn from others and their interests. They have big aspirations! (Int A3)

Kids get to connect and meet each other. This link is really important. (Int S1)

Financial support

A number of interviewees referred to the financial support provided through the Program as a strength.

The financial support is vital. There is limited opportunity to get scholarships, which adds to the prestige of the GO Foundation (Int S2)

The funds helped us support ourselves through school. They helped buy computers, which was helpful during covid and kept us connected. (Int A2 and A4)

The money for students and families removed the financial pressure. (Int S6)

Scholarships are really important. Funds helped support scholars with the internet at home, laptops, noise cancelling headphones and art materials. (Int S1)

4.2 Program outcomes and impact

The previous section outlined what Program alumni, parents/carers and school staff identified as the strengths and benefits of the Scholarship Program. This section focuses on Program outcomes and impact – what differences is the Program actually making or contributing to for those who engage in it? A strong theme across all interviewees was that engaging in the GO Program had had an overall positive impact on the students involved in the Program.

.... you look at her when she started and to how much she's grown now. I think she's got so much out of it, so much. (Int P3)

It's been, I think, a very positive experience all round....it's been really good for X.... it's been nothing but positive and pleasing and a proud thing for me as a mum. (Int P5)

It's really powerful for kids. They were asking to be part of it. (Int S5)

Specific outcomes and impacts are considered below.

Affirmation of cultural identity/feeling positive and strong about Indigenous heritage and identity

Interviewees described the GO Scholarship Program as contributing to participants feeling stronger in their Indigenous identity, being encouraged to learn more about their cultural heritage and being actively engaged in community and cultural activities and events as a consequence of engagement with the GO Scholarship Program. Numerous examples were provided of the cultural component having a positive impact.

One parent told a story of her daughter attending a bush food activity at the Botanical Gardens. Afterwards 'she was completely buzzing and wanting to learn more', and this 'sparked something' that influenced her creatively including her dancing (Int P4). Another example given was one interviewee's daughter who is an artist, and whose practice has been strongly influenced through her ongoing connection with GO, including being encouraged and succeeding in being chosen to design the 2022 Marn Grook Guernsey for the Sydney Swans.

GO Alumni particularly outlined the importance of the cultural days and sessions provided by the GO Foundation.

The connection to Country and the understanding of this through the cultural days led and informed my future studies. (Int A5)

GO gave us the opportunity to learn things we were disconnected from, arts, weaving- helped us be more connected. It's great for young kids who didn't know their culture- removes shame of being mob. (Int A2 and A4)

Increased confidence and wellbeing

Most participants, particularly parents, described GO students as growing in confidence both during and after completing the Program. This increased confidence developed from the support provided by the GO Team and role models, and from being around other Indigenous young people.

The impact of this increased confidence is manifesting itself in many ways, such as having the 'confidence to not miss out on things' (Int P4), to take on public speaking roles, and to pursue education (described further below). One parent described her daughter having the confidence to speak out at school about a number of racist issues, because of the support she received from GO and in particular one of the founders. As a consequence of his encouragement and guidance she met

with the Principal and this initiated some changes including to employment of an Indigenous person as teacher of the Aboriginal Studies subject, as well as changes to wording and descriptions relating to Indigenous people.

So we actually said that the Aboriginal Study [subject] should be taught by an Aboriginal teacher and you shouldn't be questioning any Aboriginal learner....if they see that, that's wrong, they should be allowed to say that it's wrong. So the teacher said 'no, these are my notes, this is what it is' and [her daughter] just said 'no, I've gotta stand up here'. So she actually had a conversation with Adam and asked how to do it, and he gave her that encouragement and told her to do it. And yep, sure enough, we have a little bit of change at the school with it and they got an Aboriginal educator in, which was really good. Yeah, she wouldn't have had that confidence if she didn't have the support of Adam....To encourage her to stand up. Normally that wouldn't have happened at all, but she had the backing from GO. (Int P2)

Another student shared a similar experience to the parent recount above, highlighting that the GO Foundation helped address some of the tokenism and cultural load placed on them as her family was the only Indigenous family at the school (Int A5). Others reflected on the increased confidence they gained as part of the Scholarship Program.

We gained confidence - being surrounded by younger students. Adam and Michael's stories were really empowering - never give up, keep pushing through. (Int A2 and A4)

School staff also noted the impact in GO Scholar confidence and wellbeing, sharing impacts around leadership and mental health.

