



## Untying settler-colonial knots in Australian Psychology

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### Abstract

This reflexive paper is written from the positionality of an Indigenous psychologist in response to the majority-Australia vote against constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the National Referendum, October 14th, 2023. I utilise the Net Metaphor conceptual tool offered by Jongbloed, Hendry, Behn Smith, and Gallagher K<sup>w</sup>unuhmen to articulate settler-colonialism in Australian psychology. Through the net metaphor, I describe the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project and my reflexive experience of psychology-activism in untying settler-colonial knots in Australian psychology. I juxtapose my positionality and experience against the failed Referendum and the implications for Australian psychology. Finally, this paper finishes with reflections of how the discipline can engage in collective activism necessary for addressing settler-colonial knots in psychology's spheres of influence.

**Keywords:** Indigenous psychology, settler-colonialism, decolonising, anti-racism, Indigenous knowledges, activism.

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## Positioning

I pay my deepest respect to the Elders and traditional custodians past and present of the land upon which I write this paper—Noongar boodja, located in the south-west of the region colonially and geographically referred to as Western Australia. I acknowledge the Noongar peoples profound and enduring connection to Country, waterways, seas, skies, culture, community and ancestry. I acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the land colonially referred to as Australia, as well as Indigenous peoples globally.

I am a cis-gendered woman of mixed ancestry; I acknowledge both known and unknown parts of my family history and kinship networks. Within this positionality I identify as a Noongar woman and an Indigenous psychologist, both I feel intensely connected to and proud of. I learnt my culture from my Noongar grandmother, whose art, teachings and humility for all peoples will forever stay with me. My knowing-and-being as a Noongar woman and psychologist has taken place in tandem. I recognise that at times these parts of me have been at odds and misaligned. However, through a constant journey of reflexivity and decolonising, my positionality as an Indigenous psychologist feels more integrated both in identity and professional practice. Simultaneously, I recognise my positioning of a middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gendered, neurotypical, able-bodied person, with academic qualifications and resourcing that enables the power of choice, voice, health and wellbeing. I recognise my collective positionalities in an ongoing commitment to decolonising praxis, cultural safety, cultural responsiveness and humility (for explanation of these terms see Selkirk et al., 2024).

Within this positionality I write this paper in an intrinsic mobilising response to the defeated Australian National Referendum on October 14th 2023, denying Indigenous Voice to Parliament; and to galvanise Australian psychology to engage in greater social justice and anti-racism within the systems that psychology has power and influence.

I first situate this paper within a net metaphor for settler-colonialism (Jongbloed et al., 2023). Through this lens, I then offer my reflexive experience of being part of the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP), which is juxtaposed with the failed October 14 Referendum. Finally, this paper finishes with actions the discipline of psychology can do to continue the decolonising work and reduce Indigenous-specific racism that is

required in our profession and empower the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in psychology.

## Net metaphor for settler-colonialism: Untying colonial knots

I begin with a metaphor that situates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the ecological context of historical, political, social determinants of health. I acknowledge the substantial work of Dr Kate Jongbloed (White occupier), Jorden Hendry (Tsimshian/Settler, Lax Kw'alaams), Dr Danièle Behn Smith (Eh Cho Dene & Metis/ French Canadian), and Joe Gallagher K<sup>w</sup>unuhmen (Tla'amin Nation) in offering the net metaphor as a conceptual tool for understanding settler colonialism in contemporary contexts (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023). While the inception of this metaphor was situated in the geographical region colonially referred to as British Columbia (Canada) it has application to settler-colonialism in Australia and the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and provides an effective framework for reflexivity and praxis. Below I paraphrase the net metaphor for the purposes of this paper through my reflexive lens. I strongly recommend readers spend time engaging in Jongbloed et al.'s (2023) original work for a deeper understanding and their own reflexive practice.

