

Strategy 2030

Melbourne
Biodiversity
Institute



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



In all that we do, the Melbourne Biodiversity Institute 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.

This photo and the cover were taken by MBI researcher Melanie Wong during a field trip to monitor deberra, or bogong moth, populations on Taungurung and Gunaikurnai Country



Our Purpose

The Melbourne Biodiversity Institute nurtures and amplifies transformative, interdisciplinary and world-leading biodiversity research. We platform expertise from across the University of Melbourne, fostering the partnerships, people and practices that drive positive outcomes for nature and the prosperity that thriving biodiversity delivers.

We translate knowledge into contributions to university, community and corporate learning, and provide the evidence base for the transition to a nature-positive future.

Vision

In 2030 Australia and our region will have taken bold steps to transition from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy that places the biodiversity that sustains us at the centre of just and evidence-based decision making.

We are building nature-positive cities, protecting and restoring Country and biodiverse landscapes so that nature is thriving and human-mediated extinctions are prevented.

The Melbourne Biodiversity Institute (MBI) will be placed at the centre of global research contributing to these transitions, through nurturing excellence and impact in biodiversity research. That research will be co-designed and implemented with communities, governments, civil society and businesses.



Photo by
Nicholas Rakotoparen

Our Strategic Programs

The Melbourne Biodiversity Institute (MBI) operates under **three strategic programs** designed to support the Advancing Melbourne 2030 strategy and “*Advancing Research 2030, Excellence for Impact*” strategy. Our programs provide a tangible expression of the biodiversity and ecosystems research excellence and impact that will underpin the “*Climate sustainability and ecosystem health*” impact accelerator. These programs create opportunities for academics across all nine Faculties to lead impactful biodiversity research through coordinated funding bids, expanded partner networks, and strategic positioning in policy spaces.

Program

1

Convene and Grow Research Excellence

Our distinctive role at the University of Melbourne is to convene — to create the spaces, structures and momentum that bring together researchers across all nine faculties with the partners, communities and policy-makers who need their expertise. We unite disciplines and sectors to advance biodiversity research that addresses global and local challenges, strengthening University of Melbourne's research capabilities by connecting academics across disciplines, building partnerships between academia and communities, and aligning our work with global and national commitments. This includes:

- **Resourcing communities** and academics across disciplines and places; to build partnerships, combine knowledge practices and needs, and address local biodiversity challenges.
- **Deepening our understanding of biodiversity**, its role in supporting the resilience, health, wellbeing, and prosperity of communities, knowledge that enhances the impact of biodiversity research across the university's strategic priorities.
- **Growing excellence and innovation** by supporting researchers through productive, inspiring collaborations.
- **Investigating the interactions** between humans and other living things within socio-ecological systems, including human impacts on species and ecosystems
- **Convene and lead significant funding bids** bringing together expertise, knowledge and networks from across University of Melbourne's nine faculties and our academic alliances, and connecting research teams with university-wide resources including Chancellery, Pursuit and Operations to maximise our collective impact.

Program

2

Translate Biodiversity Research into Action and Impact

Transforming biodiversity research into evidence, tools and pathways, that enable meaningful change across society. We will ensure research drives real-world impact through multiple channels:

- Influencing policy and practice in governments, NGOs and business by producing creative and responsive research through partnerships.
- Translating findings into regulation, policy, planning and management outcomes that address interconnected and environmental, social and economic challenges.
- Delivering cultural opportunities, public events, and tailored opportunities for specific partners and audiences that showcase our work and promote the importance of biodiversity as foundational to multiple societal goals.
- Establishing partnerships, embedding biodiversity as a core consideration in decision-making across government, civil society and private sectors, highlighting links to resilience, climate, health, education, agricultural and economic prosperity.
- Amplifying and communicating excellent biodiversity research to diverse audiences, growing visibility within and outside of the University of Melbourne, enhancing the national and global reputation of University of Melbourne for biodiversity research that creates cascading positive impacts.
- Exploring innovative funding models to enhance biodiversity impact, including **micro-credentialing** and new forms of enterprise aligned with the University's entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Work with public and private sector institutions to identify the opportunities to reduce impacts and promote conservation, protection and recovery of biodiversity.

