

Sydney Environment Institute



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

Sydney  
Environment  
Institute



Professor David Solomon  
Chair of the Environmental  
and Planning Institute

Professor  
David Solomon  
Chair of the Environmental  
and Planning Institute

2025 Annual Report



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We recognise and pay respect to the Elders and communities – past, present, and emerging – of the lands that the University of Sydney's campuses stand on. For thousands of years they have shared and exchanged knowledges across innumerable generations for the benefit of all.

## Foreword

Our Sydney in 2032 Strategy encapsulates the University's commitment to empowering research that "is excellent, addresses the greatest challenges and contributes to the common good". The Sydney Environment Institute (SEI) champions this aspiration in its mission and work. Through its globally recognised research, SEI tackles the pressing environmental challenges of our time and leads impact for the common good through its partnerships with communities, governments, and industry.

As one of the University's multidisciplinary initiatives, which have been key to the delivery of our strategic objectives for over a decade, SEI fosters meaningful and enduring connections within and beyond the University. In 2025, SEI drove transformative change through projects that deliver real world outcomes. SEI continues to shape policy and practice across NSW through its work with communities to prepare for and respond to climate disasters. Similarly, its [work on critical minerals](#) leads the way in unpacking challenges in the impacts, governance, and the intricate global political economy of their supply chains.

Effective action against environmental crises requires a transformation of our ways of thinking, and SEI's established expertise continues to lead the way in this area. As the leading voice on multispecies

justice (MSJ), a framework that reimagines justice by recognising human life is entangled with animals, ecosystems, and more-than-human communities, SEI is leading a powerful shift in how we understand and respond to environmental crises. In June, SEI hosted its second [Multispecies Justice Symposium](#), an exploration of more-than-human governance as crucial in addressing the biodiversity and climate crises. We are delighted to have the support of a major philanthropic foundation to conduct further governance experiments over the next two years.

Centred in this commitment to multispecies justice, and co-hosted with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, SEI's [Climate justice and loss and damage in the Pacific conference](#) explored pathways for advancing equity, justice, and sustainability for the most vulnerable. This formal recognition of the MSJ framework further cements the impact of SEI's research on climate justice in the region and beyond.

SEI has been an integral part of the University's environmental research ecosystem for over a decade, catalysing meaningful transformations through multidisciplinary research and key partnerships. As the impact of this work expands in the years to come, we will advance the University's values and aspirations in delivering excellent research, for good, even further.



**Professor Julie Cairney**  
Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), The University of Sydney

Through its globally recognised research, SEI addresses the pressing environmental challenges of our time and leads impact for the common good through its partnerships with communities, governments, and industry.

## Director's note

2025 was another busy and incredibly productive year for SEI and our members. In March, Dr Mitch Gibbs delivered the annual [Iain McCalman Lecture](#), a reflection on his journey as an Indigenous researcher and exploration of how collaboration with First Nations communities and ways of knowing can transform society's relationship with the natural world. We plan to continue a focus on the value of local knowledges from a different perspective with the announcement that Dr Rebecca McNaught will deliver 2026's McCalman lecture, [Communities in an era of compounding disasters: stories of hope from the Northern Rivers](#).

Our work on climate disasters and adaptation continued to grow and have impact this year. In April, SEI co-hosted the [Climate justice and loss and damage in the Pacific conference](#) with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development. Multidisciplinary researchers, practitioners, and government officials from Australia and the Pacific came together to discuss urgent challenges in climate-induced disasters and their disproportionate impact on small island nations, in a clear recognition of SEI's expertise and reputation on climate resilience and adaptation research.

This regional work on climate impacts and adaptation continued throughout the year. In October, we connected with practitioners and researchers driving adaptation in the Pacific and worldwide. More than a dozen SEI researchers were in New Zealand to present a broad range of ongoing work at [Adaptation Futures 2025](#), the flagship event of the UN World Adaptation Science Programme (WASP) and leading conference on the topic. Locally, SEI researchers presented at multiple sessions at the annual AdaptNSW conference. And in November, in collaboration with our colleagues in the Net Zero Institute, we hosted a visit of Dr Sandro Demaio, Director of the WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health, to discuss WHO priorities in the region, in particular as they related to the impacts of climate change.

In the political realm, four SEI members contributed to two case studies in Australia's first-ever National

Climate Risk Assessment, a recognition of our rigorous, impactful multidisciplinary research. SEI also contributed commentary and testimony to the Senate's proposed development of a 'Climate Army' – a proposed coordinated program of assistance to building resilience nationwide. When the International Court of Justice (ICJ) released its advisory opinion on the Obligation of States in respect of Climate Change, [SEI reflected](#) on the implications for Australia.

SEI further cemented its standing as the leading voice in multispecies justice with the [Multispecies Justice Symposium 2025](#), explored new pathways for sustainability research at the [Sustainability Research Forum](#) – in partnership with the University of Sydney Business School, and continued to lead in critical minerals research with the [launch of the Critical Minerals Network](#) alongside the Net Zero Institute and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. We commenced work on an ARC Discovery Project on just transmission, advancing energy justice principles to inform the construction of new renewable energy transmission lines in Australia, established a multidisciplinary project on de-extinction which explores the ethical, legal, ecological, and cultural dimensions of de-extinction projects, and published numerous outputs of our just-completed ARC DP on Environmental Justice. We also saw fantastic work emerge from our [2025 collaborative grant projects](#), and look forward to seeing the impact the [projects announced for 2026](#) will achieve.

Additionally, the excellent research of our members have received international recognition: [Prof Thom Dooren received the prestigious Biophilia award](#) for his work in the environmental humanities; [A/Prof Arunima Malik was awarded \\$1.5m in the Frontiers Planet Prize](#), the largest monetary prize for research in the University's history; five of our members were recognised on [Clarivate's 2025 Highly Cited Researchers list](#); and [A/Prof Michele Barnes was the only Australian author in the landmark Resilience Science Must-Knows](#) report, released at COP30. Our members have also been quite successful in ARC funding applications, with twelve members

securing [Discovery Project funding](#), and [Prof Jun Huang securing a Linkage grant](#), though to be frank we also saw a lot of incredibly deserving research go unfunded as ARC success rates continue to decline and governmental investment in disaster, resilience, and adaptation continued to lag need.

