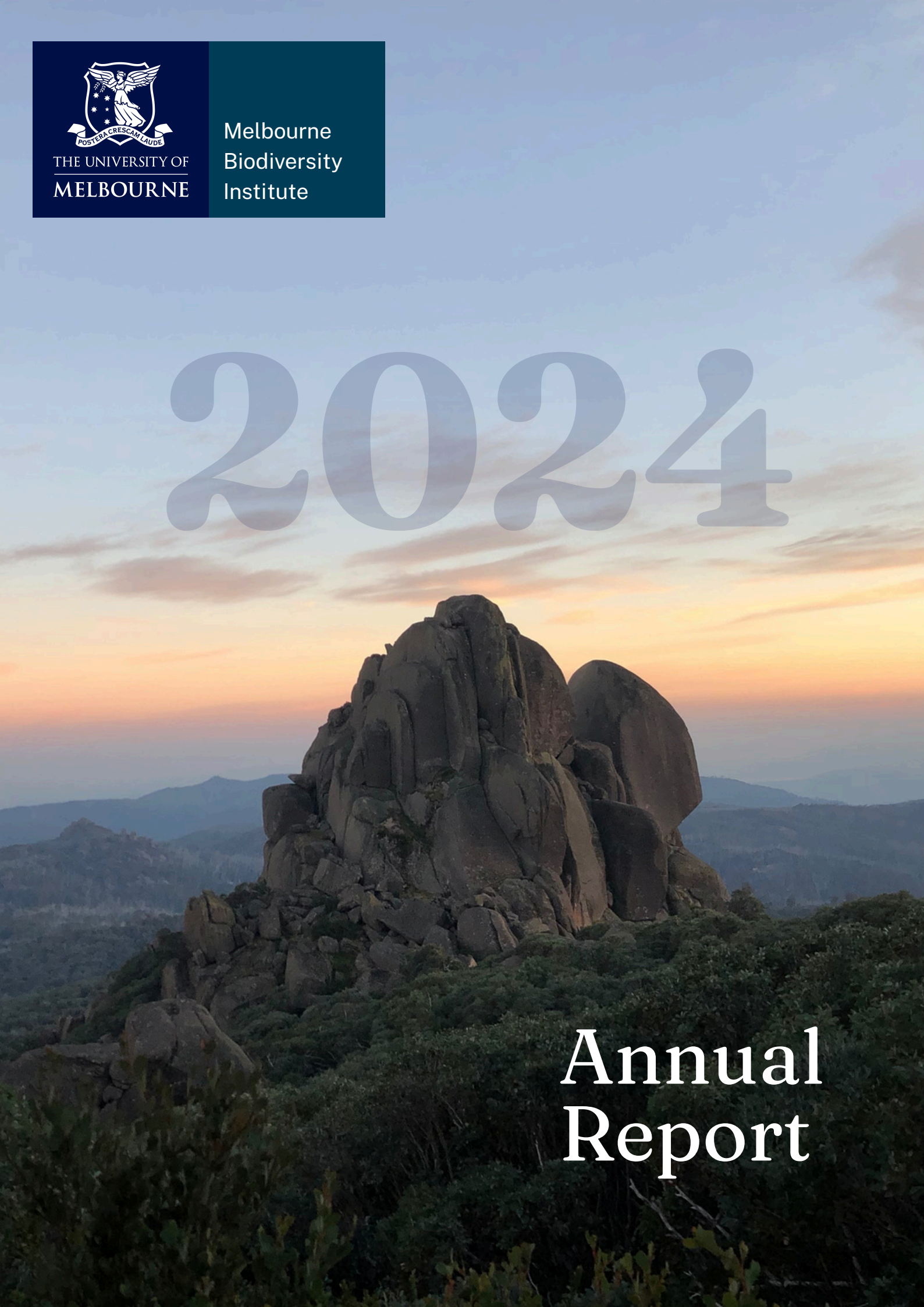
THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Melbourne Biodiversity Institute



2024

Annual Report

From the Directors

A glance at the current state of global biodiversity presents us with grim developments but growing groundswell.

2024 saw the largest Great Barrier Reef coral reef bleaching event on record, fifty-two species added to Australia's official list of most imperiled species, and biodiversity loss rated in the top two threats to the global economy by the World Economic Forum.

Yet research by the Biodiversity Council shows that Australians today are more supportive of greater protection for and spending on nature than ever before.

Signed by 198 nations at the end of 2022, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework [GBF] seeks to halt global biodiversity loss by 2030. It has energised global biodiversity protection and restoration efforts.

Globally, policies and initiatives aligning with GBF commitments have led to a rapid rise in the number of businesses seeking expertise to help understand and disclose financial risks associated with nature.

This is driving new research and translation initiatives that bridge disciplines, such as the natural sciences, social sciences, economics, and law.

The Melbourne Biodiversity Institute has been established to support the rapid social and economic transitions needed to achieve global and national goals for nature and climate. Our institute's mission is to bring together the interdisciplinary excellence needed to address and stem biodiversity loss, and support region-wide efforts to restore nature.

In our first full year of work, we delivered a remarkable program of strategic engagement, to build an interdisciplinary research network within the university with a shared purpose and vision [**p.5-6**].

Alongside building our community, networks and strategy, we have got the ball rolling with projects that just couldn't wait. We are excited to share some of our key research and the outstanding real-world applications and impacts for biodiversity that have been achieved by our researchers [**p.7-10**].

We've contributed to and fostered national and global nature initiatives. Among many connections, our researchers participated in the first Global Nature Positive Summit and the CBD COP in Columbia. The Institute was also honoured to host conservation leaders from Melanesian nations at the first Tambu Symposium [**p.13-14**].

