

**Working Together**

# First Nations Inclusion at Murdoch University







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At Murdoch University, we are aspiring to be the first choice for First Nations peoples.

As a commitment to this, we are intentional about using language that is inclusive and recognising of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples within Australia.

Therefore, please note that in this strategy, we have used the terms “First Nations”, and “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” and “Indigenous” interchangeably.



## Acknowledgement to Country

We acknowledge that Murdoch University is situated on the lands of the Whadjuk and Binjareb Noongar people. We pay our respects to their enduring and dynamic culture and the leadership of Noongar Elders past and present. The boodjar (country) on which Murdoch University is located has, for thousands of years, been a place of learning. We at Murdoch University are proud to continue this long tradition.



# Message from the PVC

## Professor Chanelle van den Berg

*Pro Vice Chancellor, First Nations*

At the core of our strategy lie four essential commitments: truth telling, self-determination, Indigenous excellence, and Indigenisation. We recognise the imperative to acknowledge and reconcile the historical injustices faced by First Nations peoples. Through truth-telling initiatives, we aim to foster understanding, healing, and dialogue within and beyond our University community.

Empowering First Nations communities to shape their own futures is paramount to our mission. We are dedicated to nurturing Indigenous leadership and increasing the number of First Nations graduates, thereby contributing to the broader Indigenous leadership landscape in Australia to foster self-determination. Our pursuit of Indigenous excellence drives us to cultivate an environment where First Nations students, staff, and faculty can thrive academically, culturally, and socially. We are committed to providing the necessary resources, support, and opportunities for Indigenous success. Moreover, we aim to shift the narrative from deficits-based to strengths-based, highlighting the resilience and contributions of Indigenous peoples.

Recognising the unique contributions and perspectives of First Nations peoples, we are committed to indigenising. We commit to embedding Indigenous knowledges, perspectives, and practices throughout our University. Through research, education, workforce and community engagement, we seek to foster a culture of respect, inclusion, and reciprocity. Additionally, we are dedicated to elevating Indigenous knowledge systems that have sustained and enriched Aboriginal communities for generations.

Murdoch University aims to “become the University of first choice for First Nations peoples, and an exemplar in embracing and promoting and benefiting from Indigenous knowledges and cultural inclusivity” as outlined in Ngala Kwop Biddi, 2023–2030. At the core of the First Nations Sub-Strategy are four foundational values that guide every aspect of our engagement, education, and collaboration. These values not only guide our actions but also shape our institutional ethos, ensuring that our efforts are aligned with our commitments to respect, partnership, empowerment, and innovation.



Our actions and initiatives are firmly anchored in four pivotal commitments. These commitments reflect our dedication to not only acknowledge the past and its impacts but also to pave the way for a future that is inclusive, respectful, and prosperous for First Nations communities. These commitments guide our efforts, ensuring that every step we take is intentional and aligned with our overarching goals.

**Our vision is clear: we aspire to become the preferred choice for First Nations communities, setting the standard for Indigenous engagement and excellence.**

# Meet Murdoch's First Nations Leaders

**Prof. Rhonda Marriott**  
**Pro Vice Chancellor Ngangk Yira Institute for Change**

A trailblazer in nursing, midwifery, and Indigenous leadership, Professor Rhonda Marriott has dedicated five decades to clinical and academic excellence. The first known Aboriginal Head of a University School of Nursing in Australia, she has held various leadership roles at Murdoch University, including Faculty Dean and Director of Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre.

Now, as Centre Director of the Ngangk Yira Research Centre, Rhonda champions equity, reconciliation, and Indigenous inclusion. Passionate about translating research into community impact, she's particularly proud of the Elders Birthing Story Book, a collaborative project preserving cultural birth stories.



**"I'm so proud of the ways in which we  
engage with the community and how  
openly the community supports and  
endorses what we do"**

**Allana Sheppard**  
**Senior Advisor First Nations**



I am a proud Noongar woman born on Whadjuk Boodja with strong connections to Bindjareb country where I have spent most of my life.

I hold the role of Senior Advisor First Nations and have close ties with the People and Culture Office. As part of my role, I collaborate on many initiatives that I'm extremely proud to be part of. Some of these include the First Nations People Strategy Actions, managing our First Nations Talent Register and maintaining our internal Staff Karrak Network.

Since starting in January 2024 there has been an unbelievable sense of belonging and inclusivity within this community and it has fuelled my spirit, reminding me of the importance of collective growth and empowerment. In this space, I have found not just a career, but a calling – a calling to uplift my people, to contribute to something greater than myself and commit to making change. As I embark on this new venture, I carry with me the lessons of the past and the dreams of the future, ready to embrace every challenge and triumph that comes my way.





**Ashah Tanoa**  
**Manager Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre**

I am a Noongar woman, with connections to Whadjuk and Bindjareb country. As Manager of the Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre, where I lead the team in supporting First Nations students at Murdoch University. At Kulbardi, we provide cultural, academic, and wellbeing support to the 250+ First Nations students enrolled at Murdoch University. I am also doing a Master of Education by research, looking at First Nation's first-year experiences at university.

