



Indigenous Employment Plan 2023–2027



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement

The University of Melbourne acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses); the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses); and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey. We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the academy. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students, we are privileged to work with and learn from Indigenous colleagues and partners every day.

About this plan

Murmuk Djerring, the University's Indigenous Strategy 2023–2027, outlines our ambitions to be the University of choice for Indigenous Australians, with unprecedented investment to attract, nurture and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff.

The [Indigenous Employment Plan 2023–2027](#) (IEP) is central to realising our ambitions and to providing outstanding career advancement and leadership opportunities for all Indigenous students and staff in a safe, welcoming and supportive environment.

The IEP is a key mechanism for delivering on our Indigenous staff headline targets:

- Indigenous staff numbers to reach 350 by 2025
- an academic to professional staff ratio to be equal for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff by 2025
- a senior (Level 8 and above) to junior professional staff ratio to be equal for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff by 2025.

Central to achieving our ambitious targets is our Office of Indigenous Employment and Development. In partnership with faculties and divisions, the Office will focus on recruiting Indigenous staff, providing meaningful support throughout their employment, and ensuring confidence in their cultural safety while at work. Meeting our challenging staff targets will take considerable work, targeted actions and commitment, including the formal recognition of, and commensurate support for, the unique skills and cultural load of Indigenous staff. It will also require a whole-of-career focus, underpinned by a valuing of the unique contributions and career pathways of Indigenous employees.

The IEP is supported by a range of internal and external policies, strategies and initiatives. They include:

- [Advancing Melbourne 2030](#)
- [Murmuk Djerring, Indigenous Strategy 2023–2027](#)
- [People Strategy 2023–2030](#)
- [Advancing Student and Education Strategy 2023–2020](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2030](#)
- [Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022–2025](#)

Purpose

Our overarching goal is to establish the University of Melbourne as the employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and professional staff.

We are doing this through the Office of Indigenous Employment and Development, which is committed to attracting and recruiting Indigenous staff and providing targeted support and career development opportunities throughout their employment. We are dedicated to providing a welcoming, culturally safe,

and inclusive working environment ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff can develop rewarding careers and achieve their full potential. Our whole-of-University approach will be led and championed by senior leaders with shared commitment, responsibility and accountability across faculties and divisions. The [Indigenous Employment Plan](#), alongside [Murmuk Djerring](#) and other key institutional strategies, will be central to delivering on key priorities outlined in [Advancing Melbourne](#).

Governance and implementation

The IEP is jointly overseen by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Community). They will:

- develop and oversee a staged and coordinated implementation plan in conjunction with initiatives and programs linked to Murmuk Djerring, the People Strategy and faculty Divisional Indigenous Development Plans
- collaborate with other areas of the University, in particular the Office of Indigenous Employment and Development and other existing staff recruitment and support initiatives to further the goals of the IEP
- work with staff forums across the University to build visibility, momentum and support for implementing the IEP's initiatives, including through the convening function of (among others): the Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee, Committee of Associate Deans and Delegates (Indigenous) and the Committees of Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning and Research) from all faculties
- review progress and implementation against the IEP annually and jointly report to the Indigenous Strategy Reference Group, University Executive and Council.

Focus areas and initiatives

Embedded in our Indigenous Employment Plan are four broad focus areas that capture the key priorities and actions that are essential to achieving our aspiration of becoming the University of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- 1 Attraction and recruitment
- 2 Retention and development
- 3 Cultural safety and wellbeing
- 4 Governance and leadership

Murmuk Djerring priorities

- Priority 1: Leadership
- Priority 2: Place, Heritage and Culture
- Priority 3: Partnerships
- Priority 4: Indigenous Knowledge
- Priority 5: Truth-telling and Justice

People Strategy focus areas

- Focus area 1: A community designed to deliver our academic mission
- Focus area 2: A thriving, fair and diverse University
- Focus area 3: Next generation leadership

These will be integrated with the five priority areas of [Murmuk Djerring](#) and the three focus areas from the [People Strategy 2023–2030](#).



📷 2024 Melbourne Indigenous Professional Employment Program staff
Photograph by Nishi Raja

Focus Area 1: Attraction and recruitment

Leadership | Indigenous Knowledge | Partnerships

Realising our aspiration of becoming a destination of choice for talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples requires major changes in our approach to workforce planning, attraction and recruitment. Increasing the number of identified positions and removing barriers and supporting Indigenous candidates to successfully apply for non-identified positions will be critical to achieving our ambitions. Indigenous employment is highly competitive and requires us to take a strategic and proactive approach to attraction and recruitment. Senior leaders will be encouraged to use direct employment and to make appointments at levels that take into consideration an individual's career potential. We must also ensure that the distinct nature of Indigenous staff careers across all levels is captured and reflected in job descriptions and other internal and external policy and communications. In line with our whole-of-University approach, our faculties and divisions must be encouraged and supported in their efforts to set and meet Indigenous staff targets.

