



INDIGENOUS FUTURES CENTRE

ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures

Annual Report 2025

Acknowledgements

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures acknowledges and honours the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our Centre operates.

We acknowledge Elders past and present, and recognise these sites were always places of learning, teaching and research, and that Sovereignty was never ceded.

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures acknowledges the support of the Australian Research Council.



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures acknowledges the financial and in-kind support provided by our collaborating organisations and community partners.



Partners



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Elder-In-Residence's Message

Gregory “Uncle Cheg” Egert Centre Elder-In-Residence

As we reflect on our second year of operation, I am proud of all that we have achieved. In 2025 we settled into our first full year, growing our presence on The University of Queensland’s St Lucia campus and in our other Nodes at University of Technology Sydney, The University of Melbourne, Australian National University, University of Sunshine Coast and The University of Western Australia. We welcomed new community partners, while continuing our relationships with founding community partners to ensure our research and operations continued to be grounded in aspirations for our collective futures.



In November we hosted our very first International Conference as a Centre. We gathered as Indigenous academics, community organisations, higher degree research students, community members and industry partners to reimagine Indigenous futures. We heard from keynote speakers such as Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Professors Audra Simpson, Rauna Kuokkanen and Brendan Hokowhitu as they shared their visions and reflections on the state of Indigeneity globally. We hosted over 300 attendees, concurrent sessions with over 50 presenters & 162 Indigenous-led presentations. Thank you to the conference committee whose immense work led to a successful conference.

We commenced our Indigenous Futures Centre Seminar Series hearing from Indigenous academics from around UQ. As part of this series, we partnered with The University of Auckland to present a symposium titled “Indigenous Knowledges: co-creating our own futures”, with 16 Indigenous panel members speaking to themes of solidarity & community building, art & activism, First Nations justice, modern science and Indigenous futures.

I look forward to the work in front of the Centre, including continuing to build upon existing community-centred research and creating more spaces for Indigenous collaboration to see an equitable future.

Director's Message

Professor Brendan Hokowhitu
Centre Director & QLD Node Lead

Tēnā koutou katoa,

2025 saw the growth and progression of ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures (the IFC) and I am delighted to present this Annual Report particularly in relation to what has changed, where we are now, and what we achieved in 2025.

What gives me most gratitude in reflection upon 2025, is the IFC Capacity Building Program (CPB), with its focus on ECRs including HDR students, postdocs and research fellows, who are an exceptional group of Indigenous leaders in their own right. IFC was established with the background of a mere 1% of academics in Australia being Indigenous.

The IFC CBP which includes workshops, professional development, masterclasses, seminars, writing retreats and more has been a huge success, including building a cohort of exceptional Indigenous ECRs.

Driven by our community partners, our research projects continued to develop in 2025, including collaborating with new partners., Notably, IFC entered into a new historic research agreement with Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders in Council (MMEIC); a collaboration grounded in the ethics, values and priorities of the Quandamooka community. It marks a significant shift in how partnerships and agreements are made with our community, demonstrating that institutions, such as universities, can enter into long-term and genuine commitments with Indigenous communities where it is the community that sets the research agenda, not the other way around. Together we want to create community-led research that is holistic and transdisciplinary where justice, for example, is reframed as community wellbeing.

Another highlight of 2025 was IFC's inaugural international conference. In November, we brought together over 300 Indigenous presenters and allies from across Australia, North America, Aotearoa, Asia and the Pacific under the conference theme "Indigenous Futures Unbound: Reimagining Indigenous futures through knowledge & praxis". Feedback about the conference has been astounding, particularly about the organisation, venue and content. The latter included Indigenous academics and Indigenous community members speaking to themes of environmental futurities, health and wellbeing, creative practice, knowledge & identity, higher education, economy, methodologies and self-determination and sovereignty, in the context of Indigenous futures.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge our partners for their continued support of IFC, and their guidance and direction through their representation on our Advisory Board, Research Committee, and Community & Partner Advisory Board.

Ngā mihi ki a tātou



Centre Overview

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures is the first entirely Indigenous led Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence.

Our Vision is for an equitable Australia for Indigenous peoples by 2050.

Our Mission as Indigenous scholars is to transform the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous peoples through an innovative community-led, transdisciplinary research program that collaborates across sectors to produce self-determined, evidence-based and impactful outcomes that fundamentally change the development and implementation of Indigenous policies and programs.

The Centre's researchers are global leaders in Indigenous-led innovative, collaborative, transdisciplinary research, who have come together with the common goal of addressing long-standing social inequalities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face.

An equitable Australia by 2050 requires that our work encompasses a transdisciplinary approach, blending the key themes of Health & Wellbeing, Law & Justice and Education & Economies, and that we create sustainable change by elevating Indigenous voices and leadership.



IFC Centre Members at the Annual Symposium, hosted by UTS

Our Strategic Objectives



Design and **deliver** an exceptional and internationally renowned program of Indigenous relational transdisciplinary research to reveal the complex mechanisms, processes, and conditions that perpetuate Indigenous intergenerational inequity.



Collaborate with community organisations, government, relevant industry stakeholders, community end-users and researchers in other sectors to deliver ground-breaking cross-sectoral policy reform and models of best-practice directly related to the four Priority Reform areas of National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020.



Provide unprecedented relational transdisciplinary cross-sectoral research focusing on the interconnections between legal, education and health contexts and build new networks with relevant international research programs.



Establish a national (and international) Indigenous Knowledge Infrastructure (NIKI) for Indigenous futures, including cross-sectoral measures, models, data systems and adaptive structures.



Support Indigenous researchers at all career stages by providing training, mentoring and career opportunities.



Foster the future generation of the most promising Indigenous Australian researchers trained through the Centre's comprehensive Indigenous leadership, mentoring and capacity building program.

Members

Elders



Distinguished Emeritus
Professor Aileen Moreton-
Robinson
Elder Scholar



Gregory "Uncle Cheg"
Egert
Centre Elder-In-
Residence

Chief Investigators



Professor Brendan
Hokowhitu
Centre Director &
QLD Node Lead



Professor Roxanne
Bainbridge
Deputy Director,
Research



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Fredericks
Theme Lead, Education
& Economies



Professor James
Ward
Theme Lead, Health
& Wellbeing



A/Professor Crystal
McKinnon
Theme Lead, Law &
Justice
VIC Node Lead



Professor Pat
Dudgeon
Co-Theme Lead,
Health & Wellbeing
WA/NT Node Lead



Professor Maria
Raciti
Co-Theme Lead,
Education &
Economies



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Gray
NSW/ACT Node Lead

Chief Investigators



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Law & Justice



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A/Professor Amanda
Porter
Co-Theme Lead, Law
& Justice



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Law & Justice



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Education &
Economies

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Professor Chris
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Te Wānanga o
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Te Rangiuā (Pou)
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o Awanuiārangi

Research Fellows



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Senior Research
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University of
Queensland



Alina Rakhi
Principal Research
Associate
University of
Queensland

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Education &
Economies



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PhD Candidate
Health & Wellbeing



Kaitlin Dunn
PhD Candidate
Health & Wellbeing



Emily McConnochie
PhD Candidate
Education &
Economies



Talia Sarra
PhD Candidate
Education &
Economies



Frederick Cobbo
PhD Candidate
Education &
Economies



Sarah Isaacs
MPhil Candidate
Law & Justice



Aidan Kampers
PhD Candidate
Health & Wellbeing

Community & Partner Advisory Board



Chair
Gregory "Uncle
Cheg" Egert
Centre Elder-in-
Residence IFC



Secretary
Arielle
Henaway
IFC



Catherine Liddle
SNAICC



Paul Stewart
Lowitja
Institute



Wayne AhBoo
Institute for
Urban
Indigenous
Health (IUIH)



Apryl Day
Dhadjowa
Foundation



Cassie Ryan
Stronger
Smarter
Institute



Nick
Devereaux
Australian
Human Rights
Commission



Karly Warner
NSW/ACT
Aboriginal Legal
Service



Dr Fadwa Al-
Yaman
Australian
Institute of
Health & Welfare



Fiona Jose
Cape York
Partnerships



Nattlie Smith
National
Indigenous
Australians
Agency (NIAA)



Yolande Brown
AIME



Dale Ruska
Minjerribah
Moorgumpin
Elders-In-
Council (MMEIC)



Mark Evenhuis
SNAICC



Prof Brendan
Hokowhitu
IFC



Dr Daniel Kiwa
McKinnon
IFC



Prof Maria Raciti
IFC



A/Prof Amanda
Porter
IFC



Prof Roxanne
Bainbridge
IFC

The Community & Partner Advisory Board (CPAB) is vital to the Centre's core functions. It is chaired by the Elder-in-Residence and composed of representatives from Indigenous communities, Partner organisations, and Centre researchers, with the aim to promote consistent linkages between on-the-ground sector leaders and the centre. The Board meets quarterly to discuss their organisations & communities to highlight needs for research to address priorities. The CPAB provides strategic advice to the Research and Executive Committees about their community-led, co-designed research projects and helps foster cross-sector collaboration. These Community Partners actively engage and co-host key activities to expand community understanding and access to research that affects them.

Advisory Board



Chair
Prof Tom Calma
AO - Fellow of
Senate,
University of
Sydney



Prof Leonie
Pihama
Tu Tama
Wāhine o
Taranaki



Prof
Lester Irabinna
Rigney
University of
South Australia



Prof J. Kehaulani
Kauanui
Princeton
University



Dist Prof Jacinta
Ruru
University of
Otago



Prof Randall Akee
University of
California



Prof Sheryl
Lightfoot
University of
Toronto

Chaired by Professor Tom Calma AO, the Advisory Board provides strategic advice to the Executive Committee on research direction, implementation, and impact.

The Advisory Board includes Professor Kehaulani Kauanui (Princeton University), Professor Sheryl Lightfoot (University of Toronto), Professor Leonie Pihama (Tu Tama Wāhine o Taranaki, New Zealand), Professor Lester Irabinna Rigney (University of South Australia), Professor Jacinta Ruru (University of Otago) and Associate Professor Randall Akee (University of California, Los Angeles).

The Board meets with the Executive Committee biannually advising on implementation of the Centre's key performance indicators.

Executive Committee



Chair
Prof Brendan
Hokowhitu
Director & QLD
Node Lead



Prof Roxanne
Bainbridge
Deputy Director



Gregory "Uncle
Cheg" Egert
Elder in
Residence



Prof Bronwyn
Fredericks
Education &
Economies Theme
Lead



A/Prof Crystal
McKinnon
VIC Node Lead, Law
& Justice Theme
Lead



Prof James Ward
Health &
Wellbeing Theme
Lead



Prof Pat Dudgeon
WA/NT Node
Lead, Health &
Wellbeing Co-
Theme Lead



Prof Paul Gray
NSW/ACT Node
Lead



Shane Boseley
Chief Operating
Officer

The Executive Committee is the central governing body of the Centre. It meets quarterly and is chaired by the Centre Director. The Committee sets the Centre's strategic direction and oversees implementation of the Centre's research and business operating plans ensuring that the activities are integrated across the different thematic threads and participating institutions.

The Executive Committee ensures that the Centre meets with the performance, reporting and regulatory requirements set out by the Centre's Strategic Plan and the Australian Research Council. The Terms of Reference allows for co-Theme Leads to represent their research theme when the Theme lead is unable to attend.

