
VIRTUAL LABORATORY ON AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CUSTOMARY MEDICINES

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Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2017–2020 aims to “ensure all students will encounter and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content as integral parts of their course of study”. Universities across Australia are endeavouring to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge into their curricula in a respectful, meaningful and sustainable manner. At Macquarie University, situated on Dharug land, the Mudang-Dali (‘to live’ in the Dharug language) Indigenous Connected Curriculum Framework is providing academics with the confidence and support to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, values and philosophies into curriculum. With this support, in Session 1 2020, we developed a laboratory on customary medicines that incorporates a yarnning circle, bush food and medicines garden tour, water extraction and chromatographic fractionation of an Australian medicinal plant, and analysis of antioxidant activity (aligned with customary use) of the extract and fractions therein. Designed to be interactive, hands-on and communal, with the implementation of COVID-19 restrictions this laboratory was quickly pivoted into a successful virtual laboratory. This presentation will describe the core components of the laboratory, which interweave Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and the adaptability of this laboratory for online and face-to-face teaching in the tertiary (and secondary) sectors.

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