We are excited to have laid the foundations and commenced research leadership toward meaningful outcomes for biodiversity in 2025 and beyond. We hope you are buoyed by reading some of the highlights and seeds we've sown.

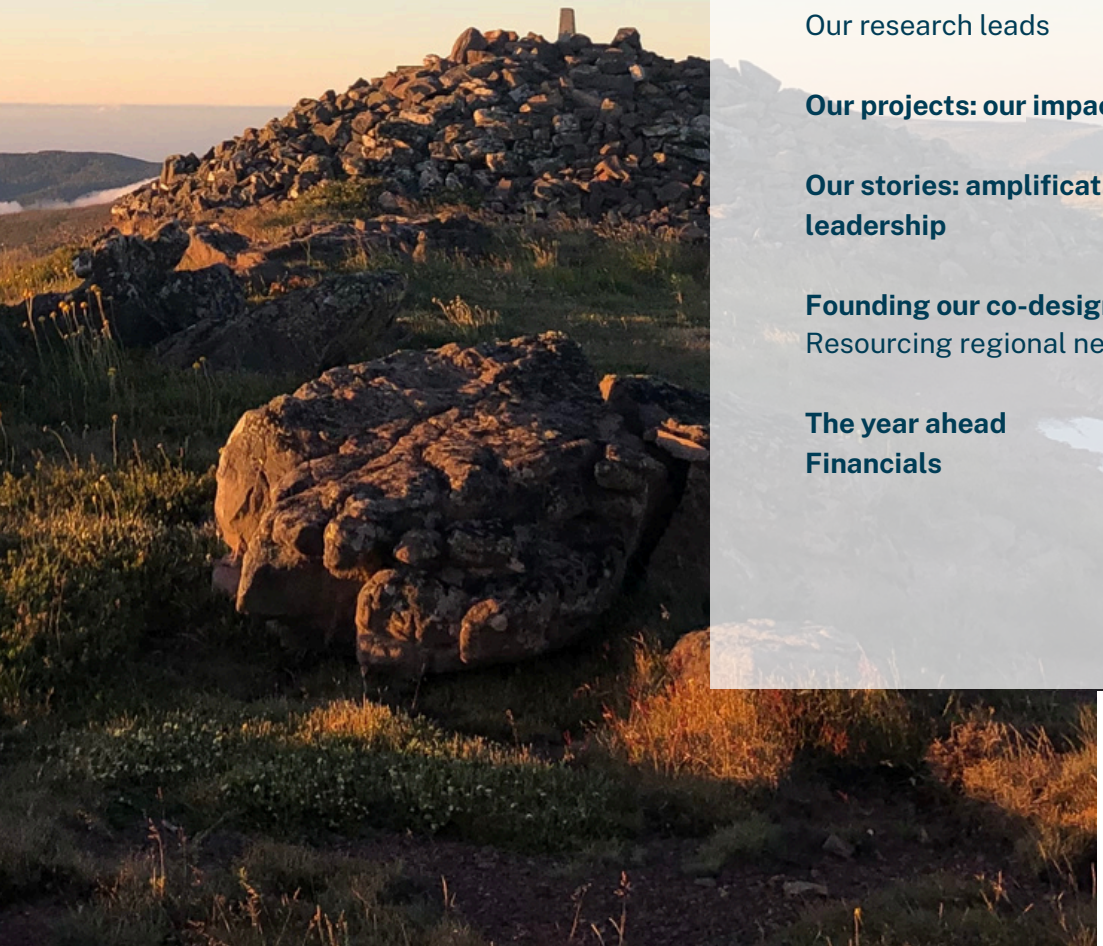
Professor Brendan Wintle - Director
Dr Rachel Morgain - Deputy Director
Melbourne Biodiversity Institute

This photo, the cover, and all the landscape images in this report, were taken by MBI researcher Melanie Wong during a field trip to monitor deberra, or bogong moth, populations on Taungurung and Gurnaikurnai Country [p.9].

In all that we do, the MBI depends on Country.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have cared for and spoken the language of Country for millennia, and remain the leading authorities in the oldest and most successful biodiversity knowledge systems in the world.

Our gratitude for Country and First Peoples is embedded in our commitment to address the impacts of colonialism, in our work.



Contents

About Melbourne Biodiversity Institute

Melbourne Biodiversity Institute [MBI] brings together researchers and practitioners from across the university and beyond, to create tools and evidence to guide policy makers, communities and industry in nature positive action and transformation.

Our purpose is to enhance the critical movement towards a nature positive future, equipping decision makers and communities with innovative data, models, research and thinking to support and guide nature positive transitions.

While we develop richly informed ideas, policy proposals and tools to address the biodiversity crisis, it is vital that the transition we make is just, healthy, and inclusive. To do this MBI brings together previously unconnected disciplines such as engineering, health, humanities and arts, along with Traditional Owners and local communities, public institutions and civil society organisations to generate brand new solutions.

MBI works collaboratively within an ecosystem of committed organisations, networks and initiatives, to convene the breadth and depth of the University of Melbourne's capability; acting as a portal for sharing ideas, amplifying this work and training a new generation of interdisciplinary researchers in biodiversity research excellence, partnerships and impact.

2024 Overview: achieving our purpose

Establishing a culture of research excellence

In 2024 MBI invited colleagues across faculties at the University of Melbourne to found seven key areas of research foci, led by some of the most innovative academics in their respective fields [p.6]. The Institute is committed to resourcing these leaders with practical support to realise crucial projects. Our year showcases the breadth of this excellence: from developing the Victorian Biodiversity Index [p.7], to understanding animal ethics in conservation decision-making [p.14], to creating new tools to completing the University's first biodiversity footprint analysis [p.10], to national and international advisory roles, leadership positions, and public platforms [p.11].