Research Committee



Chair
Prof Roxanne
Bainbridge
Deputy Director



Gregory "Uncle
Cheg" Egert
Elder in
Residence



Prof Brendan
Hokowhitu
Director & QLD
Node Lead



Nattlie Smith
National Indigenous
Australians Agency
(NIAA)



Prof Maria Raciti
Co-Theme Lead,
Education & Economies



A/Prof Amanda
Porter
Co-Theme
Lead, Law &
Justice



A/Prof Hinekura
Smith
Research Fellow
IFC



Shane Boseley
Chief Operating
Officer IFC



Prof James Ward
Health &
Wellbeing Theme
Lead



Dist Prof Linda Tuhiwai
Smith
Te Whare Wananga o
Awanuiarangi



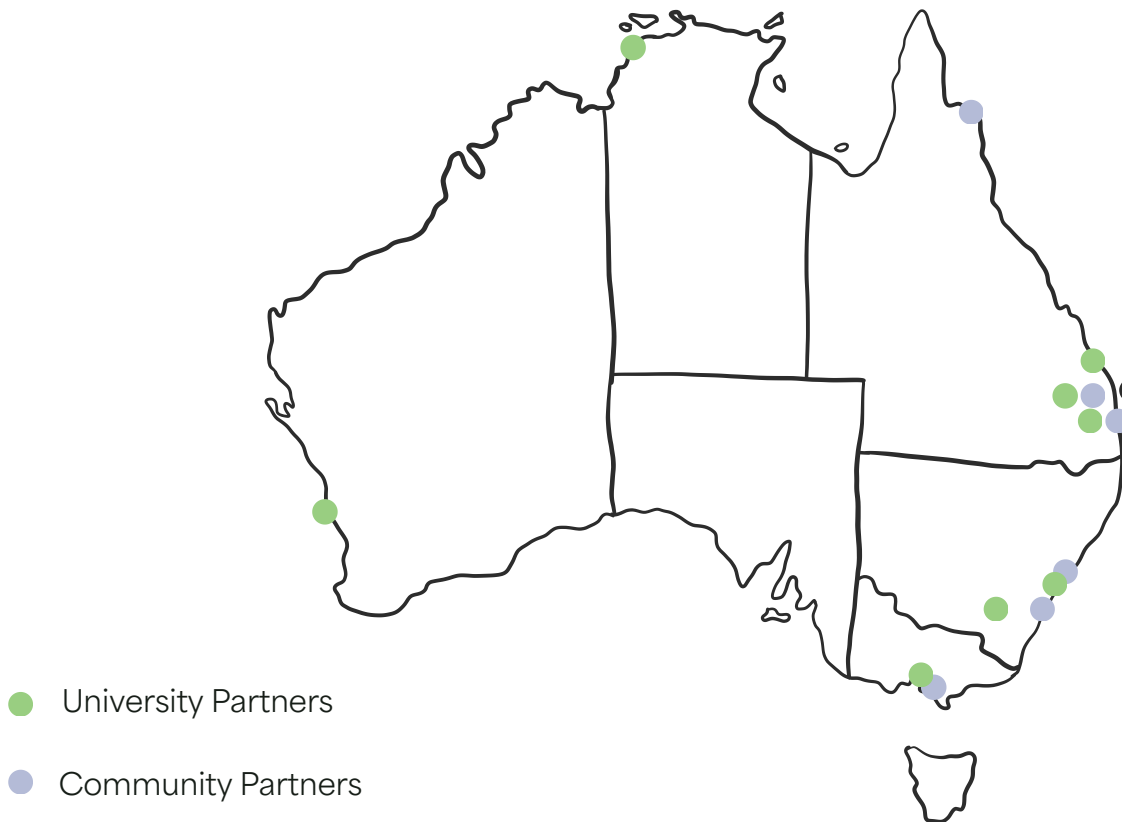
Dr Chontel
Gibson
Research
Fellow IFC



Dr Krystal
Lockwood
Research
Fellow IFC

The IFC Research Committee has oversight of the development and delivery of Centre research projects and related activities. In only its second year of operation, the Committee demonstrates agility, with clear strategies for recruitment and project continuity already in motion.

Nodes & National Reach



The Nodes, located across Australia in NSW/ACT, QLD, WA/NT, and VIC are fundamental to the Centre's success, ensuring a unified yet geographically diverse approach to research.

They enable the Centre to operate as a single, cohesive entity while fostering cross-disciplinary and cross-nodal collaboration. The nodal approach is essential to addressing contextually specific challenges within broader complex social determinants of Indigenous inequity.

Each Node contributes unique expertise and perspectives, enhancing the Centre's ability to deliver impactful, and locally oriented community-engaged research.

While the Lead Node at UQ oversees primary operations, other Nodes share administrative and leadership responsibilities, ensuring contextually specific representation and strengthening the Centre's national reach and effectiveness.

Research

The Indigenous Futures Centre's (IFC) approach to research is grounded in the principle of Indigenous self-determination. We prioritise community-led research, ensuring that Indigenous peoples are not just participants, but leaders in shaping research agendas. The Indigenous Futures Centre fosters transdisciplinary collaborations that address the real-world challenges faced by Indigenous communities, from economic inequalities to health disparities.



Dr Natalie Ironfield opening the Indigenous Futures Research Symposium

By blending Indigenous knowledge systems with contemporary research methodologies, we strive to create innovative, culturally appropriate solutions that are sustainable and transformative for future generations.

Underpinned by a robust strategic master plan, the IFC is actively delivering on its research priorities through nine key nested projects and their sub-projects that address structural inequities across education, health, justice and economic participation.

These initiatives are not abstract. They are developed with impact in mind, grounded in strong policy partnerships and ever-expanding community partnerships. They are designed with and for communities and creating pathways for self-determination, data sovereignty and tangible social outcomes aligned with *Closing the Gap* priorities.

The IFC's research is responsive, proactively setting agendas in national and international conversations on data sovereignty, ethical practice and Indigenous evaluation. Our international conference in November, showcased the IFC's impact to a global audience, further strengthening its growing network of international collaborators. On this platform, the IFC model that combines community leadership, cutting-edge transformational research and inclusive governance underpinned by an ethics of care and responsibility was recognised as best practice.



Figure 2: Research Themes

With a thriving pipeline of projects, HDR students, post-doctoral scholars and researchers, dynamic partnerships and a deep commitment to Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, the IFC is contributing to knowledge and transforming how knowledge is created and applied.

The IFC continues to distinguish itself as a national leader in Indigenous-led, transdisciplinary research with Professors Hokowhitu, Bainbridge and Raciti presenting its novel model underpinned by an ethics of care and responsibility to ARC staff for NAIDOC.

Positioned as a catalyst for structural and social change, the IFC is demonstrating how Indigenous-led research can shape better Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander futures within academia, and across government and communities.

Education & Economies Theme

The Education & Economies theme has progressed transdisciplinary projects that support multiple Closing the Gap priorities.

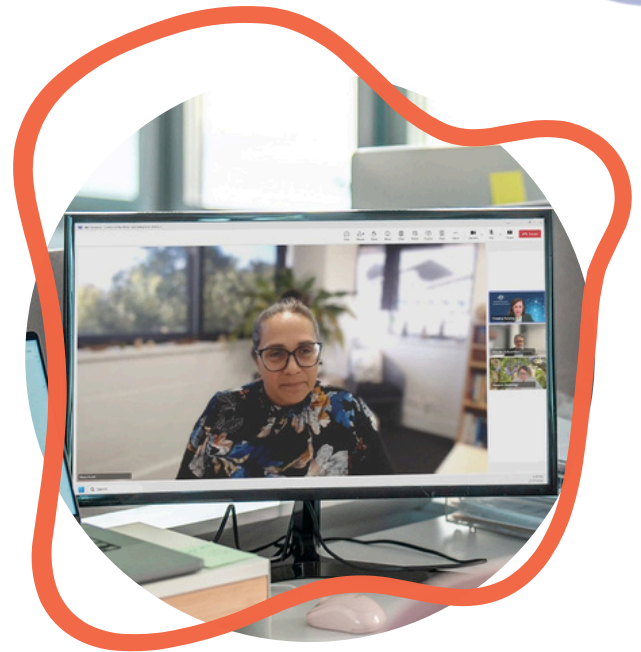
The case studies presented below explore themes of Indigenous Business Legitimacy & Narrative Sovereignty, Indigenising Occupational Wellbeing for Thriving Indigenous Futures, Strengthening Indigenous Business Futures Across Local, National & Global Contexts, and Reforming Research Training Program Funding to Strengthen Indigenous HDR Supervision and Completions.

Through undertaking this work, project outputs support equitable participation in higher education, Indigenous workforce development, growth of Indigenous employment, culturally responsive occupational wellbeing & Indigenous economic participation, supporting Closing the Gap Targets 6,7,8 & 14. The theme has worked with community partners such as AIME to continue to have a community-led approach.

Transdisciplinary research was fostered across the themes, engaging with the Stories of Change project, focusing on the challenges that make reintegration more difficult following contact with the justice system.

Dr Janine Gertz & Dr Krystal Lockwood will continue work with community organisation Elders for Change and On Common Country bring community-led advancement to Closing the Gap target 10; adult overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

This Education & Economies activity report focuses on the research sub-projects under Project 2.3: Transformative Indigenous Economies and Business.



Education & Economies Co-Theme lead Professor Maria Raciti presenting a NAIDOC Panel with ARC members

Indigenous Business Legitimacy and Narrative Sovereignty



Professor
Maria Raciti



Professor
Marnee Shay



Professor
Bronwyn
Fredericks



Dr Daeul
Jeong

This project investigates how Australian grey literature constructs and contests the legitimacy of Indigenous businesses. Although Indigenous trade economies have operated for millennia and contemporary Indigenous enterprise has grown rapidly, public-facing narratives have not kept pace.

Grey literature, such as government reports, industry briefings, policy summaries, and news media, shapes how policymakers, corporations, consumers and the public understand Indigenous economic participation. Yet it remains unexamined. The project addresses this gap by analysing how legitimacy, authenticity, and authority are attributed to Indigenous businesses and how these representations shape opportunity structures.

A systematic grey literature review was conducted using PRISMA procedures, adapted to an Indigenist methodology. Three Indigenous scholars led the design to ensure cultural authority, ethical accountability, and sovereignty over interpretation.

A total of 1256 documents (2006-2024) were identified through structured searches of grey literature databases. Documents were screened, assessed for provenance, and coded using a theoretical frame combining legitimacy theory, moral evaluation, and the emerging construct of blakwashing. This allowed a fine-grained analysis of how Indigenous businesses are positioned within Australian economic discourse.

Findings show that grey literature disproportionately foregrounds community-controlled organisations while sidelining privately owned Indigenous businesses. This emphasis reinforces compliance-centred legitimacy at the expense of innovation, sovereignty, and Indigenous-defined success.

The analysis also identifies recurrent patterns of symbolic inclusion ('blakwashing') where organisations adopt the language of Indigenous empowerment without Indigenous authorship or narrative control. These practices reproduce epistemic injustice and limit the conditions needed for Indigenous businesses to thrive.

The project undertaken by IFC Theme 2: Indigenous Education and Economies supports Closing the Gap priorities, specifically Target 8 (strong economic participation) to strengthen Indigenous business ownership, economic participation, and community-led development.

It demonstrates that representational justice is foundational to economic justice; without accurate, Indigenous-authored narratives, policy settings and market perceptions cannot support thriving Indigenous enterprise ecosystems.

Outcomes include three complete journal article manuscripts, one conference presentation with a policy brief and other translational activities to follow.

Refer to publications list for project outputs.

Indigenising Occupational Wellbeing for Thriving Indigenous Futures



Professor
Maria Raciti



Dr Chontel
Gibson

This project advances a new frontier of Indigenous scholarship by reframing occupational wellbeing through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews. The work responds to a persistent problem: despite the rapid growth of Indigenous businesses (now employing more than 116,000 people and contributing \$16 billion annually), Indigenous entrepreneurs and employees continue to operate in structurally adverse environments marked by racism, deficit framings and the absence of culturally responsive occupational wellbeing support.

Existing workplace wellbeing models privilege Western individualism and productivity, overlooking the relational, collectivist and regenerative dimensions that underpin Indigenous understandings of health, work and purpose.

The study synthesises evidence across Indigenous business, Indigenous workforce experiences, and social and emotional wellbeing frameworks to articulate why culturally responsive occupational wellbeing is necessary for both Indigenous employment and enterprise sustainability. Empirical insights reveal that connection to family, community and culture are central determinants of Indigenous wellbeing and are also emerging as predictors of Indigenous business success, especially in remote contexts where cultural identity, kinship and belonging scaffold resilience and sustainability.

When workplaces fail to recognise these dimensions, Indigenous staff face hostile workplace cultures, uphill career pathways, hyper-surveillance and denial of racism, which collectively erode wellbeing and constrain economic participation.

The project positions survivance (active presence, resistance and cultural continuity) and thrivance (flourishing, regeneration and the normalisation of Indigenous excellence) as the foundational concepts needed to Indigenise occupational wellbeing. These concepts reorient wellbeing away from narrow, market-driven models towards frameworks that affirm Indigenous identity, relationality and self-determination.

The suggested practice guidance outlines culturally informed actions such as recognising cultural load, enabling on-Country work, embedding cultural safety protocols, redesigning career pathways, and developing metrics that reward collective and community benefit rather than individualised productivity.

This project directly advances both IFC Theme 2 and Theme 3 by supporting Closing the Gap priorities focused on Indigenous employment (Targets 7) and social and emotional wellbeing (Target 14), Indigenous business ownership and participation and community-led economic development.

