



The Australian Centre

Advisory Board – Terms of Reference

1 January 2024

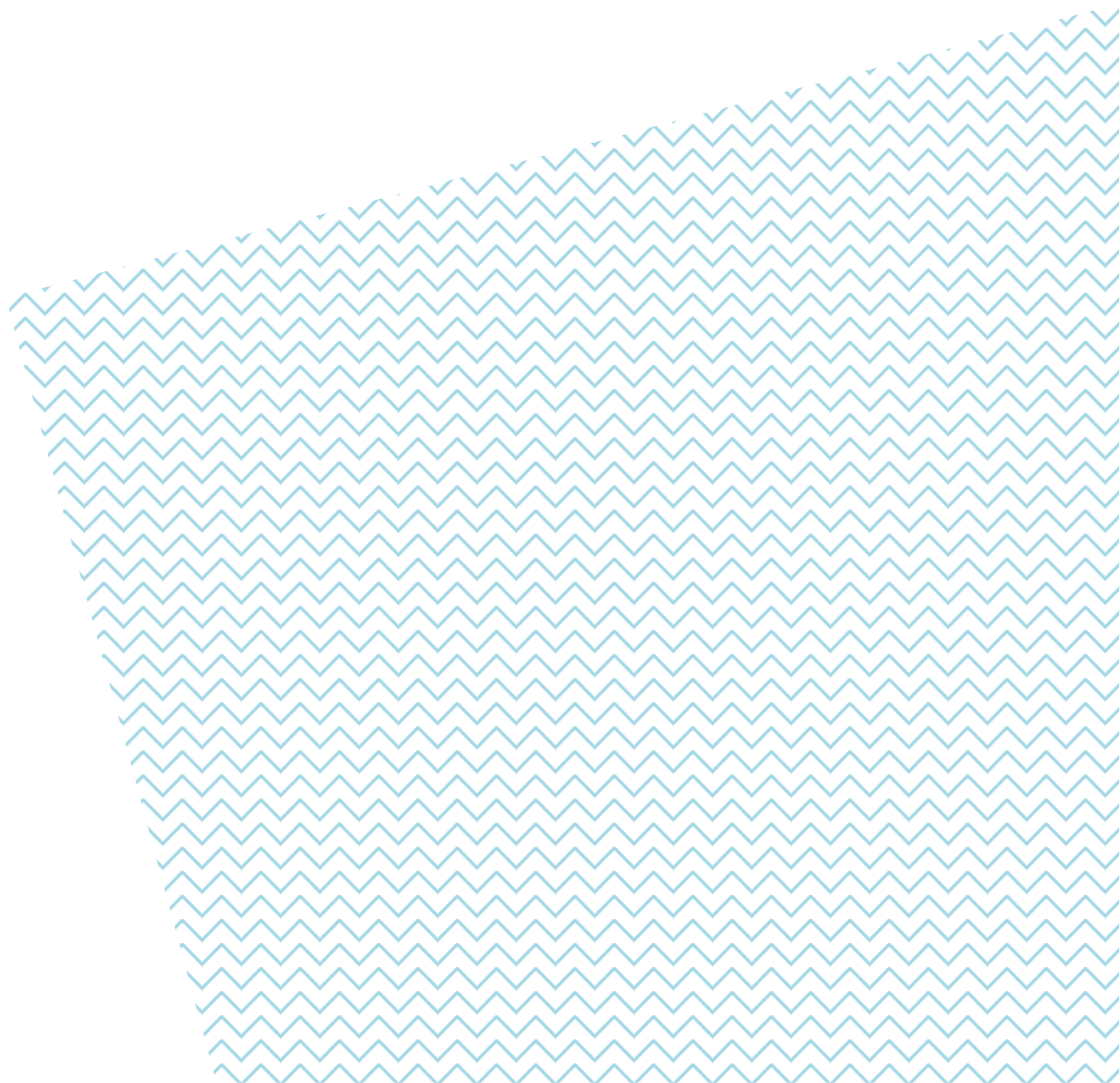


Table of Contents

Acknowledgement 3

Our Mission 3

What we do 3

Research Agenda..... 4

Function of the Advisory Board 4

Frequency of meetings 4

Schedule for 20244

Membership 5

Length of membership 5

Board Support..... 5

Acknowledgement

The Australian Centre is located at the University of Melbourne, Parkville campus, on unceded Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung land. We acknowledge Country and the people belonging to Country, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Traditional Owners, and we value our continuing relationship with you and your on-going care for Country. We thank the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Corporation for your generous and ongoing contributions to the Australian Centre.

We also acknowledge that the University of Melbourne has campuses on Country of other First Nation groups, and we acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Parkville, Southbank, Werribee and Burnley campuses, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong/Boon Wurrung peoples; the Yorta Yorta Nations, whose Country the Shepparton and Dookie campuses are located, and the Dja Dja Wurrung Nations, Melbourne University's Creswick campus location.

The Australia Centre acknowledges all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and First Nations peoples whose work, lives and Country intersect with ours. We acknowledge that invasion and colonisation has caused harm that is on-going to First Peoples.

Our Mission

The Australian Centre advances a critical understanding of how Australia's founding as a settler colony restricts our capacity to engage with the central challenges of our time. The Centre's activities are designed to enable Indigenous scholars, knowledge-holders, and non-Indigenous researchers to collaborate in the production of empirically rich, conceptually innovative, and ethically rigorous research. Through high-quality research, comprehensive research training, specialised graduate education, and meaningful critical public discourse, our objective is to elevate the expertise and influence of University of Melbourne researchers in this forward-looking national and international endeavour.

Background

The Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne has played a pivotal role in fostering scholarly exploration and critical examination of Australian society, culture, and history since its establishment in 1989. The Australian Centre has a long history in the Faculty of Arts (having been established in its most recent form in 2013 and having previously run from 1989 to 2012 in a different capacity), supporting scholarship on colonial and contemporary Australian society and culture. The Centre is also home to a number of important prizes including the Peter Blazey Fellowship and the Kate Challis RAKA award.

Under the leadership of Director Professor Sarah Maddison and Deputy Director Dr Julia Hurst, the Centre committed to fostering a critical examination of Australian society, culture, and history. Our approach is characterized by an interdisciplinary lens, with a specific focus on settler colonialism and its institutions. The Centre along with its Fellows and Affiliated Researchers are focused on scholarship that examines contemporary Indigenous affairs through questions of relationality. We resist uncritically (re)producing the idea that the unequal and unjust conditions of settler colonialism are inevitable, immutable and omnipotent, but neither do we ignore or depoliticise them. Through this work, we promote notions of settler responsibility to learn, engage, respond to and act on questions of ongoing colonial injustice on this continent.

What we do

The Centre provides a home for world-leading research that develops a critical understanding of Australia as an ongoing colonial project. Through research, research training and education programs that focus on the transformations required of settlers and settler institutions, the Centre is building a cohort of researchers and graduates ready to engage in the ongoing transformation of this nation, while concurrently holding ground for research that supports Indigenous scholarship. At the heart of our approach is the understanding that Indigenous settler relations are an integral part of the fabric of Australia. Our work is driven by the belief that creating more just relationships between First Nations and the Australian state and its people is one of the most important challenges this country faces.

The Centre at the University of Melbourne provides a home for world-leading research that focuses on these challenges as they are framed by disciplines across and the University. The Centre will also contribute to, and be a site for connection with, the critical research programs underway in other settler colonies such as the US and Canada.