Program

3

Cultivate Biodiversity Expertise & Leadership

Developing future biodiversity leaders with the interdisciplinary skills, knowledge and networks to drive lasting change. We will build capacity across all levels of education and training:

- **Increasing the capacity** of graduate researchers and academics in biodiversity fields through tailored interdisciplinary training that prepares them to contribute to diverse research priorities.
- **Embedding interdisciplinary biodiversity expertise in multiple course curricula** across the university in partnership with academic units - teaching cutting-edge research and equipping graduates across all fields with biodiversity knowledge relevant to their futures.
- **Creating pathways** for both academic and practitioner development.
- **Building networks** that connect emerging professionals with established experts and partners across climate, conservation, policy, and innovation sectors.
- **Providing professional training** that builds biodiversity understanding, skills and capability across community, government and private sectors, bringing financial sustainability to blue-sky and public-good research and development.

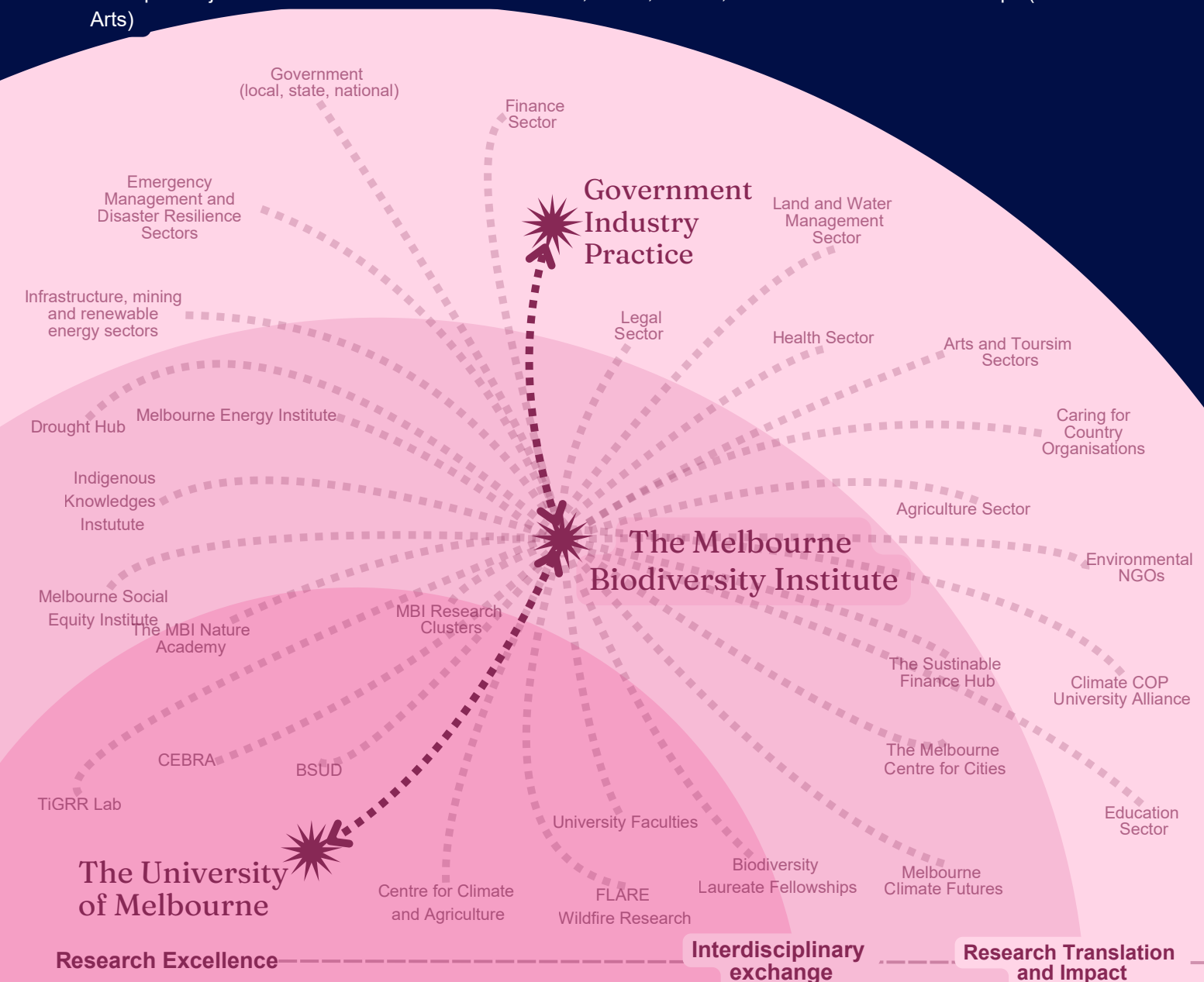
The Melbourne Biodiversity Ecosystem

Biodiversity loss stands alongside climate change as one of the defining crises of our time, and the University of Melbourne has both the responsibility and the capacity to lead a meaningful response.

Research Excellence

The Biodiversity Institute provides the University of Melbourne research community with a visible highly competent home - administrative backbone, shared infrastructure and reputational platform to pursue ambitious questions at the frontier of biodiversity research. It brings together exceptional research capability spanning across every faculty, including world leading research programs and excellence in:

- Conservation genetics and species recovery, including thylacine de-extinction research (TIGRR Lab) and biosecurity risk analysis (CEBRA)
- Ecology and environmental risk, One Health Research Group, Green Infrastructure research Group, and the Wildfire Hallmark Research Initiative
- Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design: Integrating nature into city planning and built environments (Laureate, Melbourne Centre for Cities)
- Environmental and climate law, including leadership on international biodiversity accountability frameworks (Melbourne Law School)
- Sustainable Ocean Governance - ocean climate policy and blue economy research
- Multispecies justice and more than human humanities, ethics, culture, and human nature relationships (Arts and Fine Arts)



Interdisciplinary Exchange