We are also training a new generation of creative and highly skilled early career academics and knowledge holders, through our PhD scholarship program [p.5] and our active projects [p.8]. Working as part of interdisciplinary teams, engaging with stakeholders and putting their training to work, we are supporting a cohort of new experts in honing their skills to deliver high quality research that makes a genuine difference.

Advancing impactful projects

In its first year of operation MBI secured funds alongside local and national partners, and advanced 12 biodiversity projects with real-world outcomes. From assessing whether carbon and biodiversity markets support First Peoples caring for Country, rapid energy transitions and renewables infrastructure, to biodiversity frameworks for banks, business and finance, to bogong moth conservation, each project was designed with a larger vision of holistic biodiversity revitalisation [p.7-10].

These projects activate researchers, resources, and communities to address biodiversity challenges. At their core is the MBI leading a shift in attention and narrative in everyday lives across industries, and a regeneration of biodiversity as the priority when making human decisions.

Strengthening our partnerships

We know that our strength lies in a commitment to fostering trustful and respectful partnerships, and working with others to deliver research that generates real benefits for biodiversity and people.

Our partners come from many sectors of expertise: governments, industry, finance, community, First Nations, land management, conservation, non-government organisations, public institutions, cultural organisations and philanthropy. By fostering partnerships we have helped expand the connections between these groups, convening unique and urgent conversations and providing links that spark new opportunities [p.13].

Our people

MBI Team

Brendan Wintle
Director

Rachel Morgain
Deputy Director

Dolla Cataldo
Business Manager

Alanta Colley
Program Manager

Rosie Stevens
Communications & Events Coorrdinator

Stephanie Stylli
Research and Projects Officer

Nathamon Delahoy
Administration Assistant

MBI Advisory Board

Dr Jenny Gray AM, PSM
CEO, Zoos Victoria

Estelle Parker
CEO, Responsible Investment Association Australasia

Ian Hamm
Chair of the Board of Directors, First Nations Foundation

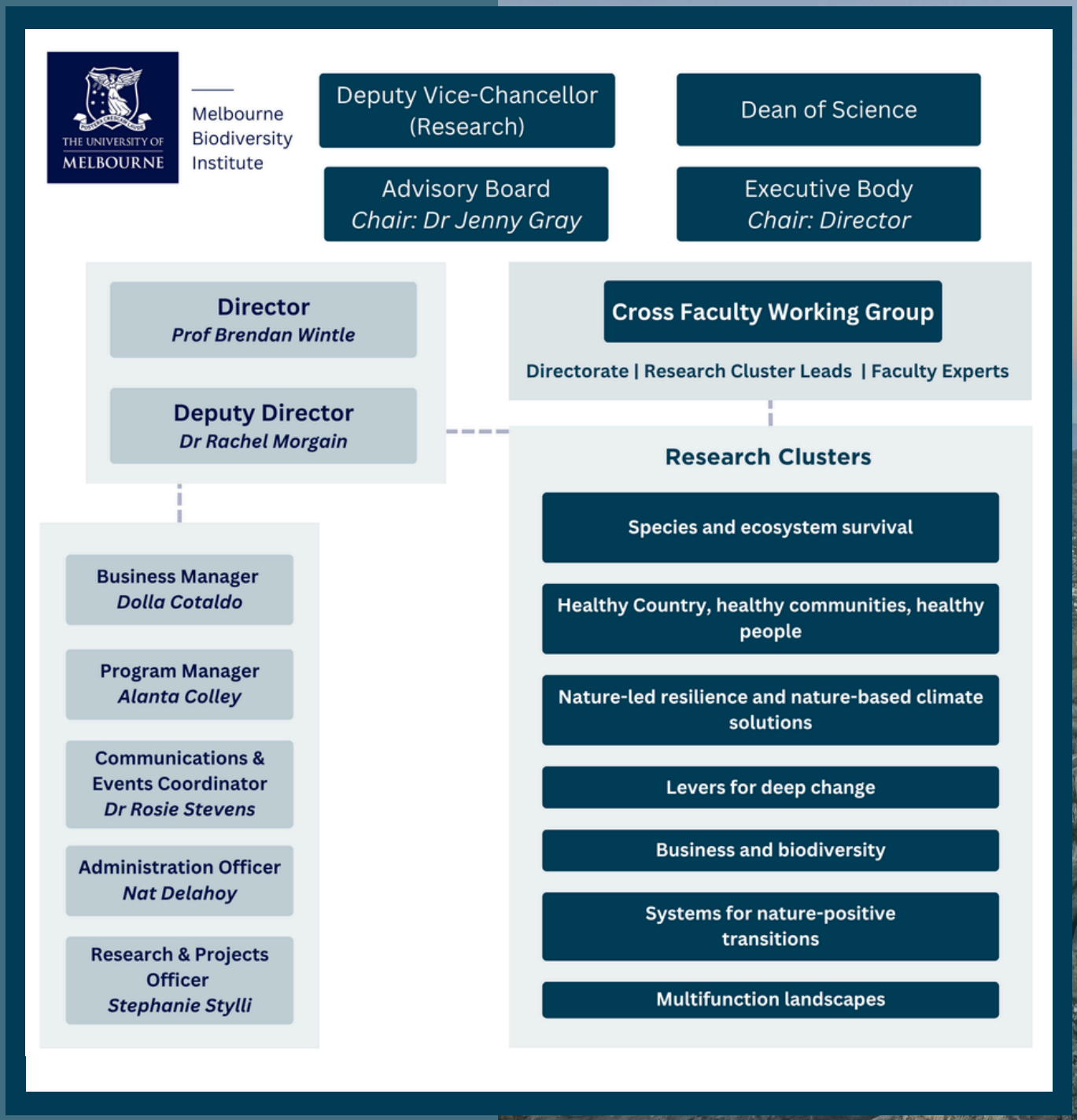
Lynley Crosswell
CEO, Museums Victoria

David Shelmerdine
Deputy Chairman, Climateworks

Professor Moira O'Bryan
Dean, Faculty of Science University of Melbourne

Our networks

Our structure



Our influence

Global

- Global Biodiversity Framework
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- UN Environmental Program
- The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- International Union for Conservation of Nature
- Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures
- United Nations Oceans
- Science Based Targets Network
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures
- The Global Reporting Initiative
- The Global Reporting Initiative
- Paris Agreement [UNFCCC]

