

School of Indigenous Knowledges

Operational Report
July 2024 – December 2025





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Murdoch University is situated on the lands of the Whadjuk and Binjareb Noongar people. We pay our respects to their enduring and dynamic culture and the leadership of Noongar elders past and present.

The boodjar (country) on which Murdoch University is located has for thousands of years been a place of learning. We at Murdoch University are proud to continue this long tradition.

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1. Overview



1.1 Foreword



Professor Chanelle van den Berg
Pro-Vice Chancellor,
First Nations Portfolio



Professor Deborah Gare
Pro-Vice Chancellor, College of Law,
Arts and Social Sciences

This year has marked an important phase in strengthening Murdoch University's strategic commitment to First Nations leadership, community partnership, and culturally grounded education. Across our portfolios, we have worked in close alignment to advance a university-wide approach that is guided by Country, informed by Indigenous knowledges, and focused on long-term impact.

The **School of Indigenous Knowledges** continues to play a central role in shaping Murdoch's strategic direction. Its role in Indigenous-led academia, truth-telling, and community-led scholarship has provided a strong foundation for the University's broader transformation. The School's work has reinforced Murdoch's commitment to embedding Indigenous perspectives across teaching, research, and engagement, ensuring these principles remain core to our institutional identity.

Across the Law, Arts and Social Sciences portfolio, we have strengthened alignment with this direction by advancing programs and research that reflect Murdoch's values of equity, relevance, and community connection. Together, our portfolios have contributed to a more coherent and integrated approach to cultural capability, student experience, and research impact across the University.

Our shared focus has been on deepening relationships with community, government, and industry, ensuring Murdoch remains connected to the priorities of the communities we serve. These partnerships continue to guide our strategic decisions and reinforce the importance of community-led approaches in shaping the University's future.

As we look ahead, our work remains centred on elevating First Nations leadership, strengthening the strategic role of the School of Indigenous Knowledges, and ensuring Murdoch continues to deliver education and research that is culturally grounded, future-focused, and impactful. We remain committed to building a university that honours Country, strengthens community relationships, and contributes meaningfully to positive social and cultural change.

1.2 Dean's Report



Associate Professor Jenna Woods
Dean, School of Indigenous Knowledges

This year has been one of meaningful growth, strengthened relationships, and a deepening of our commitment to learning that is grounded in culture, community, and shared purpose. As we reflect on the past eighteen months, it is clear that everything we have achieved has been shaped not only by the dedication of our staff and students, but also by the trust and partnership of the communities who walk alongside us. Our progress is a collective effort, built through relationships that honour knowledge, respect Country, and centre the voices of those we serve.

A key focus this year has been enhancing the student experience through culturally grounded, inclusive, and innovative teaching practices. Our academic teams have worked with great care to refine curriculum, embed Indigenous knowledges, and expand opportunities for hands-on, community-connected learning. These efforts have strengthened student engagement and created clearer, more supported pathways for learners at every stage of their journey. I am especially proud of the work undertaken to support our students, ensuring they feel welcomed, respected, and empowered within our learning environments. Their success is a reflection of the cultural safety, belonging, and genuine care that our staff continue to cultivate.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on fostering excellence in teaching, building research capability, and deepening our engagement with community.

Research activity across the School has continued to grow, guided by a commitment to work that is ethical, culturally informed, and grounded in community priorities. Our researchers are engaged in projects that address real-world challenges and support community wellbeing, with increasing collaboration across disciplines and deeper engagement with Indigenous research methodologies. These developments reflect our belief that research should not only generate knowledge, but also strengthen relationships, uplift communities, and contribute to positive change.

This year we also deepened our partnerships across community, the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, government agencies, and industry. These relationships continue to enrich our teaching and research, ensuring our work remains relevant, grounded, and connected to the aspirations of the people and places we work with. Within the School, we strengthened our internal collaborations, fostering shared practice, collective leadership, and more coordinated approaches to supporting our students, staff, and community.

As we look ahead, our focus remains on fostering excellence in teaching, building research capability, and deepening our engagement with community. I am grateful for the dedication, passion, and resilience shown by our staff and students throughout the year. Together, we continue to build a School that is inclusive, forward-thinking, and firmly grounded in culture, community, and connection, one that strives to make a meaningful difference now and for generations to come.



1.3 Our Purpose

The School of Indigenous Knowledges (SIK) exists to uphold, advance and share Indigenous Knowledges in ways that honour cultural authority, strengthen community and transform the University's approach to learning, research and engagement. Our purpose is grounded in Noongar values of reciprocity, relationality and collective responsibility, recognising Elders, knowledge holders and community partners as co-creators and custodians of the knowledge systems that guide our work. Indigenous Knowledges span a vast spectrum, from the ecological and cultural practices that have sustained our peoples for more than 60,000 years to contemporary innovations that continue to strengthen our families, communities and Nations. These knowledges are living, adaptive and globally relevant, and we are committed to ensuring they are taught, respected and applied with integrity.

As an academic School, we contribute to the University's intellectual landscape by offering holistic

Indigenous Knowledges learning experiences that are both local and global, deeply rooted in Noongar ways of knowing, doing and being. Our curriculum challenges the misconception that Indigenous Knowledges sit solely within the social sciences. Through Two-Way learning, we share knowledge generated by Indigenous peoples across diverse fields, including scientific and ecological disciplines. Our teaching is guided by Indigenous epistemologies and delivered by Indigenous staff in partnership with community, ensuring cultural authority remains central.

By being situated within both the academic structure and the First Nations portfolio, the School brings cultural and academic worlds together. Our purpose is to prepare students to carry Indigenous Knowledges into their workplaces and communities, contributing to stronger, more culturally grounded futures for First Nations peoples and for Australia as a whole.



