


# Social Justice Report 2024



A black and white photograph of two men walking towards the camera. They are both wearing white t-shirts and backpacks. The man on the left is smiling. In the background, a large building with the letters 'UTS' is visible. The image is framed by a circular cutout. To the left of the image, there are several thin, red, wavy lines. A large, solid red shape, resembling a stylized heart or a speech bubble, is positioned in the lower-left foreground, partially overlapping the image and the text.

UTS is an agent for  
social change,  
transforming communities  
through research,  
education and practice.

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## Acknowledgement of Country

UTS acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Boorooberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people, upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands.

# Welcome

## **I am pleased to present the 2024 Social Justice Report.**

Social justice and social impact are central to our vision to be a leading public university of technology recognised for our global impact.

We pursue social impact from many angles. It begins on our campus by challenging stereotypes, fighting bias, broadening perceptions and being proactive in seeking out and tackling injustices. Social impact also infuses our research and practice, and extends into our partnerships with government, industry and the community, where we aspire to make a meaningful difference to individual lives and broader society.

This year, we took a significant step towards increasing access for underrepresented groups with a bold strategy outlined in the new UTS Pathways Plan. We also expanded our Humanitarian Scholarship Program, which now supports 43 students seeking asylum – the largest cohort of its kind at any Australian university. These initiatives reflect our commitment to ensuring that students from all backgrounds not only gain entry to university and the transformational power of higher education, but are supported throughout their studies, from enrolment to graduation and beyond.

We know that financial hardships, limited resources, family responsibilities and health issues disproportionately affect the most vulnerable among us and are often intersecting. We also know that universities have a pivotal role to play in creating the pathways and support networks for all individuals to truly thrive.

In 2024, UTS continued to bring together researchers, advocates and cultural leaders to drive innovation and inform policy. This report showcases just some of the breadth and depth of that work – from instigating law reform for undocumented workers, to shaping national education policy on digital learning tools and strengthening rights for First Nations peoples through building a rigorous evidence base for change.

A few highlights: we hosted the historic Elsie Conference, chaired by Professor Anne Summers AO, celebrating 50 years since the establishment of Elsie Women's Refuge and the start of the women's refuge movement in Australia. Our UTS Shopfront program was recognised in the 'Outstanding Engagement for Student Learning' category at the 2024 Engagement Australia Excellence Awards. We also opened the Assistance Animal Toileting Facility, providing not only a physical space, but a dignified place where staff and students with assistance animals can feel safe and included.

We have always been a university connected to the world around us. Our industry and community partnerships are central to this, immersing our students in hands-on experiences and ensuring that our research is translated into tangible outcomes – many of which are illustrated in the following pages.

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“Social justice and social impact are central to our vision to be a leading public university of technology recognised for our global impact.”

UTS is also a place for dialogue. We are not afraid to tackle difficult conversations, to challenge the status quo and to engage with diverse perspectives. Through collaborative research, public events and strategic partnerships, we tackle the pressing issues of today while reimagining a better future.

As we navigate an increasingly challenging landscape for universities, this report is a testament to the extraordinary work being done across our institution. I continue to be inspired by our staff, students and partners who are shaping a more just and equitable world. Thank you to all those whose contributions are reflected in the following pages. I look forward to building on this momentum in the year ahead.

**Professor Andrew Parfitt**  
Vice-Chancellor and President, UTS



In 2024, I had the honour of stepping into the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice and Inclusion) following the departure of the mighty Professor Verity Firth AM after over 8 years of service to UTS.

It has been eye-opening to see the breadth and depth of social impact happening across our university and in our faculties. The unrelenting passion and hard work of our staff, students and partners to make the world a better place makes me incredibly proud to work here.

On a national scale, the Australian Universities Accord Final Report dropped in February, providing the higher education sector with an opportunity to reimagine its future and the valuable role it does and can play in broader society. While it covers a wide array of areas, the Accord's commitment to ensuring equitable access to education was central to the work of our Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion and UTS more broadly.

Our U@Uni Academy welcomed 389 students in 2024, and now boasts the incredible achievement of having made over 1000 offers to students from low-SES backgrounds to study at UTS. We also launched our Financial Inclusion Action Plan to address the financial barriers and burdens that our students face, and the flow on impacts on their studies and overall wellbeing.

On a much more sombre note, 2024 saw a sharp rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents in Australia, in large part due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

Racism is NOT welcome at UTS, and we continue to work together as a university community to ensure that everyone who visits our campus feels safe and welcome. UTS remains committed to making space for well-informed and nuanced discussions that are held in respectful environments, and we were honoured to welcome Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner, Giridharan Sivaraman, to UTS in August to discuss how universities can cultivate an anti-racist culture.

I am also proud of the campaigns UTS ran across campus to highlight the importance of respecting individuals through the correct pronunciation of names and using people's pronouns.

It was with enormous pride that we celebrated the Shopfront Community Coursework Program winning the award for 'Outstanding Engagement for Student Learning' at the 2024 Engagement Australia Excellence Awards!

For close to 30 years, Shopfront has acted as a gateway for not-for-profits and community groups to access the expertise and resources of the university, all while supporting students to develop their skills to become civic-minded leaders.

The achievements and accolades go on – and you will read about many in this report. For now, I want to thank you all for your ongoing commitment and passion to social justice at UTS. In a world that is feeling increasingly scary and unjust, I encourage all of you to keep fighting the good fight and help UTS continue making the world a better place.

**Amy Persson**

Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Social Justice and Inclusion), UTS



**“It has been eye-opening to see the breadth and depth of social impact happening across our university and in our faculties.”**

# The UTS Social Impact Framework

At UTS, we are an innovative and dynamic university, with an unwavering commitment to social justice. The UTS Social Impact Framework articulates a roadmap for advancing social justice and defines how we measure our social impact.

The framework maps out how we will:

- contribute to a healthy, sustainable and socially just society
- contribute to increased public good, social mobility and equity
- support the creation of enabling environments for communities to thrive
- positively influence and impact the public, individual and systemic forces that shape justice.

We have specified 6 domains where UTS can act to achieve these goals. The following report highlights how our research, teaching, programs and operations in 2024 supported each domain:

**Domain 1:** Increasing university access and success among equity target groups.

**Domain 2:** Building student agency to enact personal and social responsibility.

**Domain 3:** Supporting staff to maximise their social impact.

**Domain 4:** Targeting research, teaching and program outcomes towards social impact and communities.

**Domain 5:** Being an advocate and thought leader on social impact issues.

**Domain 6:** Ensuring our business operations and strategies reflect our long-term, independent commitment to social impact.

We have also identified 3 critical preconditions that need to be in place to maximise our impact:

**Precondition 1:** UTS leadership and culture is inclusive and supports our public purpose role.

**Precondition 2:** Alumni and partners will act through and with UTS.

**Precondition 3:** UTS has social capital and is trusted to bring about social change.

# Visualising our impact

The UTS Social Impact Dashboards measure our progress towards meeting our social justice goals. They keep us accountable to our community and to our agenda outlined in the Social Impact Framework.

By offering transparency and dynamic, interactive data, UTS community members can explore empirical findings from a broad range of sources to find evidence of our successes and open conversations on where we can improve.

The dashboards report on demographic trends – such as the number of equity students, the number of women in senior

academic positions, or the number of staff or students with a disability. Users can filter data to compare faculties or courses, different student or staff equity groups, and to examine changes over time. They also report data on staff and student opinions and experiences, and on a range of UTS's programs, initiatives and goals.

This transparency empowers people to interrogate the data to uncover issues and instigate change. Since their release, the dashboards have inspired research projects and interventions, and instigated new sources of data to provide more rigorous and comprehensive evaluation.

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**The UTS Social Impact Dashboards measure our progress towards meeting our social justice goals.**



Learn more about the dashboards at [uts.edu.au/socialimpactdata](https://uts.edu.au/socialimpactdata)

# The Australian Universities Accord Final Report: A defining moment for higher education in Australia

The Australian Universities Accord Final Report, released in 2024, marked a pivotal moment for the higher education sector. Billed as a blueprint for reform over the next decade and beyond, it seeks to reshape and enhance the sector to better meet the evolving social, economic and environmental challenges of our time.

