

## **The Proposed Indigenous Law and Justice Hub at Melbourne Law School: A Precis**

The *Indigenous Law and Justice Hub* will bring together legal experts and community leaders to produce rigorous legal research that can be directly applied in Indigenous advocacy and self-governance. The Hub will focus on two areas of law and policy that are of pressing importance for Indigenous peoples: Criminal Justice and Treaty. Its aim is to support and amplify Indigenous voices in these fields by performing two chief functions:

- Research:** Production of high-quality, rigorous legal research; and,  
**Access:** Improvement of community access to research and advice through a clearing-house function.

### **The *Indigenous Law and Justice Hub* will do the following:**

#### *Community: outreach*

- Develop and undertake robust and rigorous research that addresses current community challenges in criminal justice and treaty work.
- Connect people with complementary skills, knowledge and experience across academia and community to innovate on pressing justice and treaty issues.
- Prepare high quality plain-language explainers, opinions and briefings to provide Indigenous communities with research they can directly apply in their work, and to link scholarly research with real-life issues and challenges.
- Respond to community priorities and support the work of Indigenous leaders and organisations.
- Host *Community Research Fellows* to ensure that research meets the needs of communities and supports them in their work.
- Amplify Indigenous voices in public debate, policy-making and law reform.

#### *Community: students and scholars*

- Mentor Indigenous law students and graduate researchers to ensure they thrive at Melbourne Law School and in the profession.
- Develop top-notch clinical programs to train the next generation of social justice lawyers in collaboration with Indigenous community organisations.
- Host *Visiting Indigenous Scholars* to ensure that the Hub's work is informed by national and international experiences and cutting-edge thinking.
- Lead efforts to showcase Indigenous law and knowledge in the law school's curriculum.
- Support excellence in Indigenous research and teaching by fostering a cohort of scholars and students with strong links to Indigenous communities in and out of the University setting.

The Hub's dual research and clearing-house functions distinguish it from existing research centres in Australia and elsewhere. Our investigations show that that existing clearing-house models are housed in central government, not in Universities. They communicate policies and decisions made by governments, rather than providing access to research that will help Indigenous peoples influence these decisions.

University-based research centres that work on Indigenous issues are almost exclusively focussed on scholarship, not on research that can be directly applied by communities. Currently, no Australian law school hosts an Indigenous research centre that prioritises community engagement and collaboration.

**We believe the *Indigenous Law and Justice Hub* can bridge this gap by breaking down barriers between Indigenous communities and academia.**

The Hub will showcase the authority of Indigenous law, its central place in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the need to properly account for this law in legal pedagogy, practice and research. A university-based, impartial Hub staffed by experienced legal researchers who have close ties to Indigenous communities will support Indigenous advocacy and build meaningful, rigorous research collaborations. It will connect able minds and attract dedicated people to work together to address the deep-seated inequalities and discrimination faced by Indigenous Australians. It is a model that can help level the playing field for Indigenous communities, and that is centred on Indigenous ways of doing business and on the crucial importance of Indigenous self-determination. The Hub will be Co-directed by Melbourne faculty members [Eddie Cubillo](#), [Kirsty Gover](#), and [Amanda Porter](#), and will be guided in its work by an Advisory Board of Senior Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders.

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