

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

FACILITATING OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION THROUGH STEM

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ABSTRACT

We all aspire to make valuable contributions to society, and in academia and as scientists and/or STEM practitioners there are many ways that these contributions can be made. I have been able to contribute towards tangible community benefits in ways that I never initially anticipated, and in ways that have been immensely rewarding and educational for myself, my research group and coursework students I teach. In this presentation, I will share how research that started with looking at the chemistry of bush medicines in partnership with Yaegl Country Elders, progressed to the multi-award-winning National Indigenous Science Education Program (NISEP, nisep.org.au) that positions Indigenous secondary school students as STEM leaders and role models, building confidence, capacity, pride and aspirations in these youth and the wider community. I will also describe how Macquarie University students are integral in NISEP's empowerment of Indigenous youth and how they contribute to the sustainability and improvement of NISEP and other STEM programs while transforming themselves, particularly within the Macquarie University unit Engaging the Community in Science:

"The unit has opened my eyes to the experiences of under-represented student groups within our community and has allowed me to use my experience to nurture and support these students. It has further fostered a deep appreciation of our Indigenous communities and has inspired me to incorporate awareness and support these communities through my current study, striving for an increase in equity within our society." - Former Engaging the Community in Science student.

I will also describe how my collaborations with First Nations peoples have enabled respectful incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning into Macquarie University units, as we take our first steps towards Mudang Dali – the Indigenous Connected Curriculum.

In sharing my experiences and insights, I hope this will be an inspiration for others to grasp opportunities to contribute to building inclusion and a sense of pride and belonging for staff and students within their university and in their connections to wider community.

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