



Port Lincoln High School – Fisheries Program

School Profile

- South Australia
- Regional
- Government
- Years 8 to 12
- Located in Barngarla country

Program Summary

Port Lincoln High School is located at the southern end of the Eyre Peninsula. The town is home to Australia’s largest commercial fishing fleet, with a range of fishing and aquaculture businesses operating in the region. The school introduced a Fisheries program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in order to improve the attendance and engagement of older students at the school, and strengthen their connection to their land and water. The purpose of the program is to offer innovative and authentic learning activities that are more meaningful than traditional education offerings. The program emphasises flexibility, local context, and developing students’ sense of aspiration, self-esteem and belonging, whilst providing real-world job pathways.

The local context of Port Lincoln is dominated by the seafood industry. However, many of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at Port Lincoln High School have had little or no previous exposure to the local workplaces in this industry, including employers and organisations such as the Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy (AMFA) in Port Lincoln. This Registered Training Organisation (RTO) hosts the Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance Support as well as delivering commercial qualifications for potential boat skippers and engineers. The Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy’s aim is that students are inspired by the certificate course and by the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Fisheries Compliance Officers as role models.

To match employment opportunities in the Port Lincoln region, the school offers a Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance Support exclusively to Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander students. This entry-level course includes the Elements of Shipboard Safety skill set that gives students marine survival and firefighting skills, and enables them to qualify to work on vessels at sea. Students are selected for the course through careful case management and consideration of their specific interests, capabilities and comprehension of the circumstances under which they have disengaged from mainstream curriculum activities.

The Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance Support is offered as a block-release course, taught intensively but with flexibility as to how students access different components to suit their needs. Flexibility is one of the keys to success in the program, as student engagement can be affected by factors such as a student’s ability to participate or variations in weather conditions. Depending on their literacy and numeracy skills, students can undertake varying types of assessment activities, with options for verbal or video delivery of skills and knowledge. Flexible program delivery also allows for weather variables to be taken into account.

‘We offer the certificate over two years to allow some flexibility for the kids to catch up or redo some of the things they may have missed. Each week-long block is offered again in the second year so that they’re able to catch up and ensure that, by the end of the two-year period, they have got the full certificate and have satisfied all the requirements of the course. The certificate can be put towards their SACE credits, so it’s another way to make sure that they can stay at school and get their Certificate of Education.’

Amy O’Brien – Assistant Principal Aboriginal Education and Projects, Port Lincoln High School





Port Lincoln is located at the southern end of the Eyre Peninsula and is home to Australia's largest commercial fishing fleet.

Another key factor in the success of the program is the quality of relationships established by the support structures that have been implemented. Local role models support the program both in the classroom and away from the school environment. In addition, the school employs an Aboriginal Education Support Officer who manages the program, supports morale and acts as a role model to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

‘The Aboriginal Education Support Officer is ... determined to make the best of every single Aboriginal student that comes to the school and certainly is prepared to go to the next level to get the best out of each student.’

Todd George – Deputy Principal, Port Lincoln High School

‘I liked their teamwork, their willingness to help out their schoolmates. The most enjoyable part of the course for them was in the practical component – of being thrown in, literally, into the deep end of a pool and having to survive and learn to get in and out of a life raft.’

Sue Mattsson – Port Lincoln Campus Manager and Senior Maritime Trainer, Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy

Outcomes

The Fisheries program not only delivers employment pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but also confirms and connects them with their land and culture. The pride and sense of ownership that comes as a result of working on local land or water makes a significant difference to the wellbeing of these students.

‘My communication skills got better, leadership skills, working with others, that’s all got a lot better with the course. Not being shy anymore. I’ve learnt a lot of people skills and confidence.’

Hippy – Year 12 student, Port Lincoln High School



The Fisheries program teaches skills that will enable students to work on vessels at sea.



‘This course is creating great opportunities for students to get out, work on land, get back in touch with the land (as well as the marine parks), to acknowledge the past and the present and be able to identify different animals, different species and then go home and talk to their family about it.’

*Malcolm Miller – Aboriginal Education Support Officer,
Port Lincoln High School*

The course also provides participants with real employment pathways on completion of the two-year certificate and very useful experience during the course.

‘The Primary Industries Department of South Australia (PIRSA) is very keen to take on Indigenous employees. They have a couple ... here now in Port Lincoln working with them as [Trainee] Fisheries Compliance Officers. So, they could be a bit of a role model for these students here today.’

*Sue Mattsson – Port Lincoln Campus Manager and Senior
Maritime Trainer, Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy*



The Certificate II in Fisheries Compliance Support offers students a sense of pride and ownership as community members.

Industry Links

The program’s links with industry have expanded rapidly since its establishment. The partnership with the Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy has the potential to strengthen employment opportunities given the range of maritime and fisheries-specific courses the Academy offers across the region.

Port Lincoln Community Bank and Port Lincoln Rotary Club contributed funding to support the purchase of two boats that are used as part of the Fisheries program. These organisations also support the sustainability of the program by providing transport and subsidising uniforms and safety clothing for participants. The Aboriginal Programs Assistance Scheme (APAS) funded by the South Australian Government also helps students access extra-curricular activities such as camps, excursions and workplace visits.

As the Fisheries program continues to establish itself as an important employment pathway, students will continue to have the opportunity to take part in industry-specific training that is transferable to a range of real-world and local job pathways.



Students walk along a jetty towards a boat with Sue Mattsson, Senior Maritime Trainer at Port Lincoln’s Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy.



Why Port Lincoln High School's Fisheries Program Works

Recent research indicates that the following key themes consistently underpin successful delivery of vocational learning and vocational education and training (VET), including career education, to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- **Context:** 'Nuanced, contextual factors will influence individual or group learning undertaken by Indigenous young people (Cuervo et al., 2015; Rigney, 2011).'
- **Flexibility:** '... recognition that a rigid or singular mode of education, by definition, cannot meet the needs of diverse learners (Anderson, 2009b; Bottrell, Te Riele & Plows, 2014; Te Riele, 2014).'
- **Two-way learning and community engagement:** '... happens in the context of an evolving relationship and structured partnership between Indigenous and school communities that supports Indigenous young people to grow their learning aspirations and stay connected to school or training.'
- **Aspiration, self-esteem and belonging:** 'To "dream big" was seen as an essential component in a young person's ability to have vocational ambitions and to achieve them (Mission Australia, 2014).'
- **Real-world job pathways:** 'In assessing what motivates Indigenous young people to study, a direct link to real employment, that is, getting a job, figured much more highly than reasons connected to a plan for career or further study (Fordham & Schwab, 2007).'

Applying these themes to an understanding of the design, delivery and operation of vocational learning and VET provides insight into "what works" and "what doesn't work" for this cohort of students.

Source: Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), National Priorities: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Student Transitions Project report

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Links

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers from AITSL outline what teachers should know and be able to do. As part of the Fisheries program at Port Lincoln High School teachers are delivering vocational learning, VET or career education that aligns with the following standards:

Know students and how they learn

- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.4 Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 3.1 Establish challenging learning goals

Source: Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) (2011), Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

Contacts

If you want to know more about this program, or think that it might benefit your community, please access the following links:

Australian Maritime and Fisheries Academy (AMFA)

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E: mvalue@afa.edu.au

Port Lincoln High School

W: www.plhs.sa.edu.au

My School

W: www.myschool.edu.au

