

2024-26

Flinders University

Indigenous Research Strategy



Flinders
University

Flinders University acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which its campuses are located, these are the Traditional Lands of the Arrernte, Dagoman, First Nations of the Southeast, First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee region, Jawoyn, Kurna, Larrakia, Ngadjuri, Ngarrindjeri, Ramindjeri, Warumungu, Wardaman and Yolngu people. We honour their Elders and Custodians past, present and emerging.

We also acknowledge and pay respect to the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Nations from which our students, staff and community are from.

Flinders University uses the term 'Indigenous' when referring to programs and strategies and 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander' when referring to peoples. This terminology aligns with the Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy (2017-2020) and the call for universities to develop Indigenous Research Strategies.

Artwork credit – Front cover

Elizabeth Yani Close
Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara, 2020

The artwork both explores Connection to Country and speaks to the Landscape around Flinders University, but it also deeply explores and speaks to the concept of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people travelling to undertake their studies bringing with them knowledge, wisdom and understanding of their own Language Groups and standing together as one.

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Introduction

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the descendants of the first peoples of the Lands and Waters of Australia and have occupied, enjoyed, utilised and managed these Lands and Waters and Skies since time immemorial.

We respect and recognise the long-held philosophies, knowledges, research, strengths, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in this country.

We acknowledge the scholarship and ongoing work of international Indigenous scholars and communities in shaping, articulating, and positioning the field of Indigenous research in the international academic community.

This Indigenous Research Strategy (IRS) is grounded in the wisdom and contributions of Elders and senior knowledge holders and acknowledges the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, and stories of place. We recognise this work as located on a collective continuum with ancestors whose research legacies, survival strategies and actions have shaped our world today and into the future. This is an intergenerational whole of life vision that is focussed on communities of scholars. Flinders University is committed to growing the next generation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander scholars, educators, critical thinkers, and researchers. We are also committed to working in partnership with non-Indigenous scholars in Indigenous research.

This strategy is grounded in concepts of relationality, reciprocity, responsibility and truth-telling. We acknowledge the negative legacies of colonialism in Australia as ongoing, and we recognise the role of university institutions as key sites of knowledge production that have maintained, shaped and perpetuated such legacies, acknowledging recent efforts to redress these legacies through initiatives such as Innovate Reconciliation Action Plans. This Indigenous Research Strategy (IRS) offers a further and unique structural commitment toward redress, social transformation and reconciliation through a robust, ethical, and sustainable Indigenous research agenda. It recognises the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as self-determined under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), and provides a foundation to meet the research aspirations, needs and concerns of Indigenous communities through dynamic relationships, Indigenous-led and culturally safe research, scholarship and practice.

With this strategy, Flinders University commits to research reconciliation as part of everyday practice and recognises Indigenous Research Excellence as a whole university responsibility. It acknowledges the vital role research can play in building understanding and acceptance of our shared histories, as we work towards a shared future.



Uncle Mickey Kumatpi Marrutya O'Brien during a smoking ceremony at Yungkurinthe Inparrila

Governance Framework and Strategic Alignment

This IRS aligns with the Flinders University Strategic Plan, Making a Difference: The 2025 Agenda, the Flinders University Indigenous Workforce Strategy 2022-25 and the Flinders University Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025, as a whole-of-University responsibility.

The University's second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025 commits to Indigenous research capacity, ethical engagement, quality, and impactful research that benefits and aligns to the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The *Flinders University Indigenous Workforce Strategy 2022-25* sets a target of 3% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, including supporting an Indigenous research workforce.

This IRS is also underpinned by broader national frameworks and national and international standards, that aim to embed the principles of self-determination into all aspects of university research and education business. The *Innovative Research Universities Strategy 2022-2027* commits to developing the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers and leaders. The *Universities Australia Indigenous Strategy 2022-2025* commits to 'Accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for the use of Indigenous knowledge and cultures in higher education and research.' In its first strategy, UA set strategic direction to:

- increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participating in higher education as students, as graduates and as academic and research staff;
- increase the engagement of non-Indigenous people with Indigenous knowledge, culture and educational approaches; and
- improve the university environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These local and national strategies continue to shape the Indigenous higher education sector and inform best sector practice.

The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), endorsed by the Australian Government in 2009, asserts the right to self-determination and control over cultural heritage, Indigenous Knowledges and cultural expression, specifically through Articles 15, 23 and 31. These Articles emphasise the self-determination rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia which align with national standards to support human rights within educational institutions.

Article 15

Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

Article 23

Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous [sic] peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 31

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, including human and genetic resources, seeds, medicines, knowledge of the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions, literatures, designs, sports and traditional games and visual and performing arts. They also have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions.
2. In conjunction with indigenous [sic] peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

Nationally, the University is guided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (2020) *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research*, the National Health and Medical Research Council's (2018) *Ethical conduct in research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities: Guidelines for researchers and stakeholders* and the National Health and Medical Research Council's (2018) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007* (updated in 2018).