The review process was extensive, with more than 820 public submissions and 180 stakeholder meetings, including several contributions from UTS.

The Final Report sets out a vision for a more equitable, agile and responsive university sector that achieves growth through greater participation from underrepresented groups, alongside systemic reforms in funding and governance.

We believe that while retaining our core focus on research and education, universities must mobilise knowledge, teaching and practice for the public good, engaging deeply with communities and contributing to national progress. Central to this vision is a commitment to lifelong learning – recognising that the way we learn is evolving and that education should be accessible at every stage of life and career.

The Accord report rightly highlights the importance of fostering a more flexible, student-centred approach to learning. Our student cohort today is more diverse than ever, balancing study with work, caring responsibilities and other commitments. Creating pathways that allow for success in this context is vital. Universities must respond by enhancing student support structures, strengthening work-integrated learning opportunities and ensuring that financial constraints do not become insurmountable barriers.

Of the 47 recommendations set out in the Final Report, Recommendation No. 10 has drawn particular attention for its commitment to increasing participation from traditionally underrepresented groups, including the aim of having 20 per cent of students from the lowest socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds attend university by 2035 – an interim benchmark on the path to reaching population parity of 25 per cent by 2050. These medium- and long-term targets are a crucial step towards ensuring that universities reflect the diversity of the Australian population and that educational opportunities are truly available to all.

Achieving this ambition will require targeted investment. The Accord Report recognises that increasing tertiary attainment for historically underrepresented groups cannot be achieved without needs-based funding that considers the additional costs involved in attracting, teaching and supporting students from low-SES, regional and Indigenous backgrounds – students who are statistically more likely to face barriers to completion. Pleasingly,



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## The Final Report sets out a vision for a more equitable, agile and responsive university sector that achieves growth through greater participation from underrepresented groups.

the Australian Government has committed to investing in demand-driven needs-based funding to support universities that enrol and retain students from these groups. Consultation is underway with the expectation that the forthcoming Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) would undertake implementation from January 2026.

In December 2024 the Federal Government passed amendments to the Higher Education Support Act 2003, primarily in response to recommendations from the Final Report. These included lowering caps on HELP indexation, introducing a Commonwealth Prac Payment for teaching, nursing, midwifery and social work students with mandatory placements from 1 July 2025. These measures to improve student income support and reduce the financial burden of HELP loans are particularly welcome.

These reforms are part of ongoing policy developments, the latest of which – contained in the 2024–25 MYEFO funding announcements – bring the number of Accord recommendations being addressed

in full or in part up to 31, with plans for an additional \$2.5 billion invested in higher education over the next 10 years.

However, these plans are subject to the fluctuations of an uncertain political and financial environment. With an election in the first half of 2025, their long-term future remains precarious.

The Accord's recommendations set out a compelling path forward. The challenge now is for government, universities and stakeholders to work together to turn these ambitions into reality. With ongoing political will, sustained investment and institutional adaptation, we can create a higher education system that is more equitable, resilient and innovative – one that truly meets the needs of the nation in the decades ahead.

# 1 Enabling equitable access to education

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 1:**

**Students from underrepresented groups participate in and complete a higher education degree at UTS**

Everyone should have equal access to higher education.

We base outcomes not only on access to education for students from underrepresented groups, but also on the retention and success of our students throughout their lifetime of learning at UTS and beyond.

## UTS Pathways Plan

Launching in early 2025, the new UTS Pathways Plan is a sector-first approach to advancing educational access and equity. It will drive systematic change by offering multiple entry routes into higher education for students from underrepresented backgrounds. The plan is grounded in the principles of widening participation, fostering inclusive academic environments, and supporting students throughout their educational journeys.

The Pathways Plan represents a unified effort to ensure all students, regardless of background or circumstance, can succeed and thrive in higher education. This plan

includes recalibrating institutional targets for equity groups to ensure greater representation and success across the university.

Under the plan, UTS will offer more flexible and equitable opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds by embracing non-traditional pathways and reducing reliance on ATAR-based admissions. This includes scaling up current pathway programs, removing adjustment point caps and eliminating structural barriers to diversify student profiles at the faculty level.

## Financial Inclusion Action Plan to remove barriers to education

At UTS, our vibrant and diverse student community is one of our greatest strengths. Yet, financial hardship is becoming an increasing barrier to students' ability to access, participate in, and successfully complete tertiary education. Students from historically underrepresented and marginalised backgrounds are disproportionately impacted by financial insecurity, often leading to a compounding cycle of disadvantage.

To ensure that education remains accessible for all, UTS has joined the Financial Inclusion Action Plan (FIAP) program.

A FIAP represents an institution-wide commitment to taking targeted and

measurable actions for systemic change that enhance financial wellbeing and reduce student poverty. This national framework, spearheaded by Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand in partnership with the Australian Government, empowers organisations to address economic inequality and improve financial resilience for their communities.

In 2024, UTS released its Foundation FIAP, developed in consultation with staff and students. This plan outlines bold, strategic and practical actions to create a university environment where no student has to choose between education and financial survival.

**“This pathway has shown me that my background is not a barrier but a strength, and it has given me the confidence to reach for my goals.”**

UTS U@Uni Academy student



U@Uni Academy students on the UTS Alumni Green.  
Credit: Kwa Nguyen.

## U@Uni Academy

Our flagship initiative for widening participation, the U@Uni Academy has demonstrated remarkable success in increasing participation for students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds.

The program provides an alternative pathway to university for senior high school students at partner schools in South West and Western Sydney. Over a two-year period, students participate in on-campus experiences and in-school mentoring and tutoring to develop 21st century skills and get a taste of what university life is like. Those who complete the U@Uni Academy are offered a place at UTS regardless of their ATAR.

Since its launch in 2020, more than 1000 students have been offered places at UTS, with a conversion rate of 87 per cent. In 2023, U@Uni Academy students achieved a success rate of 82.6 per cent, which is comparable to the national average of 82.5 per cent for low-SES students. This belies the common assumption that equity and success are mutually exclusive. In fact, diversity and excellence go hand in hand.

Over the next 3 years UTS will expand our Academy partner schools from 27 to 34, working closely with them to increase the number of students successfully completing the program. Changes to the delivery model will produce efficiencies without compromising student support, allowing UTS to educate more students within current funding levels.

Working closely with the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research to attract more First Nations students through this pathway is a key priority with this expansion. UTS is also exploring opportunities to increase scholarships as recruitment and retention tools for U@Uni Academy students to enhance the program's impact.

### First U@Uni cohort set to graduate from UTS

2024 saw the pilot cohort of U@Uni Academy students – those who enrolled at UTS in 2022 – complete their undergraduate studies. Set to graduate in 2025, their success reflects their innate capabilities and strengths, along with UTS's commitment to innovating new programs and pathways to open up non-traditional routes to higher education.

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# 23

**U@Uni Academy students from our first cohort are set to graduate from UTS in 2025**

# 78%

**of the cohort described feeling that they belong at UTS**

# 6

**students are committed to, or thinking about, studying a Masters in 2025**

## From opportunity to success

Omar Moussa was a Year 10 student at Birrong Boys High School in South West Sydney when he was presented with what he calls ‘a once in a lifetime opportunity’ – a guaranteed place at university through the UTS U@Uni Academy.


‘Before that I was so nervous about whether my HSC marks would be good enough to get me into university. But then there was this program that said, “we’re going to support you to develop and learn these new skills, and if you successfully complete the tasks we assign, you have a guaranteed place at our university, regardless of your marks.” I couldn’t believe my luck,’ he said.

Coming from a high school with fewer than 400 students, Omar found the shift from the familiar surroundings of Sydney’s west to UTS and its city environment daunting at first. But he credits his successful transition in part to the robust support systems at UTS. One of the key elements for Omar in understanding university systems and campus life was the peer mentoring program offered through the UTS First Year Success Program.

‘The peer mentors made me feel supported the whole way along. They sorted us right out of the gate. They would email us, and we were put into a WhatsApp group, and we always had a checkup once a week. It was such a good opportunity to get someone else’s reassurance and to wrap my head around how universities work as a whole,’ he said.