Jongbloed et al. (2023) invite readers to “envision settler-colonialism as a net composed of hundreds of thousands of “colonial knots” that entangle Indigenous Peoples and prevent them from exerting sovereignty and self-determination” (p. 229). The settler-colonial net is made up of mainlines, smaller lines, major knots, and smaller knots. The net's mainlines are foundational structures of settler-colonialism. Together they form the larger systemic structures that underpin colonialism and white supremacy culture. The thousands of knots of that make up the net are the individual laws, policies and practices that further shape settler-colonialism. The settler-colonial net purposefully and systematically segregates Indigenous people from important aspects of society, including sovereignty, self-determination, even connection with Mother Earth (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023). Settler individuals are privileged in that they are unaffected by the settler-colonial net while simultaneously benefitting from a society whereby Indigenous rights are perpetually denied. Furthermore, the net is generally invisible from the settler-colonial vantage point, facilitating a cognitive disconnect from the lived experiences and realities of Indigenous peoples (Jongbloed & Behn Smith,



2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023). Certain events in time can shine a light on the settler-colonial net making more visible and creating greater awareness, however even with this enhanced awareness, settler-colonial society can continue to live freely without the constraints of the net. The installation and maintenance of the settler-colonial net is important here too; everyday people in the community are both consciously and unconsciously working to uphold and maintain the settler-colonial structure in place over time (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023).

Jongbloed et al. (2023) explain Indigenous resistance and decolonising efforts have created holes in the settler-colonial net. The weave has been loosened, knots untied, and some mainlines have been dismantled all together. Yet the settler-colonial net remains, with varying degrees of loose and tight weaves (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023). Some lines and knots are extremely difficult to adjust and should be dismantled with great care, and necessary guidance from Indigenous peoples. Many lines and knots remain barely visible to settler-colonial society (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023).

A central teaching offered by Jongbloed et al. (2023) is that each member of society has one or more settler-colonial knots in our sphere of influence (visible and invisible). Our collective responsibility to social justice within our communities is to identify and address the settler-colonial knots with guidance of Indigenous peoples. Dismantling the settler-colonial net requires close attention and attunement on a daily basis, with recognition that the work is ongoing (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023). In their discussion, Jongbloed and colleagues call for each organization and individual to see their positioning in relation to the settler-colonial net: to recognise roles of complicity in upholding the net, to name unearned advantages and privilege, and to identify spheres of influence to engaging in Indigenous-specific anti-racism action (Jongbloed & Behn Smith, 2023; Jongbloed et al., 2023).

### **Australia's settler-colonial net**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are strong and resilient: we have been actively resisting settler-colonial power since the arrival of the first fleet nearly 250 years ago. There has been one hundred years of formalised political activism and social justice movements to empower and improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Dudgeon et al., 2014; Maynard, 2023). Notably in

2017, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and community members from across the Country gathered to deliver a national statement appealing to the hearts and minds of the broader Australian community to join in the spirit of Makarrata (Yolŋu word for coming together after a struggle; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2023). This statement, called the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017), acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' sovereignty that was never ceded and put forward an agenda of Truth (telling), Treaty (making), and enshrining an Indigenous Voice into the Australian constitution (referred to as the Voice to Parliament). Then in 2023, a national referendum was held in Australia to vote yes or no on whether to include an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in the Constitution. The October 14 Referendum was an opportunity to dismantle a knot in Australia's settler-colonial net, however majority-Australia swiftly and firmly denied this with 60% of the nation voting no, and 40% voting yes (see AEC, 2023). Instead of sharing power in the spirit of relationality and respect, majority-Australia retreated into the comfort of coloniality, maintaining the status quo that it privileges from (Davis, 2023). Majority-Australia denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the opportunity to enact a political determinant of health that could have had substantial positive influence on the health, wellbeing and flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Abimbola et al., 2023; Chamberlain et al., 2024). The failed referendum is now another painful historical determinant of health in Australia's colonial history. The irreverence for the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples an indicator of Australia's entrenched Indigenous-specific racism and impenetrable strength of the settler-colonial net. While the status-quo of settler-colonialism has not changed, a bright light has been shone on the settler-colonial net and the wilful ignorance of settler-colonial society in Australia is irrefutable and evident (Davis, 2023). At the same time, so is the support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and self-determination. More than 6 million people, representing forty percent of Australia's population, supported The Voice to Parliament. An "almost-majority" Australia stands with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In the year(s) following the failed October 14 Referendum, I have reflected deeply on my reactions, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and positionality. In working with the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP), I've grown accustomed to the felt-sense of safety



