



Australian
National
University

ANU Strategy Community Consultation 2026

Consultations summary on matters raised by ANU Community
Reference document for the participants of the Indigenous
Strategy Special Committee Forums

ANU First Nations Portfolio

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1. Summary of consultation process

As part of the ANU Strategy Development process, consultation was undertaken in phases between December 2025 and May 2026.

- Between December 2025 and February 2026, 32 organisational units took part in local strategy consultations. They included six Colleges, their constituent Schools, Research Institutes and Centres, and six Portfolio areas. Each area responded to three questions and College Deans and Portfolio Leads synthesised findings to these questions on 10 March 2026:
 1. What is ANU really good at?
 2. What are ANU's biggest opportunities?
 3. What does ANU need to do over the next three to five years?
- Following the release of the Draft University Strategy (V1) in April 2026, a University wide community survey received 147 responses.
- Facilitated sessions with staff and students were held between 28 April and 15 May 2026, attracting more than 400 participants.
- Written submissions were received from groups and individuals across the University. Submissions addressing Indigenous matters included the workshop input from the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) and the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (WYUT) First Nations Gender Justice Institute, the joint submission from Yardhura Walani and the National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG), feedback from the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Leads Network, and the New York Alumni Roundtable.

There was strong engagement from a wide range of areas across the University. This paper summarises the feedback on Indigenous-related themes emerging from the consultations. This can be used as a reference for further community discussions on how ANU can meet its Indigenous commitments in the 2026-2030 Strategy.

2. Key themes and considerations

Overall, the Indigenous commitments in the ANU strategy V1 were broadly supported and attracted more additional detailed feedback than any other section. The Indigenous commitments were consistently named as a genuine strength of the draft. They are framed around self-determination, adoption of UNDRIP, the Tjabal Centre and the First Nations Portfolio rather than aspirational language alone, which were described as a substantive differentiator from peer institutions. Respondents endorsed the placement of the Indigenous commitments at the front of the ANU strategy.

The most common concern was the gap between the prominence of the commitments and the absence of a funded implementation plan with monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Multiple respondents, including senior Indigenous researchers, stressed that aspirational language without resourcing and governance structures could be read as tokenistic. A recurring call was for the Indigenous commitments to be carried through the full strategy into research, education, people and enablers, rather than remaining confined to a standalone section.

Respondents also called for greater care in framing and language. The aspiration for ANU to be the 'university of choice' for Indigenous students was questioned as unrealistic and potentially patronising, with a stronger framing suggested: a commitment to providing the best possible support for students who choose to come to ANU. Concerns were raised about specific language choices, including the use of 'issues' when referring to Indigenous matters, wording that could be read as paternalistic.

Respondents raised a number of key considerations which will require further analysis and input from the University community, and from Indigenous staff, students and communities to inform the development of the Indigenous Strategy:

Respondents raised a number of key considerations which will require further analysis and input from the University community, and from Indigenous staff, students and communities to inform the development of an action plan to meet the Strategy commitments:

1. **Self-Determination and UNDRIP:** A recurring theme was the call to embed UNDRIP as a genuine institutional framework. Multiple respondents argued that the commitment to Indigenous self-determination should be strengthened through university-wide adoption of UNDRIP, treated as a core organising principle of ANU strategy that shapes governance and decision-making across the institution.
2. **Community engagement and representation:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have a genuine role in University decision-making and accountability, not just be consulted through hand-picked, non-diverse processes.
3. **Recognition of existing strengths and excellence:** Sustaining and growing existing centres of excellence, including in Indigenous health and wellbeing, genomics, languages, repatriation, data sovereignty and First Nations gender justice. Ensuring the institutional architecture for support and recognition reaches the whole University.
4. **Indigenous leadership model and accountability:** Consideration of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) position, in line with other leading Australian universities. A 'Hub and Spokes' model, connecting a central Indigenous leadership function with Indigenous-led centres and researchers across the University, was discussed. Development of a funded implementation plan with clear responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation, and regular reporting against defined measures of success.
5. **Indigenous research: recognition and investment:** Several submissions recommended positioning Indigenous-led and engaged research as the primary pathway for implementing its Indigenous commitments.
6. **Data, measurement and Indigenous Data Sovereignty:** Establishing a baseline of Indigenous research, student and staff data at School and College level, and embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance Protocols.
7. **People: Recruitment, Retention and Career Pathways:** University-level frameworks for Indigenous HDR students, early career researchers and emerging leaders, including dedicated funding and the strengthening of proven pathways.
8. **Education and Curriculum:** Indigenous content and Indigenous-led teaching to be expanded and clearly articulated across all levels and disciplines.