Mentoring was a lot of good for his (a scholar's) mental health. (Int S3)

The Program has shown students not to be shy and to be heard by asking questions and speaking up for who they are and what they need. (Int S7)

The leadership stuff is the big strength - it builds confidence. (Int S2)

Accessing, pursuing and persisting in further education

A number of interviewees indicated that there were pre-existing expectations that their child would continue on to further education after school. However, in all cases the stress upon the importance of education had a positive impact and contributed to building aspirations to succeed at school and into the future.

I think really from the beginning that language about staying in school and continuing education, that was a huge impact, I think. (Int P4)

One parent interviewee explained that her daughter is currently studying overseas and very homesick. The guidance she received through the Scholarship Program is enabling her to persevere:

....having all that kind of connection to culture and sort of really just the way that Adam and Michael would like, speak to them....That overwhelming influence of their words and their experiences and their kind of mentorship like she still talks about them, you know, not wanting to leave home. And you know how there were cousins at home? Better than them at football, but didn't take the risk to kind of go and chase your dreams and do your best and all this kind of stuff. So been very influential on those levels. (Int P1)

All the parents described their children as currently or previously having engaged and succeeded in further education. There were numerous examples of alumni achieving high levels of academic success, receiving prestigious scholarships and success in employment.

Program alumni all shared the impact the Scholarship Program had on them being able to access and pursue university or further studies.

I definitely went to university because of GO - I learnt it's possible to get scholarships. It's the mindset that it was possible to go to uni. (Int A3)

I don't think I would have pursued further studies without the GO foundation. Having the open space to yarn about careers is really helpful. (Int A4)

GO helped me work on a career path. I learnt entry pathways to get into university and could yarn through how this would work. (Int A5)

Positive impact of long-term engagement with and support from GO

A strength of the Program that leads to positive impact is the ongoing connection and communication between the GO Foundation and Program alumni. This was described by parent/carer interviewees whose children had completed the Program some years ago – from three to eight years. Since that time, the GO Team had continued to engage with their children, both providing personal support and opportunities and experiences such as engagement in cultural days and other events.

I think they try to keep the community. Like they do the Christmas get together, the Culture Days where the kids come together so you've got the alumni like X and other girls who were in the Program....and they come together with the younger ones and it's just like this domino effect.... they're there mentoring the younger generation...(Int P3)

This long-term connection has a positive impact as alumni participants continue on to further education and work:

.... coming into university, X wants that culture and wants that connection so she's been very close with GO. (Int P3)

This parent believes the ongoing connection and mentoring is important as university is potentially a time when a young person could 'feel lost'. Another parent described the positive impact of the ongoing interest and support provided by the Head of Scholarships to her daughter after she left home in regional New South Wales to move to Sydney:

The after care that she's received has been amazing. Mark constantly checks in with us, me and X.... It's that ongoing relationship, it's really beautiful.... Mark is so lovely....She still is walking with pride because of her relationship with GO and....I'm getting a bit teary....Moving to Sydney was a really big deal for X, and knowing that she had that GO family and support. Still, you know, five years, six years later, there's still that relationship.... Having that ongoing support is huge.... (Int P4)

Long-term relationships between Scholarship Program alumni

Forming strong and continuing friendships was described as a positive outcome from the Program.

They've got lifelong friends out of this and they're still touching base with those people today. (Int P2)

GO Alumni shared that these relationships were often established at GO events but provided longer-term connection and engagement. This was also apparent based on some Alumni conducting the interviews together at each other's houses and referring to other Alumni throughout the consultations.

I feel like I'm connecting and using the GO Foundation more now at uni than I did at school. I've built a connection from GO at uni with this new network. (Int A5)

Opportunities provided by financial support

The financial benefits of the Scholarship Program were referred to by interviewees as a positive impact, providing opportunities that GO Scholars would otherwise not have had.

The financial side of it too was pretty huge for our family....(Int P4)

Students can have a school uniform, get the resources they need for school and attend school excursions without the family saying we just can't afford it right now. (Int S7)

One student used this (the funds) for his Year 12 woodwork to create a really nice piece. He probably wouldn't have been able to do this otherwise. (Int S6)

This was particularly mentioned by parents whose children attended independent schools, and by the parent of a child from regional New South Wales, who was able to attend events in Sydney with the support of GO funding.

4.3 Other impacts – wider benefits for school and community

There were emerging indications that the Scholarship Program's impact is extending, through its participants and alumni, to bringing about positive change in the wider community. In addition to the examples provided above about a participant challenging discriminatory practices at her school that lead to change, other examples included the following.