As we look to next year, SEI will be leading a global coalition of universities, the [U21 Nature Positive Coalition](#), in investigating and providing scientifically robust research to inform Nature Positive Initiative's 'State of Nature' metrics. SEI is also part of the University COP Alliance, an alliance of climate researchers across the Australian university sector informing the federal government ahead of their role leading the COP31 negotiations in 2026. It is a crucial time for evidence-based environmental action, and SEI's role at the forefront of these conversations is a testament to the importance and impact of our research.

As I reflect on SEI's work in 2025, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved. The University of Sydney's current strategic plan lays out aspirations for what the University wants to be known for. This includes being "renowned for addressing the biggest challenges facing the planet, including how we draw on our traditional strengths in the humanities and social sciences to explore and explain the profound social, economic and cultural implications of these challenges." The work of the SEI is key to realising that crucial aspiration, and to demonstrating the role excellent research can have in improving the public good.



**Professor David Schlosberg**  
Director,  
Sydney Environment Institute

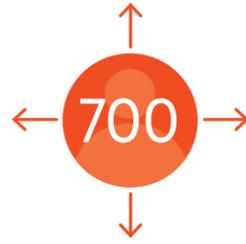


Image by Jon Tyson via Unsplash

# 2025 in review

## Membership

SEI's membership grew to more than 700 members in 2025.



## Events & communications

46  
events hosted  
by SEI

13  
were partnered  
events



2,100  
people attended  
SEI's events



5,000+  
downloads of the  
SEI Podcast Series

121,546  
post  
impressions

82,589  
website views

10,757  
fans and followers

↑ 61% growth  
on LinkedIn

Subscribe to The SEI Podcast Series on your favourite podcast streaming app

## Research supported



28  
research projects

including nine active projects directly supported by the SEI's Collaborative Grant scheme

20  
HDRs supported

4  
Honours fellows supported

\$16m+  
in funding support

## Engagement across sectors



71  
community,  
government,  
academic and  
industry partners

6  
national and  
international expert  
submissions

Including to the National Climate Army Senate Inquiry, the Net Zero Commission, and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act Reform

## Highlight achievements



Prof Thom van Dooren awarded BBVA Foundation's 7th Biophilia Award, with prize money totalling €100,000



Prof Arunima Malik awarded The Frontiers Planet Prize with US\$1 million in funding.



Clarivate Highly Cited List - Prof Alex McBratney, Prof Manfred Lenzen, Prof Thomas Astell-Burt, Prof Ian Hickie, and Prof Arunima Malik



Prof Michelle Dickson named Aboriginal Health Researcher of the Year



Dr Bec McNaught awarded over \$1.5m from the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF) for the Northern Rivers Community Resilience Alliance (NRCRA)



Deep Water by Dr James Bradley shortlisted for a 2025 Prime Minister's Literary Award

# About the Sydney Environment Institute

The Sydney Environment Institute is a globally recognised multidisciplinary environmental research institute tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. In partnership with communities, governments, and industries, we work together to address critical environmental challenges for a sustainable future.

With a diverse membership of more than 700 spanning every faculty and school at the University of Sydney, as well as external university, industry, government, and community partners, SEI brings experts from the social sciences and the arts into conversation with science, engineering and business to tackle environmental challenges.

SEI's approach emphasises collaboration and innovation. We facilitate impactful projects designed to address urgent environmental issues through creative, community-focused, and actionable research. Our work centres environmental justice and inclusive processes, policies, and outcomes.

## Our vision

SEI's vision is for a just environmental transformation in which all life can flourish.

## How we work

SEI addresses pressing environmental challenges through innovative and collaborative projects designed to create tangible impact, by:

- Connecting researchers across disciplines to drive meaningful impact.
- Working in partnership with communities, industry, and government to foster change.
- Developing practical and innovative solutions to today's environmental challenges.
- Changing thought and action within academia and beyond.

## SEI's research is organised across four research themes:

### Biodiversity, conservation, and culture

Understanding ecosystems, interconnections and finding inclusive solutions to loss.

### Environmental justices

Understanding and addressing environmental, multispecies and climate injustices.

### Climate disaster and adaptation

Examining disaster response and designing climate adaptations.

### Transformative governance

Transforming the governance of biodiversity, climate and society, and their interactions.

## Four strategic goals

### Academic reputation

Significant contributions to the academy, significant partnerships, a global reputation for academic excellence.

### Research impact

The translation of multidisciplinary research for impact, grounded in community engagement.

### Researcher support

An intellectual home for researchers working on environmental research that effectively supports ECRs.

### Internal ecosystem

A leader in the USYD climate and biodiversity research ecosystem, facilitating collaboration and coordination.

## Guiding principles and approaches

- First Nations knowledges and engagement
- Environmental imaginaries and storytelling
- Building community and supporting ECRs
- Community engagement, collaboration and partnerships

# Our community & collaborators

The SEI team blends academic and professional expertise, in order to amplify impactful and advance multidisciplinary research.

## SEI Directors and Deputies

SEI is led by researchers committed to addressing the grand challenges around climate and biodiversity, by using multidisciplinary research to advance knowledge and understanding within academic, the community, and for industry and governments.



**Professor David Schlosberg**  
Director  
Professor of Environmental Politics



**Professor Thom van Dooren**  
Deputy Director – Member Engagement  
Discipline of Gender and Cultural  
Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



**Professor Danielle Celermajer**  
Deputy Director – Academic  
Discipline of Sociology and Social Policy



**Professor Carolyn Hogg**  
Deputy Director – External Engagement  
School of Life and Environmental Sciences

## SEI Research Theme Leads

SEI research communities are collaborative and dynamic networks of multidisciplinary research, led by outstanding scholars.



**Professor Danielle Celermajer**  
SEI Deputy Director  
Department of Sociology and Social Policy  
Research lead: Environmental Justices



**Dr Catherine Price**  
ARC Discovery Early Career Fellow Lecture  
School of Life and Environmental Sciences  
Research lead: Biodiversity, Conservation, and Culture



**Professor David Schlosberg**  
SEI Director  
Professor of Environmental Politics  
Research lead: Environmental Justices, Climate  
Disaster and Adaptation



**Professor Thom van Dooren**  
SEI Deputy Director  
Department of Gender and Cultural Studies  
Research lead: Biodiversity, Conservation, and Culture



**Dr Blanche Verlie**  
Sydney Horizon Fellow  
Department of Gender and Cultural Studies  
Research lead: Environmental Justices



**Associate Professor Kate Owens**  
Director  
Australian Centre for Climate and Environmental Law  
Research lead: Transformative Governance



**Professor Rosemary Lyster**  
Professor of Climate and Environmental Law  
University of Sydney Law School  
Research lead: Climate Disaster and Adaptation



**Professor Susan Park**  
Department of International Relations  
Research lead: Transformative Governance.



**Dr Federico Tartarini**  
Sydney Horizon Fellow  
Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning  
Research lead: Climate Disaster and Adaptation



**Dr Lee White**  
Sydney Horizon Fellow  
School of Social and Political Sciences  
Research lead: Transformative Governance



**Dr Sophie Chao**  
DECRA Fellow and Lecturer in Anthropology  
Research lead: Biodiversity, Conservation, and Culture

## SEI Advisory Committee

The SEI Advisory Committee has contributed to the strategy and impact of the Institute, contributing perspectives from research, community, government, policy and industry. This group of thought leaders provide insight and advice on SEI's research, translation and engagement activities in the first half of 2025. A new advisory committee will be formed for 2026.