By demonstrating how culturally responsive occupational wellbeing can strengthen Indigenous workforce retention, entrepreneurship and business sustainability, the study provides a blueprint for building thriving. In these culturally nourishing workplaces, Indigenous identities are respected, valued and normalised.

Refer to publications list for project outputs.

Strengthening Indigenous Business Futures Across Local, National and Global Contexts



Professor
Maria Raciti

This suite of interconnected projects maps, analyses and strengthens the rapidly evolving Indigenous business landscape in Australia. It draws on three complementary streams of work: (1) global Indigenous business opportunities, (2) the Australian Indigenous business ecology and (3) the emerging international competitiveness of Indigenous enterprises. Together, these studies create a coherent evidence base for policy, sector development and Closing the Gap priorities relating to Indigenous employment, business growth and economic self-determination.

The first component examines Australia's position within global Indigenous business activity. Indigenous enterprises are flourishing, yet only 1.5 per cent of Supply Nation verified businesses export goods. Preliminary analysis shows strong growth potential, as exporters have distinct brand identities grounded in Indigenous provenance, storytelling, and cultural authenticity. International benchmarking shows that Australia is the third-largest Indigenous exporter globally. This work clarifies how capability building and global partnerships can strengthen Indigenous economic participation.

The second component focuses on the Australian Indigenous business ecology. Desktop research and sector mapping reveal a dynamic network of 21 interconnected actors, including chambers of commerce, certifiers, incubators, grassroots networks and digital marketplaces that collectively support Indigenous enterprise. The ecological model reframes the sector as a relational, interconnected economic organism that aligns with Indigenous worldviews centred on stewardship, collective wellbeing, and intergenerational responsibility.

A key insight is the significance of Indigenist self-determined actors who ground the ecology in sovereignty-led governance, cultural authority and community benefit. Policy settings that strengthen Indigenous-led institutions are more effective than generic ecosystem models that obscure power dynamics.

The third component extends this work by analysing Indigenous business in the international context. It shows how global movements, including United Nations frameworks, Indigenous procurement policies, international forums and cultural diplomacy, have influenced Australian Indigenous business practice.

This component highlights systemic risks such as misrepresentation and 'black cladding', demonstrating why definitional clarity, strong verification processes and Indigenous data sovereignty are essential foundations for legitimacy and global competitiveness.

Together, these projects advance IFC Theme 2 by providing a multi-scalar understanding of Indigenous business from local ecologies to global markets and by identifying opportunities to grow Indigenous employment (Targets 7 and 8), expand business ownership and strengthen community-led economic development. They form the strategic evidence base for building thriving Indigenous futures defined by sovereignty, survivance and economic opportunity.

Refer to publications list for project outputs.

Reforming Research Training Program Funding to Strengthen Indigenous HDR Supervision and Completions



Professor
Maria Raciti



Professor
Bronwyn
Fredericks

This policy-focused project addresses a long-standing structural barrier in Australia's higher education system: the limited availability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR supervisors and the absence of formal mechanisms to support cross-institutional Indigenous HDR supervision.

Drawing on national data, policy analysis, and sector insights, the project demonstrates that Indigenous HDR students remain significantly underrepresented in enrolments and completions, with completion rates between 50 and 60 per cent, compared with 70 to 75 per cent for non-Indigenous students. A central cause is the scarcity of Indigenous academic supervisors, who make up only 1.1 per cent of the academic workforce and are thinly dispersed across institutions.

The analysis reveals that while cross-institutional supervision is technically possible, it typically relies on informal, unpaid and unrecognised labour from Indigenous academics. This invisible cultural load places disproportionate pressure on Indigenous scholars, limits students' access to culturally safe supervision and reinforces systemic inequities within research training environments. Current Research Training Program (RTP) funding structures compound this problem by restricting financial support to the enrolling institution, creating a disincentive for universities to engage in formal shared supervision arrangements.

The project proposes a national RTP portability mechanism that enables funds to be shared across universities when Indigenous HDR students require cultural, disciplinary or methodological supervision not available at their home institution.

Complementary reforms include formal cost-sharing agreements, workload recognition, and a national Indigenous HDR supervisor register to support equitable matching of students with appropriate supervisors. Together, these recommendations create a coordinated, sector-wide model that strengthens Indigenous research capability, increases completions and embeds Indigenous expertise within research training governance.

This work aligns directly with IFC Theme 2 by advancing Closing the Gap priorities relating to equitable participation in higher education (Targets 6 and 7), Indigenous workforce development (Target 8), and community-led knowledge generation. It supports the Universities Accord agenda, the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy and the national infrastructure roadmap by offering a practical, scalable solution that addresses structural inequity in the research workforce.

The resulting model enhances cultural safety, builds Indigenous research capacity and creates a sustainable foundation for future Indigenous academic excellence and leadership.

Refer to publications list for project outputs.

Health & Wellbeing

The Health & Wellbeing theme continues to extend the “Warriorship in the Face of Racism” and “Thriving Beyond Surviving: Upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty to Illuminate Thrivance and Survivance in Urban, Regional, and Remote Australia” projects highlighted below. These community-driven research initiatives centre Indigenous strength, agency and intentionality to enable Indigenous peoples to actively resist and transform colonial oppression and structures.



Health & Wellbeing Co-Theme Lead Professor Pat Dudgeon and team at the Aboriginal Health Conference

The Health & Wellbeing researchers advance a program of research embedded in an ethics of care and responsibility to community. The work is anchored in the Indigenous ethical principles of self-determination, cultural governance, relational accountability, strengths-based framing, trauma-informed safety and Indigenous data sovereignty and governance.

Addressing persistent systemic inequities despite previous efforts in Closing the Gap reforms, we look to reframe deficit narratives and centre Indigenous wellbeing and community-defined indicators of success.

The theme has continued transdisciplinary research bringing justice perspectives to Indigenous data sovereignty, while also engaging IFC community partner Australian Institute for Health & Welfare (AIHW) to partner in the work. The theme has fostered community relationships through yarning meetings amongst researchers and community members, site visits, participation in cultural activities valuing reciprocal engagement. These projects support Closing the Gap target 14, fostering social and emotional wellbeing for Indigenous peoples.

This Health & Wellbeing activity report focuses on the research Project 3.2: Creating Culturally Responsive and Empowering Health Institutions.

Warriorship in the Face of Racism



Prof Pat
Dudgeon



Tegan Scheffe



Dr Abby-Rose
Cox

After the referendum, frontline services noticed a surge in distress among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

- 13YARN recorded a 50% increase in calls, with racism cited in up to 28% of cases.
- The Call It Out project reported that one in five racism complaints referenced the referendum, including verbal abuse, hate speech, threats, and physical violence.

As a result, Professor Pat Dudgeon designed a research project that aimed at empowering our young people to feel strong in their culture and identity through the development of a toolkit ensuring the project was strengths based.

Warriorship in the Face of Racism is a community-driven research initiative conducted across three sites Perth, Darwin, and Broome. The aim is to co-design a culturally grounded Warriorship Toolkit for First Nations people who have experienced racism (with a focus on youth).

Warriorship, as defined by the research team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars and community practitioners, refers to an embodied strength, agency, and intentionality that enables Indigenous peoples to navigate, resist, and transform the impacts of racism and colonial oppression.

The project responds to the increased prevalence of racism in the aftermath of the recent referendum, which saw a nationwide spike in racial hostility toward First Nations communities. Partner organisations, community organisations, and First Nations researchers co-design and guide each step of this project.

The Collaboration

As Professor Dudgeon is the node lead for Northern Territory and Western Australia, it was important to ensure both sites were included in the design and implementation of this project. The research team comprising of Kimberley and Northern Territory researchers resulted in the identification of three sites (Broome, Darwin and Perth).

The co-designing of this toolkit included;

- Cultural governance
- Workshop design
- Ensuring local protocols and community priorities shape the project
- Protecting and upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty
- Supporting young participants' safety and wellbeing
- Embedding insights in the final toolkits

Relationships are built through yarning meetings amongst researchers and community members, site visits, participation in cultural activities, utilisation of Aboriginal Participatory Action Research methodology and most importantly reciprocal engagement.

The Workshops - In 2026, each site will host a half day workshop involving:

- 5-10 First Nations researchers and community members
- Local cultural knowledge holders
- Experienced First Nations workshop facilitator

Workshops use culturally grounded, trauma-informed methods including yarning circles with participants who are invited to become co-researchers if they consent, Story-sharing and collective reflection, Discussions on racism, identity, and resilience, Exploration of warriorship as a cultural practice, Co-design sessions to identify strategies and tools for the Warriorship Toolkit, Participants voluntarily share experiences of racism, focusing on the impacts, community responses, and pathways to strength and healing.

Ethical Considerations - This project follows Indigenous ethics principles including:

- Self-determination - community leadership and decision-making powers
- Cultural governance - Elders and local committees oversee all phases
- Relational accountability - respect, reciprocity, and long-term commitment
- Strengths-based framing - emphasising resilience, not deficit narratives
- Trauma-informed safety - on-site support workers, culturally safe spaces
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty - communities decide how data is stored, used, and shared participation is voluntary, withdrawal is respected, and no identifiable personal stories are released without explicit Indigenous governance approval.



Professor Dudgeon & the Warriorship project team

Emerging Themes (from the case study context)

This year, the research team ran workshops at the Lowitja Conference and the Indigenous Futures Centre Conference to gain insights and feedback on the design and implementation of the research idea.

As a result, some preliminary findings suggest that the research needs to focus on;

- Cultural strength and community support
- Safety skills and de-escalation
- Awareness and recognition of racism
- Witnessing and accountability
- Responding with strength and thoughtfulness and not emotive reaction
- Protecting social and emotional wellbeing
- Guidance and empowerment of youth
- Understanding the bigger picture



IFC UWA Team presenting at the Indigenous Futures International Conference

Outcome 1: The Warriorship Toolkit

At the conclusion of the workshops, insights are synthesised into a practical, culturally grounded toolkit that may include:

- Warriorship principles and teachings
- Strategies to respond to racism safely
- Community approved language for discussing racism and resilience
- Tools for grounding, cultural strengthening, and identity reconnection
- Visual depictions and artwork contributions from youth
- Protocols for healing, restoring balance, and seeking support

Outcome 2: Podcast on Tackling Racism

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates how Warriorship in the Face of Racism fosters youth empowerment, strengthens cultural identity, and addresses the rising harms of racism through Indigenous-led, community-driven methods. By grounding the project in warriorship and cultural knowledge, communities collectively transform experiences of racism into pathways of resilience, agency, and justice.

Upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty to Illuminate Thrivance and Survivance in Urban, Regional, and Remote Australia



Professor
James
Ward



Professor
Roxanne
Bainbridge



Dr Lorelle
Holland



Dr Janine
Gertz



Dr Abby-Rose
Cox



Dr Krystal
Lockwood



Dr Daniel
Kiwa
McKinnon



Australian
Institute for
Health and
Welfare (AIHW)

This project will sit across three thematic domains, aiming to respond to persistent systemic inequities despite decades of Closing the Gap reforms. It will look to reframe deficit narratives by centring Indigenous definitions of wellbeing and elevating community-defined indicators of success, resilience, and cultural strength. As this project is still in its scoping phase, the details highlighted below may evolve following continued community consultation and priority alignment.

Context and Rationale

Despite policy attention since the 2008 National Indigenous Reform Agreement and the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap, entrenched disparities persist in health outcomes, justice involvement, education, and economic participation. These inequities reflect colonial legacies and structural racism. In this context, Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) guides a strengths-based approach to interrogate linked administrative datasets and elevate local, place-based insights that reveal pathways from survivance to thrivance.

Project Focus

The study integrates longitudinal administrative data with co-designed ecological scans across three urban, regional, and remote sites. Final site selection will occur once approvals are established through authentic community engagement and the nurturing of trusting relationships. Community engagement processes will respect local protocols and governance, uphold ethical data practices, and ensure regionally relevant analysis. This approach embeds Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and reflects community priorities and aspirations, enabling self-determined participation throughout the project. Ultimately, the study seeks to illuminate systemic enablers and barriers to thriving.

Research Questions

- What structural and systemic factors enable or constrain thriving across health, education, and justice systems in distinct geographies?
- How do community-defined indicators reshape wellbeing and success refine understandings of thriving and survivance?
- In what ways do Indigenous-led, place-based initiatives foster thriving communities and counteract systemic inequity?
- How can longitudinal, intersectoral analysis inform policy and practice transformation?