PRIORITY 1.1

Increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples recruited to academic and professional staff roles

Require faculties and Chancellery to establish Indigenous academic and professional staff targets beyond Indigenous-specific roles. These targets should be linked to the overarching Indigenous Strategy, Divisional Indigenous Development Plans, and be included in faculty Executives' Key Performance Indicators to ensure accountability at the highest level.

Review advertising, recruitment and selection policies and processes to ensure they are culturally appropriate and reflect the distinct nature of Indigenous careers.

Conduct a University-wide audit on current identified roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to inform future workforce planning.

Adopt targeted and flexible attraction and selection initiatives for suitably qualified Indigenous professional and academic staff, including appointment by invitation for selected roles.

Explore joint appointments with other institutions, as well as government, industry and other organisations.

Increase and broaden the Melbourne Indigenous Professional Employment Program offering to widen participation and mitigate barriers to attraction and recruitment.

PRIORITY 1.2

Enhance employment pathways for current University of Melbourne Indigenous staff, students and graduates

Implement internal talent support initiatives, including developing career pathways, succession planning, and identifying internal talent and supporting their growth.

Develop an Indigenous alumni strategy to grow the talent pool (with Advancement)

Strengthen Indigenous Student Employment Pathways including via graduate programs, internships and traineeships. In alignment with the [Indigenous Research Framework](#) and in close collaboration with Chancellery Research and Enterprise:

- grow our own Indigenous academics via competitive PhD scholarships, research training, mentoring and other targeted support
- identify opportunities to enhance postdoctoral and early and mid-career pathways to ensure the University remains a leading and attractive destination for talented Indigenous graduate researchers.

We will ensure advertising, recruitment and selection policies and processes are culturally appropriate and reflect the distinct nature of Indigenous careers.

Focus Area 2: Retention and development

Leadership | Indigenous Knowledge | Place, Heritage and Culture

The University is committed to providing a respectful, culturally safe, welcoming and rewarding workplace where Indigenous academic and professional staff can thrive. Positioning Melbourne as the University of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples requires creating a work environment that actively supports and nurtures careers while also contributing to the overall health and wellbeing of Indigenous staff. Fostering Indigenous staff connections with community and supporting professional development and career advancement is critical. Central to retaining and developing Indigenous staff is recognising, valuing and rewarding their unique skills, knowledge and relationships, and ensuring that University policies and procedures reflect and safeguard Indigenous staff's unique responsibilities.

PRIORITY 2.1

Support the career progression and development of Indigenous staff

Develop culturally appropriate and tailored onboarding and induction processes for new Indigenous staff.

Provide opportunities for Indigenous professional staff to undertake secondments, higher duties, job rotation and to participate in training.

Prioritise Indigenous staff in University leadership training and other professional development initiatives and explore options for targeted and tailored programs.

Expand the number of identified Indigenous roles beyond Indigenous-specific areas to create pathways for Indigenous academics, particularly at Levels A and B.

Provide Indigenous academics with targeted support to develop skills, build a track record and position themselves for career success (e.g. allocation of time and support to research and write, mentoring programs, and workshops on writing for publication and applying successfully for research grants).

Fund academic development and career advancement opportunities via an Indigenous Professional Development fund.

Provide Indigenous academic and professional staff with international engagement, leadership and research opportunities including through the Association of Pacific Rim Universities Indigenous Knowledge Network.

PRIORITY 2.2

Define, value and reward Indigenous knowledge, relationships and community responsibilities

Improve understanding of the complex nature of maintaining Indigenous knowledges and relationships, and ensure this work is represented in contracts, job descriptions, promotion criteria and all forms of recognition (honours, awards, etc.) within the University.

Update relevant policies to ensure an expansive and relevant definition of academic activities that reflects the specialised knowledge and community relationships of Indigenous staff.

Educate senior leaders, managers, committees, etc. to ensure they understand fully the significance of Indigenous-focused criteria in hiring and promotion procedures and can effectively apply them.

Develop and implement policy that acknowledges and safeguards the rights of Indigenous academics to carry out their institutional and community responsibilities.

