

## Strengthened connection to and pride in Indigenous culture and heritage in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Canberra Grammar School

### **Purpose**

To increase and strengthen cultural awareness, confidence, and connection to culture in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, through the design and delivery of a cultural immersion program at Canberra Grammar School. This project occurred in response to student-identified need, emerging from 2019 survey results that Indigenous students were craving more time dedicated to learning about and appreciating their culture. The program was also designed to enable students to spend time together to socialise and support each other.

### **Target group**

All fourteen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship students at Canberra Grammar School in 2020, including day students and boarders.

### **Activities**

Indigenous students at Canberra Grammar School come from several regions and nations, so it was important to offer a course providing opportunities to appreciate and celebrate Aboriginal culture generally. The program was facilitated by Yurbay, an Indigenous consultancy and cultural services provider. The program consisted of:

- An initial school-based eight-week program offered for two hours after school each week, including traditional Aboriginal plant use for foods, medicines, and fibres, as well as Wiradjuri teaching stories and their connection to culture, kinship structures, and animal teachings.
- Throughout the school-based program, students worked together to design and create a cultural garden space. Students celebrated the garden creation with a bush foods cooking class in the final week.
- The program culminated with an on-Country excursion visiting local area sites, learning how to identify native plants, and exploring connection to Country and culture.

### **Outcomes**

Students developed increased cultural awareness and knowledge and speak about their culture with growing confidence and pride. A 2020 follow-up survey will further investigate the extent to which students feel they have developed strengthened connection to and pride in their Indigenous culture. Program success led to ongoing and related activities, such as teaching Early Learning Centre students about the native garden.

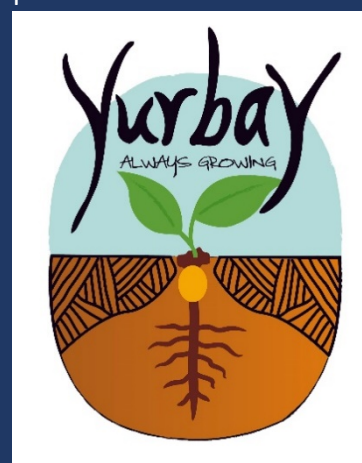
### **Learnings**

The project was an outstanding success and led to other cultural and academic support initiatives across the school. We have learned that these students are amazing ambassadors for their families and their culture, and they have helped shape the community of Canberra Grammar School, for the better.

The Canberra Grammar School native garden project:



Cultural awareness program provider:



Exploring culturally significant sites on Country:

