



Report from Monash Indigenous Congress meeting 3/2026 held 5 August 2026

Monash Indigenous Congress met on 5 August, 2026 chaired by Professor Tristan Kennedy. Key matters considered were Indigenous employment priorities, Congress' input into Monash's next strategic plan, approaches to hearing community voices in response to the Monash University Council's request, and a proposal for mediated access to Indigenous knowledges held in Monash Library collections.

Indigenous employment priorities

Congress received an update on Indigenous employment priorities, including the comprehensive review of the Indigenous Employment Policy suite which was underway, a proposed Indigenous secondment program, an Indigenous staff summit and a range of other initiatives including the establishment of an Indigenous Employment Council. The Council would be established to support the strategic Indigenous employment agenda at Monash, providing a forum for Indigenous Community representatives, industry partners and Monash leaders to work collaboratively to strengthen Indigenous employment outcomes, processes, inclusion and self-determination across the University. Members were asked to provide feedback on the draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Indigenous Employment Council ahead of its tabling with the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG).

Research and engagement initiatives

The Chair reported that Monash had recently implemented an initiative in support of its strategic commitment to working with and celebrating Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges wherever it had a campus or major presence through the launch of the International Indigenous Research Network Malaysia Hub.

The Chair reminded members of the upcoming Kindred People festival with the program featuring both academic content and creative performances, and of the upcoming Banga-ngali Yulendj seminar: *Are the concepts of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Free, Prior and Informed Consent compatible?* Presented by Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter (Emeritus @ UTAS) on 25 August.

Strategic Plan development

The Chair acknowledged member contributions to the Congress consultation on Monash's next strategic plan. Emerging themes identified were:

- **Tangible action and accountability** – move beyond high-level commitments to funded initiatives, clear responsibilities, measurable outcomes and transparent reporting.
- **Indigenous people and perspectives in decision-making** – ensure Indigenous Congress, Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities have meaningful influence, authority and partnership in decisions.
- **Indigenous knowledges embedded across the University** – strengthen Indigenous content in curriculum, research, governance, campus environments and institutional practice, including discipline-specific learning for students.
- **Investment in Indigenous staff and the academic pipeline** – provide sustained support for



recruitment, retention, development and progression, particularly for Indigenous academics, while increasing graduate research participation and pathways into academic careers.

Responses to the consultation questionnaire were used to inform the Future of Indigenous Engagement conversation document being utilised in the Vice-Chancellor's consultation across Monash to develop the next Strategic Plan.

Report on Indigenous Congress Think Tank One

Congress received a report from its inaugural Think Tank held in July, with the event largely discussion-based around Congress' role, values and principles as well as its position within Monash, and its connection to community via the diverse backgrounds of its members. Outcomes from the Think Tank included suggestions to enhance Congress presence online and via other communications, and more effectively articulate its purpose beyond what was contained in the Terms of Reference. Members emphasised the value of the Think Tank and supported other opportunities for strategic planning as well as connection outside of meetings.

Indigenous priorities in Monash AI adoption

The Chair provided an update on the proposed Indigenous AI working group which would operate in connection with the Monash AI Steering Committee to develop practical protocols and advice on the responsible use of AI in teaching, research, operations, and infrastructure. The proposal would be tabled at the Monash AI Steering Committee on 7 August.

Monash University Council request - Congress engagement and representation.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous) was preparing a response to the Monash University Council (Council) request to consider feedback regarding community engagement and representation, including options for strengthening engagement and referral pathways between Council, Council committees and the Monash Indigenous Congress.

To inform the response on how Monash best engage to understand and respond to the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities within its strategy, operations, education and research, Congress undertook an activity to discuss and respond to the questions:

- *When we say "community voice", who are we talking about? Which communities should Congress be hearing from?*
- *What do we want to hear about from identified communities? What will community voice inform?*
- *What makes community feel heard, respected and valued when engaging with the University?*
- *How do different groups (Elders, young people, families, health workers, community leaders) prefer to share their perspectives?*
- *What methods would make it easier for community members to provide ongoing input? In practical terms, what should be the mechanism or mechanisms?*
- *What types of decisions should never be made without community input?*



- *What damages trust between the University and community?*

Emerging themes from the activity included:

- that Congress itself was a representative group given the breadth of membership from across Indigenous communities, as were the Indigenous staff and student cohort;
- that Monash engagement should, in some form, be delivered in-community and this should be a key element of any approach;
- that community priorities should drive any engagement activity;
- that a clear understanding of which community or communities should be in scope in this context, given Monash's global presence but primary footprint on Koorie lands in Victoria; and
- that community engagement should be flexible, targeted and multifaceted depending on themes and stakeholders.

Outcomes from the activity would be collated to inform the response to Council at its October meeting.

Mediated access process for First Nations knowledges at Monash University Library

Congress was presented with a proposal to implement mediated access to First Nations knowledges in Monash University Library collection, noting that within the Library's collection, there were relevant published and unpublished works including books, audio recordings, film and artefacts where it was unclear whether informed consent was provided by the knowledge holders. This raised important ethical considerations regarding cultural authority, consent and the management of Indigenous cultural heritage. Congress endorsed the proposal to strengthen the governance, access, management and care of Indigenous cultural materials held by the University within the Library and across other collections held by the University. The proposal would now be presented to VCG for consideration.

Operational matters

The Chair thanked Professor Jay Phillips for chairing the previous meeting and her leadership in Congress priorities as co-chair while he was absent from the University.

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed.

The next meeting of Congress was scheduled for 21 October 2026.

Action items

Congress agreed on a number of actions, including:

- seeking feedback on the draft Indigenous Employment Council Terms of Reference to be provided to the Senior Director, Indigenous Employment;
- collating responses to the community voices activity to inform the response to Monash University Council on engagement and representation; and
- Progress the proposal on mediated access to First Nations knowledges in Monash Library collections.

Contact



For enquiries about this meeting report, please contact the Monash Indigenous Congress Executive Officer at odvc-indigenous@monash.edu.