In its first year, MBI has demonstrated and applied expertise in global, national and state policy frameworks for climate and nature.

MBI have produced guidance, indicators, modelling, mapping, decision making support, analysis and advice that has created, shaped or defined these key bodies and frameworks.

Learn more about our partnerships and co-design ethic on p.15.

National and State

- The Australian Nature Positive Plan
- State of the Environment Report
- Basin Plan for Murray-Darling Basin
- Green Building Council of Australia
- Chytridiomycosis Threat Abatement Plan
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water: Nature-based climate and disaster resilience
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation
- State of the Environment Report
- The Australian Nature Positive Plan
- Basin Plan for Murray-Darling Basin
- University of Melbourne Climate Adaptation Plan
- Victorian Biodiversity Index
- Victorian Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis
- Engaging with Traditional Owners of Corroboree frog Country
- Saving our Species [NSW]
- Biodiversity 2037 [VIC]

Our cornerstone: establishing a culture of research excellence

Our 2024 focus was creating, connecting into and supporting University of Melbourne networks to advance the strategic establishment of interdisciplinary research focused on addressing complex biodiversity challenges.

The Institute launched The Biosphere, a weekly missive for knowledge holders across the university. We also published a comprehensive guide to the university's 100 academic-strong presence at the 2024 Ecological Society of Australia conference.

The MBI also worked with Melbourne Climate Futures, Melbourne Business School, the Oceania Institute, and the Sustainability Team to deliver symposiums, workshops, meetings and working groups.

Fostering interdisciplinary research

Comprising 40 experts from 12 faculties and departments, our Cross-faculty Working Group supported the MBI in designing areas of focus, or clusters, through which to organise our research excellence and drive our impact. At the end of 2024 we appointed research leads to guide each cluster in future interdisciplinary projects.

With a community of over 300 University of Melbourne researchers, students, staff and collaborators, we undertook 11 "deep dives" with faculties across the university.

We gauged the breadth of interdisciplinary expertise and interests, and built a shared vision for harnessing our skills and partnerships to solve present complex biodiversity challenges. Deep dives produced a suite of project ideas for the research clusters to explore and progress. These cover the breadth of current biodiversity research, expertise and interests across the University.

The MBI scholarship program

Three strategic PhD scholarships were awarded to interdisciplinary scholars in 2024. Ainslie Macdonald is exploring opportunities in nature-positive agriculture, Nazia Akram is developing solutions to the largest cause of amphibian extinctions and Mark de Souza is researching the role of nature in health care facilities.

These scholars, working across Agriculture, Arts Business and Medicine in biodiversity commenced and finished their research planning in 2024.

Our PhD scholarships have strengthened our capacity to demonstrate interdisciplinary research underway within the Institute, and our collaborative networks, bringing together researchers from different faculties in supervisory teams. We look forward to offering another round of PhD scholarships in 2025.

Image description: Melbourne Biodiversity Institute Deep Dive with the Faculty of Business and Economics.

Our research clusters

- **Species and ecosystem survival**
- **Multifunction landscapes**
- **Healthy country, healthy communities, healthy people**
- **Business and biodiversity**
- **Nature-based resilience and nature-based climate solutions**
- **Levers for deep change**
- **Systems for nature-positive transitions**

Our research leads

Located across six different faculties, our research leads will connect more than 150 researchers into our research clusters, to create interdisciplinary projects led by community and expert need.

Professor Emily Nicholson
Faculty of Science

Professor in Conservation Biology. Emily's research develops new theory and tools for better conservation outcomes, built on multidisciplinary collaboration, scientific excellence, and impact on policy and practice at global and local scales.

A/Professor Paul Cheng
Faculty of Science

Associate Professor in Livestock Nutrition and Grazing Management. Paul coordinates graduate research subjects, and his research has explored forage use in livestock production, automatic milking system and livestock greenhouse gas emission mitigation.

A/Professor Kenneth Winkel
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Associate Professor and teaching specialist within the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health. Ken is on the UoM Sustainability Advisory Group and coordinates postgraduate healthcare sustainability and undergraduate One Health teaching.

Dr Attila Balogh
Faculty of Business and Economics

Assistant Professor of Finance, Attila's research explores corporate governance and biodiversity finance to understand how firms and markets navigate complex risks. He is interested in governance structures, data systems, and the design of disclosure regimes.

Dr Judy Bush
Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

Senior DECRA Research Fellow. Judy focuses on nature-based solutions for the climate change-biodiversity nexus in cities, including environmental policy and governance perspectives, collaborative governance and sustainability transitions.

A/Professor Miriama Young
Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

Associate Professor and Head of Composition at the Conservatorium of Music. Miriama uses music to blend unique sound worlds and create new sonic colour, drawing on an eclectic array of art forms and contexts.