This dual positioning within both the academic structure and the First Nations portfolio enables SIK to operate at the intersection of cultural and academic spaces.

1.4 Our Structure

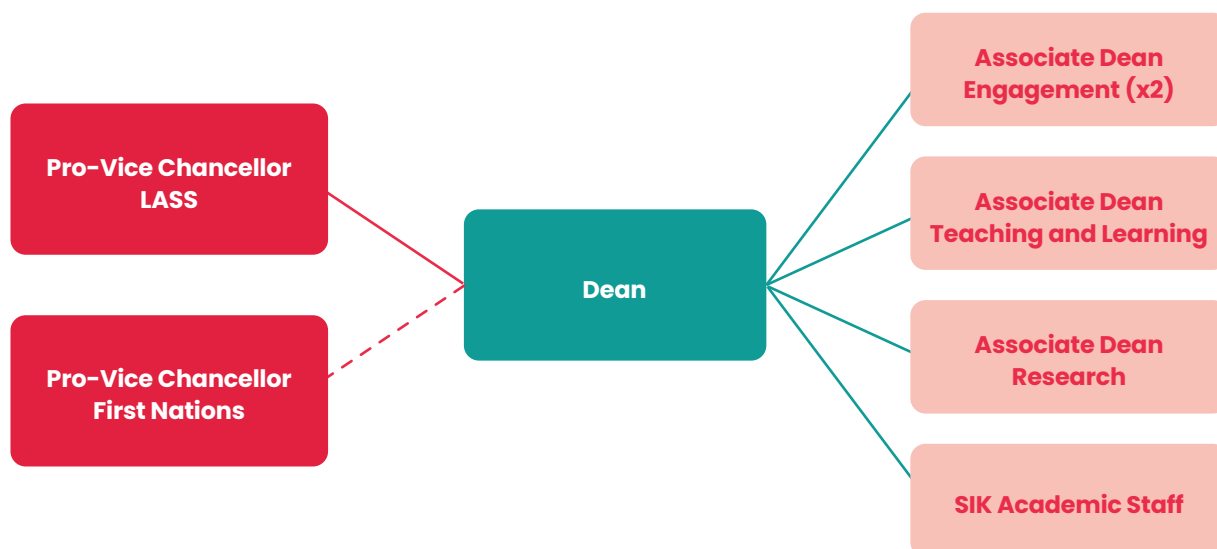
SIK holds a unique and strategically important position within the University's academic and cultural landscape. As an academic School, SIK sits within the College of Law, Arts and Social Sciences and contributes to the University's core teaching, research and governance structures. This positioning ensures that Indigenous Knowledges are recognised as a rigorous academic discipline and embedded within the formal academic architecture of the institution.

At the same time, SIK plays a central role in delivering the University's First Nations Sub-Strategy and is therefore also part of the First Nations portfolio. The School is co-located within the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre alongside the broader First Nations portfolio, creating a culturally grounded environment that

supports community engagement, cultural authority and Indigenous leadership. This dual positioning within both the academic structure and the First Nations portfolio enables SIK to operate at the intersection of cultural and academic spaces.

This model is intentional and powerful. It allows the School to uphold cultural integrity while contributing to academic excellence, ensuring that Indigenous Knowledges are advanced in ways that honour community authority and meet the standards of a contemporary university. By being situated in both spaces, SIK is able to bring cultural and academic worlds together, strengthening the University's capability to deliver Indigenous-led education, research and engagement in a way that is authentic, accountable and future-focused.

Figure 1. School of Indigenous Knowledges, Institutional Structure



1.5 Our Team



Jenna Woods – Dean, Associate Professor

Associate Professor Jenna Woods is a Wardandi Noongar woman with family connections throughout the Southwest. Jenna has been at Murdoch University since 2010, first as a student and then a teaching-focused academic, now leading a team of Aboriginal academics to strategically integrate Indigenous Knowledges within Murdoch's offerings. Jenna's background is political science and community development with her key interest being how Indigenous and Western knowledge systems and leaders interact with one another to deliver best practice across the political, institutional and social spheres.



Janinne Gliddon – Associate Dean Engagement, Senior Lecturer

Janinne is a highly respected Aboriginal health advocate in Western Australia and a proud Badimia Yamatji and Ballardong Nyoongar woman with over 30 years of public service experience in health and housing. She was inducted into the WA Women's Hall of Fame in 2022 for her trailblazing contributions to Aboriginal health. Janinne initiated Australia's first hospital-based Aboriginal Volunteer Program at King Edward Memorial Hospital and passionately advocates for cultural birthing practices. She develops trauma-informed, culturally safe programs for Aboriginal doulas and birth navigators, and contributes to stillbirth research, blending cultural wisdom with modern advocacy.



Jordan Ah Chee – Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning, Lecturer

Jordan has family connections to the Bindjareb, Wardandi, Palyku, Yawuru, and Nyikina peoples. His work focuses on integrating Indigenous science knowledge into courses at Murdoch University and strengthening partnerships with local community to ensure learning is culturally grounded and engaging. Jordan is passionate about education and STEM outreach, particularly in creating pathways that connect Aboriginal students with science. He is currently undertaking research into Indigenous astronomy and the Songlines of the Noongar people, exploring how cultural knowledge systems enrich scientific understanding and teaching practice.



Grace Wyeth – Associate Dean Engagement, Lecturer

Grace Wyeth has a background in conservation science and brings a unique perspective to her dual roles, combining environmental knowledge with cultural advocacy. She is deeply committed to supporting Aboriginal student success through Kulbardi and advancing the teaching and learning of Indigenous Knowledges through SIK. Her work focuses on fostering culturally safe learning environments, mentoring students, and integrating First Nations perspectives into academic practice. Grace's dedication strengthens both individual student journeys and broader institutional understanding of Aboriginal culture and knowledge systems.