Methodological Framework

A multi-site longitudinal and time-series design triangulates linked datasets from AIHW and ABS with community-informed ecological scans. Guided by IDS and the CARE Principles, the project embeds Indigenous governance, relational accountability, and culturally safe engagement. Quantitative analysis (descriptive statistics, trend and pattern recognition, regression) is paired with structured mapping of local services, policies, infrastructure, and opportunities.



Dr Lorelle Holland, Lucabella Rynne and Prof James Ward sharing research at the Lowitja Conference

Ethics, Data Access, and Security

Ethics approval will be sought from UQ HREC and community partners. Data extraction and linkage are coordinated with AIHW and other custodians under the Five Safes Framework. Analyses occur in UQ's Trusted Research Environment (KeyPoint Vault), with project documentation and synthesised outputs managed via UQRDM. IDS principles govern data use, interpretation, and dissemination.

Expected Outcomes

- Evidence-based insights into systemic enablers and barriers shaping quality of life outcomes across regions.
- Culturally grounded models for place-based intervention and policy design.
- Enhanced accountability and transformation through ethical, longitudinal data aligned with Indigenous priorities.
- Visual tools that surface Indigenous-defined success and thriving pathways.

Dissemination and Implementation

- Community feedback sessions and yarning-based validation (on-Country gatherings, workshops).
- Policy briefs and practice guides targeted to health, justice, education, and economic portfolios.
- Workshops and training for data-informed decision-making within Indigenous and mainstream services.
- Scholarly and public-facing outputs (reports, dashboards, high-impact publications).



Connecting with community at the Murri School Health Expo 2025
Pictured is Dr Lorelle Holland and Aunty Cathy and Aunty Dulcie

Law & Justice

In 2025, this Theme had a sustained focus directed toward strengthening existing community partnerships, alongside the development of new collaborations and opportunities to support the ongoing evolution of the Law & Justice Research programs. The theme expanded its community-led justice reinvestment (JR) initiatives driven by community research priorities and interest. In August, the IFC signed a collaborative partnership with Moorgumpin Elders-in-Council Aboriginal Corporation (MMEIC), the first of its kind for the Quandamooka community.



IFC Team & MMEIC Team at partnership signing event

The MMEIC & JR team held workshops to progress conversations on the Quandamooka Justice and Healing Strategy, and community-led measurement and evaluation frameworks. Dr. Krystal Lockwood, in partnership with Justice Reinvestment Network Australia (JRNA) was also successful in securing an ARC Indigenous Discovery Grant to document community success, highlight effective practices and support community in shaping justice on their own terms. The projects will contribute evidence towards achieving Closing the Gap target's 10 and 11, reducing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children in the criminal justice system.

The team based out of the NSW/ACT node at the University of Technology Sydney hosted the inaugural International Self-Determination in Indigenous Child Protection symposium taking place over four days to create a space for scholars and advocates from US, Canada and Australia to come together with community members from Indigenous nations. The symposium welcomed internationally based Indigenous-led organisations, (including community partner SNAICC), supporting efforts to achieve Closing the Gap target 12 to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care.

The Victorian node is currently working to progress two major research projects on prison labour and family storytelling in partnership with the Dhadjowa Foundation and the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. The Node also continues to work closely with the Institute for Postcolonial Studies to examine the role of community oral history archives in building local anticolonial and abolitionist futures.

Strength in Data, Power in Community: National Evaluation of Justice Reinvestment



Dr Krystal
Lockwood



Professor
Brendan
Hokowhitu



Professor
Tom Calma
AO



Justice
Reinvestment
Network Australia
(JRNA)

For nearly a decade, First Nations communities have been using justice reinvestment initiatives to lead innovative approaches to justice, designing models that strengthen connection, wellbeing, and community safety while driving systems' transformation.

IFC is part of a national partnership delivering the first community-driven, First Nations-led evaluation of justice reinvestment, supported through a prestigious Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous grant. This three-year, \$1 million project - one of only sixteen funded nationally - will document community successes, highlight effective practices, and support communities in shaping justice on their own terms. The project is led by IFC Research Fellow Dr. Krystal Lockwood, Associate Professor Fiona Allison (Jumbunna, University of Technology Sydney), Professor Brendan Hokowhitu (Director, IFC), and Professor Tom Calma (Advisory Board Chair, IFC), in partnership with Justice Reinvestment Network Australia (JRNA), the national peak body for justice reinvestment.

Using a praxis-oriented, community-led research design, the project will conceptualise, analyse, and expand First Nations justice models. It will directly inform all four Closing the Gap Priority Reforms - formal partnerships and shared decision making; building the community-controlled sector; transforming government organisations, and; shared access to data and information at a regional level - and contribute evidence toward achieving CtG Target 10 (adults) and Target 11 (young people) not being overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

By generating a First Nations-informed, community-driven evidence base, the project will create pathways for justice reinvestment communities to measure collective success, share learnings, and support long-term systems change that strengthens community-led justice solutions. The findings will also inform national and international understanding of justice including strengthening an Indigenous evidence-base for supporting people and communities impacted by the criminal justice system.

Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders-in-Council Aboriginal Corporation (MMEIC) Project



Dr Krystal
Lockwood



Dr Pakeri
Ruska



Minjerribah
Moorgumpin Elders-
in-Council (MMEIC)

In August, MMEIC hosted a Collaborative Partner panel, and was joined by IFC COO, Shane Boseley who spoke of the IFC's journey to drive the institutional systems change necessary to develop the collaborative partnerships.

As part of the agreement, IFC Research Fellow's, Dr Pakeri Ruska (situated at MMEIC) and Dr Krystal Lockwood work alongside the MMEIC Justice Reinvestment (JR) team to deliver community-led research and justice outcomes as directed by the Elders-in-Council.

In November, Dr Ruska and Dr Lockwood joined the MMEIC JR team workshops to progress conversations on the Quandamooka Justice and Healing Strategy and community-led measurement and evaluation frameworks.

The partnership also supports the MMEIC JR Team participating in IFC Capacity Building workshops relevant to their work, such as the 2025 Lowitja Institute & IFC Indigenous Research Methodologies Workshop delivered by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson.

The MMEIC team, joined by Dr Ruska, co-presented their work at several key conferences in 2025, highlighting the significance of the IFC MMEIC partnership. Aunty Mary Burgess led a JR Team presentation on the importance of the MMEIC-IFC research partnership at the IFC's Inaugural Conference, Indigenous Futures Unbound: Reimagining Indigenous futures through knowledge and praxis, on Kabi Kabi Country in November 2025.

Stories of Change



Dr Janine
Gertz



Dr Krystal
Lockwood



Elders for Change
Townsville



On Common
Country

First Nations peoples experience disproportionately high rates of contact with the criminal justice system in Queensland, reflecting longstanding social and systemic factors. Contact with the justice system can compound existing challenges and make reintegration more difficult.

Understanding what supports healing and long-term wellbeing is essential to breaking this cycle. These issues will be directly addressed through the pilot research project Stories of Change, delivered in Townsville, Queensland, during 2025-2026.

The project centres the voices of First Nations people, highlighting their journeys toward strength, wellbeing, and positive life pathways following contact with the justice system.

Stories of Change is led by IFC Research Fellows Drs. Janine Gertz and Krystal Lockwood, in partnership with community organisations Elders for Change and On Common Country, Dr. Glenn Dawes (James Cook University), the First Nations Justice Office (Department of Justice), and the Queensland Government Statistician's Office (Queensland Treasury).

By centring First Nations voices, the project will identify initiatives, policies, and practices that support positive outcomes after justice system contact. The project's holistic approach will generate practical strategies to advance multiple Closing the Gap targets, with direct relevance to Target 10: Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Ultimately, Stories of Change will build a First Nations-informed evidence base to support lasting positive change, strengthening connection, wellbeing, and pathways away from ongoing justice system involvement.

Stronger Together as Unified Nations for Community-led Health (STAUNCH): Aboriginal Nation Building centred on health and wellbeing solutions



Dr Janine
Gertz

First Nation communities have voiced frustration over Australian Governments slow progress on their commitments to Close the Gap targets and policy reforms. First Nations groups have identified the need to drive the necessary structural reform themselves in order to achieve health equity through First Nations self-governance and re-negotiated relationships with non-Indigenous governments, and centring Nations as the source of policy and program solutions.

STAUNCH will address Close the Gap policy shortcomings by collaboratively generating new evidence on Indigenous Nation Building (INB) processes, empowering Nations to strengthen their capacity for effective self-governance and self-determined health and wellbeing.

STAUNCH aims to equip governments by bringing an Indigenous lens to Health in All Policies (HiAP) being adopted in Australia and internationally. Through a bottom-up approach, STAUNCH will accelerate the current Close the Gap implementation plan which predominantly applies a top-down approach to structural reform.

Foregrounding place-based knowledges, STAUNCH is working alongside Aboriginal Nations: Gugu Badhun, Jirrbal, Warumungu, Bundjalung and Tharawal/Yuin to develop, implement, evaluate and scale the STAUNCH Framework



Artwork by Talah Laurie (Gumbaynggirr) 2025

STAUNCH will:

1. Document processes/evidence for establishing sustainable local self-governance and self-determination to enable healthy futures;
1. Adapt and test HiAP approaches to drive local First Nation-led agendas;
2. Develop new safety and quality care standards and indicators to enhance the evidence base for self-determined holistic healthcare models; and
4. Translate knowledges for structural reform including actionable plans for Close the Gap priority reforms.

Nation Building strategies for self-determined health and wellbeing solutions is a project funded through a National Health and Medical Research Council's Synergy Grant 2025-2029 (Project ID2036067) led by University of Sydney with interdisciplinary researchers from Central Queensland University, University of Technology Sydney and University of Queensland.

Dr Janine Gertz from UQ's IFC is the Chief Investigator leading the Nation-Building Theme. Nine of the ten CIs on this project are Aboriginal leaders with connection to each of the STAUNCH Nations. The project commences in 2025 will be completed in 2029.



Artwork by Talah Laurie (Gumbaynggirr) 2025

Indigenous Futures Centre's Inaugural International Conference

4th - 7th November

Novotel Twin Waters, Kabi Kabi Country

From the 4th to 7th of November, the Indigenous Futures Centre hosted our International Conference on Kabi Kabi Country at the Novotel Sunshine Coast Resort, Twin Waters Queensland.

This biennial event was designed to bring together Indigenous scholars, artists, community leaders, and allies from across Australia and internationally.

Conference Co-chairs, Dr Janine Gertz & A/Professor Hinekura Smith, purposefully curated indigenous-led sessions and themes while fostering appropriate cultural relationships with the Kabi Kabi peoples.

The conference theme, **“Indigenous Futures Unbound: Reimagining Indigenous Futures through Knowledge and Praxis,”** focused on advancing transdisciplinary, community-led Indigenous research.

Over four days, the program featured cultural Welcome to Country, presentations & Farewell from Kabi Kabi peoples.



Kabi Kabi peoples welcoming delegates to Country



Conference Attendees at opening keynote



Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Elder Scholar) presenting keynote

We heard from keynote speakers Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson and Professors Audra Simpson, Rauna Kuokkanen and Brendan Hokowhitu as they shared their visions and reflections on the state of Indigeneity globally.

The thinking provoked in the keynotes was then fostered in concurrent sessions. The 7 concurrent sessions were focused on 13 themes & multiple formats of presentations (workshops, practice-based sessions etc), all sharing research resources, programs and ideas to re-imagine Indigenous futurities.



Professor Audra Simpson presenting keynote to delegates

Concurrent Session Themes:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Indigenous Knowledge & Identity | Indigenous Environmental Futurities |
| Indigenous Language | Indigenous Knowledge |
| Indigenous Self-Determination | Indigenous Higher Education |
| Indigenous Methodologies | Indigenous Sovereignty |
| Indigenous Health & Wellbeing | Indigenous Data Sovereignty |
| Indigenous Creative Practice | Indigenous Economy |
| Indigenous Education | Interactive Workshops |



Professor Rauna Kuokkanen giving keynote



Closing Keynote presented by Professor Brendan Hokowhitu (Centre Director)

We Hosted:

162 Indigenous-led presentations

300 Attendees

4 Keynotes

The conference committee engaged a total of 21 local Indigenous owned businesses through the GATHAA markets collective and direct engagement. This engagement allowed these small business to be showcased, while providing conference delegates with a vibrant Marketplace and Exhibitor Space.

Delegate feedback from the conference has been positive, re-affirming the need for Indigenous-led scholarship, driven by community needs and values. The theme of “Indigenous Futures Unbound: Reimagining Indigenous Futures through Knowledge and Praxis” allowed attendees to reimagine the possibilities of their own and collective futures.