A/Professor Rebecca Nelson
Melbourne Law School

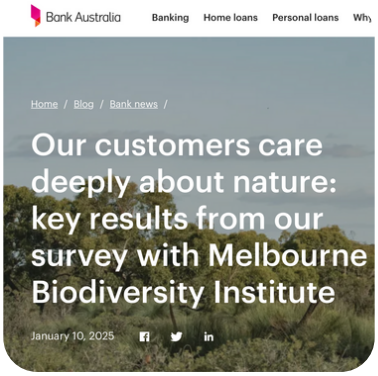
Associate Professor and Director of the Melbourne Centre for Law and the Environment. Rebecca's research focuses on environmental and natural resources law and policy, with an emphasis on empirical research and practical solutions.

Our projects: our impact

Supporting Bank Australia customers for nature and climate

Business and biodiversity

Melbourne Biodiversity Institute led a project for Bank Australia to understand the bank's personal banking customers' views, engagement and openness to action on nature and climate as part of their nature and biodiversity strategy.



Meg Shaw and Rachel Morgain led a partnership with researchers from University of Melbourne Critical Ethnography Lab, University of Queensland, RMIT and Mosaic Insights, co-designing research with Bank Australia. The research surveyed more than 2500 customers, and identified a majority customer base who care proactively about nature and biodiversity.

By finding that over 80% of customers support Bank Australia introducing more policies on nature and climate, Melbourne Biodiversity Institute has laid the groundwork for the bank to show leadership in the banking sector to transition to a nature-positive economy. We also assessed the most effective roles a bank can play to support and engage a personal banking customer base to act for nature and climate.

Recommendations included implementing innovative policies, partnership programs, messaging and engaging diverse customer champions. Our research was presented to the leadership team and all employees, and key findings have been shared with customers.

Creating the Victorian Biodiversity Index

Species and ecosystem survival

To protect and promote biodiversity, state governments need high quality, reliable and detailed data demonstrating the trajectory of different plant and animal populations. MBI has developed the Victorian Biodiversity Index [VBI] for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action [DEECA] for this purpose.

The MBI team collated 310,468 timeseries for 1,872 species across birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and plants. This living tool incorporates updates to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas, as they are made. DEECA will now use this highly sensitive tool to perform reporting to inform Victoria's Biodiversity 2030 Strategy.

The MBI will continue to work with DEECA to improve the Index; promoting evidenced-based biodiversity policy across the state.

Evaluating nature-risk investment decision tools with Franklin Templeton

Business and biodiversity

Financial institutions increasingly recognise the importance of evaluating nature-related impacts and dependencies within their investment portfolios. Failing to account for the role of nature poses significant legal risks and threatens long-term returns. With large portfolios often containing thousands of companies, each with highly complex global operations and supply chains, accurately assessing biodiversity impacts poses significant challenges.

Resultantly, software has emerged to help financial institutions assess how their corporate activities impact nature. Yet these tools currently lack third-party certification, a standardised methodology, and clear documentation of their theoretical foundation, leading to uncertainty about their reliability.

To address this uncertainty, Franklin Templeton, a leading global asset manager managing over US$1 trillion in assets, commissioned the MBI to conduct a critical review of existing biodiversity impact assessment tools. We engaged eight prominent biodiversity impact data providers, and evaluated their methodologies, comparing their outputs using a representative sample of S&P 500-listed companies. Our review found substantial variability between the tools' assessment of our sample. The use of any one tool could lead to substantially different investment decisions compared to another tool. This was further compounded by a general lack of transparency in the methodologies used, making it difficult to independently verify the reasons behind variations in results.

Our findings underscore the urgent need for scientifically robust, transparent, and standardised biodiversity assessment methods, as frameworks such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures and the Science Based Targets Network are increasingly encouraging such reporting.

Understanding cultural and social values shaping renewable energy decisions

Multifunction landscapes

Led by Rachel Morgain in partnership with Boundless Earth, the project team aims to address the wicked problems of community resistance that can arise in renewable energy planning processes when social, cultural, political and ecological conflicts are not adequately addressed.

Institute researchers Stephanie Chen, Christian Miller-Sabbioni and Joliette Cooper-Booth have interviewed dozens of Indigenous and local grassroots organisations working on net-zero developments that integrate biodiversity and the priorities of local communities and Traditional Owners. The project report provides a systematic look at good practices for linking biodiversity data and inclusive planning for renewable energy projects. Our report highlights case studies and networks of community groups that are ready to be engaged with by state agencies, renewable energy businesses and other large actors.

Key findings show that close collaborations between grassroots groups and institutional actors are necessary for making accurate and inclusive decisions about biodiversity in renewable energy projects.

Crucially, our guidelines can be used by community project facilitators, developers and governments to support the effective integration of biodiversity tools and data, including the biodiversity risk analysis tool, with local knowledge and with community participatory decision-making processes.

Our projects: our impact

Mapping a rapid nature-positive renewable energy transition

Multifunction landscapes

In partnership with the Melbourne Energy Institute, Australian Conservation Foundation and Boundless Earth, Melbourne Biodiversity Institute researchers have been working to bring ecological, spatial and cultural data sets together with energy infrastructure planning models together, to design a renewable energy network that avoids damage to nature and cultural values. Through our work, we have demonstrated that it is possible to build the renewable energy infrastructure necessary to meet Net Zero targets without destroying nature.

The tool is designed to measure the potential impact of proposed projects on the cultural and ecological systems of their prospective locations to empower better strategic decision making. For example, projects on degraded, ex-agricultural land may have limited impacts on biodiversity compared to areas with migratory routes of birds and bats.

These tools provide quality data that can save the energy sector precious time and money by identifying potential risks early which reduces delays. This strengthens Australia's ability to meet its current Net Zero commitments as well as our international commitment to halting human induced extinctions. It also saves Australia the much longer-term costs attempting to reverse ecosystem destruction.