Jeremiah Peiffer – Associate Dean Research, Professor

Jeremiah has been part of the Murdoch community since 2009, working within the School of Allied Health and serving as Dean of Graduate Studies from 2019 to 2025. He now holds the role of Professor of Exercise Science in the School of Allied Health and serves as the Postgraduate Research Chair for SIK. Jeremiah draws on his extensive research and leadership experience to support Indigenous-led research development in SIK, helping build research capability and guiding the academic growth of Indigenous staff and students. He has strong interests in organisational leadership and mentoring Early and Mid-Career academics.



Aaron Taylor – Lecturer

Aaron has a background in psychology and is deeply committed to the wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples and communities. His work focuses on strengthening collective wellbeing through culturally grounded teaching, training, and two-way learning approaches. Aaron is a Lead Facilitator in the First Nations Training Team, where he supports programs that build capability, confidence, and cultural understanding across organisations. He is passionate about creating learning environments that honour Aboriginal knowledge systems and empower communities to thrive.



Brad Vitale – Lecturer

Brad is a teaching-focused academic whose work centres on two-way science and the integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. He collaborates with local knowledge holders to develop culturally informed science learning that connects students with Country and community. Brad's interests include science education, hands-on learning, and strengthening pathways for Aboriginal students in STEM. He is committed to creating learning environments where cultural knowledge and scientific understanding come together in meaningful and respectful ways.



Jonathan Burrill – Lecturer

Jonathan has a background in community development and sociology, with a strong commitment to social justice and equity. He believes deeply in the power of education to create meaningful social change and works to ensure learning environments are inclusive, supportive, and community-focused. Jonathan's work centres on strengthening student engagement, building positive relationships, and promoting approaches that place community wellbeing at the heart of education. He is dedicated to contributing to spaces where students feel empowered, respected, and connected to broader social outcomes.

2. Core Activities



2.1 Education

2.1.1 Building a Culturally Grounded Academic Offering

At the start of this reporting period, SIK offered just one program: a general minor in Indigenous Knowledges and Practices. Since then, we have expanded significantly, drawing on our foundations of cultural knowledge, values, relationality, and interdisciplinary teaching to develop a broader, community-led suite of offerings. This growth has culminated in the establishment of one major, one co-major, and six minors, each intentionally shaped to reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being, and to meet the increasing demand for culturally grounded education across disciplines.

Offering a broader range of curriculum options is essential to ensuring students can shape their studies in ways that are most relevant to their interests, aspirations, and communities. By expanding the suite of units available, students are able to tailor their learning, engage with content that speaks directly to their lived experiences, and build the skills and knowledge that best support their future pathways. This flexibility strengthens engagement and creates a more inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives and priorities are recognised and valued.

At the same time, the introduction of a Major provides students with the opportunity to undertake a more integrated and coherent program of study, allowing them to explore key themes in greater depth and develop a stronger disciplinary identity. A Major creates a structured pathway that supports deeper learning, sustained critical inquiry, and the development of advanced capabilities that build across units. Together, a broad curriculum offering and a clearly defined Major ensure students have both choice and depth—empowering them to craft an educational experience that is meaningful, rigorous, and aligned with their goals.

As of 2026, the School of Indigenous Knowledges is delivering:

MJ-IKP

Major of Indigenous Knowledges and Practices

CJ-IKP

Co-Major of Indigenous Knowledges and Practices

MN-TWS

Minor in Two-Way Science

MJ-IKP:

Minor of Indigenous Knowledges and Practices

MN-ICOM:

Minor in Indigenous Strategic Communications

MN-ICD

Minor in Indigenous Community Development

MN-ISJ:

Minor in Indigenous Social Justice

2.1.2 Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property in Curriculum

The development of the first Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) in curriculum agreement was a landmark achievement for SIK. Initiated by the Dean and formally endorsed by the Head of Legal at MU, this agreement was designed to uphold the rights of cultural knowledge holders when their knowledges are shared through curriculum. It recognises that Indigenous knowledges are not simply content to be taught, but living, relational systems of meaning that must be protected and respected. The agreement ensures that knowledge holders retain ownership and control over how their contributions are used, particularly in external curriculum offerings where the risk of misrepresentation or misuse is heightened. This framework reflects the School's commitment to ethical engagement and cultural safety, embedding principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility into the heart of our academic practice.

This foundational agreement paved the way for the School to enter into formal ICIP agreements with individual knowledge holders, enabling the filming and production of ICIP materials for inclusion in curriculum. These materials are now integrated into our teaching programs, allowing us to deliver content externally while maintaining the integrity and cultural authority of the knowledges shared. The process of creating these resources was guided by close collaboration with knowledge holders, ensuring that their voices, perspectives and protocols were honoured throughout. By embedding ICIP protections into curriculum design and delivery, the School of Indigenous Knowledges has set a precedent for how universities can engage with Indigenous knowledges in ways that are meaningful, respectful and safe, supporting both the rights of knowledge holders and the transformative potential of Indigenous-led education.

Over the past 18 months, SIK has entered a period of significant and positive growth, reflecting both the increasing demand for Indigenous-led education and the University's recognition of the School's academic, cultural, and strategic leadership.

2.1.3 Codesign and Codelivery Load Sharing

In 2025, SIK established a more equitable and sustainable model for embedding Indigenous Knowledges across the University through formal load-sharing agreements with partner Schools. These agreements ensure that curriculum design and delivery are shared responsibilities, rather than work carried disproportionately by Indigenous academics. By distributing teaching load, curriculum development, and revenue evenly, the model recognises the collective obligation of all disciplines to engage with Indigenous Knowledges in a culturally grounded and respectful way.

