



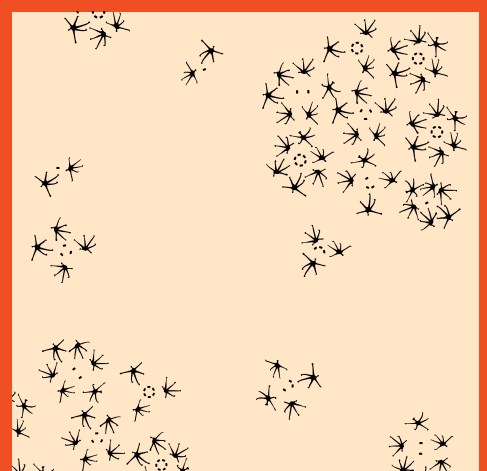
THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Indigenous Knowledge Place

Vision 2025-26

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.

Respectfully acknowledging the ancient learning cultures and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the University of Sydney declares its commitment to the continuation of this sharing through the agency of our work. There is no part of Australia where we work that has not been loved, nourished and cared for since the beginning of time.



Cover image: six pointed grass tree flowers
illustration by Dr Michael Mossman

Indigenous Knowledge Place Vision 2025-26

Message from the Dean	02
Message from the Associate Dean Indigenous	03
Introduction	05
About us	06
Guiding philosophy and background	08
Our commitment	10
What we do	12
Support us	14

Message from the Dean



In alignment with our School's Strategic Plan 2025-26, the Indigenous Knowledge Place is a focal point for innovative initiatives that respectfully and meaningfully Indigenise Architecture, Design and Planning.

This is a moment when we can take huge steps forward in advancing First Nations knowledge systems and the interconnections Country, design and building, intertwined and embodied in ways of being, knowing and doing.

In providing a hub to celebrate excellence in teaching, student experience, research, community engagement, industry collaborations, and alumni relationships, we will enact new partnerships and alliances to activate future-focused opportunities.

It provides us with a renewed engagements to create a collective approach with our partners about how the University's One Sydney Many People Strategy and Walanga Wingara Mura Design Principles can assist us in recalibrating our business as usual practices.

This aligns with broader efforts across the University to weave Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, worldviews and practices into the very fabric of our school and our University.

Professor Donald McNeill
Dean and Head of School

Message from the Associate Dean Indigenous



The Indigenous Knowledge Place (IKP) for the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning is an innovative gathering place.

The IKP is a hub for community, students, university and industry engagement and their relationships with built environment education, research, and external engagement at local, national and international levels.

The Indigenous Knowledge Place aligns with the National Science and Research Priorities where the elevation of Indigenous knowledge systems is foundational as a core principle, as well as being interconnected with the surrounding four principles.

Our architecture, design and planning disciplines support the continuity of Indigenous cultural practices, ceremonies, and community life in academia, community and industry.

We celebrate places and experiences that acknowledge and engage with Indigenous knowledge systems. Being agile, inclusive, and welcoming creates a sense of ownership, pride, and belonging.

The IKP reflects the stories, materials, and ecologies of the lands, waters and skies on which it interacts with . It is a place listens to and collaborates with Country.

Dr Michael Mossman

Associate Dean Indigenous



Image: Bulimba Build - Uncle Peter Bumi Hyde and students. Photograph: Dr Michael Mossman

Introduction

The Indigenous Knowledge Place (IKP) is a dynamic and inclusive gathering place that brings together dialogue and knowledge exchange from Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The Indigenous Knowledge Place (IKP) is an initiative at the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning, established as a hub for Indigenous and non-Indigenous dialogue, knowledge exchange, and community engagement.

Grounded in the principles of the One Sydney Many People Strategy and the Walanga Design Principles, the IKP is a place to gather, honour, share, and embed Indigenous knowledge systems in architectural and built environment education, research, and practice.