One parent explained that as well as her daughter gaining in confidence through the Program, she took her learnings back to school and shared with other Indigenous students:

....when she did go back to school she'd share that with the other [Indigenous] kids and it was something for her to be proud of. So I think it had a wider influence and ripple effect on other kids that identified within the school. (Int P4)

Another parent felt that the influence of the role models in the Program sparks an awareness of social justice. Other examples were provided of alumni who were sharing the benefits of their engagement with the GO Foundation by themselves taking on mentoring roles in their work or place of study or contributing through artworks for charity auctions.

One school staff member noted that the cultural days were pivotal learning experiences for educators across their school, sharing:

It's important for our staff to attend the cultural days and build connections with Aboriginal staff and business owners, to then bring learnings and their experiences back into schools. (Int S3)

Another noted that the GO Program strengthened the relationship between the school and parents:

It (the GO Scholarship Program) does improve school outcomes and increases the involvement of parents/carers in the school. (Int S5)

5. Challenges and opportunities for the Scholarship Program

There were limited Program challenges and opportunities for improvement raised throughout the interviews. All interviewees expressed exceptionally high satisfaction with the current Scholarship Program, with slight tweaks suggested to improve the experiences for GO Scholars. A school staff comment best summarises the attitude across the interviewees:

I'd be very upset if they closed one day. I just hope they sustain (the Program activities) with growth. (Int S5)

5.1 Program Challenges

Interviewees were asked if there were any limitations to the current Scholarship Program. At large, parents and alumni responded that there were no challenges at all.

School staff noted that the biggest challenge from their perspective was transport, particularly to attend the cultural days.

Transport is a real issue for the cultural days, particularly when it is more than a car full. (Int S2)

Importantly, one school staff member noted that the GO Scholarships did not impact the most disadvantaged students within schools, particularly given the requirements for attendance rates, behaviours and support from home commented upon from the referees. While this is not a direct challenge of the GO Scholarship Program, it may require some reflection by the GO Foundation as to targeted demographic and impact.

5.2 Opportunities for improvement

Several interviewees suggested tweaks to the Scholarship Program to help strengthen the experience for GO Scholars. These have been grouped into alumni, parents and school staff to understand where opportunities are being derived from.

All GO alumni provided suggestions for improvement, particularly in relation to meeting and the cultural days. These are outlined below.

- All alumni noted that it would be great to continue the engagement after school, noting experiences such as Bangarra Dance performances and football matches have provided opportunity to meet further GO scholars and alumni. Alumni noted that more opportunities to do this, even informally, would assist in growing this connection and also provide the opportunity to give back to new GO scholars. This was particularly the case in areas where GO did not have a physical office space, such as Canberra.
- Most alumni suggested splitting Cultural and Careers Days between Years 7-9 and 10-12 to ensure content is relevant. This could also create more opportunities for outdoor activities and utilising the GO network to show scholars a variety of career journeys and pathways.

Three of the five parents interviewed offered suggested improvements. These are outlined below.

- One parent noted that the current cultural component is a real strength of the Program. She would like to see this extended even further to include more activities such as camps and cultural immersion days on Country. This parent spoke passionately about culture being the foundation for confidence, pride and empowerment for Indigenous people.
- One parent suggested that alumni could take on more public speaking for the GO Foundation. This would be a valuable opportunity for them as well as serving to lighten the load currently carried by the Program founders and GO Team.
- One parent explained that she really appreciates opportunities for families to be involved, and she would like to be involved more and give back to the Program.
- One parent explained that one of her four children had received a scholarship. They could all see the great benefits from it and would have valued all children being accepted into the Program.
- One parent suggested that rather than providing funding directly to the family, the GO Foundation provide the actual school-related equipment. Examples included calculators, books, stationery, school shoes, trainers and IT equipment. The parent referred to other organisations which provide these items to Indigenous students such as Kimberwalli.
- One parent suggested promoting school-based apprenticeships and traineeships through the Program, as an alternative for young people who do not want to go to university. An example given was the Regional Engagement Employment Program (REEP).