“That we have a Future and, while tricky, is inevitable. I've spent chunks of my life with little to no hope in the face of our collective challenges - things like this help reinforce indigenous love, which is at the core of our hope for our Futures.”

To ensure that my project is not mine but that of the First Peoples it is intended to strengthen through closing the gap in their financial literacy knowledge and skills and professional capabilities.”

“We move together in this work –a broader, global First Nations community holds us, just as we hold our own individual First Nations communities.”

“This conference reaffirms more work is needed for action in the nation-building process of self-determination and sovereignties for Indigenous peoples.”

“The conference confirmed what I already knew: that critical, transdisciplinary Indigenous Studies is at the absolute forefront of most fields of scholarship. It has been a long time since I have been at a conference where papers were consistently exciting, robust, thought-provoking and generative. But even more than learning from formal papers, I gained new relationships. This would not have happened without the incredibly generous environment created by conference organisers - huge thanks to you all!!

“Better understanding of the work of non-academics in this space + opportunity for in-person connections with these practitioners for future partnership work.”

Centre Events & Activities: International Conference



Images captured by Lewis James Photography

UTS Annual Symposium

23rd -24th July

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

In July, our University of Technology Sydney (UTS) node hosted the annual IFC symposium, with support from Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research. The symposium brought together our CI's, PI's, Research Fellows, professional staff and partners to review the Centre's strategic objectives, advance research themes and plan next steps particularly in relation to developing the IFC research program.

Discussions with community partners focussed on applying transdisciplinary approaches and identifying strategies for future projects and partnerships, ensuring that research outcomes remain impactful and responsive to community needs.



IFC Team at Annual Symposium

United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur

18th March

University of Queensland, UQ

IFC and the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), hosted The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Dr. Albert Barume.

The event also saw panel presentations from FAIRA Director, Les Malezer, and the Australian Human Rights Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss, who shared, “This is the standard that Australia has voluntarily accepted and which it should stand by and be held accountable to”.

Dr. Barume presented and led a discussion on international human rights law and its recognition of all people in the lead up to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 2025.

IFC Director, Professor Brendan Hokowhitu said bringing an international focus to racial discrimination in Australia is key to moving forward.

“When we think of the UN and human rights, many might think abroad to Africa, or South America,” he said. “But the same issues they face with discrimination are rife here in Australia and all colonised countries. “Bringing together this level of expertise and knowledge to Australia is a focus of our Centre and today there were so many insightful discussions that we can bring to our work.



Commissioner Katie Kiss, Les Melzer & Dr Albert Barume presenting

Commissioner Katie Kiss
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission

UTS International Self-Determination in Indigenous Child Protection Symposium

30th April - 1st May

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

The Indigenous Futures Centre, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology, Sydney hosted the inaugural International Self-Determination in Indigenous Child Protection symposium taking place on the unceded lands of the Gamayngal people of the Dharawal Nation. The four-day symposium created space for scholars and advocates from the US, Canada and Australia to come together with community members from Indigenous nations within Australia to yarn about self-determination in child and family welfare systems both without the constraints of government (days 1-3) as well as providing the opportunity to talk to governments and their agencies (day 4).

The symposium built on a Special Issue of the journal *Genealogy* and focused on bringing together contributors with a particular focus on Australia, Canada, and the United States of America. In addition to the special edition, which included 13 papers (including CI Gray), this project was also associated with two community reports developed with AbSec, the NSW child and family peak organisation (and member of community partner SNAICC). One was focused on steps to operationalise self-determination in NSW, and the other exploring opportunities to strengthen accountability of the NSW child and family system to Aboriginal children, families and communities.

The Symposium was organised by UTS Jumbunna, UTS Law and the ALIVE National Centre at the University of Melbourne, supported by a leadership group comprised of Catherine Liddle (SNAICC), Professor Cindy Blackstock (First Peoples Caring Society) and Sarah Kastelic (National Indian Child Welfare Association), in partnership with AbSec - NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation, and hosted at the Aboriginal Medical and Health Research Council NSW. The symposium was supported by the Indigenous Futures Centre, as well as AbSec, CAGES Foundation, and government partners.



Prof Paul Gray, Catherine Liddle (SNAICC) & Uncle Cheg at the symposium

Closing the Gap Targets:

The Symposium relates to efforts to achieve Target 12 to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC. Grounded in self-determination, it also reflects the Priority Reforms, and responds to specific issues raised in both the Productivity Commission's Review (2024) and the Independent Indigenous-led report on Closing the Gap (2025), including that "the full expression of self-determination continues to be constrained by colonial systems and ways of working and the inability - or unwillingness - of governments to make space for worldviews that do not mirror their own."¹ Insights from the Symposium were related to each of the Priority Reforms, bringing forward opportunities for systems transformation and practice change informed by evidence.

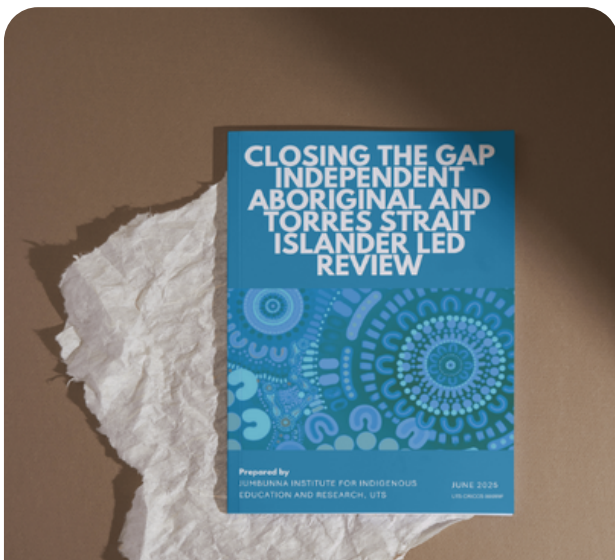
Community partners:

The Symposium included community partner SNAICC in the leadership group and was well attended by SNAICC team members as the primary community partner. The symposium included an opportunity to engage directly with local Aboriginal child and family leaders to identify practical opportunities for implementation and system transformation in Australian jurisdictions through Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031, as well as government partners. Independent statutory officers were also invited to attend relevant sessions, including the Acting National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People; the ACT Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People; and the Commissioner from the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

Indigenous peoples, particularly those colonised by the British, have some similar experiences of colonial intervention in the lives of children and families, as well as shared aspirations for self-determination in child and family welfare systems, also coloured by their specific social, legal, historical and political experiences. Many show collective action within jurisdictions to develop frameworks for systems change, including for example the Touchstones of Hope (Canada) framework, the Indian Child Welfare Act (US), and the Family Matters Building Blocks (Australia) grounded in principles of self-determination, culture and language, holistic child and family supports, structural interventions, and equality.

The symposium marked the beginning of the development of a collaborative, global, Indigenous advocacy network that aspires to serve the following aims sharing global Indigenous experiences about the opportunities and challenges associated with efforts to transform colonial child protection systems and safeguard the rights, interests and futures of Indigenous children, families and communities developing and strengthening accountability mechanisms, that ensure that our relational responsibility to children, as members of families and communities, is at the centre of decision making growing an advocacy network that builds capacity, challenges governments, identifies opportunities, educates community on their rights, undertakes strategic approaches, funnels our resources into supporting community, engages in and supports grassroots advocates and develops a new child protection framework founded in Indigenous laws and practices

With ongoing support from the IFC, this network will work to develop opportunities for international solidarity, research collaboration, academic outputs and collective advocacy through strengthening ties with communities internationally focussing on child and family wellbeing.



1 Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research. (2025). Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: Final report. University of Technology Sydney. <https://www.coalitionofpeaks.org.au/independent-review-of-closing-the-gap>

Building New Worlds: Towards the Creation of Anticolonial and Abolitionist Histories Symposium

14th November

University of Melbourne, Naarm

On 14 November, IFC Postdoctoral Fellows Natalie Ironfield and Holly Charles, with Jordanna Silverstien and Andre Dao hosted a one-day symposium at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies (IPCS), Naarm/Melbourne. Building upon a series of public programs at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies (IPCS) examining anti-capitalist, self-determined and sovereign approaches to archiving, this symposium sought to initiate a conversation about what academic oral history storytelling practices can offer for anticolonial and abolitionist futures, as well as community explorations of the role of oral histories in shaping local anticolonial and abolitionist practices.

This symposium brought together scholars, archivists, storytellers and community organizers to collectively examine the role of community oral history archives in building local anticolonial and abolitionist futures. Speakers included Professor Gary Foley (Gumbaynggirr), Professor Tracey McIntosh (Tūhoe), Professor Daniel Browning (Bundjalung), Associate Professor Crystal McKinnon (Yamatji) and Doctor Wayne Atkinson (Yorta Yorta).

This project is underpinned by recognition that anticolonial and abolitionist futures must centre Indigenous sovereignties and recognises that we are better situated to imagine and build liberatory futures when we bring the perspectives of racialised, colonised and criminalised communities into critical dialogue.

In this regard, this project builds upon scholarship and community organising work that understands carceral systems as central to settler-colonial power, interrogating how racialised, displaced, and criminalised peoples live on Aboriginal land and within settler-colonial systems. The symposium will lead to the publication of a journal special issue.



IPCS Team presenting

In addition to the symposium, on Thursday 11th of December a community workshop was held at IPCS. This one-day workshop offered education and training in academic oral history practices. Information was shared about how to document community stories, develop ethical practices and create oral history archives that support anticolonial and abolitionist futures. This project was supported by \$8,000 seed funding from the Australian Centre with an additional top up of \$2500 from IFC.

This project aligns with the following Closing the Gap targets:

- Justice and Safety (10 and 11): This project contributes to broader conversations about alternatives to carceral systems that disproportionately affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Education and Community Empowerment (6): Through the delivery of community-education based workshops, this project reimagines learning spaces that are relevant, inclusive and empowering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Strengthening Culture (16): The symposium's focus on community oral history archives supports the preservation and reimagining of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's storytelling traditions, which are central to our cultural identities and intergenerational knowledge transfer.
- Social and emotional wellbeing (14): The project's broader aims of community strengthening and safety beyond carceral systems is tied to collective wellbeing and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Feedback from Participants:

Every speaker had a meaningful contribution to the theme based in real life applications of abolitionist oral history practices."

The workshop was a gift, a generative chance to think along with others in really interesting and open ways. It was a stimulating chance to discuss carcerality in broad terms, and to consider relationships between archives, oral histories, and people past, present, and future."

"A highlight was the thoughtfully curated program with terrific, engaged speakers"

"Every speaker had a meaningful contribution to the theme based in real life applications of abolitionist oral history practices."

Breadth of speakers and topics, access to researchers from outside Naarm that we may not otherwise have; generative community and low-key, approachable feel"

thought it was innovative, engaging, and powerful to have a space to discuss work that showed us how intellectual curiosity needs to be driven by community needs."

New External Grant Funding

The IFC's reputation for excellence is reflected in major grant successes, such as the ARC Australian Laureate Fellowship in urban Indigenous health and Discovery Grant for justice reinvestment and NHMRC Investigator grant in valued-based healthcare and in influential outputs like legislated health equity and policy brief on Research Training Program funding and cultural load, now endorsed for public release by IFC.



Rechnitz Fund Grant Recipient

IFC Research Fellow Dr. Pekeri Ruska is one of four recipients of the Rechnitz Fund Grant, which seeks to further First Nations knowledge in the social sciences, and is administered by the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia. The grant will be used to expand upon the case studies formulated in my thesis which identified the ongoing existence of Quandamooka sovereignty.



ARC Discovery Grant

Partnering with Justice Reinvestment Network Australia, this project uses an Indigenist, community-led, and praxis-orientated research design. As First Nations incarceration rates continue to rise, the project provides an innovative and timely evaluation of justice reinvestment (JR) in Australia. A total of \$1,016,373 was awarded.



WUN (World Universities Network) Grant

The project, 'Forming an International Indigenous Doctoral Student and Supervisor Network,' will build a collaborative platform linking Indigenous doctoral students and supervisors across WUN universities. This network will enable Indigenous doctoral students and supervisors to connect, share experiences, and build relationships that honour Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This will help create a community that respects cultural identity, fosters belonging, and ensures Indigenous voices are heard in shaping research agendas worldwide. A total of £10,000 (AUD 21,300) was awarded.

Prizes, Awards & Appointments



ARC College of Experts

Professor Maria Raciti was appointed to the ARC College of Experts to commence in 2026. The ARC College of Experts play a key role in identifying research excellence, with its members consisting of experts from international standing, drawn from the Australian research community which includes higher education, industry and public sector research organisations.