Adopt a workload approach to recognising and valuing community obligations by providing course releases or other dispensations for Indigenous academics who have community responsibilities.

The University will host world-class research infrastructure, environments and facilities that support the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

Focus Area 3: Cultural safety and wellbeing

Place, Heritage, and Culture | Truth-telling and Justice

Creating a culturally safe, inclusive and respectful working environment, where our Indigenous staff can thrive is critical to attracting, retaining and developing an Indigenous academic and professional workforce. The IEP has a clear focus on enhancing cultural education, normalising Indigenised education and research, and shifting the focus from the individual by building organisational resilience against racism. This endeavour requires a whole-of-University commitment, aligning with Murmuk Djerring and other key University strategies, including the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2030 which prioritises the creation of a culturally safe University where everyone is welcome, safe and can belong.

The Indigenous Employment Plan has a clear focus on enhancing cultural education, normalising Indigenised education and research, and shifting the focus from the individual by building organisational resilience against racism.

PRIORITY 3.1

Provide a culturally safe environment for Indigenous staff

Define the underlying constructs of cultural safety and what constitutes a safe and inclusive environment for Indigenous staff.

Increase non-Indigenous staff capability via the roll-out of Indigenous Cultural Education and Anti-Racism Education Programs.

Provide strengths-based relational mentoring to Indigenous staff aimed at building Indigenous cultural wealth in parallel with career development.*

Facilitate Indigenous academic forums, retreats and other events to promote collaboration, networking, informal mentoring and engagement.

Implement personalised exit surveys to better understand Indigenous staff turnover.

Ensure timely and respectful collaboration with Traditional Owners on all major capital works projects to give prominence and due recognition both to Indigenous cultures, and to the role and contribution of Traditional Owners and Custodians through Signature Project 2.1 – Place and Indigenous Cultural Recognition in Murmuk Djerring.

Celebrate and promote significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dates and events across the University, such as NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Week, and provide opportunities for all staff to be engaged.

Encourage staff to use Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country at University of Melbourne events and provide appropriate training and resources in their use.

*Povey, R., Trudgett, M., Page, S., Locke, M. L. & Harry, M. 2023, Raising an Indigenous academic community: A strength-based approach to Indigenous early career mentoring in higher education, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 50(4):1165–80.

Focus Area 4: Governance and leadership

Leadership | Indigenous Knowledge | Partnerships

The presence and active participation of senior Indigenous leaders in the governance and operations of the University is vital in providing authentic cultural understanding, support and guidance to Indigenous staff. Building Indigenous leadership capacity at all levels sends an important message to staff and students, reminding them that they are valued members of the University community. Strong governance and leadership are vital to the creation of culturally safe spaces on campus and to building and strengthening the Indigenous staff and student cohort on campus. The IEP commits to building the University's capability to support Indigenous staff success and excellence by strengthening both Indigenous leadership and the policies, systems and governance structures that underpin this.

PRIORITY 4.1

Ensure ongoing monitoring of the environment that contributes to Indigenous attraction and retention and the health and wellbeing of Indigenous staff in the workplace

The Office of Indigenous Employment and Development to report to University Executive through the Indigenous governance mechanism on progress made against the IEP on an annual basis.

PRIORITY 4.2

Create, maintain and strengthen Indigenous leadership positions across the University

Demonstrate ongoing commitment to the employment of executive Indigenous positions (DVC Indigenous and PVC Indigenous) including succession planning and resourcing their portfolio.

Review the faculty positions of Associate Dean (Indigenous) with a view to providing additional support and resources to these roles given their importance in progressing the Indigenous strategic goals and responsibilities of faculties and the broader Indigenous education and research ambitions of the University.

Establish clearly articulated pathways into senior academic and professional leadership positions both in faculties and in University management including leadership training, support and mentorship.

Maximise opportunities for Indigenous staff to stay connected and supported (e.g. an annual retreat and provision of a culturally safe gathering place).

Value, encourage and enable Indigenous styles of leadership and provide specific leadership training, support and mentorship to Indigenous academics transitioning into leadership positions.

Refresh the Indigenous staff forum and ensure Indigenous staff have both the support and opportunity to influence and contribute to University decision-making processes.



About the Artist and the Artwork

Samantha Richards is a proud Indigenous woman from the Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung Tribes. The artwork featured here, Murmuk Djerring – Working Together, depicts the layers of the land, and the generations of peoples who have lived on this land, and the rich cultures and history that lie under their feet. It is where all the pieces of the puzzle connect, and by working together how we can strive for a future of positive change.