

## **ABSTRACT**

**BACKGROUND:** Increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing graduates is important in reducing health disparities in Australia. Students experience many hurdles which can prevent their progress and completion of their nursing degree.

**AIMS OF STUDY:** In the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Nutrition (SNMN) at JCU a new learning support model has been developed to provide academic, personal/cultural and pastoral supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery students from entry to graduation.

**METHODS:** The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing & Midwifery Working Group was established with Academic and student support staff from the School, Indigenous Health Unit and Teaching and Learning Development. The Working Group meets fortnightly and takes both a strategic and operational approach to student monitoring and support.

**RESULTS:** Monthly meeting for monitoring of students' progress, the development of a risk assessment tool, customised learning support and regular contact with the student group has increased student engagement with Academic staff and allow for timely interventions to optimise retention.

**CONCLUSIONS/ RECOMMENDATIONS :** The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nursing & Midwifery Working Group works in the spirit of reconciliation to bring about the necessary cultural and structural change to facilitate increased retention of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Nursing and Midwifery students at JCU and provides a model to emulate across the other health disciplines at JCU.