Further details of these key considerations are included as Appendix 1.

3. Development of the implementation plan supporting the ANU Strategy Indigenous commitments

The feedback summarised in this paper provides a common evidence base for the next phase of consultation. The intention is to test whether the themes emerging from the University-wide consultation reflect the priorities of the Indigenous communities within the ANU, to identify any important gaps or missing perspectives, and to determine whether additional priorities should be included.

The Indigenous consultation forums include four streams: Research, Student, Academic and Professional Staff. The four forums are invited to:

- Validate the consultation themes: review the themes identified through the consultation and advise whether they accurately reflect Indigenous priorities.

- Identify gaps and missing perspectives: highlight any gaps, and any more pressing matters not captured through the consultation process.
- Prioritise the focus areas: advise on which themes should be prioritised for over the next three to five years.
- Inform the development of the implementation plan: use the consultation findings and forum discussions to develop an implementation plan to meet the Indigenous commitments set in the ANU Strategy 2026-30.

If there is strong agreement on the priorities identified, the next step will be to focus on developing practical actions, responsibilities and measures of success. This will ensure that the action/implementation plan is built on evidence gathered across the University and reflects both the ANU's existing strengths and its future aspirations.

Appendix 1. Details of the consultation for each theme

Key considerations

1. Self-Determination and UNDRIP

A recurring theme was the call to embed UNDRIP as a genuine institutional framework, rather than limiting its application to particular portfolios or programs. Multiple respondents argued that the commitment to Indigenous Peoples self-determination should be strengthened through university-wide adoption of UNDRIP, treated as a core organising principle of the final Strategy that shapes governance and decision-making across the institution.

Feedback also emphasised that the Indigenous commitments should align closely with the University's Reconciliation Action Plan and be grounded in the principles of shared decision-making.

2. Community engagement and representation

Feedback noted that the Draft Strategy's approach to partnerships could be perceived as inward-looking and extractive, and called for partnerships to be reframed as two-way, reciprocal, long-term and mutually beneficial. Engaged research's underpinnings are in Indigenous research and ANU has amazing examples of how strong and enduring partnerships could be conducted. For example, Yardhura Walani was cited as an example of an engaged approach to research for community. In addition, the example of Aotearoa New Zealand, where Mauri concepts directly inform broader approaches and structures, was brought up as a model of how Indigenous approaches could inform the University's wider engagement framework.

Specific opportunities identified included:

- collaboration and partnership with Indigenous Peoples to acknowledge the value of different knowledge systems and support the integration of different ways of knowing to address pressing issues such as climate change and stewardship of the environment;
- an ongoing and authentic mechanism to listen to Indigenous perspectives on critical climate, energy and disaster matters and to integrate these into the University's thinking;
- acknowledging the ownership of Indigenous Peoples in practical ways and prioritising research that improves outcomes for Indigenous communities;
- building high-quality partnerships with Aboriginal Corporations through the provision of academic assistance and expertise to advance their community impact, building on existing relationships;
- global engagement that connects Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) with Indigenous engagement; and
- a broad definition of community, including government, publics, partners, end-users and alumni, in shaping priorities and actions across the Strategy's pillars.

3. Recognition of existing strengths and excellence

There was consistent recognition across submissions that the ANU's commitment to Indigenous advocacy and education reflects the University's distinctive national responsibility and leadership, and that ANU already holds significant strengths in Indigenous engagement, education and research. There was an equally consistent view that these strengths are not yet fully recognised or reflected in the Draft Strategy.

Strengths identified through the local strategy consultation included:

- the APS First Nations Graduate Certificate of Management, delivered by the College of Business and Economics in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency. Now in its sixth year, the program has 99 graduates and 24 current

participants, with alumni reporting significant career adaptability and progression, and has been recognised with awards from ANU, the Canberra and District NAIDOC Aboriginal Corporation and the Australian Business Deans Council.