Biodiversity loss is a challenge of profound complexity, one that no single discipline can address alone. The Institute connects expertise across faculties and fosters the interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaborations needed to tackle real-world challenges at local, national, and global scales.

By resourcing academics and communities across disciplines and places, the Institute:

- Deepens understanding of biodiversity's role in supporting the resilience, health, wellbeing, and prosperity of communities
- Illuminates impacts of human systems on biodiversity loss
- Investigates interactions between humans and other living things within socio-ecological systems

Internally, it links with and amplifies connected initiatives, collaborating and enhancing biodiversity research within other labs and institutes, creating a web of complementary expertise rather than duplicating effort.

Growing excellence and innovation through productive and inspiring collaborations, the Institute brokers interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary partnerships that support competitive funding bids with public and private sector partners, with MBI facilitating connections across the University including Chancellery, Pursuit and Operations.

This forms a foundation for scaling up collaborative efforts to develop competitive applications for larger programs, including:

- ARC Centres of Excellence and LIEF programs
- Large ARC Linkage projects
- National Environmental Science Program Hubs

Research Translation and Impact

Universities globally are being asked to play a pivotal role in reversing biodiversity decline and innovating to create a new relationship with nature, including bringing biodiversity considerations into the activities of all sectors of society. The Institute brings interdisciplinary expertise, tools, data, R&D capability, deep knowledge and responsiveness to collaborate, innovate and translate. Each of these qualities are needed to deliver solutions to the biodiversity crises at local and global scales.

The Institute acts as a portal to the University's biodiversity research, transforming findings into evidence, tools and pathways that enable meaningful change across society. The MBI acts as a point of attraction and actively brokers new relationships with businesses, governments, NGOs, and First Nations organisations across key sectors including environment, natural resource management, health, education, finance, agriculture, mining, arts and tourism.

Working in both directions, The MBI brokers relationships that deliver research solutions to partners who need them, while proactively leading industry, government and civil society toward new thinking and approaches that will shape the future of biodiversity practice.

