

Ms Emma Buckley, current member of the Teaching Staff: (written in 2021)

My time at Trinity has spanned only the last decade – a mere fraction of the life of the school – so you'll have to forgive me if I focus more on the last few years.

Trinity College's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have always been an important part of our College – indeed, some of our most illustrious alumni have been of First Peoples descent. These include John Davis, CEO of the Stronger Smarter Institute, Will Davis, CEO of Jinndi Mibunn, the Beenleigh Housing and Development Corporation, and Megan Davis, who previously chaired the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, was part of the referendum council in 2015 that went on to deliver the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017, has acted as NRL commissioner and is currently one of UNSW's Pro Vice-Chancellors. More recent graduates have achieved success working with various organisations as they create their Reconciliation Action Plans (or RAPs), refereeing sport at state level, and facilitating cultural camps and events – we are all following their careers with interest, as I'm sure they're only just getting started!

After 25 years of educating students, Trinity College began to expand on what it could offer its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Following on from the Apology to the Stolen Generations and the Year of Aboriginal Awareness in 2008, 2009 saw our efforts come to fruition with the official opening of the Aboriginal Garden. More than a decade on, this garden is still a central part of the school, a monument to the fundraising efforts of our students and their desire to engage with Australia's First Peoples.

Since 2017 I have had the twin privileges of being Trinity College's Cultural Leader and of working with our school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in this capacity. This role and the Trinity College Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student program began under the auspices of Ryan Hardie-Porter in 2009, aiming to support the students during their time at the College through a variety of measures – from linking students to scholarship and work opportunities, to allowing them the chance to engage more with their respective cultures. Previous Cultural Leaders, Danielle Barker, David Bourke, and Amy Waters (nee Lang), had built up the program, and it was a daunting task to continue in their footsteps.

Over the last few years, we have expanded the work we have done with our students to include regular cultural incursions each term, an annual camp and multiple networking days with other schools. The College has supported many students in their applications for scholarships and other opportunities, and now we have had multiple students successfully apply for and receive the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation, or QATSIF, QCE scholarship. Two of these students, Alycia and Nikela Hyland, also went on to become recipients of the QATSIF Young Indigenous Leaders Award after a very successful year as College Prefects.

The College was also one of the first BCE schools to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan, or RAP, with the committee formed in 2017 from a mix of students, parents, and staff. Our College RAP was officially launched in 2018 and has continued to undergo renewal as we achieve our goals and keep moving forward. Our committee meets every term, and we're always happy to welcome new members, or invite anyone who is curious as to how things work.

As our numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to grow, our program here at Trinity College continues to expand, as we support and celebrate these young people. I, for one, can't wait to see what the future will bring!

Emma Buckley