My favourite part about working at Murdoch is that I get to work in a space that is so supportive and uplifting for Indigenous people. I love that I get to be a part of empowering Indigenous communities by providing academic and cultural support and seeing Indigenous leaders rising up. Education is freedom and I get to see this transformational power of education every single day, which is so encouraging.



**Jenna Woods**  
**Dean of Indigenous Knowledges**

I am a Wardandi Noongar with family ties throughout the south-west.

I first came to Murdoch University in 2010 as a bridging course student and came to realise the world was a much bigger place than I had envisioned. I came from poverty, dropped out of school at 15 and became pregnant with my first son at 16. I didn't think people like me came to university.

My teaching and research interests are derived from my lived experience and that of my community. I am passionate about the interests of Aboriginal women and children, and social justice.

My favourite thing about Murdoch is the Kulbardi moort (family). I am who I am because of the people who came before me and those who surround me.



**Elisha Jacobs-Smith**  
**Senior Training Manager, First Nations**

I am a Whadjuk Noongar born on Whadjuk Country and raised on Bindjareb Country. I have strong connections across Noongar in the south-west of Western Australia through family and custodianship links.

I joined Murdoch University as the Senior Training Manager First Nations in 2025 to develop and deliver enriching training experiences to the Murdoch community. It is a blessing to share Noongar cultural knowledge and Truth-Telling of Australian history through my lived experience. I introduce myself as a cultural teacher and a cultural learner, as you cannot have one without the other and this reflects my perspective of aligning practices. Embracing First Nations knowledge systems is a significant process in our journey towards bettering with support for First Nations students, staff and the community surrounding Murdoch. I am passionate about creating spaces with visible identity and supporting positive social impact.

I have found that Murdoch is a place where the vision aligns with my values.

# Our Commitments

## Reconciliation

Murdoch University is committed to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, guided by our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Our RAP will steadfastly align with the principles and objectives of the First Nations Sub strategy, ensuring that we actively contribute to and support the empowerment, recognition, and advancement of Indigenous cultures, knowledges, and communities.

This commitment reflects our dedication to reconciliation as a core value, driving positive change and meaningful outcomes for Indigenous communities and the broader university community alike.

As a university, we recognise that education is a powerful tool for self-determination, societal change and reconciliation and that we have a unique responsibility to participate in the process.







# Our Commitments

## Employment Strategy

Murdoch University is committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive community that values and celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledges, and perspectives. Our First Nations Employment Strategy aims to actively promote and support the employment and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within our institution.

Through this strategy, we endeavour to:

- Increase representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across all levels and areas of the university to achieve parity targets of having Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Staff constitute 3.5% of our Employees,
- Create pathways and opportunities for career advancement and professional development for Indigenous staff members,
- Provide culturally safe and supportive work environments that respect and embrace Indigenous identities and contributions and
- Strengthen partnerships with Indigenous communities to co-develop initiatives that support employment outcomes.

At Murdoch University, we recognise the importance of equitable and inclusive employment practices as integral to our commitment to reconciliation and social justice.

By implementing our First Nations Employment Strategy, we strive to make meaningful contributions towards closing the employment gap and promoting genuine reconciliation within our workforce and beyond.



# Our Strategy

Over the last decade, Murdoch University has successfully built the number of Aboriginal students both studying at the university and successfully completing their studies, and we currently have the highest proportion of Aboriginal students at any Western Australian university, and a completion rate for these students that is similar to our non-Aboriginal student cohort. Building on this strong foundation.

In this Strategy we will:

- Celebrate, respect, engage and learn from the original custodians of this land
- Build the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in our domestic student body to match their representation in the general population
- Develop a Centre of Excellence in First Nation Peoples, Cultures and Knowledges
- Introduce dual signage wherever reasonable, including naming of buildings and significant sites
- Increase our employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples to match the proportion in the general population
- Embrace truth-telling – find ways to tell the stories of the past treatment of Aboriginal people around campus
- Provide all students and staff with cultural awareness training and build within them an understanding of and respect for First Nations peoples



We strive to become the university of first choice for First Nations peoples, and an exemplar in embracing, promoting and benefiting from Indigenous knowledges and cultural inclusivity.







## Kaya Wanju

### Our Community

At Murdoch University, we celebrate our socially rich and culturally diverse community, empowering all students and staff to excel.

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, identities, gender expressions, sexualities, faiths, and abilities, cherishing them as integral pillars of our vibrant and inclusive learning environment.

Through meaningful engagement, collaboration, and continuous learning, Murdoch University pledges to:

- Acknowledge and respect the histories, cultures, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Foster an inclusive and culturally safe environment for all staff, students, and community members.
- Embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledges across our curriculum and research activities.
- Support Indigenous leadership and participation in decision-making processes within the university.
- Uphold our responsibilities as custodians of the land on which we operate.