By embedding biodiversity as a core consideration in decision-making across government, civil society and the private sector, the Institute translates research into regulation, policy, planning and management outcomes that address interconnected environmental, social and economic challenges.

The ties with advocacy groups, such as the Biodiversity Council, amplifies this reach through an authoritative public-facing voice, while a dedicated communications capability, cultural events and tailored partner engagement ensure the Institute's work reaches diverse audiences, growing the national and global reputation of the University of Melbourne as a leader in biodiversity research that creates cascading positive impacts.

Research Clusters

Our research clusters convene interdisciplinary expertise to coalesce our large and diverse knowledge base across the University, empowering our people to lead strategies, foster partnerships, and identify research needs and opportunities. Each cluster is designed to deliver research that helps us understand biodiversity, how we connect with and benefit from it, and contribute to protecting and recovering species and ecosystems.

Cluster	Focus	Leads
Species and ecosystems	• Technical and science solutions • Culturally significant species • Indicators, monitoring and remote sensing • Conservation communication and education • Partnerships for conservation • Ethics and politics of conservation and 'species management' • Water quality /microplastics /pollution • Science communication • Biodiversity and pathogens • Trade and law	Alice Hughes Faculty of Science Tyrone Lavery Faculty of Science
Systems for Nature-positive transitions	• Law, law reform, global frameworks • Governance and policy transitions • Social licence and community perceptions • Accountability, reporting mechanisms and compliance • Political dynamics – opportunities and challenges • Decision support	Rebecca Nelson Melbourne Law School Justin Alger Faculty of Arts
Business and biodiversity	• Materiality and disclosures • Exposure to physical risk and loss of ecosystem services • Global regulation, networks and initiatives • Business decision making systems/ Environmental, social, and governance frameworks • Invasive vectors and global movement and trade • Leadership and Innovation • Supply chains and accountability • Spatial data and impacts • Financing nature	Attila Balogh Faculty of Business and Economics Gary Veale Melbourne Business School Glen Hoetker Melbourne Business School
Multifunction landscapes	• Approaches to regional planning, integrated landscape management • Understanding ecosystem services • Land use transition, energy, carbon, food, forestry, urbanisation • Biodiversity in cities, risks and benefits • Agriculture and biodiversity • Aquaculture • Mining and energy	Paul Cheng Faculty of Science Kylie Soanes Faculty of Science Jagannath Aryal Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology
Nature-led resilience and nature-based climate solutions	• Nature-led climate solutions, natural infrastructure • Resilience of Country, lands and waters • Economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits of natural infrastructure • Climate-nature politics and communications • Community-nature resilience	Judy Bush Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning Rachel Morgain Faculty of Arts
Levers for deep change	• Nature-Creative Arts-Technology nexus • Nature connection, communication, arts, culture spiritual and religious approaches • Ethics, "naturecultures," biophilic design • Indigenous knowledges and 'more-than-human' worlds • Personhood of nature • Law, new economic models, governance and politics • Education, philosophy, community and place • Awareness-engagement -intention-action • Histories of 'nature' and ecology	Miriama Young Faculty of Fine Arts and Music Ellycia Harrould-Kolieb Faculty of Science
Healthy Country, healthy communities, healthy people	• Caring for Country • Ecosystem integrity and condition • Wildlife health as indicator for healthy ecosystems • Education, health and music • Nature benefits for cognitive, psychological, socio-cultural spiritual and physical health • Zoonosis and biosecurity • Multi-species social/and ecological justice • Soil health and biodiversity • Pollution, ecosystems and human health • Culturally significant species • Art, health and nature • One Health	Kenneth Winkel Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences Lee Skerratt Faculty of Science Maddison Miller Faculty of Science

Convene and Nurture Research Excellence

Research Clusters - Empowering interdisciplinary teams to address crucial biodiversity challenges

A key pillar of our strategy is to empower academics across the University's Faculties and Schools to lead impactful and interdisciplinary research initiatives.