Omar began studying a Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation and converted to a Bachelor of Business which he completed in 2024. He is now planning to stay on at UTS to study a Master of Teaching (Secondary).

Innovative pathways schemes view students as more than a number. By welcoming these students into our community and giving them the tools to shine, we enrich our community and help pave the way for a fairer, more equitable future.



Sonal Singh, Executive Manager, Student Access and Equity at UTS, and Omar Moussa, Business student who came to UTS through an alternate pathway. Photo supplied.



## First Year Success Program

The first year of university can be challenging for many students, especially for those from equity cohorts.

Knowing that those who come through a non-ATAR entry pathway may lack the confidence to reach out and access existing support systems, the First Year Success Program offers wrap-around support for first year students commencing at UTS through alternate pathways.

It aims to nurture confidence, academic preparedness, connection and belonging, with support tailored for students from low-SES backgrounds. Program activities include academic bridging courses, workshops, social events and peer mentoring.

The program is built on foundations of trust, support, authentic connections and interpersonal relationships, along with a focus on case management and individual student progress, both academic and personal.

Student feedback shows that the program has been successful in helping them adapt to university life and develop a sense of belonging.

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**“While the students were excited to be starting at UTS, the jump from high school to higher education is a big one. The change can be overwhelming, and the First Year Success initiative has proved successful in helping our students navigate through the complexities of starting at uni.”**

**Moana Tago, Student Equity Project Officer (First Year Success Program),  
UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion**

## UTS Equity Ambassadors provide wrap-around support

UTS Equity Ambassadors are crucial to ensuring the success of our U@Uni students at UTS. They play a key role in all elements of the program, offering academic and mentoring support to students in Years 11 and 12 as they take part in the U@Uni Academy, as well as providing mentoring support in the First Year Success Program. Their guidance assists students in developing critical thinking, problem solving and collaborative skills which benefit them in both school and tertiary education.

As many Ambassadors come from similar community backgrounds as the U@Uni student cohort, they are uniquely capable of connecting with students and helping

to develop their sense of belonging and familiarity at UTS. They provide a UTS student perspective at parent info nights and other community events across Western and South West Sydney.

Many Equity Ambassadors are drawn from previous years' U@Uni students who have subsequently enrolled at UTS, forming another pathway for developing crucial workforce skills while providing the students with an opportunity to give back.

In 2024 UTS employed 86 Equity Ambassadors. They worked with students in schools for our UniPrep sessions, in addition to running activities during on-campus events like the Faculty Workshops, Winter School, and UTS Experience Day.

# Jumbunna Admissions Program

The Jumbunna Admissions Program offers First Nations students an opportunity to demonstrate their capability to tackle a higher education degree based on a range of factors, including previous life, education and work experience.

It recognises that the ATAR is not the primary measure of success and offers alternative entry pathways to study at UTS.

Under the new Pathways Plan, to be launched in early 2025, the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion and Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research are co-developing an intensive on-campus enabling program aimed at supporting First Nations and low-SES students. This immersive program will provide students with essential academic preparation and a strong foundation for success at UTS.

“The Jumbunna Admissions Program is a critical pathway for Indigenous students to demonstrate their ability and desire to study a chosen degree; when a student can do this, and with the right academic and pastoral support, success will follow.”

Maree Graham, Director of Indigenous Students and Community Engagement at Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

In 2024

93

First Nations undergraduate commencements

70

First Nations postgraduate coursework commencements

18

First Nations higher degree researcher commencements

405

total First Nations students studying at UTS

## Building an evidence base for meaningful change

UTS participates in many fellowship programs to support project-based research exploring questions that have the potential to drive Australia forward. Several of these fellowships are focused on equity and access to education. The Fellows' research and networks create opportunities to share evidence-informed solutions and recommendations with those who can translate them into meaningful action.

### Regional University Study Hubs bridging the gap in higher education

In 2024, accomplished leader in student services and student equity, Danielle Keenan, was awarded an Equity Fellowship at UTS through the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (now known as the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success). The program supports research to tackle some of the biggest challenges in higher education.

Ms Keenan's research project, 'Roadmap to Success: Decoding the Regional University Study Hubs', establishes evidence-based best practice for Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH) and emerging Suburban University Study Hubs.

RUSH have been a game-changer in widening participation for equity cohorts in regional areas, providing support and campus-style facilities for remote and regional students to study online.

Despite their success, research on their effectiveness has been limited. Ms Keenan's fellowship aimed to fill this gap by providing insights for communities, universities and the Department of Education to better understand the critical components underpinning RUSH's success.

Her research supports the importance of a place-based, community-led focus for regional hubs, with self-determination as a recurring theme.



**“Community-led regional hubs create opportunities for local residents to be actively involved in shaping educational pathways and support structures. These regional hubs can serve as catalysts for broader regional development, driving innovation, and addressing local needs more effectively.**

**“The potential for Regional University Study Hubs to transform educational landscapes is immense, but their success hinges on the degree to which they are integrated into the fabric of local communities.”**

**Danielle Keenan**



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“Our whole society benefits and is stronger when all students have what they need to develop their skills and talents.”

Dr Michele Bruniges AM

## Disrupting disadvantage in Australian schools

Schools should be representative of the world we want to live in: diverse, thriving, and with equal access to opportunity.

New research conducted by Industry Professor Michele Bruniges AM reveals that concentrations of disadvantage in Australian schools are intensifying, undermining the country’s commitment to providing equal educational opportunities for all.

Throughout 2024, Dr Michele Bruniges AM researched this issue as Industry Professor – Concentrations of Disadvantage at the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation Fellowship Program.

The research shows an increasing trend in students from disadvantaged backgrounds being clustered in the same schools.

This clustering of children who often need additional support puts extraordinary pressure on school resources and teachers, impacting educational and life outcomes. This lack of socioeconomic diversity also creates a cycle of negative consequences for communities.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Dr Bruniges found many examples of schools delivering educational excellence in challenging environments and a range of things we can do at the local, state, territory, and national levels that could make a difference.



## New report from the Australian Network for Quality Digital Education

A new report from the Australian Network for Quality Digital Education was released in November 2024 warning that, without action, educational technology ('edtech') and AI could further entrench inequality in Australian classrooms.

'Securing Digital Equity in Australian Education' urges policymakers to establish a Digital Equity Learning Guarantee to address data and design inequities in digital tools and ensure all Australian students can access and benefit from the highest quality edtech.

Authored by Network Chair, Professor Leslie Loble AM, Industry Professor at the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, and Director of Edtech and

Education Policy, Dr Kelly Stephens, the paper explores digital equity across access, data, design and effective use.

The Network brings together leaders from across education, industry, social purpose and philanthropic organisations, government and research, in the common purpose of ensuring that all Australian students benefit from the best edtech, and that these tools are leveraged to tackle the persistent learning divide.

The Network addresses important policy questions, like quality expectations and governance and seeks to build evidence of best practice use in the classroom. It has a particular focus on learning from voices less frequently heard, so that edtech can respond to the full diversity of needs and start to improve learning outcomes and disrupt the education divide.

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**"The risks of overuse and misuse of edtech and AI are real and increasingly documented, but less attention is paid to the significant risk of underuse and missed opportunities."**

**Professor Leslie Loble AM**



Attendees at the Australian Universities Pacific Associations Conference 2022, held at UTS. Photo supplied.

## Supporting Pasifika students at UTS

The UTS Pasifika Programs play a vital role in supporting Pasifika students through their university journey.

Starting with transition to university life, the programs foster a welcoming and inclusive environment that enables students to thrive academically and personally – throughout their time at UTS and beyond.

A key component of this initiative is the Pasifika Student Success Team, which provides tailored support to help students navigate the challenges of balancing study, work and personal responsibilities.

In 2024 the Pasifika Programs took a strategic step by aligning with the U@Uni Academy, incorporating a 10 per cent Pasifika recruitment target within the U@Uni Academy framework and setting clear, measurable goals for Pasifika student engagement and success. Through this model, 50 new Pasifika students were recruited into the program in 2024. This move reflects UTS's adaptive response to funding constraints and its commitment to leveraging existing resources to continue to support underrepresented cohorts.