You can find more information about the support we offer here on our website here.  
[Home](#) | [First Nations](#) | [Murdoch University](#)

We show our support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through the following:

- Pro Vice Chancellor – First Nations
- Pro Vice Chancellor – Ngangk Yira Institution For Change
- Kulbardi Aboriginal Centre
- School of Indigenous Knowledges
- Cultural Awareness Training
- Cultural Load and Language allowance
- Cultural and Ceremonial Leave
- Flexible Working Hours
- Karrak Aboriginal Staff Network
- Monthly Karrak Newsletter
- Indigenous Talent Register
- Aboriginal Advisory Group
- First Nations Committee
- Cultural Events
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy Committee
- Support Services
- Australian Workplace Equity Index

# Guiding Principles & Values

## Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct

The founding principles upon which Murdoch University was established continue unabated today. We continue to be guided by the principles of:

- Authenticity
- Integrity
- Respect
- Inclusivity
- Openness

These Murdoch principles come to life through our culture as evidenced by being an institution where the following are clear:

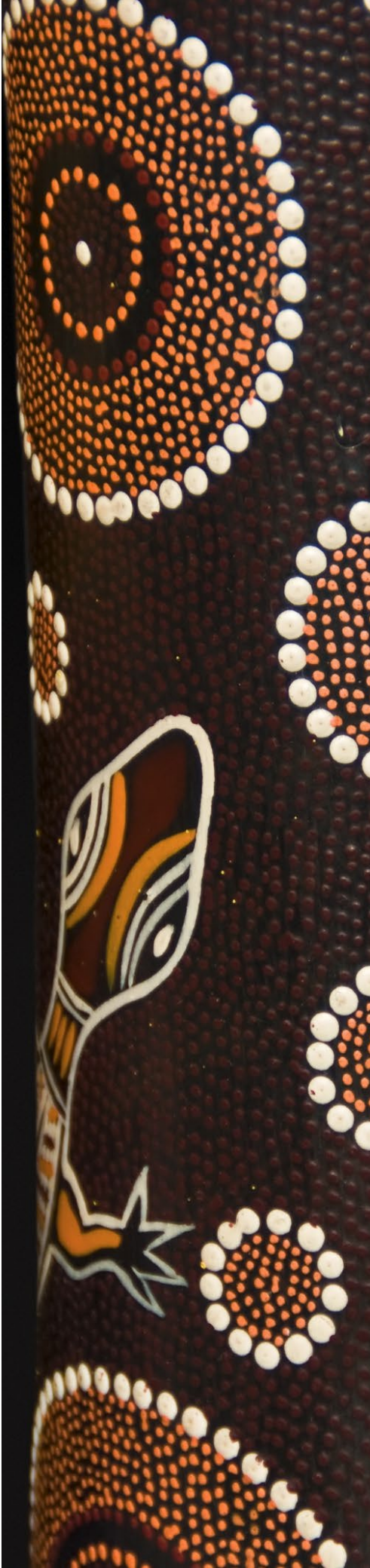
- Act with justice, respect and responsible care
- Be collegiate and respectful of other points of view
- Protect academic freedom
- Be agile, flexible and resilient
- Make decisions at the most appropriate level
- Be transparent in decision-making and with information
- Adopt common approaches to common tasks
- Be careful stewards of our resources

All staff will comply with the University’s Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct and demonstrate a commitment to its Equity, Diversity and Safety principles and the general capabilities of personal effectiveness, working collaboratively and demonstrating a focus on results.

Murdoch University values workplace diversity, promotes inclusion, and strongly encourages applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, and people with disability.

Applicants who have support or access requirements, are encouraged to advise this at the time of their application, to ensure appropriate assistance is provided throughout the recruitment process.

At the core of the First Nations Sub-Strategy are four foundational values that guide every aspect of our engagement, education, and collaboration. These values not only guide our actions but also shape our institutional ethos, ensuring that our efforts are aligned with our commitments to **respect, partnership, empowerment, and innovation.**







# Application Process

At Murdoch University, we review your application alongside a dedicated selection committee. To ensure we're identifying and assessing qualified candidates for the role, we have highlighted the process below.

Your application should consist of:

1. A covering letter addressing the Selection Criteria
2. A comprehensive CV including:
  - Full name, address, mobile and telephone number(s) and email address
  - Names, telephone numbers and email contact of at least three referees including current/most recent supervisor (no contact will be made without your permission)
  - Employment history including present position and notice required, and an indication of the earliest date on which you would be able to commence
  - Details of qualifications and professional memberships
  - Confirmation of your right to work in Australia

Aboriginality is a genuine requirement for this position as defined under Section 50(d) of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

All enquiries should be directed in confidence to:

**Allana Sheppard**

**Senior Advisor First Nations**

Allana.Sheppard@murdoch.edu.au