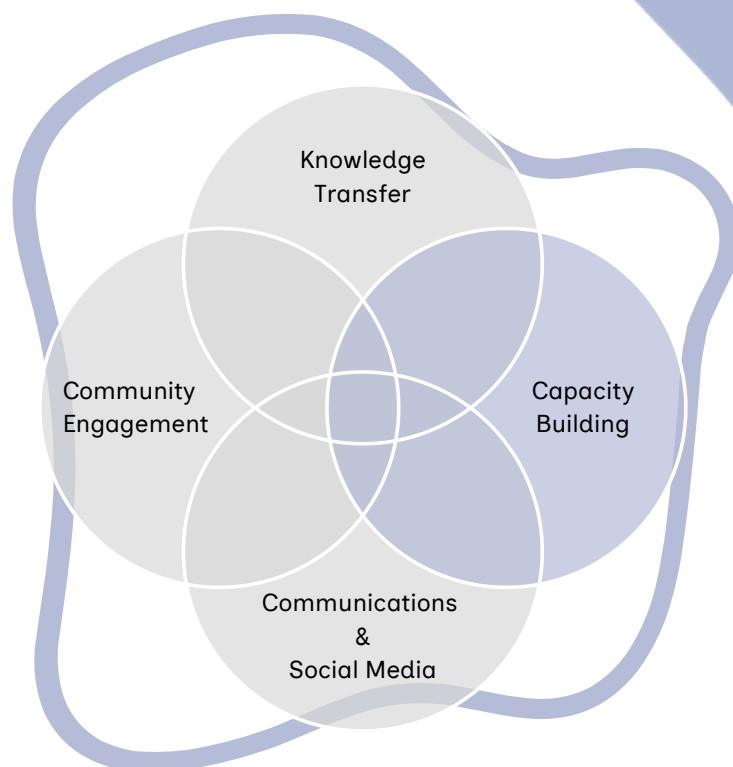
Australian Mental Health Prize

This prize acknowledges Professor Pat Dudgeon's immense work in Indigenous psychology and is awarded to advocates, clinicians, researchers, peer workers and community leaders who have changed lives and shaped national conversation.

- Professor Bronwyn Fredericks - Appointment to the ARC Advisory Committee
- Dr Holly Charles - Deans Excellence Award for Outstanding HDR candidate
- Dr Natalie Ironfield - 2025 Copyright Agency First Nations Fellowship
- Alice Melmeth - Award for Excellence, Early Career Research, The Faculty of Business, Economics & Law (BEL), University of Queensland, 2025
- Alice Melmeth - OCHRe Convocation Attendance Grant
- Lowitja Institute 5th International Health and Wellbeing Conference Attendance Grant
- Dr Pakeri Ruska - Rechnitz Fund Grant
- Dr Pakeri Ruska - 2026 Varuna Residential Fellowship awarded
- Dr Pakeri Ruska - Conferral of PhD: Sovereignty Never Ceded: Quandamooka Embodied Acts of Sovereignty
- Dr Lorelle Holland - Conferral of PhD
- Mr Shane Boseley - UQ Business, Economics & Law (BEL) Faculty Excellence Awards - Citizenship & Service
- Dr Krystal Lockwood - UQ Business, Economics & Law (BEL) Faculty Excellence Awards - Excellence in Research, Early Career Researcher
- Rhiannon Moreton - 3MT Competition, Runner's up award and People's choice award, School of Education, Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Award

Capacity Building Area of Responsibility

The ARC Indigenous Futures Centre (IFC) Capacity Building Programme (IFC-CBP) focuses on training future research leaders (primarily postdoctoral fellows) who think about complex problems in a relational way, are confident in their specialisms, and can facilitate and co-lead research partnerships.



Masterclasses and workshops will primarily teach practical survivance skills and responsibility. The Centre's young Indigenous researchers will learn how to survive in the research environment, be accountable to Indigenous communities and hold responsibility for finding solutions to Indigenous inequity related to Closing the Gap in Australia.

Where possible all masterclasses and workshops will be led by senior CIs and PIs and will be open to Centre ECRs.

Annual writing retreats will give participants the opportunity to attend. Junior Indigenous scholars face numerous challenges that typically their non-Indigenous colleagues do not (Kidman et al. 2015). The IFC-CBP will provide them the annual space, time, and resources to focus simply on writing. Participants will set or be set a writing goal to be achieved by the end of each retreat.

Indigenous Research Methodologies Workshop

25th March

Adelaide, Tartanya

Delivered by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, the Indigenous Research Methodologies Workshop, hosted by Lowitja Institute and the IFC was designed to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECRs with Indigenous research methodologies and their use within Indigenous-related research contexts. Distinguished Professor Moreton-Robinson is renowned for her work in the practice and development of Indigenous research methodologies, as well as operating within and across Western research methodologies and paradigms. The workshop provided a rare opportunity to learn from one of Australia's renowned Indigenous research experts.



The Workshop covered:

- The Origins of Methodologies
- Understanding Paradigms
- Disciplines and Methodologies
- Understanding Methods and Methodologies
- Indigenous Methodologies: an overview
- Indigenous Women's Standpoint
- Hawaiian Heuristic Action Research Methodology
- Nehiyaw Kiskeyihtamowin Methodology (Canada)
- Kaupapa Māori (Aotearoa)
- Indigenist Research Methodology (Australia)
- Developing an Indigenous Methodology



Attendees at the IFC / Lowitja Masterclass held in Tartanya Adelaide



Critical Indigenous Theory Masterclass & Minjerribah Writing Retreat

12th May, University of Queensland & Minjerribah

On May 12th Professor Hokowhitu led a IFC Critical Indigenous Theory (CIT) Masterclass grounded in the emerging discipline of Critical Indigenous Studies. Following the masterclass, ECRs attended the first IFC writing retreat of 2025 led by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson. The retreat provided space for IFC members to write for publishing purposes and where provided with writing skills in relation to PhD or post-PhD scholarship.



Grant Writing Workshop

10th June, University of Queensland

Led by Professors Bainbridge and Hokowhitu, this workshop provided ECRs with a practical introduction to the fundamentals of competitive grant writing. Participants gained insight into the funding landscape, how to strategically align research with funder priorities and how to develop key skills for crafting compelling well-structured proposals. Through interactive exercises and peer feedback, the session aimed to build confidence and capacity to pursue funding opportunities that support research impact and career progression.



Survivance Workshop

14th August, Alexandra Hills Queensland

Led by Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson, this workshop was a call to action in recognition of the underrepresentation of Indigenous scholars within the Western academy. This workshop addressed the persistent burden of historical and ongoing institutional racism experienced by Indigenous students and staff, and the critical need for Indigenous early career researchers to develop survivance skills that enable them to not only persist but thrive within the academy and beyond. The thrivance skills addressed in this workshop include surviving racism in the academy, CV writing, promotion and tenure (research, teaching, service), and applying for academic job



ECR Publishing Workshops

16th September & 15th October, University of Queensland

These workshops led by Professor Bainbridge, Associate Professor Smith & Professor Hokowhitu provided broad and specific experiences in academic publishing including in peer-reviewed journals. ECRs were provided a space to discover and question the nuances of academic publishing. The later workshop also focused concentrating on creating two proposals for two journal special issues featuring articles by IFC ECRs.

HDR: Building Indigenous Scholars of the Future

One of the central objectives of the IFC is to grow the next generation of Indigenous researchers, supported by the Centre's relational approach. The IFC HDR programme is a cohort approach that is Indigenous led, and Center's Indigenous ways of being.

Growing Indigenous scholarship is more than achieving an individual qualification. When Indigenous research capacity is enhanced, community connections and relationally also occurs which in turn supports transformation and change in, with, and for community.

The IFC offers a generous PhD scholarship top-up to attract Indigenous HDR students. A concerted advertising and recruitment effort in 2025 resulted in a total of 8 IFC MPhil & PhD candidates beginning their studies by the end of 2025.

The IFC HDR programme recognises that a successful Indigenous PhD completion brings with it multiple responsibilities including:

CONNECTION

COLLABORATION

CONTRIBUTION

COMMITMENT

An advantage of the relational cohort approach is its transdisciplinary nature. All HDR scholars have an IFC researcher who is their principal advisor, whilst research topics must align with one or more of the three IFC themes offering a unique opportunity for cross-theme ideation.

In 2025 the cohort connected regularly by way of:

- Monthly 1.5-hour cohort connection meetings (online)
- In person writing retreats
- Masterclass attendance
- IFC inaugural conference attendance and participation

In 2026 these opportunities to connect, collaborate and contribute will continue with an additional commitment to:

- Attend the MAI (Māori and Indigenous) Doctoral conference in Wellington in November as a UQ IFC cohort.
- Develop an international Indigenous scholar and supervisors' network through the WUN (World Universities Network) grant awarded in December 2025.

IFC/UQ School of Education Deadly Community Writing Retreat



9th - 11th September, University of Queensland

Co-sponsored by the IFC, this writing retreat hosted 9 exceptional Indigenous Education HDR students that, as a cohort, has the potential to change the field of Indigenous education and have a huge impact on Indigenous communities and education in Australia more broadly.

IFC HDR Snapshots



Alice Melmeth (IFC PhD Candidate)

- Awarded a Lowitja Institute International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference Attendance Grant, including support to attend a pre-conference workshop facilitated by the University of Melbourne Poche Centre.
- Awarded a 2025 OCHRe Network Convocation Attendance Grant.
- Completed a Professional Certificate in Indigenous Research at the University of Melbourne with first class honours.

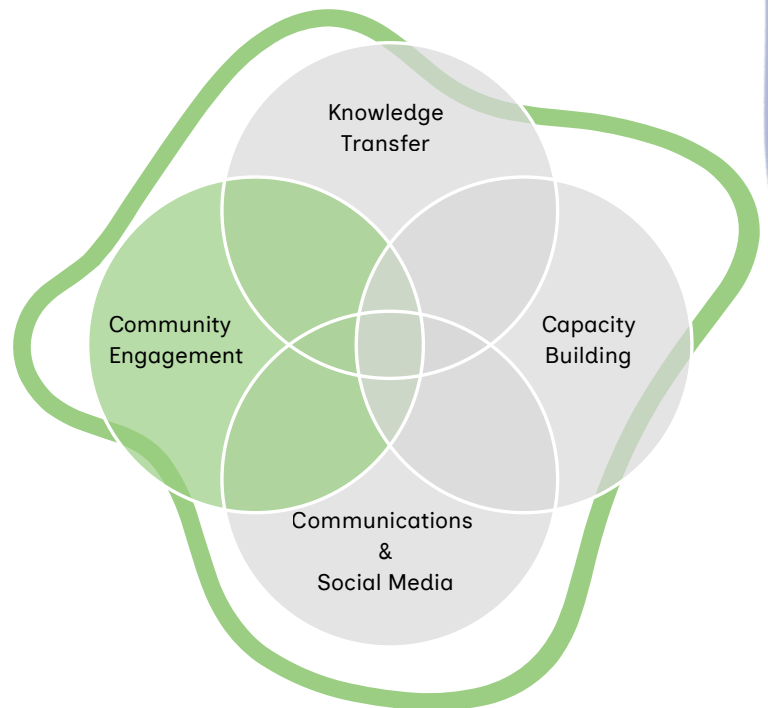


Rhiannon Moreton (IFC PhD Candidate)

- UQ 3MT Competition, Runner's up award and People's choice award
- UQ School of Education, Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Award
- Professional Certificate in Indigenous Research at University of Melbourne Presentation
- UQ Talks Panel Presentation, "Building bright futures through cultural strength"
- NAIDOC Goompi - volunteered on the IFC Stall and designed collateral for the community engagement events
- HDR Progress Review 1 - Confirmation of Candidature - recommended to upgrade from the MPhil program to the PhD program

Community Engagement Area of Responsibility

Community Engagement is a foundational cornerstone of the Centre and drives our research approach. As a Centre that strives to deliver transformational Indigenous and community led research, it is essential that appropriate community engagement be at the core of projects, people and progress.



Our Centre is creating an enduring legacy of Indigenous-led knowledge development and innovation in social research to shape policy, programs, institutions, and our communities, aligned with the intent of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020, which states, “that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.

It recognises that structural change in the way Governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is needed to close the gap”

Practically, community engagement within the Centre is outworked through both formal governance and informal connection avenues.

The Community Engagement Area of Responsibility is underpinned by ‘the three C’s’ including:

- Consultation, which refers to Indigenous community defined and led research where research is conducted that is consequential and important from their perspective;
- Collaboration seeks an on-going engagement so that Indigenous communities remain as decision-makers throughout the entire research process; and;
- Communication relates to transfer of knowledge that is meaningful to Indigenous communities.