Within the first twelve months, MBI laid the groundwork to establish an extensive interdisciplinary network spanning all of the University of Melbourne's nine Faculties. Deep conversations harnessing the skills, expertise and ideas from across the University informed the formation of research clusters around seven key 'challenge areas', with over 300 academics now signed up to participate. These clusters represent key spaces to incubate new research collaborations and identify opportunities for research excellence and impact.

In 2025 we coalesced research clusters under co-leadership drawn from across University of Melbourne Faculties; fostered exploratory conversations on the scope of clusters; identified pressing issues and early opportunities; launched new research initiatives through seed and sapling funding; and developed a business model for a Biodiversity@Melbourne micro-credentialing initiative.

In 2026 we will convene co-design workshops with research end-users aligned with cluster challenge areas; support the implementation of seed and sapling projects, convening workshops for promotion, next steps and scaling options; identify and develop proposals for key project research opportunities (e.g. Linkage, philanthropic, grant-based, partner-funded research); map existing and new major biodiversity research across the University to support and amplify impact; identify larger-scale opportunities for impact e.g. through large initiatives and fostering MBI participation in governance, decision-making and advisory roles; develop and market test Biodiversity@Melbourne micro-credentialling.

In 2027 we will secure and lead major initiatives; consolidate successful research projects; launch formal micro-credentialling offerings; scale up impact; review, consolidate and synthesise knowledge from across research projects in thematic areas, to deepen insights and amplify findings; build on foundation to foster regional and global partnerships; foster new and expanded range of seed, sapling and project opportunities.

In 2028-2030 MBI will expand our impact and reputation for research excellence from a consolidated base of major initiatives and projects led across Faculties and disciplines; support 'spinning up' and/or 'spinning out' new centres and collaborations as appropriate; expand microcredentialling to a wide range of finance, industry and community members; working with regional and global partners launch initiatives including climate-resilient biodiversity and nature-based solutions in Asia and the Pacific and global natural capital.

The Nature for Business Incubator is an enticing research translation initiative that will support businesses orienting toward becoming nature positive and undertaking their first financial disclosures that incorporate nature risk. Through the Business and Biodiversity cluster and working with the Melbourne Business School and the Faculty of Business and Economics, we will provide technical support and training to those businesses across sectors, through micro-credentialling and support in understanding and acting on nature risk including dependency and transition risk.



Photo of the 2025 Melbourne Biodiversity Symposium by Grant Treeby



Photo by Nicholas Rakotopare

Leading Major Research Initiatives

Australia has an urgent need for research that reflects and helps sustain the vital importance of biodiversity as we transition to a resilient, prosperous, and not just net zero economy. Over the life of this strategic plan, we anticipate significant opportunities for the University of Melbourne to lead large-scale research initiatives in biodiversity research excellence, that will position us to achieve impact on scale. This includes the next iteration of the National Environmental Science Program, alongside future Centre of Excellence and Cooperative Research Centre bids, and other direct funded and philanthropic opportunities. MBI will continue to lead the work of developing our research, practitioner and policy networks that will position us strongly to lead and win these opportunities.

Work towards major bids through the delivery of this plan includes:

2025: consolidating opportunities explored through the 2024 Centre of Excellence bid, and identifying new opportunities arising from this; exploratory work with potential philanthropic funding partners; strategic partnership development to position MBI for future large grants, bids and initiatives.

2026: The National Environmental Science Program is likely to make a call for significant (~\$50M) bids for research collaborations in 2026 for funding commencing in 2027.

These bids provide the opportunity to organise a significant research collaboration for a six year research and impact window. We are well placed with strong networks across multiple universities to lead such a bid. We have started organising a consortium around likely thematic areas.

Pursuing research excellence on scale:

The MBI's 2024 bid for the ARC Centre of Excellence established partnerships spanned private sector organisations, governments, land management and caring for Country organisations and research networks. Partners included Australian Agricultural Company (Australia's largest agricultural enterprise), National Australia Bank, Clean Energy Council, Responsible Investment Association Australasia, The Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy, and Water, Jagun Alliance, WWF, The Nature Conservancy, ClimateWorks, BehaviourWorks, four of Australia's leading Universities, Oxford University, University of Hawaii, Technical University of Munich, and Durham University. This bid, and the networks and thinking behind it, provides the foundation for new efforts to establish large scale research funding over the life of this plan.