MBI initially created these models mapping the entire East Coast in Queensland. With the model proved, our researchers have now expanded the reach of the tools to be able to inform policy and planning nationally. The results have been used in University of Melbourne's contribution to the design of Net Zero Australia 2; with biodiversity risk analysis being a large part of the new program. Net Zero Australia 2 has already attracted over $2million in promised support.

Building capacity and conserving Bogong moths (deberra)

Species and ecosystem survival

The Bogong moth, or deberra in Taungurung language, is widely known for its annual mass-migration to the Australian Alps. Moth abundance means ecosystem abundance: deberra are a vital food source for the critically endangered Mountain Pygmy Possums. Deberra are also deeply culturally valuable to many First Nations Peoples.

In 2017 moth numbers crashed by 99.5%. The MBI are working with a range of partners, in a collaborative effort to find out why. There are significant gaps in Western knowledge about where the moths breed, the natural fluctuations of the species, and the specific threats to their survival.

Over the last two summers, field researchers Melanie Wong and Olivia Tunney have monitored Bogong moth activity across a range of sites and summits in Victoria. Ms Wong has worked

alongside Taungurung Land and Waters Council sharing different techniques for counting moths commonly taken up by non-Indigenous researchers. Methods include a bucket-and-light method, and a newer camera-capture method. Taungurung cultural authorities have then correlated cultural knowledge and scoped sites to instruct our team on the best methods of data collection for Country and deberra. Our team has also collaborated with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the Nallawilli Traditional Owner Group; to enhance all parties' capacity to make informed conservation decisions for the moths and improve the MBI data set.

We know that at the heart of understanding the Bogong moth, are strong, equipped networks. Alongside First Nations leadership, the MBI have collaborated with the North East Catchment Management Authority to select sites and share data and support Traditional Owner groups to continue monitoring initiatives.

The project team has built a partnership with the University of Western Sydney, supporting the establishment of a multi-state 3 year monitoring program across Tasmania, NSW, Victoria and ACT. The team has also established a new pilot trial for a Bogong moth environmental DNA project, which was presented at the Ecological Society of Australia conference in December. Our Alps-wide monitoring program is only possible through the financial commitments of donors who connected with us through Australian Environmental Grant-makers Network [AEGN].

Melanie Wong showcasing her work at University of Melbourne Behind the Science philanthropy night.

Biodiversity footprint as living lab with UoM Sustainability team

Business and biodiversity

In 2022, the University of Melbourne took the Nature Positive Pledge as a founding member of the Nature Positive Universities Alliance. The University had begun setting its benchmark through a Biodiversity Baseline Data Project, focused on on-campus biodiversity. However, little work had been done to understand how the University's entire value chain - such as the supply chain of the goods and services the university purchases and their investments - impacts biodiversity.

To address this gap, the University of Melbourne's Sustainability Strategy team engaged the MBI to lead a comprehensive, institution-wide biodiversity footprint and materiality assessment of nature-related pressures and dependencies.

MBI developed two open-source, reproducible R workflows that help the university complete initial assessments of their nature-related dependencies (such as reliance on clean water, healthy soils, and natural resources) and their impacts on nature (such as greenhouse gas emissions, land use change, and biodiversity decline). These workflows are designed to align with the Nature Positive Universities Nature Positive Pledge and international frameworks, including the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures [TNFD].

Key findings of the assessment reveal that contribution to global warming, land-use change, and water consumption are the primary drivers of the University's biodiversity impacts, with the majority of the impacts embedded within the University's supply chain. These insights have directly informed the University's evolving nature-positive strategy: initiating engagement with major suppliers and guiding approaches to meet renewable energy targets, ensuring nature considerations sit alongside climate goals.

By providing open-source workflows, MBI has empowered other universities and businesses to understand their own biodiversity footprint and impact reduction options.

Our stories: amplification and thought leadership

In its first year, MBI colleagues have been invited to share expertise and lead thinking in numerous high-impact rooms.

MBI were invited into the review of Australia's nature laws, including membership on the Minister's expert advisory panel.

Members stepped into public roles as Councillors for the Biodiversity Council, and were invited to attend COP 16 and the Global Nature-Positive Summit.

Members were also invited to speak at a Ministerial Roundtable on Nature-Positive Business attended by Minister Plibersek and industry leaders including BHP, ForEco, Rio Tinto, ANZ, and others, which was hosted by Melbourne Business School.

Alongside media appearances, MBI Director Brendan Wintle gave evidence at a Senate Inquiry on Nature Law Reform, and stepped into positions as both board director and science advisory committee chair with Zoos Victoria.

Left: MBI researcher Sam Hickman presents biodiversity footprinting work at the Wattle Fellowship Spotlight event at Earnst and Young.