MMEIC Partnership Agreement; Elders Council progressing community-led justice and healing

The Australian Government through the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) committed \$69 million over four years in the 2022-23 budget towards community-led justice reinvestment initiatives (Justice Reinvestment, 2025). North Stradbroke Island was one of the 27 communities who successfully obtained funding for their justice reinvestment program led by the Minjerribah Moorgumpin Elders-in-Council Aboriginal Corporation (MMEIC).

In August 2025, the IFC signed a collaborative partnership with MMEIC, the first of its kind for the Quandamooka community. The partnership demonstrates best practice models for institutional and First Nation community agreements, highlighting how these relationships can be reimagined, led by community priorities and responsive to community identified research needs. As part of the collaborative partnership celebration MMEIC hosted a Collaborative Partner panel, and was joined by IFC COO, Shane Boseley who spoke of the IFC's journey to drive the institutional systems change necessary to develop collaborative partnerships.

MMEIC Chairperson, Aunty Mary Burgess outlined the agreement as an, "important partnership that will support community led research, support our research capacity... all of this is about our young people" (Historic Agreement Signed: Indigenous Futures Centre Partner with MMEIC, 2025).

IFC Elder-in-Residence, Uncle Cheg Egert described the agreement as "a unique opportunity to showcase the proper way of engaging with community goals and aspirations" (Historic Agreement Signed: Indigenous Futures Centre Partner with MMEIC, 2025).

Members of the IFC & MMEIC teams at the collaborative agreement signing



NAIDOC IFC UoA Symposium: Indigenous Knowledges: Co-Creating our own futures

4th July

University of Queensland, UQ

This one-day symposium hosted by IFC and co-sponsored by the University of Auckland brought together established and emerging Indigenous scholars and practitioners to explore Indigenous knowledges in relation to creating our futures. The symposium featured five panels (all with Indigenous panellists) speaking to themes of Indigenous knowledges in solidarity & community building, art & activism, first nations justice, science, and futures. Noted speakers included artist Richard Bell and Professor Krushil Watene.



Attendees of the NAIDOC symposium listening to panel presentations

Community NAIDOC Events



Musgrave Park Family Fun Day

11th July, Meanjin

The IFC Team hosted a stall at Meanjin's community NAIDOC celebration events at Musgrave Park. The stall provided an opportunity for staff, researchers & students to engage the South East Queensland community in their research areas. Community members were encouraged to share what Indigenous Futures means to them.



Goompi, Minjerribah

2nd August, Minjerribah

In addition to the Meanjin & other national events, the IFC joined MMECI on Minjerribah for their NAIDOC community day. Hosting stalls allows the Indigenous peoples from the wider community to engage with IFC research and share their visions for Indigenous futures.



Indigenous Art Walking Tour

9th July, University of Queensland

During NAIDOC Week at UQ, the Indigenous Futures Team collaborated on a walking tour which showcased Indigenous art currently being displayed in the Centre & the Faculty of Business, Economics & Law. The tour sparked conversations around art as activism, with several works created by Mr Richard Bell.

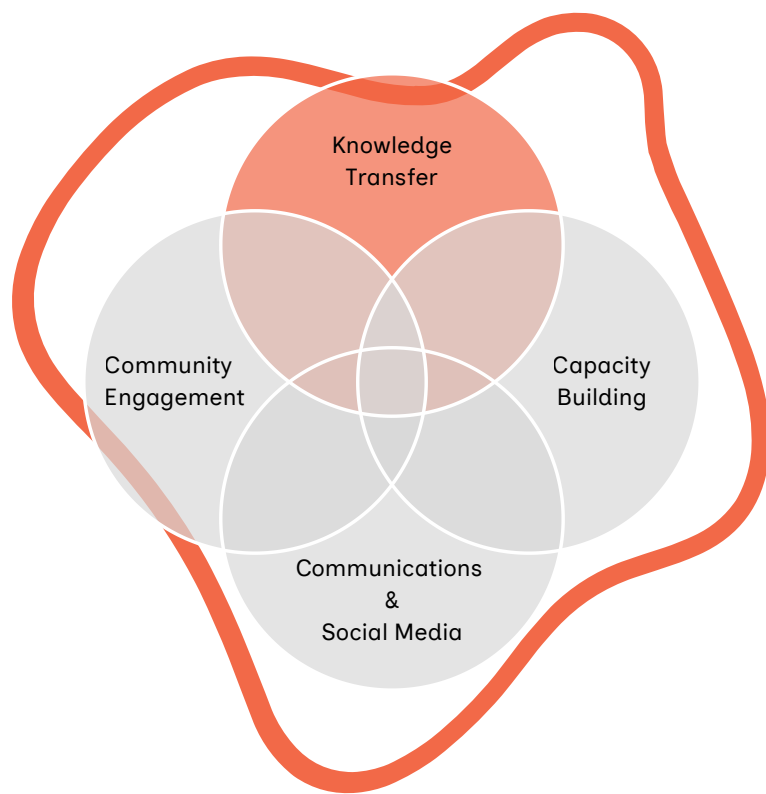


NAIDOC Events hosted by the IFC team

Knowledge Transfer Area of Responsibility

The impact of the Centre and its research must be translatable into policy and practice that leads to positive transformation in the lives of Indigenous Australians.

The Centre’s Knowledge Transfer Area of Responsibility plays a key role in effectively communicating knowledge to communities and influencing key stakeholders through social media, presentations, public speaking engagements and more.



Given that the Centre assembles a unique, critical mass of Indigenous researchers that forms a world-class international community of researchers, a fundamental goal is to simultaneously become Australia’s Indigenous research infrastructural nexus, acting as a creative conduit between national leading Indigenous community researchers, prominent international Indigenous researchers, emerging researchers, Indigenous communities and the multiple sectors that engage with Indigenous communities.

Seminar Series



In 2025, the IFC launched its monthly seminar series, welcoming members of the Indigenous community, Indigenous staff, as well as Indigenous students, and Indigenous visitors. By bringing together Indigenous knowledges and transdisciplinary approaches within and across the diverse spaces into which we work, the IFC Seminar Series provided an excellent opportunity to network and promote an Indigenous research culture premised on community thrivance and transformation.



During 2025, we hosted the following seminars:

- Dr Shea Spierings on Ethics in Indigenous Research
- Dr Irene Semos on Skelim Pason & Stretim Pasin
- Dr Daniel Kiwa McKinnon on Maori Charter Schools, Public Systems & Privatisation
- Dr Luke Williams & Jacob Birch on Indigenous Food Systems as a pillar of Nation Building
- Jocelyn Flynn & Aunty Sana Bala on SUNA Middle Ground
- A/Prof Hinekura Smith on “Our kids don’t read articles” Story and creative practice in research with and for community
- A/Prof Levon Blue & A/Prof Sharlene Leeroy-Dyer on Reimagining Indigenous Employment, Retirement & Super
- Distinguished Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson on A lesser form of Being; Race, Blackness and the “Aborigine” in Australia





UQ Research & Innovation Week

9th September, University of Queensland

The IFC was well represented during UQ's Research and Innovation week participating in the fifth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and Innovation Forum. Professor Brendan Hokowhitu (Centre Director), A/Professor Marnee Shay (CI) and other UQ Indigenous academics spoke to Indigenous students' representation, recognising Indigenous knowledge & addressing contemporary global challenges. The panel was facilitated by Professor Bronwyn Fredericks (CI).



In-Conversation: Place Responsive Pedagogy with Uncle Cheg, Dan & Aunt Mary Graham

24th October, University of Queensland

The University of Queensland Art Museum & the IFC co-hosted a conversation with Adjunct Associate Professor Mary Graham, Dr Daniel McKinnon (RF), and Gregory "Uncle Cheg" Egert (IFC) centred on First Nations modalities of knowledge and learning. The speakers drew on their shared experiences in education systems, discussing an Indigenous pedagogy that holds relationality with place as the foundation for meaningful inquiry. This conversation follows an existing initiative by The Australia Becoming collective.



SUNA TOK TOK Symposium

6th September, University of Queensland

To mark the 50th Anniversary of Papua New Guinean Independence, the UQ Art Museum hosted the SUNA TOK TOK symposium. Dr Irene Semos, a Manus and Bougainville woman & IFC Research Fellow, presented to the topic "PNG Futures and Creative Practices", while other topics included the Politics of Independence". The symposium program was presented in conjunction with the first local presentation of Yuryial Eric Bridgman and Haus Yuriyal's installation SUNA (Middle Ground) 2020.



Lowitja Conference

16th - 19th June, Tartanya Adelaide

The 4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference 2025; **Strong, Fearless, Together** brought together thousands of Indigenous peoples interested in upholding the rights of Indigenous peoples in health. This space provided IFC researchers a space to share their research, including presentations on Community transformation, Living Wisdom of Indigenous Knowledges, Commissioning of Indigenous Health & Wellbeing evaluations, privileging Indigenous ways of knowing & community-led self-determination. The Warriorship & MMEIC Community Justice project teams were able to share their progress.



SNAICC Conference

7th - 9th October, Meanjin Brisbane

This conference showcased excellence in Aboriginal-led practice, shared lived experience & research, and strengthened national efforts to drive reform for better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. The gathering brought together Elders, community leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations, service providers, researchers, educators, frontline workers, students & representatives from government. The IFC Team presented on topics such as centering culture via justice reinvestment & Indigenous Self Governance and the role of research in building and supporting our Nations



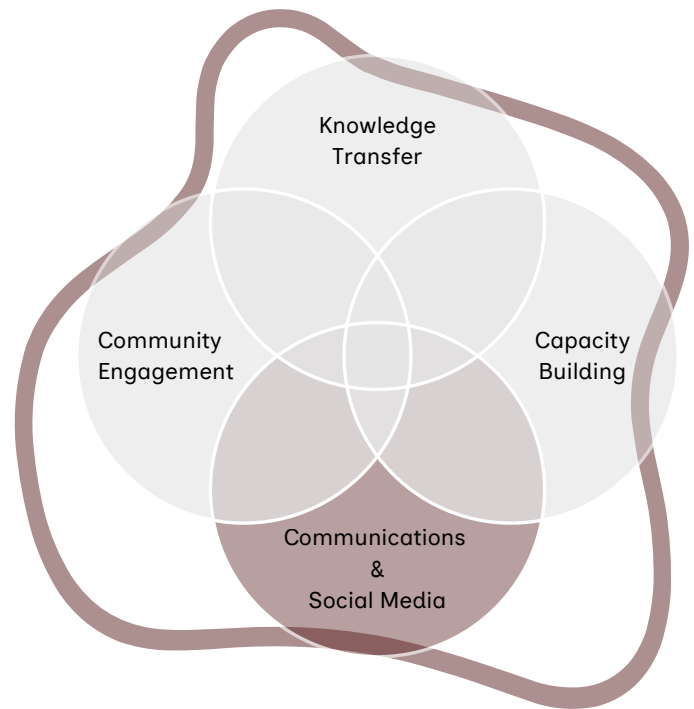
World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education (WIPCE)

16th - 20th November, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

As the largest Indigenous focused conference, WIPCE provided the ideal platform to share research & learnings. The IFC team presented on current Education focused research.

Communications & Social Media Area of Responsibility

Through the IFC Marketing & Communication Strategy, the Communications & Social Media Area of Responsibility (AoR) has refined how the IFC communicates to research and community audiences, putting focus on consistent and relevant content. One of the desired outcomes of the 2020 National Agreement on Closing-the-Gap referred to: “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development” (3-4).



Communicating results, successes, and our work in general is a key focus for the IFC and a responsibility as a publicly funded research Centre. It will be imperative that the IFC maintains a strong social media presence. We will continue to share IFC free to access publications, position papers, policy briefs, community partner content and provide media organisations with advice on areas of expertise.

The Communications & Social Media AoR will continue to meet to discuss how Centre research outputs are disseminated to academic, Indigenous community, industry and other relevant audiences and avenues in 2026.

Website



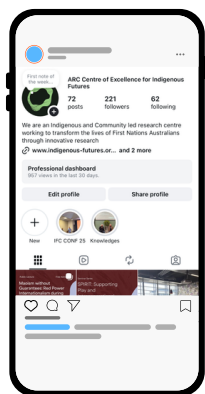
The IFC website continues to provide a launching pad for all News & Events, Opportunities, Resources and engagement. We have introduced new pages to better support the Seminar Series distribution & the Indigenous Futures International Conference. The International conference drove high levels of visits, with 8,000 visits on the conference page alone.