The University also aligns with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics) principles regarding data and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Vision

Flinders University is committed to becoming an institution of Indigenous research excellence and leadership that aligns with local, national, and global movements in self-determination, decolonial research and anti-racist methodologies to achieve socially transformed and just futures.

Values

The Indigenous Research Strategy is underpinned by social justice and rights-based values that are: centred in Indigenous knowledges, systems, protocols and practices; informed by Indigenous-led methodologies, ethics and aspirations; and grounded in relational accountability and integrity to promote respectful representation, reciprocity and the rights of the researched.

These values guide, inform and frame the four Priority Areas identified for action in this, our first Indigenous Research Strategy:

1. Indigenous Research Excellence, Capacity and Leadership
2. Research Respect, Reciprocity and Impact
3. Research Governance and Responsibility
4. Celebrating Indigenous Research Excellence.



Priority 1: Indigenous Research Excellence, Capacity and Leadership

Flinders University commits to a culture of Indigenous research excellence that is fundamentally Indigenous-led and in partnership or co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; enacts Indigenous codes of ethics; recognises and respects Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights; and benefits the priorities and aspirations of community.

Flinders University commits to increasing Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander research leadership capacity and capability through a visionary pipeline of targeted support, action and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students. These commitments will be evidenced through the following specific actions.

1.1 Develop innovative approaches to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research students and staff at Flinders University who align, build on and are responsive to national priorities in Indigenous Research

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.1.1 Develop College-based strategies and localised targets to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Honours and Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students and report progress annually.	September 2024	PVC (Indigenous), DVC (Students) & Deans (Education)
1.1.2 Develop an Indigenous Research Higher Degree Advancement case for competitive Honours and HDR scholarships.	April 2024	Director, Alumni and Advancement, PVC (Research Training and Capabilities) and DGR, & PVC (Indigenous)
1.1.3 Explore the co-creation, with Colleges, of pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that includes both HDR scholarship support and experience in an academic staff position.	December 2024	DVC (R) & PVC (Indigenous)
1.1.4 Raise the stipend for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students.	February 2024	PVC (Research Training and Capabilities) and DGR and DVC (R)
1.1.5 Introduce a two-year Indigenous postdoctoral Fellowship and explore co-funding with Colleges to increase the number available at Flinders to a minimum of two per annum.	December 2024	DVC (R) & VP&EDs

1.2 Provide ongoing mentoring and support to build workforce capacity and leadership for emerging and established Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.2.1 Provide ongoing funding and operational support to progress the work of the First Nations Researchers Collective.	Ongoing	DVC (R) & Research Development and Support
1.2.2 Support professional development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HDR students and research staff and to establish and maintain local, national, and international networks vital to fields of research, including attendance at key events, conferences, and meetings.	Ongoing	VP&EDs & DVC (R)

1.3 Scope and benchmark Indigenous research activities at Flinders and other universities

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.3.1 Work with Colleges to identify existing and emerging hubs/areas of Indigenous research excellence and impact to provide a basis for building on and promoting to potential partners and collaborators.	July 2025	PVC (Indigenous) & Deans (Research)
1.3.2 Scope and benchmark best practice Indigenous research institutes and centres to inform Flinders University's Indigenous research agenda.	March 2025	PVC (Indigenous) & Deans (Research)
1.3.1 Inform scoping and benchmarking exercises by providing an annual report on Indigenous research, covering Indigenous research funding, research outputs, impact stories, and Indigenous research ethics as a standing item of the Research Quality Committee.	October 2024	PVC (Indigenous)

Priority 2: Research Respect, Reciprocity, and Impact

The University commits to an Indigenous research culture of respect, reciprocity, and care that is grounded in Indigenous codes of ethics and best-practice community engagement, and that values, impacts, and benefits Indigenous-led and self-determined research aspirations and priorities.

2.1 Support and enact best-practice research development and ethical conduct in all research activities that engage with, impact upon, or are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
2.1.1 Review and report on current research ethics processes and the application of key Indigenous codes of conduct and ethical frameworks.	December 2024	DVC (R) & PVC (Indigenous)
2.1.2 Assess and improve internal research governance, Indigenous data management, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on relevant research committees.	December 2024	DVC (R) & PVC (Indigenous)
2.1.1 Develop strategies to improve ethics training for research staff, supervisors, and students who engage in research involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.	December 2024	PVC (Research Training and Capabilities) and DGR, PVC (Indigenous), & Research Development and Support

2.2 Identify and promote Indigenous research methods, best-practice models of community engagement, and research outcomes that demonstrate real world impact

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
2.2.1 Promote the INDG9000 Indigenous Research Methodologies topic to all Honours and HDR students at Flinders, and to those with cross-institutional enrolment.	Ongoing	VP&EDs, PVC (Research Training and Capabilities) and DGR, & Indigenous Australian Studies Convener
2.2.2 Scope the potential to offer an Indigenous Research Methodologies micro-credential based on INDG9000 that is accessible to external partners, researchers, and communities.	December 2024	CHASS Dean (Research) & Indigenous Australian Studies Convener
2.2.3 Provide training through the First Nations Researchers Collective on documenting impact.	December 2024	Chief Research Development Officer

Priority 3: Research Governance and Responsibility

Flinders University acknowledges its unique relationship with Indigenous communities, staff, students, and to Country, as an inherent responsibility embedded in concepts of relationality, justice, and collective rights.