### Ali Abbas

Director of the Laboratory for Multiscale Systems,  
University of Sydney

### Melissa Haswell

Professor of Practice (Environmental Wellbeing),  
University of Sydney

### Peter Lipman

Founder, Anthropocene Actions

### Iain McCalman

Emeritus Professor of History, Australian Catholic University

### Joel Negin

Professor and Acting Deputy Executive Dean - Academic,  
University of Sydney

### Jenny Newell

Curator, Climate Change Projects, The Australian Museum

### Dagmar Reinhardt

Associate Professor, School of Architecture Design and Planning,  
University of Sydney

### Tim Stephens

Professor of International Law, University of Sydney

### Glenda Wardle

Professor of Ecology and Evolution, University of Sydney

### Zoe Whitton

Managing Director, Head of Strategy & Impact, Pollination

### Bhiamie Williamson

Research Scholar, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research,  
Australian National University

### Christine Winter

Senior Lecturer, Politics, The University of Otago

### Georgina Woods

Head of Research and Investigations, Lock the Gate

## Professional staff team

SEI's team of professional staff provide members and the University with a wealth of expertise and professional knowledge, to support multidisciplinary environmental research.

### Catarina Agostino

Communication and Engagement Officer

### Emma Bones

General Manager

### Suhasini Gunatillaka

Events and Administration Officer

### Kirsten Jackson

Program Manager

### Nancy Lee

Program Manager

### Hannah Regan

Project Officer

### Eugenia Tanaka

Senior Project Officer

### Thanh Whittam

Finance Officer

### Genevieve Wright

Senior Project Officer



The work at SEI demonstrates the role excellent multidisciplinary research can have in improving public good.

## Membership

In 2025 SEI's membership consisted of

700

researchers, policymakers and practitioners

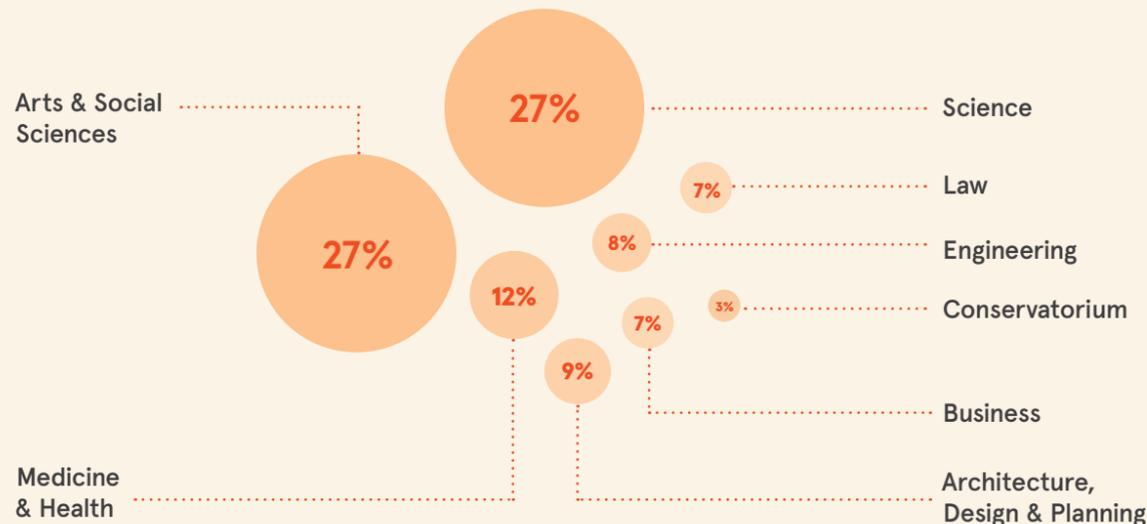
64%

are internal University members



### Internal members by faculty

SEI's internal University members are spread across eight faculties, with a mix of career stages.



### Internal members career stages

19%

Higher degree researchers

28%

Early-career researchers

29%

Mid-career researchers

24%

Senior academics

## 2025 Member achievements

The exceptional research, collaborations, and dedication to environmental issues of SEI members have been recognised and celebrated through prestigious awards, promotions, and funding successes in 2025. Congratulations to all our members, here is just a small excerpt of the achievements from this year.

### Highlight achievements

**Professor Thomas Astell-Burt, Professor Ian Hickie, Professor Manfred Lenzen, Professor Arunima Malik and Professor Alex McBratney:** Recognised in Clarivate's 2025 Highly Cited Researchers list.

**Professor Arunima Malik:** Winner of the Frontiers Research Foundation.

**Professor Thom van Dooren:** Winner of the BBVA Foundation's 7th Biophilia Award.

**Dr James Bradley:** Winner of the Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction at the Premier's Literary Awards; and received a Gold Medal in the Animals and Nature section of the Nautilus Awards for book *Deep Water*.

**Dr Alexander Yuen, Dr Alison Peel, Associate Professor Arianna Brambilla, Dr Catherine Gilbert, Professor David Raubenheimer, Dr Haihui Joy Jiang, Dr Kate Lynch, Associate Professor Michele Barnes, Associate Professor Nader Naderpajouh, Dr Rosalyn Gloag, Dr Shamila Haddad, Dr Thomas Parkinson:** Awarded 2026 ARC Discovery Project funding.