Newsletter



We have continued to update and engage both internal and external members through regularly timed newsletters. Continued growth in engagement, outputs & communications have increased our subscribed users to 927.

Social Media





Through the refinement of our Communications Strategy & the direction of the Social Media & Communications AoR Committee, we have seen increased engagement on social media. We made deliberate efforts to partner with current & new community partners to communicate relevant events and agreements.




The peaks in late September & early November can be contributed to the inaugural conference. Conference delegates shared their feedback on LinkedIn & Instagram, sharing their experience with broader community audiences.

Followers

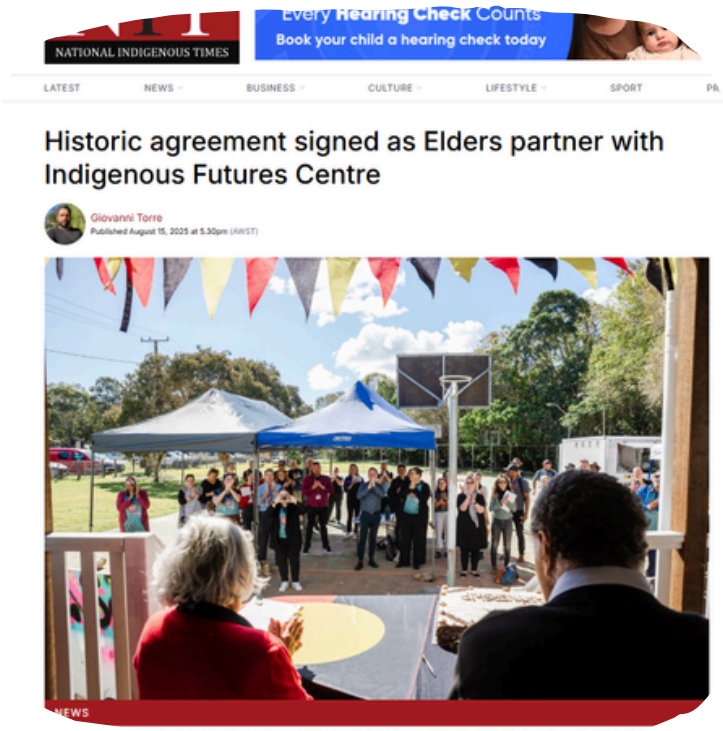
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Media

The IFC have continued to engage with Indigenous & non-Indigenous media outlets to promote key topical articles & historic partnership agreements with incoming community partners. This public engagement allows wider audiences to engage with centre outputs and achievements that are relevant to multiple communities.



Select media engagement covered by National Indigenous Times (NIT)

Audience Engagement

	Impressions/Hits/Visits	Total Interactions (likes, comments, shares etc)
Website	56,328	
Facebook	30,100	1,426
Instagram	14,600	429
LinkedIn	41,673	1497
Totals	142,701	3,352

Public Social Media Engagement from the International Conference

The International Indigenous Futures Unbound Conference was a deadly gathering which brought together knowledge holders, leaders, and communities to reimagine Indigenous futures through knowledge sharing and praxis..

Given **EPIC Pathways'** commitment to further empowering Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth, it was inspiring to have the opportunity to build new and existing connections alongside so many dedicated partners working toward self-determined futures. The event was an inspiring opportunity to celebrate culture, truth telling, and discuss future pathways for the next generation.

We appreciate those came to our session to sit in circle, connect, paint, weave, brainstorm, reflect on our why, and our how.. together 🌈 🌊

Nyin galangur (thank you) to the Kabi Kabi people, and the deadly conference organisers for all you do to care for Country and community voices.

#IndigenousFutures #KabiKabiCountry #EPICPathways #YouthLeadership #Mentoring #Community #FireCarriers



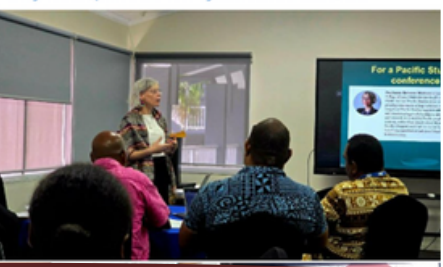
Privileged to attend the Indigenous Futures Conference hosted by **ARC Centre for Excellence for Indigenous Futures** on the Sunshine Coast. It was wonderful to have a space with some amazing Indigenous academics and catch up with friends I had not seen for some time. I presented on the small HRC Activation Grant project focused on Pacific youth wellbeing needs in the Southern parts of NZ, with the aim of creating a youth-initiated Pacific research agenda for the future. It was a highlight to share the session with the amazing scholar **Sandra Yellowhorse, PhD** and hear more about her important work.



ccc You and 58 others 1 comment · 1

Charles Olovikabo and I had the privilege of presenting draft papers on aspects of Solomon Islands legal futures. These papers are the first outcome of a workshop I was invited to facilitate in Honiara earlier this year, on academic writing for lawyers (we covered writing our bios, hence photo 1). Barava tango tumas to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs and the **Australia Solomon Islands Partnership for Justice (ASIPJ)** for initiating and supporting this important work, which is also supported by Australian Research Council Discovery Early Career Researcher Award DE210100486.

George Hoa'au Apolosi R Bose Ethel Sigimanu Joanna Kenilorea-Hanu



It was a real privilege to be invited to the **Indigenous Futures Conference** as a speaker. I had the opportunity to share our research known as **Shifting or Rotational Farming** to guide and shape Marma ways of life for than-human kin.

The conference brought together a wonderful gathering of Indigenous scholars. An important space for dialogue, learning. A particular highlight for me was meeting people from North Queensland — the first Torres Strait peoples in Australia. An extremely helpful experience. It was also great to catch up with my mentor, and lifetime teacher.

While the conference offered many different methods of engagement it employed a variety of participation. An Indigenous dialogic approach have been more culturally grounded and listening. Grateful for the opportunity to contribute Indigenous voices from around the world.



Journal Articles

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Centre Key Performance Indicators

Performance Measure	2025	Actuals
1. Number of research outputs		
Research Books/Monographs/Edited Collections	2	2
Journal articles	45	117
Book Chapters	45	12
Conference publications	10	3
Other (please specify)		
Position papers, project reports and submissions to enquiries	12	20
Participation in national events, workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences	32	221
2. Quality of research outputs		
Citations	100	118
Publications in Q1 Journal Quartile by CiteScore (%)	20	19
Non-academic citations (policy documents, media)	10	0
3. Number of workshops/conferences held/offered by the Centre		
Annual Summit	1	1
Linkage Retreat		0
Bi-annual International Conference	1	1
· Community/Partner Organisation/Researcher Professional Development Workshop	1	6
· Community/Partner Organisation/Researcher 1-day Symposium	1	5
4. Number of training courses held/offered by the Centre		
· Postgraduate Masterclass and Workshop	1	6
· Postgraduate Writing Retreat	1	2

Centre Key Performance Indicators

Performance Measure	2025	Actuals
5. Number of additional researchers working on Centre research		
· Postdoctoral researchers	11	14
· Honours students	2	0
· PhD Students	18	6
· Masters students	3	2
· Associate Investigators	1	10
6. Number of postgraduate completions		
· HDR and honours completions	20	0
7. Number of mentoring programs offered by the Centre		
· Research Assistants (recruited, mentored)		5
· Capability building programs	1	8
8. Number of presentations/briefings		
· Plenary and keynote addresses at major government and academic conferences	12	16
· Policy papers and reports developed for government, partner organisations and the public	15	19
9. Number of new organisations collaborating with, or involved in, the Centre	1	18
10. Number of female research personnel		
Female	48	39

Centre Key Performance Indicators

Centre-specific KPIs		
Community Outreach & Communications - End User links		
· Visits to/with Indigenous communities, schools and sector partners	30	41
· Opinion pieces, stories, media releases, advertorials in Indigenous media, sector bulletins and websites	40	36
· Social Media engagements - Twitter, Instagram, TikTok	1440	3352
· Centre Website hits (increasing 15% per annum)	575	56328
International and national links and networks		
· New international linkages and partners	3	4
· International visitors and visiting research fellows	10	62
· Co-publications with international co-authors and PIs	10	40
· Memberships in international and national professional communities	10	110
· New Research projects co-designed with partner organisations and communities	1	15
Number of Indigenous research personnel	80	49

Income & Expenditure Report

The table below contains financial information for 2025.

Income	ARC Funds	UQ Funds	OEO Funds	OTHER Funds	TOTAL
Australian Research Council Grant	5,807,379	0	0	0	5,807,379
University Cash Contributions					0
<i>University of Queensland (1)</i>		726,356			726,356
<i>Australian National University</i>			33,015		33,015
<i>University of Technology Sydney</i>			184,757		184,757
<i>University of Melbourne</i>			138,773		138,773
<i>University of Western Australia</i>			70,080		70,080
<i>University of Sunshine Coast</i>			34,934		34,934
University Cash Contributions Total		726,356	461,559	0	1,187,915
Other Income					0
<i>Workshop & Conference Income (2)</i>				90,368	90,368
Other Income Total				90,368	90,368
Total	5,807,379	726,356	461,559	90,368	7,085,662

Expenditure	ARC	UQ	OEO	OTHER	TOTAL
Personnel	3,529,398	98,107	42,509	0	3,670,014
Equipment	14,765	0	0	0	14,765
Maintenance	31,943	14,580	201	0	46,724
Travel	175,591	255,270	30,742	0	461,603
Field Research	550	0	-550	0	0
Other	279,687	266,852	16,678	90,368	653,586
Total	4,031,933	634,809	89,581	90,368	4,846,691

1. UQ contribution includes \$3905 is additional income above contractual contributions for 2025

2. UQ generated additional income of \$90,368 in conference registrations and workshop contributions which was expended against the conference and workshop.

3. UTS corrected for \$8513.52 in Non-ARC expenses reported in 2024.

2026 Activity Plan

Research

In 2026 IFC will continue implementing our transformative research program by;

- Holding bimonthly theme meetings to discuss progress, manage risk and communicate outcomes.
- Launching numerous new research projects led by Community & our ECR cohort
- Actively create new Partnership opportunities with Community

Governance

In 2026 IFC will continue to embed our good governance structure across the Centre's operations, gathering for the following board and committee meetings via;

- Quarterly Community & Partner Advisory Board
- Biannual Advisory Board
- Quarterly Executive Committee
- Quarterly Research Committee
- Quarterly Area of Responsibility Working Groups

Community Engagement

In 2026 IFC will continue to lead our community first approach by;

- Meeting with our Community & Partner Advisory Board Quarterly
- Meeting on a regular basis with our Community Partners to listen to Community needs and priorities.
- Implementing the Indigenous Futures Internship program with our Community Partners.
- Actively engaging in Community Events across our Nodes
- Hosting Community Engagement Events across each Node

Linkage Events

In 2026 IFC will hold 1 Centre wide linkage events including our;

- Annual Summit and Linkage Retreat

Capacity Building

In 2026 IFC will deliver our annual Indigenous Futures Capacity Building Program for our ECR/HDR Cohort which will include;

- 3x Writing Retreats
- 6x Masterclass Workshops
- Monthly IFC Seminar Series delivered by our ECR Cohort

Knowledge Transfer

In 2026 IFC will continue communicating knowledge to communities and influencing key stakeholders through;

- National and International Conference Presentations
- Public speaking engagements
- The continued development of the Centre's National Indigenous Knowledge Infrastructure (NIKI) project

Communications & Social Media

In 2026 IFC will continue to drive our communication strategy to deliver useful return of research for Community, Partners and Government across the following channels;

- IFC Website
- IFC Social Media Channels - Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn
- Monthly Internal IFC Newsletter
- Quarterly External IFC Newsletter
- Member Updates & Highlights (Community, Partners & Team)
- Monthly New Publication Announcements
- Quarterly Research Theme Updates
- Ongoing News and Events Updates (linkage events, seminar series, partner events)





3:20pm Stories of civics and citizenship engagement in diverse contexts and places
Panel discussion and Q&A

Associate Professor Peter Galbraith, James Cook University
Dr Kathryn Harbour, James Cook University
Dr Pádraig Jia Ying, University of Sydney
Dr Catherine Ferguson, The Education University of Hong Kong
Dr Janette Gertz, The University of Queensland

Chair Adjunct Associate Professor Libby Tashiro, Monash University

Five women are standing together, smiling for a photo. They are all wearing name tags and professional attire.





**INDIGENOUS
FUTURES CENTRE**

ARC Centre of Excellence for Indigenous Futures

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