The University commits to best practice Indigenous governance frameworks to honour these critical research relationships underpinned by Indigenous ethics, research transparency, accountability to communities and partners, and movements in Indigenous data sovereignty.

3.1 Design and embed Indigenous governance structures that support the implementation of the University's Indigenous excellence in research agenda

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1.1 Appoint an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Academic Research Lead to progress key Indigenous strategic initiatives; engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers through the First Nations Researchers Collective; and provide local and national expert advice and engagement where required to support Indigenous research excellence.	June 2024	DVC (R)
3.1.2 Promulgate the Indigenous research priorities and vision to College and Portfolio leaders to align with internal strategic plans, programs and reviews relating to Indigenous research initiatives.	December 2026	DVC (R) & PVC (Indigenous)

Priority 4: Celebrating Indigenous Research Excellence

Flinders University celebrates research excellence conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

Flinders also has a responsibility to ensure that the research is presented to staff and to the public to build their understanding of the achievements and impact of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. As a first step in recognising the quality of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, Flinders University commits to three deliverables.

4.1 Design and deliver a program to highlight and celebrate Indigenous Research Excellence

Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
4.1.1 Introduce Vice-Chancellor's awards that recognise research excellence, engagement and impact by Indigenous researchers and research students.	December 2024	PVC (Indigenous) & DVC (R)
4.1.2 Identify, leverage and promote key areas of Indigenous Studies research excellence based on tangible community benefit and positive impact.	Ongoing	DVC (R), Marketing Team, VP&EDs, Deans (Research) & HDR Coordinators.
4.1.3 Establish an annual public symposium showcasing Indigenous research innovation, impact, and community engagement.	May 2025	PVC (Indigenous), Indigenous Research Lead, DVC (R) & Chief Research Development Officer



Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

CHASS College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

DVC(R) Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)

IRS Indigenous Research Strategy

Indigenous Data Governance

CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance include:

- **Collective benefit:** Data ecosystems shall be designed and function in ways that enable Indigenous Peoples to derive benefit from data.
- **Authority to control:** Indigenous Peoples' rights and interests in Indigenous data must be recognised and their authority to control such data be empowered.
- **Responsibility:** Those working with Indigenous data have a responsibility to share how those data are used to support Indigenous Peoples' self-determination and collective benefit. Accountability requires meaningful and openly available evidence of these efforts and the benefits accruing to Indigenous Peoples.
- **Ethics:** Indigenous Peoples' rights and wellbeing should be the primary concern at all stages of the data life cycle and across the data ecosystem (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2020).

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the 'inherent and inalienable rights and interests of indigenous [sic] peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data and information about their people, life ways and territories' (Kukutai & Taylor 2016, p. 2)

Its enactment mechanism, Indigenous Data Governance, is built around two central premises: the rights of Indigenous nations over data about them, regardless of where it is held and by whom; and the right to the data Indigenous peoples require to support nation rebuilding (Bodkin-Andrews, Walter, Lee, et al., 2019).

PVC & DGR Pro Vice Chancellor (Research Training and Capabilities and DGR: Pro Vice-Chancellor (research Training and Capabilities) and Dean of Graduate Research

VP&ED Vice President and Executive Dean

Appendix B: Relevant Existing Flinders University Governance Instruments

Athena SWAN Charter: To advance gender equality across academia with a focus on STEM.

flinders.edu.au/about/athenaswan

Diversity and Inclusion Committee: An internal committee to advance diversity and inclusion for staff and students.

staff.flinders.edu.au/colleges-and-services/people-and-culture/organisational-development-diversity

Flinders University Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025:

flinders.edu.au/reconciliation-action-plan

Flinders University Enterprise Agreement:

staff.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/staff/pc/enterprise-agreement/enterprise-agreement-2023-2026/enterprise_agreement_2023-2026.pdf

staff.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/staff/research/secure/research-support-plan.pdf

Indigenous Workforce Strategy Committee: An internal committee comprising of stakeholders that oversee the implementation of the Indigenous Workforce Strategy.

RAP Oversight Committee: An internal committee comprising of stakeholders that oversee the implementation of the University's RAP:

flinders.edu.au/reconciliation-action-plan

Tarrkarri-ana Committee: An internal committee comprising of priority areas stakeholders to oversee the implementation of ISSP funds.

University Research Committee: Developed the Flinders University Research Support Plan 2021-23 and 2023-25:

staff.flinders.edu.au/content/dam/staff/research/secure/research-support-plan.pdf

Appendix C: References and Supporting Documents

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