



Yoorrook Justice Commission Request for Information

5th April 2024

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Dear Emily and Chris,

Yoorrook Justice Commission | Tertiary Education Sector Inquiries | Monash University

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2024 requesting information from the University to support Yoorrook's inquiry into the tertiary education sector. Monash is pleased to contribute. As outlined in Monash's strategic plan, [Impact 2030](#), the University is committed to fostering a society that recognises, respects and includes Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledge. This commitment is exemplified by Monash's active support of initiatives such as Treaty discussions in the state of Victoria, the Uluru Statement from the Heart process, and the work of the Commission.

Monash University remains mindful that its main Australian campuses are located on the unceded lands of the Kulin nations, and also operates on the unceded lands of other Indigenous Nations within and outside of Australia. Monash will continue to foster a society that recognises, respects, and includes Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledge, by working with and celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as Indigenous peoples from lands outside Australia on which Monash maintains a major presence.

Monash has made significant investments in Indigenous-led initiatives at both the whole-of-institution and faculty level to tailor actions to needs. These include:

- [Monash Indigenous Studies Centre](#) - The Monash Indigenous Studies Centre (MISC) is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. Monash is proud to be the first university to support Indigenous research and teaching in a dedicated Centre, which has been Indigenous-led since 1977. The Centre has grown its multidisciplinary scope to become a site for projects of local, national, and international significance. The research and teaching activities of the Centre continue to bring about positive change for Indigenous peoples in Australia and internationally.
- [William Cooper Institute](#) - Monash University's Indigenous Engagement Unit. On 6 December 2019, Monash University formally launched the [William Cooper Institute](#), building upon the previous Yulendj Indigenous



Engagement Unit. The William Cooper Institute connects research, learning and engagement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities through the establishment of a 'hub-and-spoke' model of Indigenous leadership and participation across the University. The Institute oversees the development of targeted strategies to increase the participation of Indigenous students across the country, in particular, graduate students and those from regional areas. It also convenes comprehensive engagement programs with secondary schools and Indigenous community-controlled organisations, to build greater awareness of the University's educational offerings, pathways, entry schemes, scholarships, and engagement programs.

- [Indigenous Graduate Program](#) - This bespoke graduate program provides an exceptional foundation for a career at Monash. The Indigenous Graduate Program (IGP) is designed to build the capacity of Indigenous professional and academic staff and future Indigenous leaders in higher education. The IGP is a 12-month program of accelerated professional development and leadership opportunities, an international travel experience, and the promise of an ongoing role at the University upon successful completion. Ten graduate staff members commenced in 2023 with appointments across the University and nine successfully completed the program. In 2024, fourteen graduates have been placed in meaningful, career-focused appointments across the institution.
- [Gukwonderuk Indigenous Health Unit](#) - The Gukwonderuk team advocates for a human rights approach to health equity, ensuring Indigenous communities receive the care and support they deserve. Central to their mission is the provision of quality education in Indigenous health equity, empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills to effect positive change. The Unit is dedicated to cultivating a diverse healthcare workforce, nurturing Indigenous talent in healthcare provision, education, research, and leadership. The name, Gukwonderuk, holds deep significance, symbolising a potent cure-all medicine cherished by Aboriginal peoples in South-East Australia. Translated as "wise old plant" or "old man weed," Gukwonderuk embodies wisdom, resilience, and healing - a fitting reflection of the Unit's commitment to advancing Indigenous health and wellbeing.
- [Wominjeka Djeembana](#) - This research lab within the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture is dedicated to advancing Indigenous-led research and creative practice, with a focus on fostering cultural knowledge exchange and community engagement. It strives to address pressing social and environmental issues through collaborative projects and interdisciplinary approaches while celebrating Indigenous cultures and perspectives.
- [Murrup Bung-allambee Indigenous Psych Group](#) - Comprising Indigenous lecturers, researchers, and graduate research students, the Group advocates for a self-determined approach to Indigenous wellbeing. Murrup Bung-allambee (meaning 'Balanced Spirit') offers peer support and mentorship for Indigenous psychology students, future Indigenous healthcare providers, educators, researchers, and leaders. At Murrup Bung-allambee, Indigenous students and staff find a dedicated space to connect and engage in research and learning concerning First Nations wellbeing and psychology, fostering a sense of community and cultural enrichment.
- [Kummargi Yulendj scholarship program](#) – The Kummargi Yulendj ('Knowledge is Rising') Scholarship Program goes beyond providing financial assistance to students. It offers fully funded global educational experiences, priority access to academic services, and on-campus employment opportunities. The program's name, gifted by N'arweet Carolyn Briggs AM, signifies Monash's dedication to enhancing student capability for the benefit of individuals and their communities. With Kummargi Yulendj, Monash is reshaping its scholarship offerings to expand support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as well as those from regional, remote, or low-income backgrounds. This initiative underscores Monash's commitment to accessibility, student success, and community empowerment.