from being part of a community of genuine allies in the discipline and profession of psychology. From my dearly respected colleagues I have witnessed an active and commitment to decolonising and anti-racism in psychology – the untying of settler-colonial knots in psychology’s spheres of influence. I recognize this experience as a potential privilege in my positionality, as it has facilitated hope, resilience, voice and agency in the world. Prior to the October 14 Referendum, unlike many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, I was optimistic and had faith in Australia’s readiness and willingness to share power with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Then followed the wave of disappointment, despair and grief that Australia is not as progressive as I had believed. I reflect on my lived experiences with a privileged nervous system that has not embodied the same degree of racism and disappointment that others have endured. I recognise my privilege of working in spaces where my voice has had power, and the felt-sense of relationality and commitment to allyship from non-Indigenous colleagues and the 40% of Australians who voted yes.

In my space of reflexivity, I have listened to the voices and read the words of other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a source of sense making and hope (Jones, 2024). A grief process of what I considered unfathomable, which for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was a foregone conclusion; a historical narrative and lived experience that is all too familiar. I found comfort in the reassurance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, that the failed referendum is a merely setback that will not stop the work from being done (Oscar, 2023), and the perspectives of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who felt encouraged, heartened and mobilised by the existence of 6 million Australians who voted yes. I acknowledge the fortitude of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, leaders and communities who have experienced many similar setbacks in history and who continue to have faith in majority-Australia whilst they are simultaneously meticulously untying knots in the settler-colonial net.

### **Australian psychology’s settler-colonial net**

Through Indigenous leadership and social justice movements, there is now well-established discourse regarding psychology’s influence and maintenance of the settler-colonial net (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015; Fish et al., 2024). Specifically, Eurocentric epistemologies in psychology have been weaponised against Indigenous peoples (Awad et al., 2024),

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Cullen et al., 2020; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015; Moreton-Robinson, 2004). This epistemic violence positions certain knowledge systems as superior (e.g. empiricism and positivism) whilst positioning diverse knowledge systems, such as Indigenous knowledges, as inferior or less valuable (Adams et al., 2015; Awad et al., 2024). Psychology has enacted colonial oppression and epistemic violence over Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through imposition of Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies in psychology (Carey et al., 2017; Dudgeon & Walker, 2015) and silencing Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing (Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Waitoki et al., 2018). An example of this is the ongoing use of Western research methodologies, assessment methods, diagnostic systems, and psychological treatments that negate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, rights and lived experiences (Dudgeon & Walker, 2015). The result is the maintenance of the settler-colonial net in Australian psychology and the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Situated within the global decolonising movement, psychology in Australia is undergoing a paradigm shift whereby Indigenous knowledges in psychology (Indigenous psychology) are being honoured and taught as a necessary part of epistemic justice and Indigenous self-determination (Dudgeon & Bray, 2023). Indigenous knowledges in psychology are progressively more being celebrated in psychology spaces and recognised as holding significant epistemological value in psychology (Dudgeon & Bray, 2023; Dudgeon et al., 2023). Indigenous psychology is no longer a fringe or ‘emerging’ discourse, rather it is a discipline in its own right (Clark & Hirvonen, 2022; Dudgeon, 2017; Waitoki et al., 2018), discussed and taught in various ways and degrees across Australia (Dudgeon et al., 2021; Selkirk, Gibson, et al., in press). It is essential knowledge in the theory and practice of working as a psychologist in Australia (Edwige et al., 2022). The need for more Indigenous Psychologists in the discipline is well recognised and steadily more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are graduating into the psychology profession (Dudgeon et al., 2021). The lived experiences, knowledges and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are being reflected in contemporary psychology education and practice (Dudgeon et al., 2021; Edwige et al., 2022).

The Indigenous turn in psychology (Dudgeon & Bray, 2023) reflects the substantial advocacy by Indigenous Psychologists and leaders who have



done, and continue to do, the disproportionately heavy lifting of dismantling the mainlines of the settler-colonial net within psychology (Clark & Hirvonen, 2022). For too long Indigenous leaders in psychology have borne the emotional load of decolonising the profession (referred to as colonial-load by Weenthunga Health Network, 2023). Driven by Indigenous leaders, Psychology in Australia has made some steps in towards rightfully holding the colonial load (such as the Australian Psychological Society's Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples), however the discipline has yet to fully grapple with its identity as an ongoing colonising agent and therefore holding the responsibility of decolonising work. Though structural change is afoot with cultural safety now part of National Law (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2022), and in the near future all registered psychologists in Australia will be required to face their positioning of cultural safety as part of mandatory registration requirements (Psychology Board of Australia, 2024a, 2024b). This is an important part of psychology's responsibility to hold colonial-load.