Under this approach, each participating School contributes 50% of the curriculum design and delivery and receives 50% of the revenue generated. This ensures that SIK is properly reimbursed for its expertise while also supporting a fairer distribution of labour across the institution. Importantly, this model enables Indigenous Knowledges to be fully integrated into units, replacing the outdated practice of standalone guest lectures with curriculum that is coherent, culturally authoritative, and meaningfully embedded within the broader learning experience. The two current agreements, with the School of Nursing and the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, demonstrate the strength of this approach, each supported by an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property memo that safeguards community knowledge and ensures it is engaged with under formal ICIP principles.



2.1.4 Scaling up delivery

Over the past 18 months, SIK has entered a period of significant and positive growth, reflecting both the increasing demand for Indigenous-led education and the University's recognition of the School's academic, cultural, and strategic leadership. This expansion has strengthened the School's capacity to deliver culturally grounded, high-quality learning experiences at scale, while continuing to uphold the depth, relationality, and cultural authority that define Indigenous Knowledges teaching. One unit alone experienced more than a 700% increase in enrolments, demonstrating not only strong student appetite but also the trust placed in the School's approach and the relevance of its curriculum across disciplines.

This rapid growth has highlighted the School's ability to respond with agility, collaboration, and a clear sense of purpose. Staff drew on their collective strengths to plan strategically, support one another, and ensure that expansion enhanced rather than compromised the integrity of the curriculum. Through this coordinated effort, the School has been able to broaden its offerings while maintaining cultural safety, academic rigor, and community-led practice. The experience has reinforced the School's role as a key driver of Indigenous education at Murdoch, demonstrating that growth, when grounded in culture and shared commitment, can strengthen institutional capability and deepen the impact of Indigenous Knowledges across the University.

2.1.5 Delivering curriculum externally

Over the reporting period, SIK has worked in deep partnership with community to shape a culturally grounded and meaningful approach to delivering Indigenous curriculum in online environments. This work has required careful, sustained consultation with Elders, knowledge holders, and community partners to ensure that digital delivery upholds the same cultural authority, relational depth, and integrity that characterise face-to-face learning. Rather than simply transferring content into an online format, the School has engaged in a thoughtful process of re-imagining how Indigenous Knowledges can be shared in digital spaces in ways that honour cultural protocols, protect community ownership, and maintain the pedagogical richness that students expect from SIK units.

Through this collaborative process, the School has developed digital materials, teaching methods, and engagement practices that reflect community guidance and uphold the cultural safety of both students and knowledge holders. This work has strengthened the School's capacity to deliver high-quality Indigenous education at scale while remaining firmly anchored in community-led principles. As a result, from 2026 all SIK units will be available externally through Murdoch University and Open Universities Australia (OUA), significantly expanding access for students across Australia. This expansion represents not only a major milestone in the School's growth, but also a demonstration of how Indigenous Knowledges can be integrated into contemporary learning environments without compromising cultural integrity or community leadership.

2.2 Research

2.2.1 Creation of the Masters to PhD Pathway

The creation of a Masters to PhD pathway within the SIK, in partnership with the Graduate Research Office, is a transformative initiative that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in undertaking postgraduate research. This pathway provides a culturally responsive and academically rigorous structure, beginning with Research Methods Training (RMT), progressing through the Master of Philosophy (M.Phil), and culminating in the Doctor of Philosophy (D.Phil). It offers a supported opportunity for students to build research capacity, strengthen supervisory relationships, and engage deeply with Indigenous methodologies and community priorities. The staged progression enables students to transition confidently through each phase, with the entire process designed to be completed within the standard four-year full-time equivalent (FTE) PhD timeframe. This approach acknowledges diverse educational journeys and ensures that students are well-prepared for doctoral study. It also contributes to national goals for increasing Indigenous HDR participation and retention, while fostering intergenerational knowledge transmission and Indigenous-led scholarship. By embedding cultural safety, flexibility, and excellence into the pathway, the School affirms its commitment to nurturing future Indigenous researchers and leaders who will shape the academic landscape and deliver meaningful outcomes for their communities.

2.2.2 Increasing the Indigenous HDR Stipend

SIK continues to work closely with the Graduate Research Office and the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations to address long-standing barriers to Indigenous participation in higher degree research. Through sustained advocacy, evidence-based analysis, and culturally informed consultation with community and current HDR candidates, we highlighted the financial inequities faced by Indigenous researchers and the impact this had on access, retention, and completion. This collaborative work positioned the stipend increase not simply as a financial adjustment, but as a strategic investment in Indigenous research leadership and a necessary step in aligning Murdoch's practices with its commitments to equity, reconciliation, and First Nations self-determination.

This partnership resulted in the successful increase of the Indigenous HDR stipend from \$37,000 to \$50,000, a change that significantly enhances the accessibility and viability of postgraduate research for Indigenous candidates. The increase reflects a shared institutional commitment to removing structural barriers, supporting Indigenous knowledge creation, and strengthening the pipeline of Aboriginal researchers across disciplines. By working together, SIK, the Graduate Research Office, and the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations have created a more enabling environment for Indigenous HDR students, one that recognises the cultural, community, and economic realities they navigate, and supports their capacity to contribute meaningfully to research that benefits their communities and the University.



By embedding cultural safety, flexibility, and excellence into the pathway, the School affirms its commitment to nurturing future Indigenous researchers and leaders who will shape the academic landscape and deliver meaningful outcomes for their communities.



2.2.3 Establishing the Indigenous Academic Fellowship Scheme

The establishment of the Indigenous Academic Fellowship Scheme within SIK represents a significant strategic investment in strengthening Murdoch University's First Nations academic leadership and research capability. Developed through close collaboration between the School of Indigenous Knowledges, the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations, and senior academic leaders, the scheme responds to the national under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and the structural barriers that limit pathways into academia. The initiative is grounded in Murdoch's commitment to truth-telling, equity, and Indigenous self-determination, and positions the University as a leader in creating culturally grounded, sustainable academic career pathways for Indigenous scholars.