Translate: Knowledge into Action

Building Partnerships & Networks - Connecting knowledge systems and communities for biodiversity impact

Melbourne Biodiversity Institute's leadership and many of our members are strongly networked, with a great depth of experience in partner-engaged and co-designed research. These relationships will be sustained through the breadth of projects seeded and supported by MBI, led from all Faculties across our Institute.

In addition to sustaining and helping our partnerships to flourish, our 5-year plan emphasises **connecting and activating these networks** across the Institute in a strategic way and collaborating on **strategic projects with other interdisciplinary initiatives** at the University, to ensure our research achieves its potential in impact and scale.

In **2025** we reached out to priority partners to develop MBI profile and active conversations on the potential for co-design of research initiatives; initiate early project opportunities; work with clusters to develop a stakeholder map and database, to align our partnership and engagement activities; establish a comprehensive engagement and impact tracking system; develop a project workflow to share and amplify relevant research findings across our networks; redevelop and launch our refreshed website; and launch our public newsletter.

In **2026-2027** we will actively seek government and industry research partnerships to scale collaboration, such as the Sustainable Finance Hub and the National Centre for Zero Extinctions; and consolidate strategic partnerships towards major bids and interlinked research initiatives.

In **2028-2030** we will implement work on successful major bids and work with partners and donors to resource ongoing research on scale to solve complex challenges in biodiversity and invest in nature-led resilience to achieve a wide range of societal, cultural and economic goals.

Strategic priorities for strengthening and interlinking our partnerships to achieve scale, solve complex challenges, and maximise beneficial impact span all sectors:

Priorities in **government** include:

- Australian Government portfolios of environment, energy, climate, agriculture, Indigenous Australians, disaster resilience, health and Treasury. Taking a cross-portfolio approach and building research partnerships that speak to multiple portfolios allows us to embed biodiversity across national policy priorities, underpinned by a strong recognition of nature's benefits and risks of nature loss in the Measuring What Matters Treasury economic framework. We will also support national implementation of global commitments including the Global Biodiversity Framework, Paris Agreement and UN Environment Programs Taskforce on Nature and Climate-related Financial Disclosures, leveraging our experts' presence in global governance institutions and networks.
- Victorian Government portfolios of environment, parks, climate, energy, primary industries and cities, Traditional Custodian partnerships and public institutions. While MBI maintains relationships with all state and territory governments, our strong and enduring collaborative partnerships with the Victorian Government remain a key priority. We will grow collaborations including supporting the Biodiversity 2037 strategy, First Nations Treaty, energy transition, and climate resilience.
- We will also invest in and leverage the University's existing partnerships with public institutions including Zoos Victoria, the Melbourne Museum, and Arts and Cultural Institutions, through co-designed research collaborations and public events. These partnerships provide academics across Faculties with access to government networks and opportunities for policy and public influence.



Photo by
Nicholas Rakotopare

Priorities for **place-based** partnerships include:

- Traditional Owner Corporations and First Nations caring for Country organisations. Restoring biodiversity in Australia requires investing in the Traditional Owners whose people have cared for biocultural values for millennia. Working with the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, we will invest in our existing relationships and foster new relationships across the places where the University is embedded and where we work, undertaking research that is designed and co-governed by the Traditional Custodians and Indigenous organisations to meet their needs and priorities.
- Local government, natural resource management, agricultural stewardship, land and sea conservation organisations and large asset managers. Our research on the ground with partners responsible for biodiversity has helped promote the importance of biodiversity restoration as a priority and to design innovative ways to protect and recover biodiversity, both in protected areas and across mixed-use landscapes. Through these partnerships we will initiate collaborations on scale to address significant emerging priorities including for land use and energy transition, food production and climate resilience.
- Regional partnerships. As part of recognising and growing our contributions as an Australian institution within our region, we will invest in strengthening our collaborations with partners in Oceania and Asia, including for pressing issues such as nature-led climate resilience, contributing to Australia's leadership of the Climate Conference of Parties in 202