- Yardiura Walani, the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research in the ANU College of Law, Governance and Policy, is Australia's largest Indigenous-led health and wellbeing research centre. Yardiura Walani has a strong track record of impactful research, major funding success and the training of Indigenous researchers.
- the Bandalang Studio at the School of Engineering in the ANU College of Systems and Society is at the forefront of supporting Indigenous knowledge and its meaningful integration into the School and the broader University.
- Indigenous languages, social justice, community-led repatriation, heritage protection and ethical research governance within the Research School of Humanities and the Arts, including the world-leading Return Reconcile Renew (RRR) repatriation digital archive.
- national leadership in research and education in Indigenous mathematics and knowledge systems within the Mathematical Sciences Institute in the ANU College of Systems and Society.
- strengths in Indigenous genomics through the National Centre for Indigenous Genomics (NCIG), highlighted by the John Curtin School of Medical Research.
- established field programs, including in the Research School of Earth Sciences, that already connect research and teaching to Country, communities and land management.
- long-standing partnerships with Indigenous communities across the University.

At the same time, feedback emphasised that Indigenous research excellence occurring across the ANU is not adequately recognised. The institutional architecture for support and recognition was described as currently reaching only part of the University, with Indigenous health and wellbeing research in particular not highlighted despite being an area of significant activity and national leadership. As one Indigenous early career researcher put it: *'I don't feel seen in the strategy as it only speaks to certain parts of the university that work in First Nations research.'*

The workshop with the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) and Wiyi Yani U Thangani (WYUT) First Nations Gender Justice Institute highlighted that the ANU hosts institutionally embedded, policy-facing centres that are unmatched nationally and, in many cases, globally. Both institutes were established as strategic priorities with university, government and philanthropic investment, yet their work, values and outcomes are not reflected in the Draft Strategy, which makes no mention of gender, First Nations women and gender diverse groups, and the equality work of these institutions, despite their high-profile nature of work and the outcomes generated so far.

4. Indigenous leadership model and accountability

Feedback consistently identified Indigenous leadership as a core priority, with a focus on expanding Indigenous-identified positions and strengthening leadership pathways across the University.

A significant governance question raised through the consultation was whether ANU should, in line with other leading Australian universities, establish a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) position. The absence of a Indigenous Leadership at Deputy Vice-Chancellor level within the Chancery was identified as a gap, and respondents asked how the University should reconsider the value of the dedicated First Nations Portfolio against a DVC model.

Related feedback called for:

- Indigenous governance to be embedded within implementation, decision-making and accountability structures, rather than being limited to consultation processes;
- the Indigenous Strategy Committee to be expanded to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher and student representation. These groups should be meaningfully involved in guiding University-level policy and decisions; and
- long-term institutional commitments to sustain and grow Indigenous-led centres that are already demonstrating national and international leadership.

Looking forward, feedback identified an opportunity for the ANU to strengthen Indigenous research leadership and become the primary voice in contemporary conversations about ethics, artificial intelligence and governance.

The most consistent message across all consultation channels was that the Indigenous commitments must move beyond aspiration, carry institutional weight and be supported by clear implementation arrangements. Respondents called for:

- a commitment to developing a specific, funded implementation plan for the Indigenous components of the Strategy;
- clear accountability frameworks, with regular reporting and defined measures of success, so that progress can be measured, monitored and reported over time; and
- the Indigenous commitments to be woven through the full Strategy – research, education, people and enablers – rather than remaining a standalone section.

Several contributors emphasised that implementation should recognise and invest in existing areas of established strength, including Indigenous health research, genomics and data sovereignty.

5. Indigenous research: recognition and investment

A strong and consistent theme was the opportunity to position the ANU as the leading university in Indigenous-governed research practice, and as a national leader in Indigenous health research, Indigenous governance and justice, Indigenous knowledge and sustainability, and Indigenous political and economic empowerment. Opportunities identified included scaling Indigenous-led research and governance, consolidating global leadership in Indigenous languages, repatriation and data sovereignty, and engaging strategically with the National Resting Place as a defining national project. There was also a call for the ANU to lead more national initiatives in Indigenous-led and commissioned research, translating Indigenous knowledges and community priorities into appropriate policy and community service design.

Feedback called for research agendas to be co-designed with Indigenous communities, supported by joint governance arrangements for research affecting Indigenous peoples and by funding for Indigenous research chairs and scholarships. This was described both as an ethical imperative and a source of unique research insight and national leadership. Contributors also emphasised the importance of Indigenous research creating impact beyond academia by informing policy, public discourse, education and community outcomes, while maintaining culturally safe practices that recognise and protect Indigenous knowledge-holders and contributors.