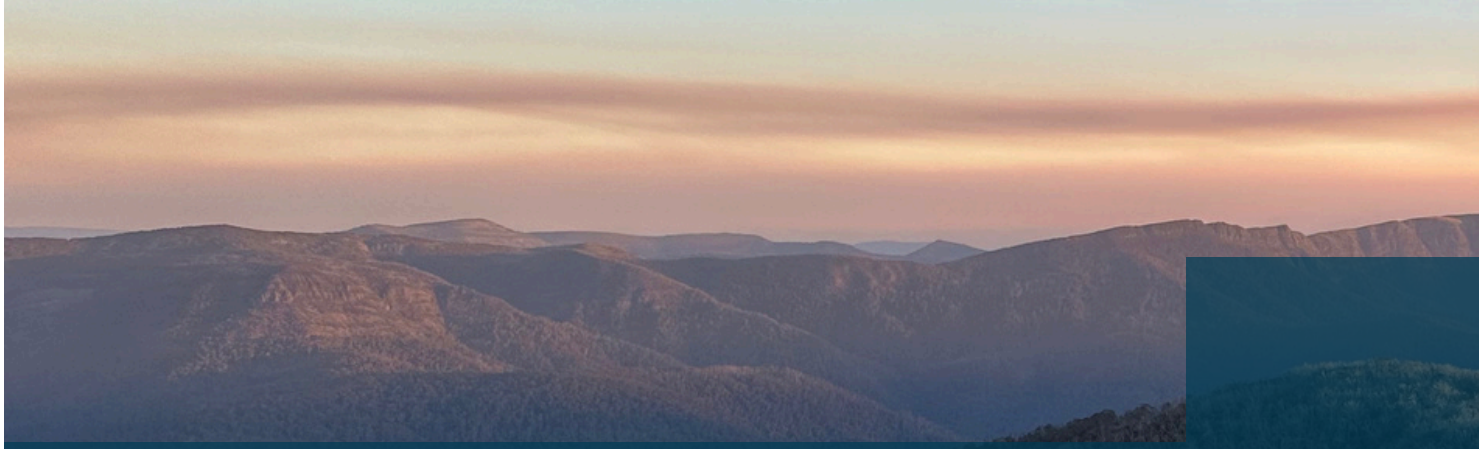
Above: MBI cluster lead Emily Nicholson invited to attend Biological Diversity COP16.
Left: MBI Deputy Director Rachel Morgain leads interdisciplinary co-design workshop at Ecological Society of Australia conference with MBI cluster lead Judy Bush.
Below: Morgain invited to speak at Agribusiness Fireside Chat at Faculty of Business and Economics.

Above: MBI Directors present at University-wide Deep Dives meetings with faculties.

Right: MBI Director Brendan Wintle speaks to ABC News about rediscovered Melbourne/Naarm species.

Left: MBI briefs Minister for the Environment, Tanya Plibersek's office on nature laws

Below: Brendan Wintle speaks at Australian Council of Superannuation Investors National Conference



Founding our co-design ethic

Co-design is at the heart of real-world, impactful research. MBI held several co-design and adoption meetings and workshops with industry partners across our projects, including:

- Workshops with Australian Conservation Foundation, Queensland Conservation Council, Queensland Government, Victorian Government and a wide array of other partners on de-risking biodiversity and renewables;
- Bank Australia co-design workshop and senior leaders briefing on customer views on nature and climate;
- Co-design workshop with Taungurung Land and Waters Council on priorities for nature and carbon funding;
- National Australia Bank workshop and review meetings to assess first pass TNFD analysis.

These workshops established a core methodology of co-design with industry partners across sectors. They have built trust and reputation for MBI with key partners, and established our credibility for building meaningful, effective, relevant research.

This lays the foundation for MBI to develop further relationships, and bring together these partners in 2025 in interdisciplinary and industry co-design workshops.

Building partnerships

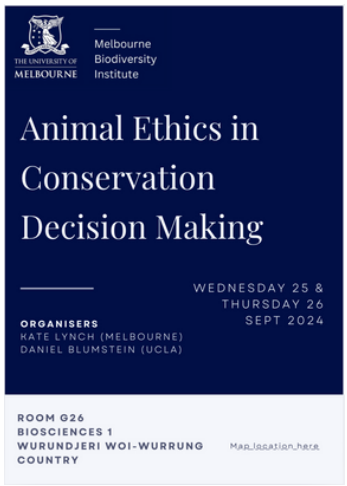
MBI has established a profile, built a foundation of impactful research in key areas, and grown awareness of our interdisciplinary research capability across key sectors in government, finance, industry, NGOs, First Nations and philanthropy.

MBI established a range of partnership research projects with not for profits, finance, philanthropy and industry and delivered specific research outputs against each.

Alongside those mentioned throughout this report, some of our partners included:

- Conservation Ecology Centre
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victoria State Government)
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Australian Government)
- Treasury (Australian Government)
- Zoos Victoria
- Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
- Clean Energy Council
- Bush Heritage
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trust for Nature
- Jagun Alliance
- Museums Victoria
- NRM Regions Australia
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Environment Victoria
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Australian Carbon and Biodiversity Foundation
- Rendere Trust
- Isaacson Trust
- The Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network
- Australian Agriculture Company
- Climate Action Network Australia
- Alluvium
- Responsible Investment Association Australasia
- 31 partner organisations in government (NSW, Qld, Victoria, Commonwealth)

Resourcing regional networks



Tambu Symposium

Dr Tyrone Lavery invited a group of conservation leaders from Melanesia (Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Bougainville and Papua New Guinea) to the University of Melbourne for the first ever Tambu Symposium.

Hosted by the MBI, and supported by the Oceania Institute and The School of BioSciences, the group of conservation leaders dedicated an immersive week to discussing tambus, or cultural restrictions, related to the environment, and their potential roles in biodiversity conservation.

New Caledonian researcher in Ecology and Conservation Biology, Conservation Officer of the Northern Province of New Caledonia and President of the Gardiens des Iles association Malik Oedin noted:

“This short week's work has enabled us to set up a solid network throughout Melanesia, which will gradually grow stronger."

“The first fruits of the working group are already within reach, with the preparation of a dedicated symposium by the group at the 32nd International Congress for Conservation Biology [ICCB] to be held in Brisbane in June 2025.” Mr Oedin added.

International animal ethics workshop

The MBI hosted a two day intensive workshop on animal ethics in conservation decision making. Coordinated by Dr Kate Lynch from University of Melbourne and Professor Dan Blumstein from University of California, LA, 12 participants from universities and insitutions across Australia co-authored a paper due to appear in *Trends and Ecology and Evolution*.