The Fellowship Scheme provides dedicated culturally safe part time appointments within SIK, designed to support emerging Indigenous academics to build teaching capability, develop research programs, and engage meaningfully with community. By embedding mentorship, professional development, and community-connected scholarship at the core of the program, the scheme strengthens the pipeline of Indigenous academic leadership across the University. Its establishment marks a major step in aligning Murdoch's workforce strategy with its broader institutional commitments, ensuring that Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and leadership continue to shape the University's future direction.

2.2.4 Establishing the Ngala Katitjin Bidi Network

Over the past 18 months, SIK has been steadily building a strong Indigenous academic network through the development of a HDR support and training collective. This collective brings together Indigenous HDR students from across Western Australia, regardless of which university they are enrolled at, and has grown into a genuinely community-driven space shaped by the needs and requests of its members. The network meet fortnightly at the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, alternating between practical training sessions and our more informal social support gatherings known as *mob yarns*. The training sessions are built directly from what students tell us they need, covering everything from research skills and methodologies to navigating supervision, writing strategies, and cultural governance. The *mob yarns* provide a culturally-safe space to connect, decompress, and support one another through the challenges of postgraduate study. The invitation is open to any Indigenous HDR student, and the collective has quickly become a place where emerging scholars can build relationships, share knowledge, and strengthen their academic journeys together. Through this work, we are not only supporting individual students but also nurturing a broader network of Indigenous researchers who will continue to shape and lead scholarship across the state.

The establishment of the Indigenous Academic Fellowship Scheme within SIK represents a significant strategic investment in strengthening Murdoch University's First Nations academic leadership and research capability



2.2.5 The Australian Council of Deans of Science - A guide for curriculum development First Nations Australians' Science

Our Associate Dean of Teaching and Learning, Jordan Ah Chee, was a member of the national research team that co-authored *A Guide for Curriculum Development – First Nations Australians' Science*, a resource designed to support the meaningful integration of First Nations content into university science curricula. The guide was developed through a collaborative co-design process involving both First Nations and non-First Nations academics, and draws on the foundational work of Professor Joe Sambono. It provides practical frameworks and guiding principles for educators seeking to embed Indigenous Knowledges in ways that are culturally safe, respectful, and pedagogically sound.

The guide emphasises the importance of showcasing Indigenous sciences, not simply teaching about culture, and encourages curriculum developers to engage with First Nations communities and knowledge holders throughout the design process. Jordan Ah Chee's involvement reflects SIK's leadership in advancing Indigenous-led curriculum development and its commitment to cross-disciplinary collaboration. The guide is now a nationally recognised resource, supporting educators across Australia in building cross-cultural capability and transforming science education to better reflect the knowledge systems and contributions of First Nations Australians.

2.3 Engagement

2.3.1 Honouring our Knowledge Holders

At the heart of our School's mission is a deep respect for the cultural authority and lived experience of our Indigenous Knowledge Holders. We honour their contributions through inclusive teaching practices, collaborative curriculum design, and meaningful engagement in research and governance. Their wisdom shapes our Two-Way learning approach and strengthens our connection to Country and community. We actively recognise their impact by creating culturally safe spaces, supporting leadership pathways, and celebrating excellence. This commitment is formally expressed through the awarding of Honorary Doctorates and the appointment of Honorary Fellows, acknowledging their enduring legacy and influence.

Honorary Fellows of the School of Indigenous Knowledges

SIK has established an Honorary Fellows program to recognise and uplift the community leaders who guide and support our work. This program is our way of honouring the deep knowledge, cultural authority and generosity that our Elders and community partners bring to the university. It also opens the doors of Murdoch more widely to community, making our spaces, facilities and services easier to access and use. By welcoming community leaders as Honorary Fellows, we create meaningful pathways for them to be involved in teaching, research and cultural guidance, while ensuring they are supported and respected within the university. The program reflects our commitment to reciprocity and genuine partnership, and strengthens the connection between community and campus in a way that benefits us all.

Our five appointed Honorary Fellows are:



Olman Walley



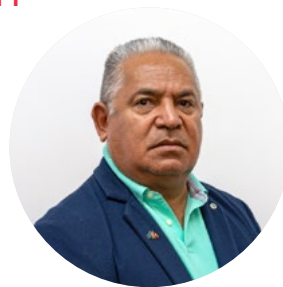
Angela Ryder, OAM



Ingrid Cumming



Alison Scott



Anthony Hansen

Honorary Doctorates

2024, Dr James (Jim) Morrison

Dr Jim Morrison, a Minang-Goreng Noongar Elder and Traditional Custodian of WA's southern coast, was named 2023 NAIDOC Male Elder of the Year. For over five decades, he has led efforts for Stolen Generations rights, Aboriginal child protection, mental health, justice reform, and culturally safe services. He chairs the WA Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation, co-founded Reconciliation WA, and created Yokai Healing Our Spirit. Jim received the John Curtin Medal and contributed to award-winning virtual preservation of Aboriginal Missions. He hosts Moorditj Mag on RTR FM92.1, sharing Aboriginal current affairs across Noongar Radio and regional stations, continuing his legacy of cultural leadership.



2025, Dr Millie Penny AM

Aunty Millie Penny AM, a revered Noongar Elder, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in recognition of her lifelong dedication to cultural leadership, community service, and advocacy. Her work spans over five decades, particularly in the areas of family violence prevention, healing, and empowerment of Aboriginal women and children. She has played pivotal roles in organisations such as Yorgum Aboriginal Corporation and has guided curriculum development, cultural governance, and intergenerational knowledge transmission. Her leadership is deeply rooted in Noongar matriarchal traditions, and she has been

honoured with the NAIDOC Perth Outstanding Achievement Award and an Order of Australia medal for her enduring contributions.

