

# Indigenous Employment Plan 2023–2027



## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

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.

## Preamble

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 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 Plan 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 for Indigenous Employment. In partnership with faculties and divisions, the Office for Indigenous Employment 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 Indigenous Employment Plan 2023 – 2027 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
- [Advancing Student and Education Strategy 2023 - 2020](#)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2030](#)
- [Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022 – 2025](#)

## Statement of Purpose

Our overarching goal is to establish the University of Melbourne as employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academic and professional staff. We will do this by creating a dedicated Office for Indigenous Employment committed to attracting and recruiting Indigenous staff and providing targeted support and career development opportunities throughout their employment. We will provide 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*.

Embedded in our Indigenous Employment Plan 2023 – 2027 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:

- Attraction and Recruitment
- Retention and Development
- Cultural Safety and Wellbeing
- Governance and Leadership

## Governance and Implementation

The Indigenous Employment Plan (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 Indigenous Employment Office 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 (amongst others): the Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee, Committee of Associate Deans and Delegates (Indigenous) and faculty Associate Dean's (T&L and Research) Committees.
- review progress and implementation against the Indigenous Employment Plan annually and jointly report to the Indigenous Strategy Reference Group, University Executive, and Council.

## Indigenous Employment Plan: Focus Areas and Initiatives

The Indigenous Employment Plan is structured under four Focus Areas that integrate the priority areas with the priorities/focus areas of *Murmuk Djerring* and the *People Strategy*.

| <b>Murruk Djerring priorities</b>        | <b>People Strategy focus areas</b>                                 |
|--|--|
| Priority 1: Leadership                   | Focus area 1: A community designed to deliver our academic mission |
| Priority 2: Place, Heritage, and Culture | Focus area 2: A thriving, fair and diverse University              |
| Priority 3: Partnerships                 | Focus area 3: Next generation leadership                           |
| Priority 4: Indigenous Knowledge         |  |
| Priority 5: Truth-telling and Justice    |  |

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

*Initiative:* 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' KPIs to ensure accountability at the highest level.

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

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

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

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

*Initiative:* Increase and broaden the MIPEP offering to widen participation and mitigate barriers to attraction and recruitment.

#### **Priority 2. Enhance employment pathways for current University of Melbourne Indigenous staff, students and graduates**

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

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

*Initiative:* 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

## 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 the University as destination 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 University policies and procedures reflect and safeguard Indigenous staff's unique responsibilities.

#### **Priority 3. Support the career progression and development of Indigenous staff**

*Initiative:* Develop culturally appropriate and tailored onboarding and induction processes for new Indigenous staff

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

*Initiative:* Prioritise Indigenous staff in university leadership training and other professional development initiatives and explore options for targeted and tailored programs

*Initiative:* Expand the number of identified Indigenous roles beyond Indigenous specific areas to create pathways for Indigenous academics, particularly at Level A and Level B.

*Initiative:* 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, workshops on writing for publication and applying successfully for research grants).

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

*Initiative:* Provide Indigenous academic and professional staff with international engagement, leadership and research opportunities including through the APRU Indigenous Knowledge Network

#### **Priority 4. Define, value and reward Indigenous knowledge, relationships and community responsibilities**

*Initiative:* 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.

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

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

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

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

### 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 Indigenous academic and professional workforce. 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. 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.

#### **Priority 5. Provide a culturally safe environment for Indigenous staff.**

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

*Initiative:* Increase non-Indigenous staff capability via roll out of Indigenous Cultural Education and Anti-Racism Education Programs

*Initiative:* Provide strength-based relational mentoring to Indigenous staff aimed at building Indigenous cultural wealth in parallel with career development.<sup>1</sup>

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

*Initiative:* Implement personalised exit surveys to better understand Indigenous staff turnover.

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

*Initiative:* 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.

*Initiative:* Encourage staff to use Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country at University of Melbourne events and provide appropriate training and resources.

### 4. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

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<sup>1</sup> 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), 1165-1180.

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 Indigenous Employment Plan commits to building the University's capability to support Indigenous staff success and excellence by strengthening Indigenous leadership and the underpinning policies, systems and governance structures.

### **Priority 6. Create, maintain and strengthen Indigenous leadership positions across the University**

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

*Initiative:* Review the position of Associate Dean, Indigenous, with the 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.

*Initiative:* Provide Indigenous leadership training and establish clearly articulated pathways into senior academic and professional leadership positions in both faculties and University management.

*Initiative:* Provide specific leadership training, support and mentorship to Indigenous academic and professional staff transitioning into leadership positions.

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

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

*Initiative:* Refresh the Indigenous staff forum and ensure Indigenous staff have both the support and opportunity to influence and contribute to university decision-making processes

### **Priority 7. Ensure ongoing monitoring of the environment that contributes to Indigenous attraction and retention and the health and wellbeing of Indigenous staff in the workplace.**

*Initiative:* The Office of Indigenous Employment to report to University Executive through the Indigenous governance mechanism on progress made against the Indigenous Employment Plan on an annual basis.