Suggested practical actions included:

- an Indigenous research fund to support Indigenous-identified research priorities; and
- a mechanism to protect and share Indigenous research and knowledge, as determined by Indigenous researchers;

Several submissions recommended that the Strategy explicitly position Indigenous-led engaged research as the primary pathway for implementing its Indigenous commitments. This reflects principles long held in Indigenous-led research practice: relational accountability, reciprocity and shared authority. The suggested approach was for the ANU to operationalise

its Indigenous commitments through Indigenous-led engaged research, embedding UNDRIP principles in research design, ethics, data governance, partnership agreements and evaluation. This would move the commitments from aspiration to embedded practice and ensure consistency across research governance and partnerships.

6. Data, measurement and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Feedback identified the absence of data on Indigenous student and staff numbers at the School and College level as a specific gap in the Draft Strategy. Respondents called for clear data reporting on Indigenous staffing, student participation and education outcomes, together with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure progress against ANU's Indigenous Commitments.

Feedback also called for the implementation, embedding and respect of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance Protocols across the University. The Return Reconcile Renew repatriation digital archive hosted by the Australian Data Archive (RSSS) was highlighted as a nationally distinctive model of secure, community-governed data stewardship that embeds Indigenous data sovereignty and supports community-led repatriation and training and culturally appropriate use of sensitive materials.

7. People: Recruitment, Retention and Career Pathways

A strong call across the consultation was for university-level frameworks to support Indigenous higher degree research (HDR) and early career researcher (ECR) career pathways, which are currently supported at a local level. Respondents called for a top-level strategic commitment to Indigenous HDR and ECR positions, with explicit detail on how those pathways will be supported. Feedback emphasised that developing and implementing new pathways needs to be paired with a commitment to maintain, improve and strengthen existing pathways that have proven successful.

Specific suggestions included:

- continued and sustained investment in the Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre to support undergraduate success;
- investment in and partnership with Yardhura Walani, which is home to the largest cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and HDR students at ANU, with strong staff retention and 100 per cent HDR completion rates;
- dedicated funding for Level A and Level B Indigenous programs to support, grow and retain the next generation of Indigenous research leaders across ANU;
- strategic Indigenous recruitment and research pipeline development, including non-traditional pathways, postdoctoral fellowships and Indigenous-identified positions;
- improving job security and career development pathways, including for Indigenous and early career academics;
- honing existing programs to support undergraduate retention, HDR retention and completion, and to build academic staff in key areas defined by community and policy stakeholders;
- building on existing school-level initiatives, such as the Bandalang Autumn and Summer Schools and the Kim Wilson Program in Engineering; and
- ensuring University residences reflect an appropriately diverse mix of students, including Indigenous and equity cohorts.

Feedback called for culturally informed recruitment and retention practices, including opportunities to work remotely from Country, sorry business leave, colonial load leave and employee assistance programs. It also called for institutional investment in new and existing Indigenous spaces, including the First Nations Portfolio, Fenner Circle, the Bandalang studio and the Yil Lull studio. Respondents emphasised the importance of supporting all research

undertaken by Indigenous staff, not only research relating to Indigenous peoples. Feedback also identified a diverse and representative workforce as an important component of the University's national mission.

8. Education and Curriculum

Feedback identified the Draft Strategy to be missing the inclusion of Indigenous content in teaching and research programs at all levels, with Indigenous communities and knowledge-holders and academics as leaders, collaborators and paid consultants. This was noted as especially important in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, where Australian Indigenous scientific knowledge in land and waters management is already leading the way globally. Feedback also noted the omission of education from the *Possible Actions* section of the Indigenous commitments, despite its inclusion in the *Direction*.

Suggestions included

- more courses on Indigenous knowledges taught by experts in the field;
- actions that promote voluntary collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians;
- embedding Indigenous mathematical knowledge and truth-telling in the history of science within research and education;
- fostering capacity in STEM disciplines to engage respectfully, creatively and productively with Indigenous communities; and
- building on existing and emerging offerings, such as the Indigenous Perspectives in Business and Economics course and field-based learning programs that connect research and teaching to Country, communities and land management.

Respondents called for a commitment to making the ANU more accessible to Indigenous students. Suggested practical actions included removing tuition fees for Indigenous students and providing more support for students who are studying and researching remotely from campus in their own communities.