When I was an early career clinical psychologist, decolonising discourse was not prevalent in the spaces and spheres I worked within. The recognition of coloniality in psychology was not in the psyches of psychology educators or clinical supervisors. My attempts to grapple with cultural safety in psychological practice was met with smiling invalidation and epistemological silencing of Indigenous knowledges in psychological theory and practice. I now realise these experiences were formidable in the maintenance of un-integrated parts of the self, internalised racism, and a misunderstanding of culturally safe psychological practice (Selkirk, Alexi, et al., 2024a; Selkirk, Alexi, et al., 2024b). The realisation of this internalised colonisation was both painful and necessary in understanding my power, positionality, decolonial praxis, and integration of the self as an Aboriginal woman and Indigenous Psychologist. Leaning into the discomfort of the colonised-self enabled liberation and a stronger grounding in the cultural-self.

### **Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP): Untying settler-colonial knots**

The Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP)<sup>1</sup> is at the forefront of the decolonising movement in Australia – providing

Indigenous-led guidance in addressing settler-colonial knots in psychology. Established by esteemed Bardi woman and Indigenous Psychologist, Professor Pat Dudgeon AM, AIPEP is a groundbreaking initiative changing the way we teach and practice psychology in Australia (Selkirk, Gibson, et al., in press). The first iteration of AIPEP (2013-2016), resulted in the development of guiding frameworks to embed Indigenous psychology into psychology curricula (Dudgeon, Darlaston-Jones, et al., 2016a), provide culturally safe support for Indigenous psychology students (Dudgeon, Darlaston-Jones, et al., 2016b), and grow the cultural responsiveness of the psychology workforce (Dudgeon, Harris, et al., 2016). The second iteration of AIPEP was revitalised under the Transforming Indigenous Mental Health and Wellbeing<sup>2</sup> grant in 2020. AIPEP in its current iteration is a nation-wide project that aims to decolonise psychology higher education and practice across Australia (Dudgeon et al., 2021; Selkirk, Gibson, et al., in press).

One of the substantial achievements of AIPEP has been the national community of practice (AIPEP CoP) of Indigenous and non-Indigenous psychology educators working towards decolonising and Indigenising psychology curricula in higher education, and increasing the number of Indigenous psychology students (Selkirk, Gibson, et al., in press). Educators are working in collaboration within schools of psychology, as well as coordinating with other schools of psychology across Australia, to meet and exceed cultural responsiveness accreditation standards (Australian Psychology Accreditation Council, 2019; Bucks et al., 2023). I've witnessed in the AIPEP CoP a genuine desire, willingness, and committed action to increasing Indigenous representation in psychology education and engage in anti-racism activism in psychology. An excellent example of this is the AIPEP CoP working group's publication *Guidance in Creating Honours (Fourth Year) and Postgraduate Equity Pathways in Tertiary Psychology for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Applicants* (Ohan, McMullen, et al., 2023). AIPEP CoP members have demonstrated committed activism in psychology to truth-telling, epistemic justice and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (including Indigenous psychology students). This is just one example of the AIPEP team and CoP members working together to tackle settler-colonial knots in our spheres of influence (Selkirk, Gibson, et al., in press).

<sup>1</sup> <https://indigenoupsyched.org.au>

<sup>2</sup> <https://timhwb.org.au>



Admittedly, I feel envious of the knowledges relating to critical psychology, decolonising psychology and Indigenous psychology being taught in psychology education today and wish I had the same educational experience that Australia's future psychologists are receiving. Learning more culturally responsive content and being in more culturally safe environments would have undoubtedly been protective (Selkirk et al., 2023). Perhaps my experience of compartmentalised parts of my identity would have been less pronounced without the silencing of Indigenous knowledges in psychology education. Though, I recognise my unearned advantages from the significant work of Indigenous psychologists before me (Clark & Hirvonen, 2022). Being part of AIPEP, and specifically the AIPEP CoP, has been incredibly healing and joyful as an Indigenous Psychologist. It has allowed further integration and alignment of different parts of my multifaceted identity, as well as a revitalised energy and hope for the direction of psychology in Australia. It is a privilege to have a community of psychologists and psychology educators with a shared commitment for social justice and desire to collaboratively address settler-colonial knots in psychology.