**Dr Thomas Parkinson, Professor Arunima Malik, Associate Professor Sandra Alday, Associate Professor Menguy Li, Associate Professor Fady Aoun, Professor Ying Zhang, Associate Professor Sophie Webber, Associate Professor Sophia Maalsen, Associate Professor Yorgi Mavros, Associate Professor Robert Cowan, Dr Rebecca Hamilton, Dr Penny Farrell, Dr Mitch Gibbs, Professor Michelle Villeneuve, Dr Maren Koehler, Professor Lexine Stapinski, Associate Professor Jennifer Kent, Associate Professor Jennifer Ferng, Professor Jeanne Huang, Dr Jasmine Jiang, Dr Jarryd Daymond, Professor Jaime Gongora, Associate Professor Isabelle Hesse, Professor Dallas Rogers, Professor Dalia Nassar, Dr Claire Parfitt, Dr Claire Golledge, Dr Billy Haworth, Dr Aysu Kuru, Professor Andrew Merchant, Dr Ali Khoddami, Associate Professor Ainsley Elbra:** Received academic promotions in 2025.

**Dr Jo Longman and Dr Rebecca McNaught:** Received a Rural Mental Health Research Partnership Grant from the Peregrine Centre.

**Professor Michelle Dickson:** Named 2025 Aboriginal Researcher of the Year at the Western NSW Health Research Network Symposium.

**Professor Abbas El-Zein, Associate Professor Ainsley Elbra, Dr Ali Khoddami, Professor Alison Betts, Associate Professor Amanda Tattersall, Professor Andrew Merchant, Dr Catherine Ingram, Dr Catherine Price, Dr Claire Parfitt, Professor Clare McArthur, Professor David Schlosberg, Professor Deanna D'Alessandro, Associate Professor Dinesh Wadiwel, Professor Federico Maggi, Associate Professor Floris van Ogtrop, Associate Professor Gareth Bryant, Dr Haihui Joy Jiang, Professor Julia Kindt, Professor Jun Huang, Professor Kurt Iveson, Dr Madeline Taylor, Dr Malcolm Possell, Professor Manfred Lenzen, Associate Professor Petr Matous, Dr Rebecca Cross, Dr Rebecca Hamilton, Associate Professor Sophia Maalsen, Associate Professor Sophie Webber, Associate Professor Tina Bell, Dr Vanessa Bowden, Professor Yuan Chen:** Received funding for 2025 ARC Discovery Projects.

**Dr Kenya Fernandes:** 2025-2026 Superstar of STEM by Science & Technology Australia; and awarded 2025 ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Awards (DECRA).

**Professor David Schlosberg and Jamie Loveday:** recognised for the founding of FoodLab Sydney in the Australian Financial Review Higher Education Awards.

**Dr Mitch Gibbs:** 2025 Australian Academy of Science Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scientist Award.

**Professor Carolyn Hogg and the Threatened Species Initiative team:** Named as finalist for the 2025 Eureka Prize for Environmental Research.

**Professor Jun Huang:** Awarded a 2025 ARC Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities grant.

**Professor Joshua Cinner:** Awarded a National Geographic Society (USA) grant.

**Professor Alex McBratney and team:** finalist for the 2025 Eureka Prize for Sustainability Research.

**Dr Rebecca McNaught:** Awarded a HEAL Innovation Fund grant.

**Dr Sujuan Zhang:** Received the Young Research Award 2025 from the Project Management Institute.

**Professor Liza Lim:** Winner of the 2026 Grawemeyer Award for 'A Sutured World'.

# Research theme & program highlights

In 2025, the Sydney Environment Institute advanced critical climate and environmental issues through innovative, cross-disciplinary research designed to deliver tangible change. The four research focus areas in 2025 were:

- Biodiversity, Conservation and Culture: finding creative and inclusive solutions to biodiversity loss.
- Climate Disaster and Adaptation: using multidisciplinary research to build community resilience to disasters and climate change
- Environmental Justices: examining responsibility toward each other, the environment and the planet
- Transformative Governance: understanding the transitions needed while navigating to a more sustainable future.

With collaboration and community engagement at the core of our work, SEI delivered projects that had real-world impacts from local communities through to a global scale.

This year's highlights demonstrate the Institute's breadth and depth of expertise, and ongoing dedication to transformative environmental and social change.



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

## Universities Responsibilities in Disasters

The Universities' Responsibilities in Disasters project is a collaboration with the Sydney Policy Lab. It is a multidisciplinary, community-first initiative exploring how universities can be effective partners in local climate resilience and adaptation. Through collaborative engagement with on-campus and surrounding communities, this project has developed a better model for how the University of Sydney can mobilise its people, networks, expertise, resources, and infrastructures to support efforts in future disaster scenarios.

Between July and October 2025, the project team held 11 stakeholder engagement workshops in which they explored and scenario planned for future climate impacts in areas surrounding the University's sites at Camperdown, Westmead, Camden, Nepean and Lismore. The process allowed the researchers, policy makers and community members to reflect on the importance of amplifying local knowledges, building long-term partnerships, and engaging in genuinely collaborative planning processes to prepare for the challenges of a climate-changed future.

In total, 91 individuals participated in the workshops, across 57 unique stakeholder groups spanning local and state government, not-for-profit and community organisations, University staff, academia, students, and local residents. For many, this was their first time being welcomed onto the University campus. The project has resulted in policy recommendations and guiding principles for effective climate resilience and adaptation policy at the University. It has also produced two localised versions of The Adaptation Game (TAG), an award-winning collaborative climate scenario planning tool, for use by community, local government and staff to support ongoing climate resilience and adaptation planning at the University and its surrounding areas.





Image by Genevieve Wright

## Iain McCalman Lecture

The 2025 Iain McCalman Lecture, held on 3 June 2025, was delivered by Sydney Environment Institute Member Dr Mitchell (Mitch) Gibbs, a proud Dunghutti man, Lecturer, Postdoctoral and Fulbright Fellow in the University of Sydney's School of Geosciences. The annual series honours SEI co-founder Iain McCalman's legacy by showcasing early to mid-career, multidisciplinary environmental researchers shaping both scholarship and public debate.

In "Co-creating futures: embedding Indigenous knowledges in environmental research", Gibbs reflected on his journey as an Indigenous academic navigating the Western academy. He emphasised the importance of authentic partnerships with First Nations communities—rooted in trust, mutual respect, and co-designed methods—to shift decision-making in land and sea country toward genuine Caring for Country.

Gibbs shared examples from his research on shellfish and oyster reef restoration, demonstrating how Traditional Ecological Knowledge can both revitalise Indigenous cultural practices and support effective environmental stewardship. His Fulbright work with the Swinomish and Samish nations in North America further illustrates the global relevance of Indigenous epistemologies.