The UTS Pasifika Programs secured 2 \$10,000 grants under the Students as Partners Project, to fund 2 new initiatives:

- The **UTS First Year Narratives** project created a digital storytelling library of the lived experiences, challenges and triumphs of Pasifika and Indigenous students at UTS. This resource provides educators with insights to support culturally responsive teaching and student success strategies.
- The **Tapasā: Pasifika Student Empowerment Initiative** offered culturally tailored academic and personal support for Pasifika students through peer tutoring, mentorship and culturally relevant workshops, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and academic confidence.

These projects contribute to UTS's broader inclusion efforts, ensuring students feel valued and supported in their cultural identity and academic journey. They also provide an evidence base for refining curricula, teaching methodologies and student support services.

By embedding student experiences into institutional processes, UTS strengthens student engagement and enhances academic outcomes. UTS is an institution where equity is not just an aspiration, but an active practice. The UTS Pasifika Programs exemplify this and are setting new standards in student success and community engagement, demonstrating UTS's role as a leader in inclusive education.



## Additional places for Humanitarian Scholarship Program

In 2024, UTS expanded our Humanitarian Scholarship Program in response to global conflicts, increasing the number of scholarships from 20 to 25, to support additional asylum seekers from the Middle East.

Students forced to abandon their education when fleeing their home countries face profound barriers to higher education. Under Australia's education policy, refugees without permanent protection visas are ineligible to access Commonwealth Supported Places or the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). This makes tertiary education financially unviable for many.

Recognising the unique challenges that humanitarian entrants face, the Humanitarian Scholarship Program provides full tuition costs for students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds to undertake undergraduate study at UTS, along with a comprehensive support program.

In 2024, there were 43 students in the program – the largest cohort of students seeking asylum in Australia supported by a higher education institution.

“Universities have a role to play in advocating for the rights of students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, as well as influencing policy to ensure that our world is a fair and just place for all people.”

**Sonal Singh, Executive Manager, Student Equity and Access at UTS**

“The UTS Humanitarian Scholarship Program has played a pivotal role in shaping my life and career. The impact of the program through its mentorship and internship opportunities cannot be overstated. My academic and professional mentors not only guided my career and professional path, but also became a source of inspiration and support, and are now like family.”

**Mohammad Sakhvidi, UTS Humanitarian Scholarship alumni, and Founder and Director, TQN Personnel**

UTS is a member of the Australian Chapter of **Scholars at Risk Network**, as well as the recently-established **Australian Refugee Welcome University Sponsorship Consortium**, a nationwide alliance that will work to co-design a blueprint for an education-led pathway for refugee resettlement in Australia.



# 2 Students as change agents



## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 2:**

**Students have the agency to enact personal and social responsibility**

We want our students to feel empowered to be involved in social issues.

Throughout their time at UTS, we hope to instil in them the confidence to use their skills to contribute to our society in an impactful way.

## Students skill up and give back through the UTS SOUL Award

The UTS SOUL Award is a co-curricular social impact action and leadership program for UTS students run by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

Participants are supported to be social justice leaders and engage in civic responsibility through training, peer support and program coordination to venture beyond their degree and into the community.

SOUL also facilitates partnership with for-purpose organisations, channelling university resources into the community by providing access to skilled and passionate volunteers.

In 2024, both local and international 'SOULies' representing every faculty and degree level supported over 250 community organisations.

“In my SOUL journey, I’ve learned leadership is more than just being in charge. It’s about connecting deeply, caring and knowing why you’re doing what you do. Leading means listening to others, helping them grow, and being real when times get tough. It’s about being strong when things are hard and staying true to yourself. And most of all, leadership is about helping others shine bright on their own path to success.”

Silja Johny, Master of Business Analytics (Extension) student.



In 2024

**19,604**

volunteer hours

**250+**

community  
organisations supported

**2244**

students participated in SOUL

**230**

SOUL Badge and  
Award graduates

## Catalysing change through student-led initiatives: SOUL Starter Grants piloted in 2024

In 2024, 5 students received the inaugural SOUL Starter Grants. The new program funds UTS SOUL students' social change ideas, projects and initiatives.

Grants ranging from \$500 to \$1000 are available for new and existing initiatives that enable social impact, contribute to a culture of social justice at UTS, or help create a society that is healthy, sustainable and socially just.

Dimitrios Papdopoulos, Joshua Chelashaw, Jing Chen, Nelufer Raji and Raghav Motani were the first grant recipients. Their projects addressed food insecurity, gender equity in STEM and international student support respectively.

Reflecting on the program, 1 student said, 'this experience showed me that even with a modest budget, we could create meaningful change. It made me realise I can take initiative and make a difference, not just at uni, but beyond.'



## Student spotlight

### A global citizen's local impact connecting campus and community

Raghav Motani has become a cornerstone of community life on and off campus after arriving in Sydney in 2023 from India to pursue a Master in Marketing.

A dedicated SOUL Award participant, Raghav volunteered over 400 hours across 6 organisations, including as a mental health first aider for Kookaburra Kids, a UTS peer networker, a Red Cross emergency and disaster community RED-iness member, a volunteer for TED X Sydney and a wellbeing representative with Activate UTS.

‘Volunteering is about genuinely improving people’s lives, developing relationships and bringing about constructive changes,’ he says. ‘It demands time but it’s not

impossible if you know its value and manage your time well.’

In his other role as Convenor of the International Collective with the UTS Students Association, Raghav revitalised the group from its COVID-era inactivity. He organised regular volunteering and social activities for the often-isolated international student community.

Alongside this community-building Raghav undertook advocacy work on issues facing international students – including transport costs, speaking on a panel at a UTS event on housing insecurity, and being profiled on the same issue in the Sydney Morning Herald.

Reflecting on his own challenges with social connection, loneliness and the cost of living, Raghav said, ‘I understood that if I needed to make friends, I needed to step outside of my comfort zone and have an open mind.’

His impressive efforts have earned him the Betty Makin Youth Award from the City of Sydney, honouring exceptional contributions to the local community.

Raghav stands as a true global citizen, using his passion and skills to advocate for social justice, build community and leave a lasting impact.

Credit: Image supplied.





## Volunteering sets the stage for a vocation in social impact

UTS Honours student Patricia Tolentino's interest in social justice inspired her to pursue a Bachelor of Communications in Social and Political Science.

Patricia took this further by volunteering through UTS programs including the SOUL Award and the Big Lift, as well as participating in the UTS Shopfront Community Coursework Program as part of her studies.

This saw her collaborating with the Red Cross to engage young people, leading the campaign 'Twenty Ways to do More Good' carried out in partnership between SOUL and the Red Cross, as well as volunteering in regional and remote Australian towns – eventually becoming the Big Lift program's Executive Marketing Director.

'These experiences really opened my eyes to the many challenges facing different communities,' Patricia said. 'Volunteering has genuinely changed my life for the better.'

Through UTS Shopfront's Community Coursework Program, Patricia got to work with Yung Prodigy, a grassroots organisation supporting young people affected by parental incarceration. This ignited a spark for further research.

'I had actually been so certain about a different career path; however, this experience made me realise how much I truly love research. It made me realise that privileging marginalised voices through the contribution of knowledge is something that I want to pursue in my career,' she said.

Now pursuing an honours degree, Patricia still volunteers – as a campaign support worker assisting refugees with Amnesty International Australia.

'It has all been a process of learning and unlearning things I've internalised my whole life. I think completely differently now,' Patricia reflects. 'My degree and experiences have fostered my ability to think for myself, to think beyond the information and experience that's been given to me.'

Her dedication was recognised when she was awarded the Outer Western Young Volunteer of the Year for 2024 and became a finalist for NSW Volunteer of the Year.

Now equipped with a blend of academic and practical experience across research, marketing and frontline volunteering, Patricia is set up for a lifetime of social impact.

# UTS Shopfront: Placing students at the heart of the community

The UTS Shopfront program provides a pro-bono service partnering community organisations with the skills and expertise at UTS. Our students work on real-world challenges put forward by not-for-profit organisations as part of their degree.

For close to 30 years, UTS Shopfront has empowered both students and under-resourced organisations in the community sector to deliver outcomes that help make the world a better, more socially just place.