School Staff highlighted the following suggestions:

- Offering financial and non-financial scholarships. Some schools highlighted that they already pay for much of the resources for Indigenous students. Others shared students had given up their place in the GO Scholarship Program to assist other students who may have benefitted greater from the financial amount.
- One staff member suggested running separate Program days for Early Primary to Year 8, Year 9 and 10, and Years 11 and 12, to provide more succinct leadership and public speaking training.
- One staff member noted it would be good to have more direction for the cultural days, ensuring outcomes are met through these sessions.
- Improving the application process. One staff member noted the difficulty in getting two referees.
- More staff visits. GO staff visits were particularly valued by schools and provide an opportunity for scholars, staff and GO to connect around key ideas and understandings.

6. Recommendations for the Scholarship Program

Based on the strengths, outcomes, impact and opportunities of the Scholarship Program, the following recommendations are proposed for consideration. It is important to note that, at large, all interviewees highlighted the strengths and benefits of the Program and that the following recommendations are considered minor tweaks to further enhance the Program.

1. Celebrate the successes of the GO Foundation Scholarship Program, noting the need for the scholarships and the significant impact these are having on the lives of Indigenous youth in Australia. This should be considered externally, through marketing and promotions, and also internally, through team activities.
2. Develop both a financial and non-financial scholarship pathway to increase Scholarship Program numbers, noting that non-financial scholarships will also require time and effort from Scholarship Managers. Non-financial scholarships should match the existing Scholarship Program offerings, just apart from the financial support element for students who do not require it.
3. Consider splitting Cultural and Careers Events based on age/school year cohorts.
4. Leverage GO alumni and parents/carers to support GO initiatives, including mentoring roles for new Scholarship recipients.
5. Reflect on the comment regarding the Scholarship Program not impacting the most disadvantaged students and clearly make a decision as to whether this needs addressing.
6. Consider increasing the information provided through the GO Scholarship Program about post-schooling career pathways, including university and non-university training and education pathways. This should include school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, for those young people interested in exploring other options.

7. Conclusion

Adam and Mick's legacy will be the GO Foundation. (Int S3)

This research project provides a clear picture that the GO Foundation Scholarship Program is positively impacting the lives of its Indigenous participants. It provides a strong endorsement of the Scholarship Program's current content and approaches, and very encouraging feedback for the GO Team. The GO Foundation has been credited with ensuring young Indigenous students attend university, and are leaders in their community with the confidence to create change in broader society.

Perhaps most importantly, all GO alumni reflected on the cultural knowledge and skills provided as part of the GO Scholarship Program. This has instilled pride and grounding of culture, creating and strengthening their identity.

Recommendations have been proposed for the GO Foundation's consideration, however it suggested that these be viewed as tweaks to further strengthen the power of the GO Scholarship Program.

Importantly, all interviewees highlighted the inspiration and the dedication of GO Foundation staff, in particular Adam Goodes, Michael O'Loughlin, Charlene Davison and Mark Heiss. These Indigenous leaders are a huge strength of the organisation.

The GO Foundation should be immensely proud of the achievements highlighted in this report.

We thank you for the opportunity to conduct this research.

Appendix 1

Interview questions

Program alumni

1. What were some of the positive aspects of being a GO scholarship recipient? (What did you like/enjoy/find useful about the program?)
2. Were there any parts of the experience you did not like or find useful?
3. What did you learn from being involved in the GO Scholarship Program?
4. Was there anything you found particularly significant from the workshops/activities you attended?
5. In what ways would you say being involved in the GO Scholarship Program has influenced or changed you in relation to:
 - Connection to culture
 - Transition to further education and employment
 - Confidence
6. Do you have suggestions for how to improve the program for future participants?
7. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about the program?

Parents/carers

1. Can you please tell me about your involvement with the GO Scholarship Program?
2. From your perspective how has participation in the program influenced your child and/or your family?
3. From your perspective what have been the benefits of the program for your child and/or your family?
4. From your perspective what do you think are the strengths of the program?
5. From your perspective are there any limitations to the program?
6. Do you have suggestions for how the program could be strengthened?
7. How do you feel about the communication between the GO Team and you as a parent/carer? (e.g. communication regarding GO events and opportunities, updates on the GO Foundation)
8. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about the program?

School staff

1. Can you please tell me about your involvement with the program?
2. From your perspective how has participation in the program influenced your students?

3. From your perspective what have been the benefits of the program for your students and the school overall?
4. From your perspective what do you think are the strengths of the program?
5. From your perspective are there any limitations to the program?
6. Do you have suggestions for how to improve the program for future participants?
7. How do you feel about the relationship between the GO Team and you as the school contact?
8. Are there any other thoughts you would like to share about the program?