The lecture showcased a powerful shift toward inclusive, culturally grounded, and transformative environmental research, underscoring how respectful, co-designed partnerships with First Nations communities are essential for building just and sustainable futures.

[Listen to the lecture](#) or [read the longform article](#).

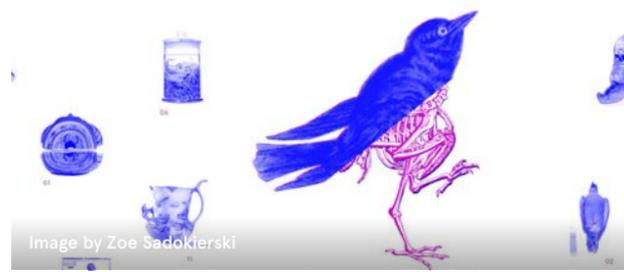


Image by Zoe Sadokierski

## Exploring biodiversity through cultural institutions

The Sydney Environment Institute continues its partnerships with cultural institutions such as the National Museum of Australia and the Chau Chak Wing Museum, leveraging their collections and cultural expertise to explore biodiversity loss and climate impacts through interactive storytelling.

Launched in April 2025, *A Curious Trail of Animal Tales* is a collaboration between the Sydney Environment Institute, School of Humanities at the University of Sydney, and the University of Technology Sydney's Visualisation Institute. This work brings together a collection of animal stories inspired by items from the exhibits in the Chau Chak Wing Museum, and guides participants through a selection of trails in the museum. These tales describe more than just biological information about the creatures they relate to, they include how the lives of human communities, across times and cultures are tied to animal life. Visit the exhibition or explore online [link].

The *Living on the Edge: Caring for Australia's Threatened Places* project continued this year, as an ongoing collaboration and platform for sharing stories of cultural practice, First Nations knowledge, arts and science perspectives as they relate eight ecological communities across Australia. The project delivered public events, education and creative initiatives including the Storytelling for Lost and Threatened Places Symposium in June 2025. This symposium brought together researchers, storytellers and communities, to explore how stories are used to shape not only how places are conceived and defined, but also how, or whether, they are valued, managed, inhabited, or simply discarded.



Photo credit: Kathie Heyman.

## Reimagining resilience in disaster scholarship, policy and practice in Australia: lessons from building a community resilience alliance in the Northern Rivers, NSW

In 2025, the Sydney Environment Institute continued to drive impactful research that centres communities impacted by the compounding climate disasters facing Australia. One of the projects supported by SEI's collaborative grant scheme in 2025, *Reimagining resilience in disaster scholarship, policy and practice in Australia...* informs, records, and shares lessons from the emergence of a newly forming Northern Rivers Community Resilience Alliance (NRCRA, the Alliance).

The NRCRA was recommended and supported by SEI's *Self organising systems to minimise future disaster risk* project, which identified the need for a 'regional alliance' of existing place-based community groups that were pivotal to emergency and recovery efforts in the 2022 catastrophic floods and landslips in the Northern Rivers. In 2025, the NRCRA was awarded funding from NRMA and \$1.5m by the Disaster Ready Fund, the Australian government's flagship initiative for disaster risk reduction (DRR), further legitimising the importance of the NRCRA and the impact of SEI's work.

The project, led by Dr Rebecca McNaught from the University Centre for Rural Health (UCRH) and an embedded researcher in the NRCRA, and Dr Billy Tusker-Haworth from the School of Geosciences, has produced an academic literary review and policy analysis, expanding the existing knowledge base around resilience and DRR and supporting more effective policy and practice, and built a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework for the Alliance. It also enabled a master's dissertation, submitted by the team's research assistant, and supported a knowledge-sharing gathering in November between the NRCRA and other organisations in NSW and QLD.



Image by Markus Spiske via Unsplash

## Climate Justice Series

In 2025, the Sydney Environment Institute hosted a series of panel discussions on the theme of Climate Justice, exploring how we can respond to escalating climate, ecological, housing, and social justice crises in ways that are just, inclusive, and transformative.

The series invited audiences to broaden their understanding of climate justice through conversations on topics such as housing and climate, First Nations leadership, reimagining governance to include more-than-human perspectives, unpacking the meaning of "nature positive" for conservation, and considering alternatives to growth-driven economies.

Across the year, the four panels featured prominent speakers from Australia and around the world to unpack the complex intersections of climate action, equity, and systemic change, challenge dominant narratives, and propose bold pathways toward a more just and sustainable future for all:

*Climate Justice in the Midst of Climate Turbulence* explored how approaches like deliberative democracy, innovative urban design and First Nations leadership are essential to tackling Australia's urgent climate change, housing, and energy challenges.

*Reimagining Democracy: How Diverse Knowledges Are Creating More-than-Human Justice*, hosted in partnership with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services), explored how other animals, forests, rivers and ecosystems can be included in decision making practices.

*What 'Nature Positive' Means in Practice* examined nature finance, asking how we measure and value nature, and what principles should guide conservation and finance sectors.

*Rethinking Growth: Post-Growth, Degrowth, Donuts and Well-being* showcased SEI research on degrowth as a pathway to human flourishing and emphasised the importance of including the Global South in this movement.

Listen now on the [SEI podcast](#).

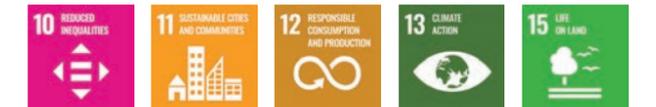




Image by Sydney Environment Institute

## Critical Minerals Network

The pace of the global energy transition is increasing, creating a heightened demand for critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth elements. Globally, the geopolitical landscape is tenuous as companies and countries compete to secure reliable access to these resources without sufficiently minimising the environmental and social harm of the extraction processes and product supply chains.

In 2025, the University of Sydney Critical Minerals Network was established to foster interdisciplinary collaboration that considers the complex nature of these challenges and provide pathways forward. Led by Professor Susan Park, and supported by the Sydney Environment Institute, the Net Zero Institute, and the Faculty of Arts and Social Science, this network has convened academics from the humanities, business, law, science and engineering through a series of networking, industry and policy events, engaging over 50 stakeholders across the four events.



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

## Climate Justice and Loss and Damage Conference

In February 2025, SEI co-hosted the [Climate Justice and Loss and Damage Conference](#) with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, Professor Surya Deva. The event brought together researchers, policymakers, civil society leaders, and Pacific representatives to address the urgent challenges of climate justice, particularly for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and climate-vulnerable communities across the Pacific.