IKP provides a hub for current and prospective students, academic and professional staff, researchers, industry and government partners to explore the School of Architecture, Design and Planning's commitment to Country and First Nations communities and cultural practices.

The IKP welcomes an Indigenous and non-Indigenous Community of Dialogue and Exchange (CODE) between students, researchers, designers, industry, government partners to elevate respectful dialogue and innovative programs.

It supports cultural continuity, celebrates the richness of First Nations ways of being, knowing and doing, and facilitates curiosity, understanding and action. This is a place for all to feel a sense of belonging and grow together.

Through teaching, research, yarning, exhibitions, workshops, and storytelling, the IKP facilitates cross-cultural sharing of knowledge locally, nationally, and globally.

Through the Indigenisation of curriculum, best practices in Indigenous cultural intellectual property and Indigenous data sovereignty protocols, pedagogy and research, we commit to inclusive learning that honours diverse ways of knowing. We build enduring partnerships with Aboriginal communities, grounded in trust, reciprocity, and shared leadership.

About us

We gather as a group of experienced Indigenous academics and practitioners who bring a wealth of knowledge for dialogue and exchange to benefit Indigenous-focused self-determination.

Our philosophy is guided by the understanding that Country is the foundation of knowledge and memory, and that architecture, design and planning engages in respectful dialogue with these deep cultural landscapes. Country is the foundation for design and practice—it is a living entity that communicates spirit and stories to create dialogue.

We engage in genuine, ongoing dialogue with a community of guests. Through practices such as yarning and cultural immersion, we listen deeply to the stories, values, and aspirations of the people who have cared for Country for millennia. Co-design is a process to engage with all in collaboration with Country.

Architecture, Design and Planning becomes part of a network for storytelling to respectfully enact cultural narratives into the fabric of thought—through form, materiality, movement, and multisensory experience. These narratives honour the past, reflect the present, and inspire future generations.

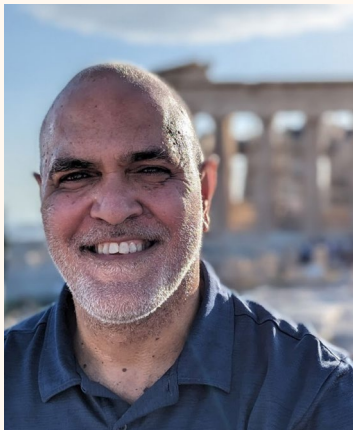
We practice with respect for place, community and culture. Each location is unique, with its own ecological, spiritual, and cultural ways. Enacting design processes in harmony with the ecologies of Country. These storylines to celebrate, regenerate, heal and transform lie at the core of our approach.

Supporting cultural continuity means celebrating cultural practices, ceremonies, and community life. We create experiences that acknowledge and engage with Indigenous knowledge systems and a sense of belonging.

Our approaches integrate an ethic of care and respect to transform participant mindsets that appreciate and celebrate ways of the past and are resilient and adaptive with a focus to the future.

Our contributes to a broader legacy of reconciliation, truth-telling, and justice to inspire a new generation of academics and practitioners to see design as a tool for cultural empowerment.

IKP working group



Dr Michael Mossman
(Kuku Yalanji)
ADP Associate Dean
Indigenous



Ms Elle Davidson
(Balangarra)
Aboriginal Planning
Lecturer



Dr Beau de Belle
(Gamilaraay)
Indigenising Curriculum
Lecturer

Advisory group

- **Bradley Kerr**
(Quandamooka)
ADP Associate Lecturer
- **Marni Reti**
(Trawoolway)
Associate lecturer of Practice
- **Ebony Syron**
(Biripi)
Senior Research Assistant

ADP executive support

- **Professor Donald McNeill**
ADP Dean
- **Linsay Meltzer**
ADP Research Manager
- **Hannah Parslow**
ADP Executive Officer

Guiding philosophy and background

Our philosophy is to shape built environments that honour and reflect the enduring relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices and Country as foundation.