Priorities for **private sector** partnerships include:

- Working with the finance sector to co-design significant R&D collaborations on finance and biodiversity to address priority issues, including: robust methods and tools for finance sector players to assess and address nature risks and opportunities in their portfolios, the integration of TNFD with climate and social risk assessments, and opportunities for mobilising investment in ecosystem-based solutions to climate risk.
- Working with enterprises pioneering nature positive business practices to understand and amplify nature-positive business leadership and support implementation of TNFD.

Our **philanthropic and donor** partners and **community** partners remain vital to our ongoing work, and will be celebrated and engaged through bespoke and public events, communication channels and ongoing direct relationships.

***The Sustainable Finance Hub**, a new joint initiative between MCF and MBI, is poised to attract investment to meet the growing demand from the finance sector for the capabilities and tools to measure biodiversity impact, and to access the Nature Repair Market. The MBI has established a leading team of analysts equipped with knowledge about how to design and implement the cutting-edge tools for businesses to do this. We are strategically well placed to be the front runners in offering this capability to corporate leaders in ecological responsibility and global voluntary initiatives such as the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures and the Capitals Coalition. We are exploring these opportunities with partners in Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA), the Australian Sustainable Finance Institute (ASFI) and a wide network finance sector partners, including existing collaborators Franklin Templeton. This initiative brings together academics from Faculty of Business and Economics, Melbourne Business School, Science, and Law, demonstrating cross-Faculty collaboration.*



Photo by Jaana Dielenberg

Our Influence

Expanding and interlinking our global and national policy influence

MBI is globally connected, with expertise and influence drawn from across the University spanning global conventions, governance systems, nature-positive business initiatives and science organisations, as well as shaping how these global processes inform national and sub-jurisdictional (state and territory) policies and programs. Our engagement across these diverse global forums and initiatives on the following page provides the foundation for expanding this influence. Melbourne Biodiversity Institute have produced guidance, indicators, modelling, mapping, decision making support, analysis and advice that has created, shaped or defined the below key bodies and frameworks.

Global

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

National and State

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



Photo of the 2025 Melbourne Biodiversity Symposium by Grant Treeby

Our MBI strategy includes coalescing and increasing these connections, mentoring new and emerging academics into these governance and decision-making spaces and opportunities, and linking our expertise and initiatives across these diverse forums and spaces.

Global Biodiversity Leadership development is a strategic priority for MBI. In 2025 we promoted and fostered the participation of early career academics and emerging leaders in significant policy networks including the Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Bogota and the Global Biodiversity Framework monitoring and reporting framework. In 2026 we are consolidating this foundation, convening a workshop and symposium to share lessons and build a mentoring and leadership network, and identifying key opportunities for influence including through Australia's leadership of the 26th climate Conference of Parties

Delivering cultural opportunities and public events

UoM houses esteemed musicians and composers in the Conservatorium of Music, celebrated visual and performing artists within the Victorian College of the Arts, legal experts on the personhood of nature, Indigenous leaders, and leading ecologists. As a publicly-funded institution, we have a remit to deliver public events and share our research findings and expertise with the wider community.

MBI has demonstrated its capacity to convene compelling public engagement on biodiversity, through our inaugural symposium 'Everything is Connected' and the landmark visit of Professor Dame EJ Milner-Gulland in early 2026. Building on this foundation, our strategy focuses on growing a distinctive annual program of public events, including a public lecture series and Festival of Nature, that positions the University of Melbourne as the leading intellectual and cultural home for biodiversity in Australia.