Notably, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, examined the implications of COP29 and the UN General Assembly's report [Climate justice: loss and damage](#). The report included Multispecies Justice (MSJ) as the first principle of climate justice, formally recognising SEI's work as the leading voice in MSJ and further cementing the impact of SEI's research at a global level. At the conference, multispecies justice was further explored in the context of loss and damage, alongside issues of climate finance and debt, and community resilience and self-organising in the face of disasters.



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

## Reducing the healthcare system's carbon footprint

As the healthcare sector grapples with its environmental footprint, the "Reducing the healthcare system's carbon footprint" project brings together a multidisciplinary team of experts from medicine, science and the humanities, to measure the emissions produced by common medical activities. By doing so, health services and clinicians are better able to quantify, compare and communicate the carbon costs associated with care to consumers.

*Prof David Celermajer: "In the face of the climate crisis, the environmental impacts also form an important component of healthcare decision-making,"*

Working closely with Interim Australian Centre for Disease Control, the New South Wales Ministry of Health, and Sydney Local Health District, the project this year developed a functioning calculator tool to measure emissions from different clinical care pathways starting with dialysis, obesity management and pneumonia treatment. An intervention is being designed that will test how the calculator can be used in clinical settings, and the widespread use of a carbon footprint calculator in the healthcare system, could allow for environmental impact to be an additional consideration in healthcare decision-making. Longer term this information may be used to develop new lower carbon standard clinical pathways, to reduce the amount of carbon emitted by healthcare providers.

[Read the pilot study findings.](#)



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

## Degrowth Research Cluster

The Sydney Environment Institute, led by the work of Professor Manfred Lenzen and Dr Mengyu Li, has explored how economic systems might shift to promote justice, resilience and sustainability as environmental and social pressures intensify. In March, SEI convened a roundtable to link researchers working on new economic models that move beyond traditional growth-focused thinking into experimental new models, including degrowth (using and making less), post-growth (not relying on continual growth), and well-being economy approaches (putting people and nature first). Resulting from the roundtable were four new streams of research and two new collaborative projects led by cross-disciplinary teams.

The two projects funded projects are:

- *The Architecture of Care: Governing Health Innovation Precincts through Wellbeing, Health, Equity and Design* – Professor Deborah Barnstone (Architecture, Design and Planning), Dr Rebecca McLaughlan (Architecture, Design and Planning), Associate Professor Kate Owens (Law), Dr Fabian Sack (Science)
- *Engaging Emerging Economies in Post-Growth/ Degrowth Transitions* – Professor Manfred Lezen (Science) and Dr Mengyu Li (Science)

Find out more about this work on the [SEI podcast series](#).



# Researcher support & development

In order to equip our members, and the next generation of multidisciplinary researchers with the skills necessary for tackling grand environmental challenges, the Sydney Environment Institute delivers a comprehensive, cross-faculty development and support program every year.

Students, academics and professionals are invited to participate in collaborations and initiative to learn the skills and approaches required to become adaptive scholars and multidisciplinary problem solvers.

SEI supports our community through:

- Offering professional development and capability-building workshops
- Supporting research translation and dissemination through public panels, symposiums, and a member development fund
- Delivering training in multidisciplinary research methodologies
- Providing personalised mentoring for funding applications and project proposals
- Guiding career pathways and writing for diverse platforms, and
- Facilitating connections with external partners in industry, community and government.

"The fellowship was an amazing opportunity- not only did I get to connect with others from across the field, but it also enabled me to attend the Ecological Society of Australia's annual conference, where I got to present my research and connect with so many more people! I wholly believe that being able to access that opportunity allowed me to strengthen my decision to pursue a PhD next year since I really love my research and sharing it with others."

– Catherine Gunawan

"Honours was challenging but deeply meaningful, and the SEI Fellowship played such an important role in supporting my research as I was able to travel back home and help me stay grounded in why this work matters."

– Cana Nongkhlaw



Image by Sydney Environment Institute.

## SEI Honours Students 2025



Image by Sydney Environment Institute.

The SEI Honours Research Fellowship Program supports emerging researchers with practical tools and guidance to address critical environmental challenges.

Fellows receive mentoring from SEI academics, opportunities to share their work in presentations and discussions, office space at SEI, and a bursary to progress their research agenda. The program helps develop future environmental scholars ready to contribute meaningfully to pressing environmental challenges.

In 2025, SEI welcomed four honours students from the University of Sydney whose research aligns with the Institute's focus research themes. Projects cover topics including investigating biodiversity in informal green spaces; the effectiveness of early warning systems for extreme weather events; governance, access, and usage of ephemeral beaches; and restoration and recognition of Indigenous knowledges within formal education related to environmental conservation.

### 2025 SEI Honours Research Fellowships

- **Catherine Gunawan, Faculty of Science** – Space for Growth: Investigating the Potential of Informal Green Spaces in Western Sydney
- **Dylan Shadbolt, Faculty of Engineering** – Evaluating the effectiveness of the Philippines' anticipatory action framework
- **Arohi Saini, Faculty of Science** – Shifting Sands, Shifting Rules: Exploring Geomorphological Change and Informal Practices on Ephemeral Beaches

### 2025 Iain McCalman Honours Research Award in partnership with the Chau Chak Wing Museum.

- **Cana Nongkhlaw, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences** – Decolonizing Education: Indigenous Knowledge, Conservation, and Land-Based Learning in Khasi Communities

## SEI Postgraduate Students 2025

In 2025, the Sydney Environment Institute supported 19 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students. SEI Executives, Research Theme Leads and key members also provided supervision for students working on projects that closely align to SEI's research themes.