In 2024, the Shopfront program doubled the number of students that it engages with and increased community partner numbers by 70 per cent.

In 2024, the Shopfront program worked with 4 faculties – UTS Business School, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building and the Faculty of Engineering and IT.



Shopfront Visual Communications student team with community partner Arts and Cultural Exchange. Credit: Kwa Nguyen.

“Undertaking the course has opened my eyes to the challenges faced by not-for-profit organisations and has deepened my ability to engage with empathy and understanding with the client. It has given me confidence in myself.”

UTS Shopfront student

In 2024

2200

students undertook  
coursework projects

86

coursework projects

3700

students engaged in  
Shopfront’s learning modules

84

community partners

## Awards and recognition for UTS Shopfront

2024 winner of the Outstanding Engagement for Student Learning category at the Engagement Australia Awards.

2024 finalist in the Future Builder category of the Shaping Australia Awards.



Credit: Casamento Photography.

50



Shopfront Visual Communications student team with community partner Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre. Credit: Jamie James.

## Design students showcase 50 years of women's community health

On International Women's Day 2024, women from different generations, cultures, sexualities and backgrounds came together at Leichhardt Library to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Australia's first women's health centre, Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre (LWCHC).

Among those celebrating the event were 4 students from UTS Shopfront, who created the exhibition which brought the LWCHC's colourful history to life.

This was the students' first experience of receiving an exhibition brief, but they rose to the occasion. 'The Threads Between Us' tells the powerful story of the centre from its emergence from the Women's Liberation movement in the 1970s, the development of specialist cultural and linguistic support groups over many

decades, as well as pivotal campaigns around birth control, refugees and crisis centres.

'Shopfront was highly recommended to the centre to realise its vision of a public exhibition highlighting its history of activism, people and cutting-edge services that continue to be delivered today,' said LWCHC Manager Dr Ses Salmond. 'The students totally embraced the project ... they wanted the exhibit to be the best it could possibly be, and we were thrilled with the outcome – we continue to receive outstanding feedback about the exhibit.'

Through an immersive day at the centre, students connected with the many faces behind LWCHC including counsellors, a doctor, a dance therapist, a Vietnamese health educator, a current client and CEO of peak body Women's Health NSW.

'The students conducted the design process and meetings with exceptional professional skill and a commitment to excellence. We felt inspired and thankful for the skills, dedication and heartfelt commitment to this project,' said Dr Salmond.

The milestone exhibition has helped the community recognise and commend the centre's contribution to the special health needs of women.

Their work earned the student team a place as finalists in the Australian Graphic Design Awards in the category of student spatial, reflecting the calibre of their work and the quality of the outcome for the community.

## Cultivating social consciousness through reflection and service

The Brennan Justice Program is a voluntary program for UTS Law students to strengthen their justice consciousness, idealism and sense of service, leadership skills and practical understanding of law's operation.

By encouraging pro bono service, engagement in critical reflection and developing students' capacity for personal and professional leadership, the Brennan Program seeks to strengthen students' understanding of justice and social impact.

In 2024, the program ran weekly Brennan Discussion Groups on current affairs and social justice topics, attended by almost 100 students. The Brennan Justice Talks series proved a further success, delivering 6 thought-provoking sessions to booked-out halls that addressed pressing issues such as LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, AI and inclusivity, domestic violence and Treaty.

In 2024, the program was awarded a UTS Learning and Teaching Award for Social Impact in Learning and Teaching for the Allens Neota UTS Law Tech Challenge for Social Justice partnership.

Operating since 2016, this partnership between Allens Law firm, software company Neota Logic and the UTS Faculty of Law places students with a non-profit organisation to build a smart app to solve a real-world problem. Several apps created through this program have gone on to win awards and some are live in the market.

**“The opportunity to partake in the Brennan Program is one of the many reasons why I chose to pursue my law degree at UTS. Being part of a community that shares the values of a sense of service, justice and idealism is incredibly empowering.”**

**Miriam Polis, 2024 Brennan Justice and Leadership Program awardee.**

In 2024

# 5805

program points awarded for student engagement

# 460

students attended events

# 11,300+

hours volunteered for 21 organisations

## BUILDing global citizens

UTS BUILD (Beyond UTS International Leadership Development) is an extra-curricular global leadership program designed to empower students as active global citizens. The program fosters leadership, intercultural understanding and critical thinking, enabling students to make meaningful contributions to campus life and society. Participants cultivate these attributes and skills through a dynamic blend of workshops, events, seminars, experiential on- and off-campus activities and endorsed global immersion experiences.

BUILD works collaboratively with other aligned programs and UTS departments to foster student agency, promote wellbeing and belonging to the campus community, and raise awareness and action towards social and environmental sustainability. In 2024, BUILD's coordination of Global Goals Month, run in partnership with UTS Sustainability, was recognised with a silver Vice-Chancellor's Professional Staff Excellence Award for helping UTS achieve excellence across student learning, research or community engagement.

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In 2024

**1865**  
students registered

**1980**  
student experiences  
completed

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**51**  
events and opportunities

**135**  
program completions

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“Ultimately, BUILD has prepared me to make meaningful differences in the world by offering opportunities for reflection, action and growth. The program’s focus on empowerment, sustainability and leadership development has sharpened my professional abilities and deepened my sense of responsibility as a global citizen and leader.”

Amenah Al Saegh, Bachelor of Information Technology

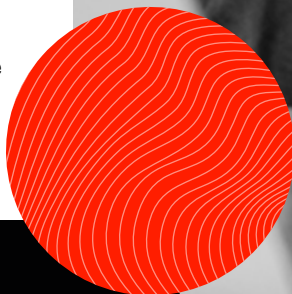


# 3 Maximising our impact

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 3:**

**Staff have the confidence and  
are supported to maximise  
their social impact**

We want to ensure that our staff have the capacity, support and confidence to lead and contribute to socially impactful work. More than that, we want to ensure they are recognised and rewarded for this work.



## Building a community to champion multicultural women

The Multicultural Women's Network (MWN) is a grassroots-driven initiative carving out space for multicultural women to realise their full potential and advocate for equity and justice at UTS.

While offering support and connection, the network also focuses on systemic change. It provides a channel for the university to access multicultural women's perspectives for policies, strategies and programs, and works to increase meaningful representation and visibility.

Alongside regular networking events, in 2024 the MWN hosted talks on bridging the cultural gender gap in leadership, exploring culture and identity in the diaspora and language survival and revival.

A highlight was *Say My Name*, a decolonising initiative to celebrate and acknowledge names deemed 'tricky', 'foreign' or 'unfamiliar' in Anglo-Australian contexts. The campaign provided insights and tools to rectify mispronunciations and work towards respect and inclusion. *Say My Name* was featured as part of Vivid Sydney, expanding the impact of MWN's work beyond UTS.

## Social justice leave to strengthen community impact

In seeking to maximise social impact beyond our campus, UTS implemented Social Justice Leave – an additional leave entitlement for continuing and fixed-term staff to access up to 5 days of paid leave to volunteer their time and skills for the benefit of the wider community.

The initiative encourages staff to contribute to organisations with charitable or social good purposes, fostering rich and reciprocal relationships with communities. By supporting high-impact volunteering outside of formal work responsibilities, Social Justice Leave reflects UTS's commitment to creating meaningful and positive change beyond the university's walls.

In 2024

45

staff members used

361

hours of social justice leave



## Supporting and celebrating our LGBTIQ+ community

UTS is proud to celebrate and support the students, staff and partners who make up our LGBTIQ+ community.

In 2024, UTS increased opportunities for our staff to connect through:

- expanding activities of the UTS Staff Pride Network – open to all LGBTIQ+ staff members
- growing our UTS LGBTIQ+ Research Network – a space where researchers can share their work, celebrate achievements, connect and collaborate.

We educated and upskilled staff through our Breaking the Binary and UTS Ally training offerings, which encourages curious, empathetic individuals to identify as allies and raises awareness of issues related to gender, sexuality and body diversity. In 2024, close to 200 staff took part in these sessions.

We hosted and supported numerous queer events in 2024, most notably, our Pride Series which included Queering Research events showcasing the broad impacts of LGBTIQ+ researchers at UTS, the Love is Love Hub in the Faculty of Engineering and IT, and Drag Queen Bingo.