Our strategy includes:

- Developing a program of public events, including an annual symposium which commenced in 2025 and a public lecture series commencing in 2026.
- Supporting, empowering and interlinking interdisciplinary cultural initiatives working with the leading creative practitioners, designers and cultural experts across University of Melbourne and our public institutions and facilities.
- Working through and further fostering our strategic partnerships with specialists in large scale public engagement. These include Zoos Victoria, Museums Victoria, institutions in the Arts Precinct, the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, the Australian Citizen Science Association and more

Festival of Nature: Working with the concept of 'more than human worlds', we will explore the launching of a Festival of Nature in partnership with cultural and public institutions, Indigenous Knowledge Institute and our philanthropic partners and potential donors. This has the opportunity to bring a significant group of publics along on the crucial importance of biodiversity, celebrating the ways creative practice, science and humanities help our communities find new sources of wonder and connection through knowledge of living things. This has the opportunity to attract cultural and arts funding and draw in new communities.

Cultivate: Future Biodiversity Leaders

Cultivating the next generation of biodiversity research, policy and practice leaders is a priority for MBI. Our institute provides a core of offerings to attract and support graduate researchers and Early Career Academics from across disciplines and Faculties. Our PhD scholarships from MBI through the Chancellery Strategic Scholarships program are highly sought after and are supporting a core of high-quality PhD students undertaking higher degree research in biodiversity in diverse fields: from agriculture to threatened species recovery, health to Indigenous knowledges.

We offer ECAs across all faculties the opportunity to work alongside and be mentored by cluster leads in convening interdisciplinary research collaborations and communities of practice, organising workshops and public events, developing policy submissions and delivering research for impact. Our projects provide opportunities for research assistants and postdoctoral researchers to broaden their skills and engage in industry-focused and public good research for impact.

Our research leadership brings together a network of academics with extensive experience and expertise in mentoring and capacity building for research excellence and impact, and provides a significant number of mid-career academics with the opportunity to develop as research leaders. Our researchers are experienced in integrating research into teaching, and are cross-fertilising expertise through guest lectures and co-convened courses.

Drawing on these strengths, our strategic plan identifies a suite of priority pathways to train the leaders of the future.

In 2025 we continued to grow our strategic MBI PhD cohort across Faculties and disciplines, and commence cohort-building activities for our higher degree research candidates. We have scoped biodiversity micro-credentials and commenced fostering cross-faculty guest lecturing and integrating our research into undergraduate and graduate teaching. We appointed ECAs and cluster research support and convened a community of practice for them and for cluster leads as their mentors to share and learn from one another on convening interdisciplinary and engaged research spaces. We have started to provide opportunities for Early and Mid-Career Academics to showcase their work in an inaugural MBI Symposium.

In 2026-2027 we will commence a foundational Nature Academy training program of opportunities, providing a wider network of biodiversity-focused higher degree researchers and ECAs with the chance to coalesce as a cohort and build skills in engagement and impact, research for policy, cultural awareness and industry-ready practice. We will commence piloting for micro-credentialling, and formalise a process of supporting integration of institute research into university teaching.

We will continue to provide opportunities for E/MCAs to showcase their work in symposia and other public forums. We will explore opportunities for philanthropic and partner funding for ECA development, and begin scoping for a program of industry placements for our ECAs, and community fellows, for early career practitioners and community members to intern with MBI. We bring Biodiversity leaders to the University, showcasing the work of EJ Milner-Gulland in biodiversity mapping with a broader network, as part of our successful Miegunyah fellowship application.

From 2028-2030 we will coalesce these elements to stand up our new Nature Academy, to be launched in late 2027-early 2028. This launch and the Academy itself will be a drawcard to attract new students and researchers, and a touchstone of the University's excellence in developing emerging leaders in biodiversity in and beyond the research sector.

Nature Academy: *The Nature Academy will offer spaces for graduate researchers and early career academics from a broad array of disciplines to come together, build a cohort, share knowledge, and receive specialist mentoring and training in areas of MBI strength. This includes training in research engagement and impact, influencing policy, engaging in research across disciplines and knowledge systems. Undergraduates will benefit from opportunities in research-led teaching. We will work with our partners and donors to establish a pipeline for industry-ready biodiversity graduates, and explore pathways for skilling up, including opportunities for industry placements and internships.*



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