### Untying settler-colonial knots in Australian psychology's spheres of influence

Psychology as a discipline and profession offers great value and impact in the health, wellbeing and flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Within this positionality, we must continue to recognise that psychology is powerful, influential and accountable. The Australian Psychological Society's (2016) historic apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recognised that psychology has been complicit in the harmful impacts of settler-colonialism on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and a redistribution of power is necessary to address ongoing harms (Carey et al., 2017). Yet, untying settler-colonial knots requires daily work and ongoing action, and "each of us has multiple knots within our spheres of influence" (Jongbloed et al., 2023, p. 231). Following failed October 14 Referendum, it is prudent that the discipline and profession of psychology engage in committed action in social justice and anti-racism. In my mobilised response following the defeated referendum, I offer my own personal reflections as a way to responsibly hold my relative positionalities of power, and to support the discipline of psychology to address settler-colonial knots within their spheres of influence. I position these reflections within in the context of my identity

as an Indigenous Psychologist and membership in the psychology community. As such these reflections are from my knowing-and-being, and not intended to be prescriptive of the multifaceted nature of decolonising work.

1. Allyship (the verb) is an ongoing practice of decolonising and anti-racism that involves critical self-reflexivity, accountability and committed action. The responsibility of decolonising practices and addressing racism sits with non-Indigenous peoples, while the actions of Indigenising sits within the governance and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Accountable allyship recognises the importance of these two positionalities; knowing when to take responsibility versus when to follow the guidance and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The failed October 14 Referendum was a conscious and overt action of withholding power, a harsh reminder of Indigenous-specific racism that persists in Australia. However, the discipline of psychology should not be complicit in this silencing going forward. Psychology has an ethical responsibility to challenge oppressive ideologies in psychology, including the implicit and embedded racism that settler-colonial society in Australia privileges from. No longer is it possible to hide behind naiveté or ignorance: the onus of engaging in self-reflexivity around positionality, decolonising and culturally responsive practices as a psychologist are now embedded into National Law (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2020; 2022) and competencies for psychology registration (Psychology Board of Australia, 2024a). It is also the responsibility of higher education institutions to nurture these values and train psychology students with these skills; and through the support of AIPEP we know this is both possible and already in motion (see Selkirk, Gibson, et al. in press).
2. Despite the failed October 14 Referendum, the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* provides community-driven and culturally informed values for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander empowerment and self-determination. Torres Strait Islander man and advocate Tomas Mayo explains that regardless of the referendum result, the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* provides the



best path for giving voice and power to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Mayo, 2024). While majority-Australia was not ready to acknowledge sovereignty and share power, psychology can forge its own path and commit to values and framework articulated by the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. It is vital that the discipline of psychology does not retreat into the comfort of coloniality. This will require an examination of understandings around truth, treaty and voice; as well as an examination of how it is being honoured and enacted within psychology's spheres of influence; including institutions and sectors that intersect with psychology including education, health, justice and child protection. In most cases, this will require a critical consciousness and interrogation of how power is being shared and maintained in psychology (see Readsura Decolonial Editorial Collective, 2022a; 2022b; Awad et al., 2024).