First Nations-led Conservation Futures goes independent

We are excited to see Conservation Futures launch as an independent First Nations owned and run organisation, building and trialling a world-first Indigenous-led Integrated Knowledge System [IKS].

Conservation Futures started as an Ian Potter Foundation partnership project between Bush Heritage Australia and MBI colleagues at University of Melbourne, with Jagun Alliance and many other research, NGO and government organisations.

Conservation Futures is ‘Creating a place to engage, understand, protect and heal Country through recognising, safeguarding, and weaving knowledge systems’.

The IKS is that place, a place where First Nations and other knowledge holders can safely hold their knowledge on a platform, share knowledge between generations, and choose what and how they share with others. We look forward to continuing to work with the Conservation Futures team as they grow the work and share it with others.

The Year Ahead

In 2025 MBI will expand our reach and impact; building on the partnerships and projects established in our first year of operation. We will invest in furthering our research excellence through the launch of our inaugural seed funding round for interdisciplinary biodiversity research; progressing the most promising initiatives that align with our strategic plan.

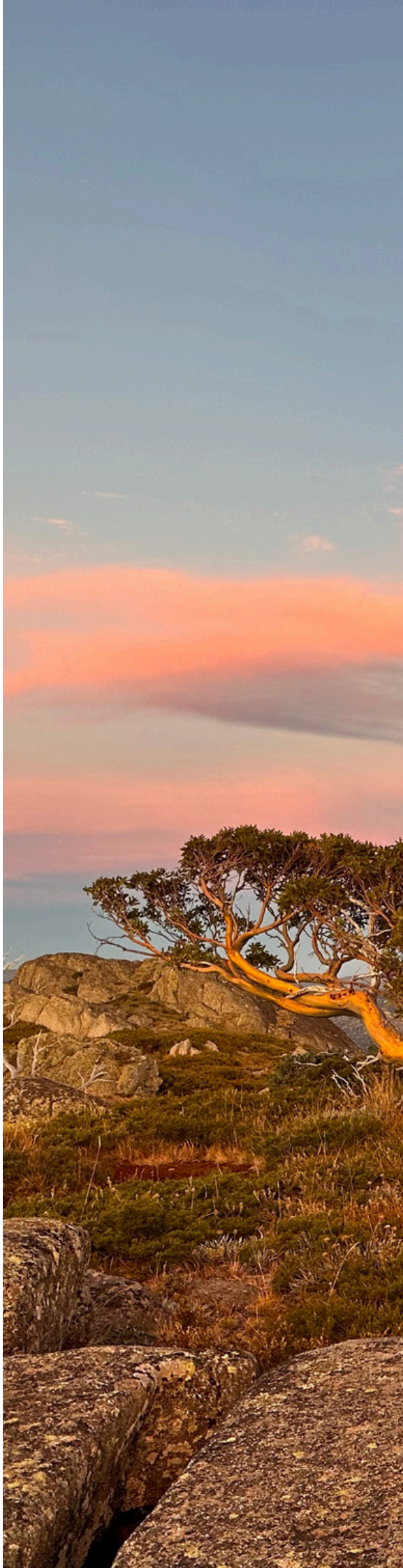
Our seven research clusters will be launched in 2025. These clusters are designed to nurture communities of practice in key challenge areas, drive innovative approaches to nature-positive solutions for business, land management that is good for nature and people, and engage a range of other activities across our priority areas. We will be focusing on supporting new large grant applications, synthesis and pilot research, industry research co-design forums, invited speakers and workshops, strategic public engagement, and other activities proposed by clusters that fit within MBI scope and strategic plan.

We will continue to centre Indigenous and community knowledge in the transition to a nature-positive economy. We are launching new projects with state government partners, building community engagement into high priority regional planning initiatives. We will uplift the voices of dedicated community researchers by sponsoring and co-programming workshops at the Australian Citizen Science conference late in 2025.

Responding to substantial demand from the finance sector, MBI will support business in transitioning to nature-positive practice, assisting partners to implement data tools, to measure their impact on biodiversity and the benefits of positive transformational change. With our partners in finance, we will look at building the biodiversity skills and knowledge currently lacking in the finance sector through micro-credentialing, as well as the development of a ‘nature for business knowledge hub’.

We will continue to support both state and Federal governments to improve protection of our natural assets in the renewable energy transition. This includes supporting their implementation of our integrated mapping tools, which will be implemented through Net Zero Australia II and DEECA’s implementation of the Victorian Biodiversity Index.

Alongside offering our three interdisciplinary PhD scholarships, MBI will commence development of a ‘nature academy’ for early career researchers; enhance their skills, networks and expertise through cross-disciplinary collaboration, training, and building collegiality through a positive cohort experience.



Financials 2024

Income	
Core University Funding	$1,034,069
Expenditure	
Operating and administration expenditure	
Directorate salary	$178,651
Deputy and Professional staff salaries	$332,240
Administration and general	$12,793
Sub-total operating expenditure	**$523,684**
Research enabling expenditure	
Salaries (research-enabling staff only)	$140,521
Engagement & sponsorship activities	$12,766
Research amplification	$30,356
Sub-total research enabling expenditure	**$183,643**
Total Expenditure	**$707,327**
Net Surplus/Deficit	**$356,742**

Melbourne Biodiversity Institute acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses), the Yorta Yorta Nation (Dookie and Shepparton campuses), and the Dja Dja Wurrung people (Creswick campus).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years.

We also acknowledge First Peoples' enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future, and acknowledge the importance of Indigenous knowledge in the Institute. As a community of researchers, teachers, professional staff and students, we are privileged to work and learn every day with Indigenous colleagues and partners.

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