The IKP is a place that is part of a living network to connect. Our invitation is to create an Indigenous and non-Indigenous Community of Dialogue and Exchange between students, researchers, designers, industry, government partners as ways to come together in respectful dialogue and co-creation.

It supports cultural continuity, celebrates the richness of First Nations ways of being, knowing and doing, and facilitates curiosity, understanding and action. This is a place for all to feel a sense of belonging and grow together.

By strengthening Indigenous governance and empowering leadership at all levels, we strive for a just, equitable, and transformative educational landscape that reflects and celebrates the richness of First Nations cultures.

We enact processes to shape built environments that honour and reflect the enduring relationships Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with Country. Guided by the principles of the One

Sydney Many People Strategy and the Walanga Design Principles we commit to designing places that are culturally responsive, responsive, enact an ethic of care, and are spiritually connected.

We engage deeply with Country to ensure that architecture, design and planning emerges as part of an ecology—respecting stories, rhythms, and knowledge systems.

Through dialogue and exchange, we are creating a Place that celebrates and nurtures belonging, supports Indigenous leadership and self-determination, and contributes to the healing and resilience of Country through shared cultural practices.

The IKP is a collaborative vision that embodies ways to gather and share knowledge and create conditions for Indigenous knowledge systems to shape the future of architecture, design, and planning. Our place is a critical activation that is co-designed with Indigenous voices and serves as a platform for collaborative future innovations.

We provide support through culturally safe spaces for Indigenous and non-Indigenous guests to thrive, mentor, and lead innovative discourse relationally with Country and Indigenous communities and cultures.

Our philosophy encourages the inclusion and integration of Indigenous knowledge into built environment disciplines, while also connecting with curriculum, pedagogy, research, and governance.

This Place will become a legacy experience to influence research, education, and community engagement into the future. Recognising and celebrating Indigenous knowledge systems enacts inclusion, belonging and appreciations of Country for all guests who interact with Country as a foundation for research methodologies, ethics, and outputs.

“we invite you to
celebrate Country,
and First Nations
Communities
and Cultures
and the valuable
contribution
they make to our
collective future”

Ms Elle Davidson
(Balangarra)
Aboriginal Planning
Lecturer



Image: Morning tea with Indigenous ADP
students, staff and colleagues, September 2025.
Photograph: Tammy Ienna

Our commitment

The following vision, mission and strategic themes underpin these commitments:

Image: Sharing Country. Master of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts. Dr Beau de Belle and students.
Photograph: Dr Michael Mossman



Our vision

We envision a future where Indigenous knowledge systems are deeply respected and embedded across education and research. Where Country, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural practices, thrive in environments that nurture collective excellence and personal growth.

Through Indigenised curriculum, teaching and research, our vision enables inclusive learning that honours diverse ways of knowing. Building long-term partnerships with First Nations communities, grounded in trust, reciprocity and shared leadership, will provide platforms for exciting future propositions.

By strengthening Indigenous agency and leadership, we work towards a just and transformative knowledge ecology that celebrates First Nations cultures.

Our mission

Our mission is to place Country as the foundation of creative practice in teaching and student experience, research and knowledge exchange, and external engagement—guided by Indigenous knowledge systems.

We are committed to honouring the deep spiritual, and environmental connections that Country provides through community and cultural practices.

Through respectful partnerships, inclusive practices, and the co-leadership and attribution of Indigenous voices, we aim to elevate Indigenous knowledge systems that care for and give back to Country.

This mission drives us to create sustainable, culturally rich, and resilient systems that support Indigenous and non-Indigenous dialogue and exchange to ensure it is all grounded in the wisdom of Country.