The Centre's work, and therefore the work of the Advisory Board, is framed by four core principles:

1. A place-based ethic: valuing and respecting the centrality of Country and First Peoples
2. Reflexivity: recognising settler positionality as a beneficiary of colonisation
3. Reciprocity: using our resources to support, remunerate and reciprocate the contributions of Indigenous collaborators wherever possible
4. Justice: thinking always about how our work contributes to more just relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples

Research Agenda

The Centre’s research program is shaped by a series of provocations that consider how Australia’s founding as a settler colony restricts our capacity to engage with the central challenges of our time. Our interdisciplinary work centres critical scholarship that is often marginalised in the disciplines. We aim to create an institutional home for the slow and careful approaches foundational to the often undervalued or invisible ethical work that is essential to any research in this field.

The Centre’s research agenda focuses on five research themes:

- **Nationhood:** researching the fragility of settler nationalism, examining questions of belonging and identity, foregrounding transnational solidarities, and seeking to understand the multiple dimensions and harms of race politics. Exploring resurgent projects of Indigenous nation-building and their relationship (or lack thereof) to the settler state.
- **Justice:** exploring resistance to the violence of settler colonialism. Focussing on work that centres practices of abolition and transformation, seeking to undo and rebuild social and political institutions in ways that centre Indigenous sovereignties and prioritise community control.
- **Country:** exploring the centrality of Country to Indigenous Lifeworlds, focussing on the ways First Nations’ care for and obligations to Country are inexplicably bound to questions of sovereignty. Understanding environmental harm as a foundational violence of settler colonialism.
- **Hi/stories:** investigating the multitudinal narratives that circulate in this place through which people make meaning of themselves and their communities. Analysing the role of story and narrative in the production of so-called Australia and making space for marginalised stories.
- **Knowledge practices:** Understanding the ethics and politics of knowledge production through research that supports decolonial or anti-harm approaches and methodologies. Examining the challenges to transformative teaching about race, racism, and the ongoing harms of settler colonialism

Function of the Advisory Board

The primary function of the Advisory Board is to provide guidance to the Director to ensure the mission of The Centre is being met. The Board will support The Centre’s commitment to fostering world-leading research, research training, education, and public engagement. The Board will provide medium-term strategic thinking, as well as aide in supporting the development of new opportunities and new ways of thinking. The Board will not provide ongoing day-to-day management or administrative oversight related to the Australian Centre’s activities.

Frequency of meetings

The board will meet as below unless otherwise determined by the Chair. The Board will also address business via email.

Schedule for 2024

Name	Date	Time	Location
Meeting One	Tuesday 27th February	2:30 PM-4:00 PM	Zoom
Meeting Two	Tuesday 7th May	2:30 PM-4:00 PM	Zoom
Meeting Three	Tuesday 13th August	2:30 PM-4:00 PM	Zoom

Meeting Four	Tuesday 19th November	2:30 PM-4:00 PM	Zoom
---------------------	-----------------------	-----------------	------

Membership

Dr Lou Bennett AM will chair the Board working closely with Director Sarah Maddison. If Dr Bennett AM cannot attend a board meeting Professor Maddison will call upon members of the committee to assume this role.

Membership Type	Member	Affiliation	Term Expiry
Chair	Dr Lou Bennett AM	School of Social and Political Sciences Faculty of Arts	2025
Academic Representative	Dr Kim Alley	School of Social and Political Sciences Faculty of Arts	2025
Academic Representative	Dr Ngaree Blow	Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences	2025
Academic Representative	A/Prof Jessica Gerrard	Melbourne Graduate School of Education	2025
Academic Representative	Professor Chris Healy	School of Culture and Communications Faculty of Arts	2025
Academic Representative	A/Prof Crystal McKinnon	School of Social and Political Sciences Faculty of Arts	2026
Wurundjeri representative	Stacie Piper	Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung, Cultural heritage Aboriginal corporation.	2026
Academic Representative	Dr Andonis Piperoglou	School of Historical and Philosophical Studies Faculty of Arts	2026

Length of membership

Members will serve a term of two years from the date of appointment. An offer to extend the membership of the Board by two years will be at the discretion of the Chair and Centre Director.

Board Support

The Board will be supported by the Centre Manager [Bianca Williams](#)