Monash is proud of its long history of Indigenous engagement that began in its first decade with the establishment of the Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs to promote research and knowledge of Indigenous Australians. However, Monash acknowledges that higher education institutions might have contributed to historical injustices against First Nations peoples. As an institution, Monash is committed to helping to address past wrongs and working *with* Indigenous peoples towards better outcomes *for* Indigenous peoples. Monash remains committed to an ongoing process of self-



reflection and action to identify where it might have fallen short of its aspirations for Indigenous engagement and inclusion.

Over recent years Monash has implemented pragmatic change, including the initiatives described above, which has produced positive outcomes for Indigenous student and staff participation. For example, the proportion of Indigenous staff at Monash now reflects the Victorian population. Monash has the structures in place to continue this trajectory. The University is dedicated to improving its practices through strategic initiatives led by Indigenous Australians, as it continues to work towards reconciliation and genuine partnership with Indigenous communities.

In this spirit, in 2023 Monash embarked upon a whole-of-institution approach to the structural recognition of Indigenous voice. In February 2024, a working group, led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous, met with Indigenous higher education leaders at institutions across the globe to explore relevant models. By creating direct communication between Indigenous people at Monash, the senior executive and the University's governing body, the Council, the University will strengthen Indigenous leadership and give an influential voice to Indigenous peoples and communities at Monash.

The details below provide a snapshot of Monash University's approaches to Indigenous participation, curriculum, research and culture. These initiatives consistently target positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples and communities through higher education.

Core to Monash's Indigenous strategy is its [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Framework: 2019-2030](#). This Framework is based upon four pillars:

- Increasing the participation of and supporting success in Indigenous students;
- Embedding Indigenous perspectives and content into curriculum;
- Growing research contributions to address and serve the needs of Indigenous people and communities; and
- Upholding traditional knowledge and respecting Indigenous students, staff and communities.

The Framework serves as a guiding document for the University's commitment to Indigenous engagement, education, research, and communities. The Framework is built upon principles of respect, recognition, reconciliation, and responsibility towards Indigenous peoples and communities. It outlines key strategic objectives across six priority areas: Indigenous student success, Indigenous employment and leadership, Indigenous research and knowledge, Indigenous community engagement, Indigenous cultural competency, and embedding Indigenous perspectives in teaching and learning. Through targeted actions and initiatives, the Framework aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment that fosters Indigenous success, strengthens partnerships with Indigenous communities, and promotes the integration of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives across the University's activities.

The [Monash University Indigenous Research Action Plan: 2021-2023](#), outlines the University's commitment to advancing Indigenous research initiatives. It aims to promote Indigenous knowledge and perspectives across all disciplines, foster Indigenous research leadership and capacity building, and enhance Indigenous community engagement. Monash's soon-to-be-launched Indigenous Research Action Plan 2023-2026 takes a further step toward capacity building for future Indigenous researchers and a refocused commitment to prioritising Indigenous-led research as defined by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Through targeted actions and initiatives, Monash seeks to create a sector-leading research environment that contributes positively to Indigenous communities and the broader society.

Monash's [Indigenous Employment Policy](#) and [Indigenous Employment Procedure](#) seek to advance the employment outcomes of Indigenous Australians. We recognise that an environment in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff can thrive requires the redress of racism, social injustice, exploitation, and employment inequity. Key to this is the



University's commitment to supporting Indigenous self-determination by facilitating and encouraging the direct involvement of Indigenous Australian staff in determining their own career strategies, goals, and objectives.

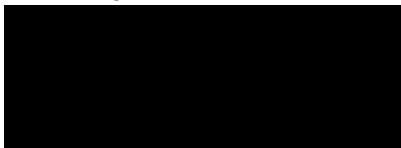
The **Appendix - Response to Yoorrook's Request for Information** contains the responses to the specific questions posed by the Commission.

To support Yoorrook's preparations for planned hearings, roundtables and other evidence gathering processes in April 2024, the following Monash staff are available to provide further information about Monash University's history and future direction in relation to Indigenous peoples and are prepared to participate in planned hearings and roundtables where appropriate:

- Professor Tristan Kennedy, Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous; and
- Professor Lynette Russell, Sir John Monash Distinguished Professor, Monash Indigenous Studies Centre, School of Philosophical, Historical & International Studies.

Please let me know if you require anything further.

Kind regards,



Professor Sharon Pickering
Vice-Chancellor and President
Monash University