Our strategic themes



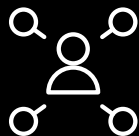
Teaching and student experience

- Indigenising curriculum
- Travelling studios
- PhD studies
- Exchange programs
- Scholarships and placements
- Indigenous student recruitment
- Student-focused activities and work



Research and knowledge exchange

- Research projects and strategies
- Community knowledge exchange
- Cross-university collaborations
- Indigenous academic fellowships
- Industry collaborations



Community and external engagement

- Community relationships building
- Industry collaboration
- Indigenous staff capacity-building
- Awards and honours
- Symposium and event organisation
- Alumni and philanthropy relation

What we do

Become a part of our community of dialogue and exchange
to learn about and enrich your practice with us

Through teaching, research, yarning, exhibitions, workshops, and storytelling, the IKP facilitates cross-cultural sharing of knowledge locally, nationally, and globally.

We invite Indigenous and non-Indigenous guests to feel a sense of belonging, ceremony, storytelling, and cultural continuity, fostering dialogue and exchange across diverse communities to shape the future of architecture, design and planning.

Our teaching

The IKP informs the design and delivery of teaching by embedding Indigenous knowledge systems into built environment education.

Our teaching spans Indigenous curriculum development, travelling studios, PhD study, and exchange opportunities across universities, creating pathways for innovative education and collaboration.

- Gadigal Centre of Excellence: Bachelor of Design in Architecture 3rd year graduating studio
- From the Heart: Master of Architecture 4th and 5th year Studio
- Country-Centric Design: Connecting to Baarkindji Country Wilcannia Studio
- Sharing Country: Masters of Interaction Design and Electronic Arts (MIDEA)



Image: Dr Michael Mossman and Tim Bishop
September 2025. Photograph: Tom Cavdarovski



Image: Students in Yarrabah Burri Gummin Studio. Photograph: Dr Michael Mossman

Student experience

The Indigenous Knowledge Place empowers students and academics—Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike—to engage in meaningful, ethical, and creative learning experiences with Country.

- Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning Indigenous Scholarship
- University of Sydney students showcase cultural identity at Venice Architecture Biennale
- Architecture students visit regional NSW to explore connections between Country, community and design

Our research

The IKP embodies our School's commitment to ensuring Indigenous knowledge systems shape the future of research in architecture, design, and planning. Our research spans innovative projects, community co-design initiatives, cross-university and industry collaborations, and Indigenous academic engagements at local, national, and international levels.

- Indigenising the Built Environment in Australia
- Voicing First Nations Country, culture and community in urban policy

External engagement and industry collaborations

Through our external engagement, we strengthen industry and community relationships, build Indigenous staff capacity, deliver CPD and symposia, and invite support through donations to grow this innovative community.

- Sydney Short Course: Practicing on Country
- Wilkinson Indigenous Garden



Image: Elle Davidson and Cornel Ozies Practicing on Country. Photograph: Dr Michael Mossman

Support us

Create a lasting legacy of future innovations

Collaborate with us to build meaningful relationships and shared values that align with the IKP's mission to embed Indigenous Knowledge and facilitate cultural exchange.

Establishing long-term partnerships that reflect shared values to impact change activates stimulating environments for Indigenous-led education, research and cultural programming processes.

In our engagement with you, we can co-design on-Country experiences and IKP visions for the future. Interact with exceptional stories from Indigenous community and industry partners, scholars, students and researchers.

We encourage opportunities for philanthropic contributions to meaningfully invest in and activate our initiatives: teaching, student experience, research and community engagements and industry collaborations.

Investments in our initiatives adds to an ongoing platform to Indigenise the culture of the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning.

The inclusion and integration of Indigenous knowledge systems is an ongoing pursuit of collective excellence for resilient, adaptive and regenerative built environments that celebrate Country, community and culture.



For more information
University of Sydney
School of Architecture,
Design and Planning
adp.iss@sydney.edu.au
sydney.edu.au/architecture/ikp



CRICOS 00026A TEQSA PRV12057

Produced by Dr Michael Mossman, the University of Sydney,
November 2025. The University reserves the right to make
alterations to any information contained within this
publication without notice.
Issue 1/2025