### SEI Doctor of Philosophy Candidates:

- **Annika Burkhardt** – Comparing the climate change adaptation of grey, green and hybrid coastal infrastructure projects in the Asia-Pacific region
- **Darren Chang** – Decolonial Animal Sanctuaries: Prefiguring Multispecies Justice
- **Muhammad Sikandar Ali Chaudary** – Climate Change Mitigation: The Politics of Extraction for a Just Energy Transition
- **Victoria Bonilla-Báez** – Desnudando Uruguay: the intertwinings of memoria, territorio, and our silenced Indigenous identities
- **Hannah Della Bosca** – For Colony and Empire: The Lifeways and Lifeworlds of Ants as Paradox and Paradigm of Terrestrial Resilience
- **Caillin Dunsford** – Mixed methods study: Climate change and solastalgia in the Asia Pacific, focussing on Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities
- **Dorna Ghoreishi** – Health care hybrid life cycle assessment: existing barriers and new opportunities in utilizing activity-based costing data to calculate comprehensive and accurate footprints via hybrid lifecycle assessment
- **Zhuogun Ji** – Policy Frameworks for Equitable Energy Transition in Developing Countries –A Case Study of China
- **Vosawale Lesuma** – Navigating Everyday Flood Risk and Adaptation in Suva, Fiji: Formal Responses and Informal Realities
- **Freya MacDonald** (Awarded SEI PhD Scholarship) – Environmental Fiction and Future Environmental Imaginaries: close reading contemporary Environmental Fiction and Creative non-fiction written during and in the wake of the 2019/2020 Black Summer Bushfires in Australia
- **Philip McKibbin** – The Politics of Love and Multispecies Justice
- **Libby Newton** – Antipodean Rights of Nature Laws: Locating Transformations in Ecosystem Governance

- **Myles Oakey** – The Death of a Songbird: An arts of listening in a time of extinctions
- **Amir Hossein Pakizeh** – Application of Artificial Intelligence Models in Community Resilience Building Projects
- **Anni Taitto** – The health and wellbeing impacts of the energy transition for low-income renters: a comparative UK-Australia study
- **Ana Maria Ulloa** – The Roles of NGOs in Fostering Multi-level Accountability: Can Learning Improve Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change?
- **Yohanes Usbobo** – Banu: An Alternative Way for Atoni Meto to deal with climate change. A comparative study on Atoni Meto knowledge and practice in West Timor, Indonesia and Oecusse, Timor Leste
- **Raymond van der Zalm** – From Clinical Activities to System Outcomes: Building an Activity-Based Hybrid IO-LCA Framework for Sustainable Healthcare Systems
- **Sam Widin** – Cockatoo Cultures and Edge Effects in Tropical Science

### SEI Masters Students

- **Sheryn See** – Master of Philosophy

### Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Postdoctoral Research Fellows at the Sydney Environment Institute have played a crucial role in advancing projects within the Research Themes, establishing networks and support systems for SEI members and collaborators, securing research funding for the Institute, and contributing to various research dissemination and translation activities.

#### 2024 Postdoctoral Research Fellows:

- **Dr Louise Hansell** – Reducing the healthcare system's carbon footprint. 2025-current
- **Dr Lian Sinclair** – Just Transmission: advancing coherence in Australia's electricity policy. 2025-current
- **Dr Scott Webster** – ABIDE: Animal abidings: recovering from disasters in more-than-human communities. 2025-current

### Spotlight: Dr Scott Webster

Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr Scott Webster has been part of the Sydney Environment Institute since 2021. He has held multiple positions on SEI research projects (*Bushfire Stories*, *Self organising systems to minimise future disaster risk*, *Universities' responsibilities in Disasters*) as well as providing coordination and support to the Climate disaster and adaptation research theme.

Scott's research is about connection to place: its meaningfulness, the knowledges and actions it enables, and the suffering and injustice caused when these attachments are ruptured. He explores this across several areas including local knowledges and climate adaptation, as well as social, climate, multispecies, and other forms of in/justice.

In 2025, Scott was part of SEI's panel *Community-Centred Disaster Response and Adaptation* at Adaptation Futures 2025, the leading global conference in climate adaptation. He also leads the research on *Universities' Responsibilities in Disasters*, a project from SEI and Sydney Policy Lab examining how the University of Sydney can better support its on-campus and surrounding communities in disasters, and leads the Australian case study in ABIDE (Animal abidings: recovering from disasters in more-than-human communities), a global research project funded by the European Research Council to explore what we can learn from animals about bushfire recovery and adaptation to inform disaster governance.



Congratulations to...

**Darren Chang** for submitting their PhD thesis: *Exploring Re-animalisation as an Approach to Multispecies Justice: Insights and Lessons from a Farmed Animal Sanctuary in Australia*.

**Emily Nabong** for being awarded a PhD

A special thank you to...

**Libby Newton, Yohanes Usbobo, and Victoria Bonilla-Báez** for coordinating SEI's postgraduate network in 2025.

# Support for Early and Mid-Career Researchers

The Sydney Environment Institute prioritises support for Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCRs) looking to develop multidisciplinary research skills. Our tailored programs foster collaboration and provide valuable capacity building experience.

Led by Deputy Director for Member Engagement, Professor Thom van Dooren, the 2025 EMCR Strategy Series included sessions to support researchers with their publication strategy, research project brainstorming, approaches to identifying and responding to external funding opportunities, and methods for building successful collaborations. This series was complimented by one-on-one support offered by SEI Leadership, as well as the training opportunities provided through the University's Researcher Development Hub and within Faculties.

SEI's commitment to EMCRs reflects our dedication to equipping emerging scholars with the skills and expertise required to excel in impactful, multidisciplinary environmental research.

## Sydney Environment Institute Collaborative Grant Program

SEI's Collaborative Grant Program is designed to encourage new cross-faculty, multidisciplinary research projects that align with SEI's key research themes and address urgent environmental issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

The scheme provides seed funding to project teams who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to collaborate, and supports projects that propose innovative research to address environmental issues, employ novel approaches to climate resilience and adaptation, and connecting exciting work between new partners within the University to address the biodiversity crisis.

sustainability reports, including public statements, policy reports, environmental impact assessments, stakeholder surveys, and ESG reports.

## The Importance of Traditional Knowledge Pathways for Conserving Sea Country: A Case Study with Indigenous Rangers

*Theme: Environmental justices*

Dr Mitchell Gibbs, Dr Jacqueline Dalziell, and Professor Pauline Ross, (Faculty of Science) were awarded funding to collaborate with the Gamay Rangers and understand the importance of traditional knowledge and t's process of transfer between Elders and members of current Indigenous Ranger groups.

## Transforming river management through art, science and ancient knowledges

*Theme: Biodiversity, Conservation and Culture*

Associate Professor Claire Hooker (Faculty of Medicine and Health) and Dr Vic McEwan (The Sydney Conservatorium of Music) were awarded funding to develop a novel knowledge creation cycle, integrating art, science and ancient knowledges to address the complex cultural, ecological, health, and multi-species challenges facing Australian Inland Rivers

## Reimagining resilience in disaster scholarship, policy and practice in Australia: lessons from building a community resilience alliance in the Northern Rivers, NSW

*Theme: Climate disaster and adaptation*

Dr Billy Tusker Haworth, Dr Rebecca Hamilton, Dr Anna Sturman, Associate Professor Amanda Tattersall (Faculty of Science), Dr Rebecca McNaught, Dr Jo Longman (Faculty of Medicine and Health), Elly Bird (Resilient Lismore), Associate Professor Kate Owens (Sydney Law School), and Professor Susan Park (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) were awarded funding to record and share lessons from the emergence of a newly formed community resilience alliance to reduce future disaster risk.

