



Reckoning and Reimagining

Workshopping Indigenous justice pedagogies for
Australian legal education

Workshop Communiqué

This communiqué emerged from *Reckoning and Reimagining: Workshopping Indigenous Justice Pedagogies for Australian Legal Education*, held on Wurundjeri Country from 22–23 August 2025. Over seventy-five educators, research students, community representatives, and practitioners came together to reflect on how Australian legal education must change to confront its colonial foundations and to embed Indigenous law and justice across all aspects of teaching and learning.

The statements that follow capture our collective conviction that truth-telling, accountability, and structural reform are not optional — they are the necessary foundations of a just legal education system.

We are First Nations legal academics and non-Indigenous allies who call for structural reform in Australian legal education. This communiqué is directed to everyone involved in the delivery and regulation of legal education, particularly those who exercise power over its design, namely Law School executives, the Council of Australian Law Deans and the regulators of State and Territory legal admission requirements.

It is the conviction of workshop attendees that:

1. Every Australian law graduate should be equipped with an understanding of our 65,000+ years of legal history. They should encounter in their legal education the strength and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal knowledges, the significance of Country to Indigenous legal orders, as well as the truth of the role of Australian legal institutions in colonial projects. Our teaching should feature and generate opportunities to learn from Indigenous histories of powerful advocacy, activism, dispute resolution and law reform work. We have many examples of how to do this amongst our own teaching and from colleagues abroad, but today only a small number of our law students benefit from these programs.
2. Australian legal academics must engage in processes of reckoning with the colonial foundations of the discipline, and harms resulting from the erasure of Indigenous legal knowledges and philosophies from our institutions. We call on law schools to reckon with the scope of change truly required to provide a legal education adequate to support First Nations justice objectives. It is not a tinkering around the edges of our practice but a transformation which is required.
3. All Australian law students should experience joy and a sense of belonging in their university education. They should learn in a law school where they encounter a variety of enriching pedagogies connected to Country and community. Legal

education institutions should be responsive to the complexity of Indigenous students' lives, without underestimating their brilliance.

4. We must develop appropriate structures of Indigenous authority and governance to enable these transformations. Too often Indigenous colleagues have found themselves labouring on advisory bodies to legal institutions that do not have Indigenous peoples' interests at heart. We call for Indigenous governance over culture and curriculum change to law schools, and structural protections so that initiatives can endure. We must walk with care in developing sound institutional and faculty support required to shift our practices. These cultural transformations of Australian law schools need to be properly resourced.
5. Indigenous graduate attributes and course learning outcomes should be present, embedded consistently and scaffolded across curriculum to support learning opportunities centring Indigenous knowledges.
6. There must be an easing of the colonial load experienced by the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal academics, and concerted attention to building culturally safe workplaces. Developing workforces capable of growing graduate capability around Indigenous legal knowledges and philosophies requires pathways for First Nations academics, thinking creatively about how we collaborate in teaching, and growing the capability of non-Indigenous academics to take up this work. We cannot set up First Nations academics to fail through unrealistic expectations to do the work of transforming their institutions alone – that is not their role.
7. Racism is a significant problem in Australian law schools, including forms of racism protected by academic freedom. First Nations people in Australian law schools deserve better. Action on anti-racism is urgent and essential. We call upon Law Schools to implement local anti-racism strategies to ensure culturally safe work and learning environments for First Peoples.
8. Every legal educator has a role in developing and delivering Indigenous justice pedagogies for Australian legal education. We invite you to walk this journey with us.

This communique is both a commitment and a call to action.

As First Nations academics, collaborators, and allies, we commit to continuing this work together: to build curricula grounded in truth, Country, and relationality; to ensure that Indigenous law and history are recognised as foundational; and to create law schools where every student learns in ways that honour the oldest continuing legal traditions on earth.

We call on all those who design, teach, and regulate Australian legal institutions to take responsibility for transforming legal education — to move beyond acknowledgment toward genuine accountability.

For enquiries: mls-Indigenous@unimelb.edu.au