2026, Dr Vivienne Hansen

Dr Vivienne 'Binyarn' Hansen is a Balladong Wadjuk Noongar woman and one of Western Australia's most respected practitioners and teachers of Noongar bush medicine. She grew up learning traditional healing from her family, a foundation that shaped her lifelong commitment to preserving and sharing Noongar cultural knowledge. Dr Hansen later formalised her training through the Marr Moorditj Foundation, becoming the first Indigenous member of the National Herbalist Association of Australia. She is the co-author of *Noongar Bush Medicine* and *Noongar Bush Tucker*, landmark publications that document medicinal plants and cultural practices of the south-west. A renowned speaker, healer, and advocate, she continues to teach, mentor, and inspire future generations, ensuring Noongar knowledge remains strong and accessible.



2.3.2 Delivering public Indigenous Knowledges events

As an act of service, SIK supports and delivers public events as a vital expression of its commitment to sharing Indigenous Knowledges with broader society. These events are designed to foster truth-telling, cultural exchange, and community-led dialogue, creating spaces where Indigenous voices are centred and respected. They serve as platforms for Aboriginal scholars, Elders, and community leaders to engage with diverse audiences, including students, academics, policymakers, and the general public. Through these engagements, SIK promotes understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being, while also responding to community-identified priorities. The events are grounded in relational ethics and cultural authority, and often involve collaboration across university faculties and with external partners. By hosting these events in accessible and culturally significant spaces, SIK ensures that Indigenous Knowledges are not only preserved within the academy but actively shared, celebrated, and applied in ways that benefit both Aboriginal communities and the wider public.



6 March 2025:

Dr. Jim Morrison's Doctoral Seminar: They're Just Waiting For Us To Die

Dr Jim Morrison's seminar, *They're Just Waiting for Us to Die*, powerfully addressed the traumatic legacy of the Stolen Generations, focusing on the forced removal of Aboriginal children and the enduring pain carried by survivors and their families. Through truth-telling, Uncle Jim highlighted the resilience of Aboriginal communities and issued a compelling call for reparations and justice, underscoring the urgency of healing and recognition for those still waiting to be acknowledged.

28 May 2024:

Genocide in the Wildflower State: Film Screening with Q&A Panel

We partnered with Yokai, the People and Culture Office, the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, and the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations to deliver *Genocide in the Wildflower State: Film Screening with Q&A Panel*. This collaboration reflected our shared commitment to truth-telling, community engagement, and amplifying Indigenous voices through public scholarship.

28-29 November 2024:

20th Murdoch Colloquium "Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledges"

We partnered with the School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences to deliver the 20th Anniversary Murdoch Philosophy Colloquium, themed *Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledges*. This event aims to foster long-overdue dialogue between philosophical and Indigenous knowledge systems through consultation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues at Murdoch and beyond.

December 2024 and December 2025:

Cultural performances and Honouring our Elders at Birak Festival

We partnered with the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations, and Boorloo Aboriginal Cultural Experiences to deliver cultural engagements and Honouring Our Elders at the Birak Festival. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to celebrating Aboriginal cultural leadership, strengthening community relationships, and creating inclusive public spaces for cultural exchange.

30 May 2025:

Truth Telling Forum

We co-hosted the Truth Telling Forum in partnership with RecWA, Yokai, and the National Centre for Truth, Reconciliation and Justice, creating a powerful space for dialogue, healing, and community-led truth-telling. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to justice, cultural authority, and amplifying Indigenous voices in public discourse. Plans are underway to deliver the summit on a larger scale next year, with follow-up reflections and outcomes to be published in a special issue of the *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*.



28-30 July 2025:

Justice Reinvestment Summit

We also partnered with Social Reinvestment WA to facilitate the Justice Reinvestment Summit, a multi-day event focused on community-driven strategies for reducing incarceration and strengthening support systems. This partnership enabled meaningful engagement with policy leaders, researchers, and Aboriginal communities to advance long-term, place-based justice reform.

8 October 2025:

Dr. Millie Penny's Doctoral Seminar: Moorditj Wirrin Yok

Dr. Millie Penny's Doctoral Seminar: *Moorditj Wirrin Yok* offered a powerful exploration of Aboriginal women's leadership, cultural strength, and community resilience. It encouraged participants to reflect deeply on identity, Indigenous knowledge systems, and the transformative impact of centring Aboriginal ways of knowing within scholarly and community contexts.



14 March 2026:

Boordawan Movement Launch Gala Dinner

The Boordawan Launch Gala Dinner brought together community leaders, Elders, scholars, and supporters for an evening that honoured Aboriginal excellence and collective vision. The event celebrated cultural strength, creative innovation, and the shared commitment to uplifting Indigenous voices. Guests enjoyed powerful storytelling, moving performances, and a sense of unity that highlighted Boordawan's purpose: fostering opportunities, strengthening community connections, and championing a future grounded in culture, pride, and collaboration.



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2.3.3 Establishing the cultural leadership initiative

SIK played a foundational role in shaping Murdoch University's cultural leadership initiative for Aboriginal staff and students, launched in late 2024. From the outset, the School helped design the cultural framework, learning approach and community-led structures that underpin the initiative, ensuring it was grounded in Indigenous-led learning, cultural authority and strong community guidance. The program was created to strengthen cultural identity, confidence and leadership across the campus, providing Aboriginal staff and students with opportunities to connect deeply with culture while developing their own leadership pathways.

During its establishment phase, SIK supported the coordination of monthly knowledge-sharing sessions led by Elders and community leaders, creating a culturally safe space for reflection, grounding and intergenerational exchange. The School also contributed to the development of Noongar language classes that encourage staff and students to build stronger relationships with Country, community and each other through language revitalisation and everyday cultural practice.