3. Indigenous knowledge systems hold significant value to the discipline and practice of psychology in Australia. Decolonising practices in psychology are not mere mechanistic adaptations of Western derived approaches. It is centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing as the foundational underpinning of psychological theory, research, education, practice and engagement. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being are the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of our doing (Goslett & Selkirk, 2023; in press). Importantly, this is combined in tandem with a human rights approach that deeply considers determinants of health, identifying settler-colonial systems and structures, and Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination (see Redvers et al., 2022; Calma, 2008).
4. Psychologists have excellent skills at analysing and identifying nuanced patterns and processes within individuals, groups, systems and societies. The capacity of non-Indigenous psychologists to address power and oppression in psychological practices and systems is rarely about a lack of ability. Rather, a willingness to identify and name settler-colonialism and the privilege and power it affords, willingness to identify and name Indigenous-specific racism and the

oppression it perpetuates, and the courage to lean into the discomfort it stirs once it is identified (see Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2020; Selkirk et al., 2024). As articulated by Jongbloed et al. (2023): "How we show up in society from this place of unearned privilege in relation to settler-colonialism is part of our readiness to begin to undo colonial knots" (p. 232). From this knowing and being, a committed action to cultural humility and the redistribution of power by decentring themselves as experts to actively listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, empowering our rights as decision makers in matters that impact the lives of our families and communities. Within this process is a reflexive practice identifying when coloniality attempts to reposition its dominance once again (resistance to sharing power). Structural changes in National Law (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2022) and competencies in general registration for all practicing psychologists in Australia (Psychology Board of Australia, 2024a) means the psychology discipline must go beyond acknowledgements and minor adjustments in practice. It requires to directly addressing racism in psychological theory and practice (Awad et al., 2024), and therefore, holding the responsibility of colonial-load.

5. With the guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, psychology educators and supervisors are encouraged to continuously reflect on innovative ways Indigenous knowledges can be honoured and celebrated in the teaching and training of psychology. This will necessitate that certain Western knowledges in psychology will be decentred to provide room for other canons of knowledge (this is the sharing of power). The fixation that empiricism and positivism as the only legitimate form of evidence in psychology silences Indigenous knowledges systems and perpetuates coloniality in psychology (Rogers et al., 2024). Making room for different canons of knowledge does not mean it is not evidence based, rather there are a different form of evidence that can exist in tandem and offer complimentary insights (Breen & Darlaston-Jones, 2010). This does not dilute an already-packed curriculum or clinical practice program, rather it enriches



it through epistemological pluralism and two-eye seeing. Indigenous psychology can enrich learning and deepen our understandings of the diverse human experiences (for an example see Lilienfeld, Lynn, Namy, & Dudgeon, 2025). Psychology students and psychologists in training will be in a better position to enter a contemporary and evolving workforce that necessitates culturally safe practices (Selkirk, et al., 2024).

6. Organisations, health services, and academic settings must invest in decolonising systems and anti-racism. Cultural safety and decolonising efforts need to work in tandem across all levels for transformation change to happen and be long lasting. The tumultuous power dynamic between settler-colonial systems and Indigenous knowledges means siloed initiatives are not only vulnerable to epistemic silencing, but the emotional load on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is untenable. Decolonising efforts, programs and initiatives must be coordinated, integrated, and well-resourced for the long term.

## Conclusion

The October 14 Referendum was a missed opportunity to dismantle a knot in Australia's settler-colonial net, yet, the failed referendum in Australia is not the worst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and allies are regrouping and continue the work with more strength and conviction. As explained by Wiradjuri woman, Hon Linda Burney MP (2023) in her speech: "We will carry on, we will move forward, and we will thrive. This is not the end of reconciliation." Whilst we are a long way from cultivating a truly culturally safe psychology workforce that is free from racism, there is hope. Cultural safety is now part of National Law for all registered health practitioners with Ahpra (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, 2020; 2022), and soon to be embedded into the registration competencies for practicing psychologists (Psychology Board of Australia, 2024a). Momentum is happening and the work must continue. In the words of Bunuba woman and Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar AO (2023): "Now is the time for action. There is so much that we can do together to educate

and inspire the next generation". The formidable nature of coloniality and hegemony of Western ideologies will continue to push back on Indigenous sovereignty and knowledge systems in psychology. It must be continuously monitored, reflected, and challenged. As stated by Jongloed and Behn Smith (2023): "as settlers it's our responsibility to keep an eye on the net", and therefore the work of decolonising psychology must be done collaboratively between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples. In doing so there will be generational shifts. Despite the setback of the failed October 14 Referendum, the results showed us that there is substantial support for voice, truth, and treaty in Australia. In my mobilised response and hope garnered from AIPEP, I'm now emboldened to work together in continuing to untie the knots of coloniality in psychology and prevent further ropes from going back up.

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