The *Say My Name, Say My Pronouns* campaign, developed with UTS Shopfront students, launched towards the end of 2024. The campaign raises awareness about the importance of using preferred names and pronouns and the impact that has on student and staff belonging and inclusion.

In 2024, we launched a UTS Mardi Gras reference group, including both staff and students, that developed a successful application for UTS to participate in the 2025 Mardi Gras Parade.

In addition to celebrating and highlighting our LGBTIQ+ community we are determined to ensure that our university is as inclusive as possible for those students and staff.

In 2024, we commenced a high priority project to map, assess and ensure that our policies and systems are fully inclusive of all students and staff through a new cross-university initiative – the Anti-Deadnaming and Anti-Misgendering (ADAM) project. The ADAM project aims to ensure that transgender, gender diverse and intersex students and staff who change their names or gender are provided with the dignity, respect and privacy that should be afforded to everyone in our community.



## Staff spotlight



### Aunty Glendra Stubbs recognised for a lifetime of advocacy

UTS Elder-in-Residence Aunty Glendra Stubbs OAM was recognised in 2 prestigious awards in 2024.

The proud Wiradjuri woman was named a Finalist in the 2024 National NAIDOC Week Female Elder of the Year Award and has been nominated for the 2025 NSW Senior Australian of the Year Award.

These accolades recognise Aunty Glendra's tireless work, spanning over 4 decades, in providing support and advocacy for survivors of trauma.

Working with state and national bodies and serving on a range of boards and committees, Aunty Glendra's roles include serving as Aboriginal Engagement Advisor for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, CEO of Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Corporation, and Elder-in-Residence at Knowmore, a legal service supporting victims of child sexual abuse and the Stolen Generation.

Aunty Glendra's legacy is a testament to her unwavering dedication to improving the lives of those affected by trauma and injustice.



Graham Akhurst and his mum, Gladys at the 2024 National NAIDOC Week Awards. Image: supplied.

### The power of a gripping yarn to shape a new generation

In 2024, the Centre for the Advancement of Indigenous Knowledges (CAIK) at UTS gained Kokomini man Graham Akhurst as Director.

Growing up, Graham didn't connect with Indigenous stories available to him, often told by non-Indigenous authors. His own struggle to navigate his place in the world as a young Aboriginal man fuelled his desire to offer something better to the next generation, which led to his debut novel *Borderland* and a place as Finalist in the 2024 National NAIDOC Week Awards in the Creative Talent category.

'There is a deep understanding to be gained from literature,' he says, stressing the importance of Indigenous kids seeing themselves reflected. 'I wrote *Borderland* for a 15-year-old version of me ... If we don't see it, we don't believe it.'

Graham is dedicated to finding and advocating for opportunities for young Indigenous writers and raising the profile of First Nations literature, both in Australia and overseas. He wants people to 'learn of a different lens with which to view the world and experience why we are so resilient.'

## CLOAK unites science and fashion to champion queer visibility

Fusing art, science and fashion, Associate Professor Cherine Fahd, visual artist and researcher at UTS, co-led a project to reimagine the lab coat as a symbol of queer pride.

Iconic for impersonal neutrality in science, the lab coat represents the hidden challenges many LGBTIQ+ scientists face navigating their identities within a field where many still feel compelled to remain closeted.

Fahd collaborated with UTS fashion academic Todd Robinson and 3 University of Sydney academics from diverse fields of study. Together, they co-designed an experiment that paired 11 LGBTIQ+ scientists with 10 UTS fashion students to transform recycled lab coats into garments that reflect the scientists' personal and queer histories.

For the fashion students, it offered an opportunity to design for real people with meaningful stories.

Beyond its artistic merit, the project exemplifies the power of interdisciplinary practice to address underrepresentation in science. 'We wanted to see what impact creative practice, particularly in fashion and photography, could have on bringing visibility to this issue,' said Associate Professor Fahd. 'What it does is create a particular social dynamic that frees people up, gets people talking, trusting and sharing stories.'

By blending creative practice with lived experience, it showcases the transformative potential of collaboration to inspire more inclusive workplaces. The CLOAK project was recognised as a finalist for the 2024 Eureka Prize for STEM Inclusion.

Faelan Mourmourakis modelling their bespoke lab coat designed by Lucy Brack for the CLOAK project. Credit: The CLOAK Collective.

## Honouring a transformative voice for gender justice

Jess Hill, who did not come through a traditional tertiary education institution, has often crossed paths with UTS in her advocacy work against gender-based violence.

Already an Industry Fellow with the UTS School of Communications and UTS's inaugural journalist-in-residence, the renowned writer and speaker was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from UTS in recognition of her significant contributions to our knowledge of, and finding solutions to, gendered violence in Australia.

A leading voice on gender-based violence, Jess Hill has presented at almost 400 events about coercive control and delivers education for magistrates, communities and frontline workers. She is also regularly consulted on law reform and sat on the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches panel in 2024.

Her comprehensive investigation into domestic abuse and coercive control began with an award-winning book *See What You Made Me Do*, which led to 2 SBS docuseries, a podcast and a Quarterly Essay on how #MeToo has changed Australia.

Jess Hill was named Marie Claire's 2023 Changemaker of the Year and the 2024 NSW Premier's Woman of Excellence. She has also been nominated for the 2025 Australian of the Year Award.

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**"We shouldn't be afraid of having that discussion publicly, because ultimately, I think public policy is improved by public debate. And when we don't have public debate about public policy, I think we get poorer outcomes."**

**Jess Hill**





# Social Impact Grants

These grants support UTS researchers and practitioners to undertake projects that benefit the community. For 2024, the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion awarded 10 grants of up to \$10,000.

## Co-designing workshop for Garguree

**Team:** Louisa King and James Melson, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

**Partners:** Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association Incorporated (GAHA) and Gully Traditional Owner (GTO), David King, a Gundungurra man

## Co-designing a model for end-of-life care for those living with cognitive disabilities in Supported Independent Living

**Team:** Lindsay Asquith, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

**Partner:** Northcott Innovation

## Aboriginal archives in Italy. A project to create spaces for reciprocal collaboration

**Team:** Monica Galassi, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research

**Partners:** Museum of World Cultures, Ethnographic Museum Giovanni Podenzana, Museum of Civilisation

## Dynamic assessment of technology-mediated communication in traumatic brain injury

**Team:** Sheree Lu, Faculty of Health, Professor Emma Power, Dr Lucy Bryant (Supervisor)

**Partner:** Optimal Speech Pathology

## Exploring African Australians’ health literacy needs at the point of care and potential community-based health literacy interventions: Perspectives from consumers and providers

**Team:** Abela Mahimbo, Faculty of Health and Dr Michael Camit, UTS Business School, Health Literacy Manager at South Western Sydney Local Health District Multicultural Services

**Partner:** African Health

## Weapons of Slow Destruction

**Team:** Darren Lee, Thomas Ricciardiello and Ben Simons, UTS Data Arena

**Partner:** National Justice Project

## Bystander ally project: Minimising harm from bystander reactions to sexual assault and sexual harm

**Team:** Rachel Bertram, Dr Aimee Smith and Claire E F Wright, UTS Business School

**Partner:** NSW Universities Prevention Connection

## Scoping a pathway program for First Nations adult community educators

**Team:** Keiko Yasukawa and Dr Greg Martin, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Dr Bob Boughton, University of New England

**Partner:** Literacy for Life Foundation

## Empowering queer Muslim voices: Building bridges for inclusion and support

**Team:** Lisa Siobhan Irving, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

**Partner:** Sydney Queer Muslims

## STEM x Hub partnership

**Team:** Marco Angelini, Faculty of Engineering and IT

**Partner:** Sydney Secondary College

## Social Impact Dashboards grants

These grants are designed to support faculties and university staff to engage with and use the UTS Social Impact Dashboards. By identifying areas needing improvement, the projects will design solutions for positive social impact.