This work has now transitioned to the First Nations Training Team, who hold responsibility for delivering and managing the program. SIK continues to support the initiative by offering cultural guidance, contributing to sessions where appropriate and ensuring the program remains aligned with community expectations and Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being. The initiative reflects SIK's ongoing commitment to nurturing Aboriginal leadership and embedding culturally grounded learning across the University.

2.3.4 Launching the Boordawan Movement

SIK has worked closely with the Pro Vice Chancellor First Nations portfolio to transition what was formerly the Cultural Leadership Initiative into the Boordawan Movement, a more holistic and ambitious program that is now fully operational. Boordawan launched with a highly successful gala dinner that brought together community, industry and university partners, and has already secured significant philanthropic and partner investment. Built around three interconnected pillars, cultural development, academic excellence and practical support, Boordawan reflects an Indigenous-led model designed to strengthen cultural identity, build academic confidence and equip students with the real-world skills needed to thrive within the University and beyond.

SIK continues to support Boordawan by providing academic guidance, contributing to activities where appropriate and ensuring the movement remains aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing, doing and being. Boordawan now stands as a cross-disciplinary, community-anchored initiative that strengthens Indigenous leadership across the University and prepares Indigenous young people to be leaders into the future.



2.3.5 Sharing Indigenous Knowledges externally

Staff from SIK are regularly invited to present at conferences on best practice in the teaching and learning of Indigenous Knowledges. These presentations showcase our culturally grounded pedagogies, including Two-Way learning and Noongar-led curriculum design, and reflect our leadership in Indigenous education across Australia and internationally. Through these engagements, our staff contribute to national conversations on curriculum transformation, cultural safety, and Indigenous excellence in higher education.

Over the reporting period, staff delivered presentations to the following:

- National History Teachers Conference
- HERDSA Annual Conference
- Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Conference
- Western Australia Teaching and Learning Conference
- Australia Africa United Conference
- ECU Bhutan-Australia Conference
- 20th Murdoch Colloquium *Philosophy and Indigenous Knowledges*
- Truth Telling Forum
- Justice Reinvestment Summit
- Science Teachers' Association of Western Australia Conference
- Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Conference
- MU HASS Poverty Forum
- The Leadership Institute's Indigenous Leadership Summit
- WA Teaching and Learning Forum

2.3.6 Extending Indigenous academic networks

SIK is actively extending Indigenous academic networks through strategic partnerships and collaborative initiatives. We have co-applied for a CAULLT grant with Curtin University and Queensland University of Technology to support professional learning and curriculum development that embeds Indigenous Knowledges. Our Indigenous Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Collective includes Aboriginal HDR students from all universities in Western Australia, fostering a cross-institutional community of support and scholarship. Internationally, we have connected with the University of Otago through a cultural exchange trip to Aotearoa New Zealand, strengthening trans-Tasman Indigenous academic relationships and culminating in the first tri-lingual MOU signed by our Pro-Vice Chancellor First Nations and the University of Otago's Deputy Vice-Chancellor Māori.

We also engage nationally through events such as the Back to Country Oration in Northam, where we collaborated with University of Melbourne and Monash University to support truth-telling and community-led dialogue. These efforts reflect our commitment to building a robust, inclusive network of Indigenous scholars and allies, advancing leadership, research, and cultural exchange across institutions.

3. Enablers



3.1 Strengthening Our People and Culture

At the heart of SIK is a deep commitment to nurturing our people in holistic, culturally grounded ways. Our approach is shaped by Noongar values and relational practices, recognising that we are Moort and that our strength comes from looking after one another. We work intentionally to create an environment where staff feel supported to grow, lead, and thrive, professionally, culturally, and personally. This people-centred philosophy informs every aspect of our work, from cultural leadership and academic development to supporting staff to stay connected to community, identity, and the things that matter most to them. By investing in our people in culturally safe and empowering ways, we are building a confident, future-focused academic community grounded in Indigenous principles.

Cultural leadership sits at the core of this approach. All SIK staff are work-loaded to participate in the Cultural Leadership Initiative, which includes Noongar language learning, regular engagement with Elders, and opportunities to participate in leadership programming through the Western Australian Aboriginal Leadership Institute. These experiences strengthen cultural identity, deepen relational practice, and ensure our work remains anchored in community-led values. Importantly, cultural and community engagement is formally recognised within staff workloads, affirming its central place in our academic practice and ensuring this work is valued, supported, and sustained.

We also take a strategic, long-term approach to academic career development. Staff are paired with senior leaders across the University through a mentoring program designed to support career progression, leadership capability, and personal growth. Dedicated workload, tailored support, and clear pathways enable staff to pursue research, attend conferences, and undertake HDR studies with confidence. Staff are also encouraged and supported to step into governance and leadership roles across the University, strengthening Indigenous representation in decision-making and building institutional capability. Succession planning and structured development pathways ensure that staff can map their long-term futures and see themselves as part of the University's ongoing leadership.

Equally important is our commitment to supporting staff to pursue their passions and work in ways that reflect their strengths. We encourage staff to design curriculum aligned with their interests, build meaningful partnerships with community and industry, and undertake research that responds to community priorities. We recognise that people do their best work when they feel connected, inspired, and supported, and we actively promote a healthy work-life balance that allows wellbeing and creativity to flourish. Through this holistic, values-driven approach, SIK continues to grow an empowered, culturally grounded academic community that reflects who we are, honours where we come from, and strengthens our collective future.



We work intentionally to create an environment where staff feel supported to grow, lead, and thrive, professionally, culturally, and personally.