## Climate change and Solastalgia in ethnic minorities in the Western Pacific region

*Theme: Environmental Justices, and Climate disaster and adaptation*

Associate Professor Ying Zhang, Dr Marcelle Townsend-Cross, Dr Marlee Bower, Associate Professor Meru Sheel, Caillin Dunsford (Faculty of Medicine and Health), Dr James Dunk (Faculty of Arts and Social Science), and Associate Professor Veronica Matthews (University Centre for Rural Health) were awarded funding to examine the impact of climate change-induced Solastalgia, emotional distress caused by environmental changes, on ethnic minorities in the Western Pacific region.

## Mapping social networks to understand disparities in who benefits (and who loses) from climate adaptation projects

*Theme: Climate disaster and adaptation*

Associate Professor Michele Barnes, Dr Henry Bartelet (Faculty of Engineering), and Dr Sandra Alday (University of Sydney Business School) were awarded funding to analyse how social networks influence the distribution of benefits and burdens in climate adaptation projects, and apply a novel social network and systems mapping approach to assess how power, influence and access to adaptation resources shape adaptation project outcomes.

## Engaging human and non-human actors in crisis resilience: AI-supported immersive technologies for inclusive decision-making

*Theme: Climate disaster and adaptation*

Dr Joel Fredericks, Dr Soojeong Yoo, Dr Callum Parker, Dr Marius Hoggenmueller, Dr Tram Thi Minh Tran (School of Architecture, Design and Planning), and Dr Nate Zettna (University of Sydney Business School) were awarded funding to investigate how virtual reality and augmented reality simulators with AI-supported decision-making recommendations and facilitation, can strengthen community engagement before, during, and after crises such as natural disasters, habitat loss, and environmental degradation.

## Establishing a Standardised Multispecies Justice Impact Assessment Framework for the Renewable Energy Sector

*Theme: Environmental Justices*

Dr Bastian Thomsen (University of Sydney Business School), Associate Professor Arunima Malik (Faculty of Science, University of Sydney Business School), Professor Susan Park, Professor Danielle Celermajer, and Professor Nick Enfield (Faculty of Arts and Social Science) were awarded funding to examine how stakeholder relationships, socioeconomic interests, and biopower dynamics influence equitable multispecies relations in renewable energies to develop the Multispecies Justice Impact Assessment Framework. Associate Professor Claire Hooker (Faculty of Medicine and Health) and Dr Vic McEwan (The Sydney Conservatorium of Music) were awarded funding to develop a novel knowledge creation cycle, integrating art, science and ancient knowledges to address the complex cultural, ecological, health, and multi-species challenges facing Australian Inland Rivers.



Image by by Stephen Mabbs via Unsplash

# 2025 Spotlight



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

Indigenous Knowledge holders and allies gathered for the first two days of the symposium at the Sydney Institute of Marine Science

## Multispecies Justice Symposium 2025

The accelerating climate and biodiversity crises are reshaping environments and communities in ways that raise urgent questions about justice, responsibility, and care. Around the world, species are disappearing, ecosystems are collapsing, and the effects of environmental change continue to fall unequally on both human and more-than-human communities. The Sydney Environment Institute (SEI) is leading global research to respond to these challenges in environmental justice, including in the emerging field of multispecies justice (MSJ). MSJ expands traditional ideas of justice to consider the interconnectedness of all life. Through innovative research, policy engagement, and creative practices, SEI is driving a transformative shift in how we understand and act on the climate and ecological crises, ensuring that care and responsibility extend across species and ecosystems.

SEI's Multispecies Justice Symposium in 2025, a five-day gathering co-designed with the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, convened more than sixty scholars, Indigenous leaders, artists, practitioners, and community contributors from Australia, the Pacific, Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The symposium sought to advance theoretical and practical approaches to justice in a world shared with 'Earth Others', asking how governance might move beyond human-centred frameworks to genuinely account for the agency, needs, and lives of more-than-human beings.



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

Participants at Dr Nardi Simpson's Barran Kin-ection workshop.



Image by Sydney Environment Institute

MSJ Symposium attendees engage in a workshop led by Native American knowledge holders, featuring a traditional cultural game.

Guided by Professor Danielle Celermajer, Professor David Schlosberg, and Dr Blanche Verlie, participants explored how legal and social systems could be reshaped to recognise multispecies relationships and considered new eco-social contracts that bring Indigenous and Western knowledge systems into dialogue. Central to the symposium were the principles of 'Earthy Governance', which emphasises relational ethics, deep listening, and embodied responsibility. Sessions created space for meaningful exchange across cultural and ecological boundaries, highlighting that multispecies justice is not an abstract idea but grounded in lived obligations and ongoing connections to Country and kin.

The 2025 event builds on the foundational concepts established by the Institute in 2018 and the inaugural Multispecies Justice Symposium in 2019, which sparked critical conversations on more-than-human governance and relational ethics. This year's gathering deepened those foundations, moving from conceptual dialogue to practical strategies and embodied approaches for multispecies justice. This body of work has culminated in the creation of the Multispecies Justice collective, a diverse community of practice committed to advancing the field and has generated multiple streams of research and a suite of publications, both scholarly and translational, including an MSJ handbook to be released in 2026. A dedicated website, also launching in 2026, will serve as a central hub for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and ongoing engagement both within the collective and beyond.

## What is Multispecies Justice?

Multispecies Justice starts with the idea that justice isn't just for humans, it includes all living and non-living parts of Earth: animals, plants, rivers, forests, soil, minerals, and the ecosystems they form, along with the relationships that keep them healthy and thriving.

MSJ challenges the ways existing extractive systems, such as capitalism, have shaped ideas of justice, making them unable to stop today's environmental harm. Current justice theories often assume humans are separate from nature, and that belief has helped create the problems we face. Instead, MSJ offers a new way of thinking, one that sees everything as connected and focuses on relationships within the natural world.



## Thank you

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The Sydney Environment Institute would like to thank its members, staff, and partners, for their dedication and support throughout 2025. Our achievements and successes are a result of your hard work, passion, and commitment to SEI's community, mission, and values.

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