**Improving students' financial literacy and wellbeing through targeted workshops and evaluation**

Amir Armanious, UTS Business School

**Understanding the critical role of inclusive community in STEM gender equity programs**

Faezeh Karimi, Faculty of Engineering and IT

**Further first-year success: Co-designing and delivering interventions to increase support for students from low-SES backgrounds who have failed a subject in their first year of study**

Jack Cornish, Faculty of Health

**Developing an indicator of graduate outcomes for students from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds supported by the Humanitarian Scholarship Program**

Janet Ge, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, Olga Oleinikova, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Perpetua Burt, UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion

**Pathways to completion: Improving our understanding of U@Uni students' experience from Academy to degree**

Lisa-Angelique Lim, UTS Connected Intelligence Centre

**Effective metrics for the evaluation of bystander responses to victim-survivors of gender-based violence**

Catharine Pruscino, Office of the Provost, Rachel Bertram and Dr Aimee Smith, UTS Business School

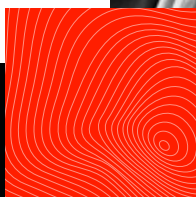
# 4 Contributing to our community

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 4:**

**Targeted research, teaching and program outcomes have social impact and collectively contribute to community**

We aspire to be an agent for social change, transforming communities through research, education and practice.

This means ensuring social impact is embedded into all aspects of our work.



## Responding to community need in our local precinct

UTS has a long-standing commitment to fostering reciprocal connections within our local community, recognising local residents as experts in what's needed for our shared neighbourhood to thrive. In precinct suburbs including Glebe, Haymarket, Pyrmont and Ultimo, we have built partnerships that create tangible benefits for both the community and UTS.

One such initiative is the Food Circle program, led by Glebe Youth Service with support from UTS. The food relief program provides weekly grocery deliveries to families experiencing food insecurity, with donations from SecondBite, Food Bank, Gift of Bread, Harris Farm, OzHarvest and Newington College.

Beginning in late 2023 the program was kickstarted through a co-design workshop run by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion. Throughout 2024, the program saw volunteers sort and hand-deliver food to households in Glebe's public housing district. Many of the volunteers were UTS

staff, and students involved in our SOUL program. Through this collaboration, students were provided with real world opportunities to work in the community sector and build civic graduate attributes.

Over a year the program grew from 20 households to 78, prompting a re-evaluation to meet growing demand.

In December 2024, the Food Circle Hub launched, offering a marketplace format where families choose food and household essentials. The hub also serves as a community space to bring people together and provide access to services, including CHEX community gift cards offered by Uniting Harris Community Centre.

The CHEX initiative, which received funding through a 2023 Social Impact Grant from the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, was further enhanced through a partnership with UTS Rapido. This impact-focused hub, part of the UTS Faculty of Engineering and IT, worked to digitise and expand the initiative.

**“Volunteering with Glebe Youth Service was incredibly rewarding ... This experience highlighted how small acts of kindness can make a big difference and reinforced my commitment to community service. It was a powerful reminder of the impact we can have when we work together.”**

**Student volunteer**

To date:

# 3500

**bags distributed**

# \$270,000

**worth of food donated**

**“The rise in the cost of living is impacting more people every day, with the pressures felt most by families experiencing vulnerabilities. Food Circle redirects otherwise discarded healthy and nutritious food to homes that might be doing it tough. None of this would have been possible without the support of our partners – with UTS being a critical ally. Coming together has allowed us to combine resources and support creating better futures for the community.”**

**Mitra Gusheh, CEO, Glebe Youth Service**



Associate Professor Fiona Allison and her team after winning the JMI Policy Challenge Grant.

## UTS Engaged Community Symposium

In October 2024, UTS initiated the Engaged Community Symposium to explore the value and impact of universities prioritising and practising community engagement.

The full-day event explored the how and why of community engagement through a series of discussions and interactive workshops open to staff and external partners. The event sought to foster best practice in working with community, promote networks and build capacity for engaged scholarship, all while exploring how UTS can better work with communities in our teaching, learning and research.

## UTS programs recognised in Engagement Australia Awards

In 2024, 2 UTS programs won Engagement Australia Excellence Awards. The awards recognise outstanding nation-building initiatives that demonstrate far-reaching impact and innovation in all sectors and aspects of the Australian economy and community.

Our winning initiatives included:

**Excellence in Indigenous Engagement** was awarded to the project 'Aboriginal Community Justice Reports for Sentencing Courts' from the UTS Faculty of Law.

**Outstanding Engagement for Student Learning** was awarded to UTS Shopfront in the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

## JMI Policy Challenge Grant winners

Open to partner universities of the James Martin Institute (JMI), the Policy Challenge Grant is an annual award program to support applied public policy research addressing some of New South Wales' biggest policy challenges.

The 9 winners in 2024 included 2 projects from UTS:

**A new 'build-to-rent-to-own' model for 'generation rent'** won a grant under the theme 'Reimagining affordable housing: community policy solutions'.

The project, led by Caitlin McGee at the UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, explores the potential of a 'build-to-rent-to-own' housing model, which could offer previously excluded groups the opportunity to generate wealth from their housing.

**Aboriginal-led justice solutions: strategies for reinvestment** won a grant under the theme 'Innovative solutions in justice and early intervention'.

The project will focus on design of a mechanism to support Aboriginal-led justice reinvestment in NSW, led by Associate Professor Fiona Allison at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research.

## Long-term partnerships planted years ago bear fruit

Historically, universities have earned a reputation as ‘ivory towers’ – exclusive, elite and shut off from the realities of the world around them. But this couldn’t be further from the truth in 2024. Universities exist for the public good and have a responsibility to use our extensive knowledge and resources to contribute to positive social change.

For Oscar Sanchez, Coordinator of Uniting Harris Community Centre and Ultimo/Pyrmont resident, UTS is an extension of the community. When Oscar first connected with UTS through the Shopfront program, he never imagined it would lead to such a long and fruitful partnership.

‘We have worked with UTS in one way or another for close to 25 years. Our partnership has had a huge impact. Not only does it help us with things like fundraising and capacity building for our staff and volunteers, but it has also helped

us better understand ourselves as a community and to identify what we need to thrive,’ he said.

‘Reciprocity is at the core of the work that we do in community,’ said Lisa Aitken, Executive Manager for Community Engagement and Impact at the UTS Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion. ‘While students build vital skills in global citizenship and have work-integrated learning opportunities, our community partners get access to resources they would not otherwise have.

‘At the Uniting Harris Community Centre, this looks like student-designed logos for their food pantry program, software design interns developing digital asset maps for the local area, and student volunteers supporting numerous community events. They are part of rich place-based research and knowledge exchange benefiting UTS and its surrounding neighbours.’

The long-term partnership with UTS and the time given to nurturing it has led to changing perceptions among the community about universities.

Oscar believes members of the community have felt heard by UTS as well as been enabled to make active change within their own community – and that UTS has been able to develop community trust by being present without an agenda. ‘Being present requires time, attention and people – and the university is doing that,’ he said.

‘I would love for the community to see the university as a second home. And I would love the university to see the community as an extension of UTS. The more the university is aware of what the community has to offer, the more possibilities there are. Together, we can do so much more.’

Over the years, UTS has worked with local and regional community members and groups through several projects and initiatives, including **UTS Shopfront**, the **UTS SOUL Award**, the **Glebe Digital Mentoring Program**, and more recently, the **100 Voices project** and **Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership**.

In our local precinct, we also work closely with organisations such as **Glebe Youth Service**, **Mission Australia**, **Bridge Housing**, **City West Housing** and are actively part of local networks like **Pyrmont and Ultimo Network of Services** and **Forest Lodge and Glebe Group**.

## Research spotlight

### Driving legislative change to protect migrant workers from exploitation

Australia is home to more than 100,000 undocumented workers – migrants employed without a valid visa. Their precarious status means that wage theft, exploitation and unsafe work environments have been common risks for these workers. But fear of detection and deportation has prevented many from reaching out for help.

Until recently, numerous courts held that a worker's undocumented status voids their contract of employment and associated workplace protections, leaving workers who do speak out without even basic employment protections.

But following more than a decade of advocacy and engagement by Associate Professor Laurie Berg (UTS Faculty of Law) and Associate Professor Bassina Farbenblum (UNSW), the Australian Government recently amended the *Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)* and the *Migration Act 1958 (Cth)* to better protect migrant workers from the perils of exploitation.