3.2 Enhanced governance process and procedure

As SIK continues to grow in scale, complexity, and influence, it has prioritised the strengthening of its governance structures to ensure accountability, transparency, and cultural integrity remain at the centre of its operations. A key development over the reporting period has been the expansion of the School's interdisciplinary Board of Studies, which now includes representation from across the University to support rigorous academic oversight. This body plays a critical role in curriculum governance, quality assurance, and strategic planning, ensuring that SIK's programs remain academically robust, future-focused, and firmly grounded in Indigenous-led principles.

To uphold cultural safety and ensure that governance is conducted with the depth and respect required in an Indigenous Knowledge context, all non-Indigenous members of the Board of Studies are required to complete the School's Cultural Training Framework. This ensures that those participating in academic decision-making are well equipped to support the School's work, understand the cultural protocols that guide it, and contribute to governance in a culturally informed

and respectful manner. This expectation reflects SIK's commitment to building a governance environment where cultural authority is recognised, upheld, and embedded in all processes.

Beyond formal academic governance, SIK has embedded culturally responsive decision-making practices that reflect Noongar principles of circular leadership and collective responsibility. The School reports to the Aboriginal Reference Group twice annually, seeking guidance on strategic directions and ensuring alignment with community expectations. Regular updates are also provided to the University's First Nations Committee, reinforcing coherence with broader institutional commitments. Monthly School meetings bring all staff together to participate in shared decision-making, fostering a collaborative culture where diverse voices are valued and leadership is distributed. These governance practices not only strengthen operational effectiveness but also honour Indigenous ways of leading, working, and being together, ensuring that SIK's growth is guided by cultural integrity at every level.

Beyond formal academic governance, SIK has embedded culturally responsive decision-making practices that reflect Noongar principles of circular leadership and collective responsibility.



3.3 Reciprocal relationships with our community

Reciprocal relationships with community sit at the centre of SIK and are the foundation that makes our work possible. These relationships are built over time through trust, respect and shared responsibility, and they provide the cultural authority that guides our teaching, research and engagement. Grounded in Noongar principles of reciprocity and collective care, we work with Elders, knowledge holders and community partners as co-creators and custodians of the knowledge systems we walk alongside.

The strength of these relationships enables us to deliver curriculum that is culturally grounded, relevant and deeply connected to lived experience. Our teaching emerges from ongoing dialogue, shared learning and community guidance rather than from static materials or generic templates.

This ensures that our curriculum reflects cultural protocols, community priorities and the realities of Country, offering students an experience that is authentic, meaningful and culturally safe. In turn, our work contributes back to community through shared learning, capacity building and the continuation of cultural knowledge.

At SIK, we hold ourselves accountable to community and remain guided by the values and expectations of those we walk with. We listen, respond and act in partnership, ensuring that our decisions and future directions honour the relationships that sustain us. These reciprocal, community-led partnerships are our greatest strength and will continue to shape the way we teach, lead and engage with the world.

3.4 Deepening partnerships with other Schools

SIK has continued to strengthen its relationships with Schools across the University, recognising that meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration is essential to advancing our academic mission and cultural responsibilities. As SIK's programs, influence and external engagement have expanded, so too has the need for coordinated, institution-wide partnerships that reflect the scale and strategic importance of our work. What has emerged is a network of relationships built on trust, respect and shared purpose, relationships that enable Indigenous Knowledges to be meaningfully centred across disciplines rather than treated as an add-on or specialist component.

These collaborations have become a defining strength of the School. They provide the academic

and cultural foundations required to deliver high-quality, culturally safe curriculum and to support other Schools as they engage with Indigenous content in ways guided by community authority. Through these partnerships, staff across disciplines are supported to build their confidence and capability, creating space for shared learning, capacity building and honest, future-focused conversations about how to embed Indigenous Knowledges with integrity. As SIK continues to grow, these relationships will remain central to our approach, reinforcing our commitment to collaboration that is respectful, reciprocal and transformative for the University as a whole.



4. Finances

SIK is currently navigating a period of significant expansion, and this growth requires thoughtful and sustained investment. Our budget position reflects both the opportunities and the pressures that accompany rapid development. Notably, we have achieved **167% revenue growth with only 80% growth in expenditure**, demonstrating strong financial performance and disciplined cost management during this period of scaling.

Because the University operates on a lagged budget model, where income generated in one year is not received by the School until the following year, the impact of our strong 2024 performance is only now visible in our 2025 budget. Likewise, the substantial growth we are experiencing throughout 2025 will not be fully recognised until 2026.

This timing difference is an expected and intentional feature of our long-term strategy. We have deliberately positioned the School for growth, understanding that building a strong and sustainable academic environment requires upfront investment. Central to this strategy is our commitment to people: high-quality teaching, learning, research, and engagement are only possible when we attract, support, and retain exceptional staff. As salaries account for the majority of our expenses, our investment in staff is both our greatest cost and our most important asset.



Table 1. School of Indigenous Knowledges Finances 2024-2025

Profit & Loss Accounts	2025		2024	
	Budget (\$'000)	Actual (\$'000)	Budget (\$'000)	Actual (\$'000)
Student Related Teaching and Grant Income	0	1,431	0	548
Other Income	0	35	0	0
Internal Revenue	7	60	0	22
Total Revenue	7	1,526	0	570
Salaries	750	849	526	502
Administrative Expense	0	4	0	1
Advertising and Marketing expense	0	5	0	1
Donations and sponsorships	0	7	0	0
General Consumables	0	2	0	0
Non-capitalised equipment	0	1	0	0
Other student and teaching related expenditure	0	6	0	5
People development, training and travel	0	30	0	17
Other Expenses	48	84	12	9
Non Salary Expenses	48	138	12	33
School Reserves	(137)	0	0	0
Internal Expense	0	0	0	2
Total Expenses	661	987	538	537
Surplus / (Deficit)	(654)	539	(538)	33



School of Indigenous Knowledges

Murdoch University
90 South Street,
Murdoch WA 6150

murdoch.edu.au

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