The changes will reinstate employment protections regardless of visa status, providing a path to anti-discrimination and workers' compensation claims for undocumented workers. Unauthorised work will no longer be a criminal offense.

These achievements are the culmination of more than 15 years of research and advocacy by Associate Professor Berg and Associate Professor Farbenblum, and an extensive, multi-year engagement strategy involving government, parliamentary, higher education, business and community stakeholders with vested interest in labour law policy reforms.

**“Employers across the country can no longer enjoy impunity for exploiting those undocumented workers – they now have responsibilities to those workers and liability for workers’ compensation and other protections when workplace laws are breached.”**

**Associate Professor Laurie Berg**

### Thrive: Harnessing data science to discover what makes students finish school well

This research program from the Human Technology Institute (HTI) at UTS combines the power of statistical machine learning, lived experience and community co-design to understand what factors impact NSW school students finishing school well.

Launched in 2024, the program is a collaboration between the HTI and Western Sydney University, with substantial funding support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

Thrive's unique approach integrates the expertise of education specialists

with the development of new causal machine learning methodologies, rich longitudinal datasets and qualitative research methods to engage communities, including children and young people, to identify specific challenges and how to address them for positive change.

The knowledge generated will inform policy decisions, enabling more effective educational programs which support all students to finish school well, irrespective of the barriers they face.

Pioneering a unique pathway in education research, Thrive promises to position Australia at the forefront of employing innovative and evidence-based methodologies to tackle pressing social issues.



## New research on the lived experience of First Nations Australians at work

With funding from NAB Foundation, UTS Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, the UTS Business School and Diversity Council Australia (DCA) have partnered to undertake new research to create workplaces free of racism, discrimination and bias for First Nations Australians.

The first Gari Yala report – meaning ‘speak the truth’ in the Wiradjuri language – was released in 2020 and revealed the racism and lack of cultural safety experienced by Indigenous people across Australian workplaces.

Associate Dean (Indigenous Leadership and Engagement) at the UTS Business School and Professor of Indigenous Policy at the Jumbunna Institute, Nareen Young, will lead a team in using Indigenous research methodology to provide a First Nations perspective, which will make a significant contribution to the national conversation around employment for Indigenous people.

‘To speak the truth about the lived experience of Indigenous Australians at work is crucial to creating fair and equal workplaces,’ said Professor Young. ‘We want to track the psychosocial impact of racism at work, examine cultural/colonial load and its impacts more carefully while tracking the impact of intersectional considerations.’

Former DCA CEO Lisa Annese said the first Gari Yala report ‘changed the conversation around how First Nations people are treated at work and paved the way for a more thoughtful and considered approach.’

## Bioengineering solutions at the frontier of regenerative medicine

Biomedical engineer Dr Jiao Jiao Li received the 2024 Eureka Prize for Emerging Leader in Science for her research and leadership in regenerative medicine, including using stem cells to treat chronic diseases like osteoarthritis.

With no known cure, osteoarthritis is a debilitating condition that causes pain, mobility problems and increased risk of death for more than 2.2 million Australians.

Dr Li’s work focuses on the therapeutic potential of bioactive factors in nano-scale packages that are produced by stem cells, and the biomaterial solutions to effectively deliver these into patients.

Her promising research follows on from earlier work in co-inventing a ceramic-based biomaterial scaffold to regrow bone using a patient’s own resident stem cells, currently licensed by an Australian orthopaedics company.

As Dr Li continues her research journey using a multi-disciplinary approach, she hopes her new discoveries will progress to clinical studies in the next 8 years.

**“It’s exciting to be working at the frontiers of regenerative medicine, where we’re bringing together the diverse fields of stem cell biology, engineering, nanotechnology, materials science and biomanufacturing to help people in need. It’s also fulfilling to be able to use my research as a platform to reach more people in our community to disseminate the wonders of science and engineering.”**

Dr Jiao Jiao Li

# 5 Advocacy and thought leadership

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 5:**

**UTS is an advocate, critical voice and thought leader on issues that concern and impact communities**

UTS convenes advocates, thinkers, experts and cultural leaders alongside our researchers and practitioners to contribute to public discourse on complex local and global issues.



## Forums for impact

UTS hosted a series of public events throughout 2024 to explore wicked problems in our community.

### Gender equity

UTS marked International Women's Day 2024 with the event **Wifedom: Exposing the workings of patriarchy**, exploring how women's domestic labour – which upholds households and economies – is too often devalued and unacknowledged. While it is a bargain few people, including men, want to be part of, it stubbornly persists.

Award-winning author and UTS Luminary Anna Funder delivered a keynote on how the patriarchy continues to maintain the status quo. Associate Professor Ramona Vijayarasa and Professor Peter Siminski also joined Anna to share insights and expertise on how we can move towards more equitable models.

Following the release of the report *Giving voice to women's experiences in surfing in Australia*, by UTS researchers Dr Ece Kaya and Dr Leila Khanjaninejad, UTS held a panel event to explore change to empower the next generation of women surfers.

**Waves of change: Women and surfing in Australia** brought together industry experts, researchers and athletes focused on gender equity in surfing to discuss systemic barriers for women in surfing, and the programs and infrastructure needed to remove them.

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**“As a writer, the unseen work of a great writer’s wife fascinates me. But as a woman and a wife, her life terrifies me. I recognise in it a life-and-death struggle between maintaining herself and the self-sacrifice and self-effacement so lauded of women in patriarchy, which are among the base mechanisms by which our work and time, which are indispensable, are made invisible.”**

**Anna Funder**

### Sustainability

Recently, we’ve seen the hottest years in history, wildfires sweeping across continents, record levels of food insecurity, escalating biodiversity loss, and a widening gap between the rich and poor.

In the webinar, **Planetary Health**, Professor Sharon Friel, Elna Tulus and Professor Jason Prior joined Professor Michael Thomson to discuss the interconnection between global systems and the public’s health, and how we can move forward to a better future for people and the planet.



## Elsie Conference: Celebrating 50 years of women's refuges in Australia

A major highlight on the UTS calendar in 2024 was hosting the **Elsie Conference**. This marked the 50th anniversary of Australia's first women's refuge and celebrated the grit and resilience of the women's movement in Australia.

The conference was chaired by Anne Summers AO, Professor of Domestic and Family Violence at UTS Business School, who led the group of women that broke into and took residency of a vacant property – named Elsie – to found Australia's first women's refuge.

The Elsie conference brought together refuge and shelter workers, advocates and organisations, researchers and public policymakers. It provided a national platform to honour the past, celebrate the history and achievements of the women's refuge/shelter movement, and discuss emerging challenges. These included how domestic violence is changing and



recognition of the specific issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, multicultural women and other high risk groups.

The conference culminated in the Elsie Awards, acknowledging 50 unsung heroines whose dedication has kept refuges running, saving the lives of thousands of women and children.





## Fostering anti-racism at UTS

Australia's Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman delivered a keynote on the higher education sector's role in combating racism, and the Australian Human Rights Commission's historic anti-racism study at universities as part of our event, **Cultivating an anti-racist campus culture**.

Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO, Professor Kylie Readman, Salma Elmubasher, Glen Babington, Professor Michael Blumenstein and Dr Elaine Laforceza then joined the Commissioner to discuss UTS's role in driving anti-racism efforts and the necessary steps universities must take to foster an environment of pride and belonging for all.

**“Racism isn’t about race, it is about power and privilege. If you are white, it is about the power and privilege to know that the institutions around you were built by people like you, built for you and privileged people like you. It is power and privilege to know that you do not have to diminish yourself in any way to access those systems.”**

**Giridharan Sivaraman**

UTS took the stage at **Vivid Sydney 2024** with the event **Say my name: the humanity of names**. The storytelling session and panel discussion unpacked how we perceive and acknowledge names unfairly categorised as ‘tricky,’ ‘unfamiliar,’ or ‘foreign’.

Moderated by Jan Fran, speakers Dr Elaine Laforceza, Dr Sunil Badami, Dr Kumi de Silva and Dr Mariko Smith discussed their personal experiences and the cultural, familial and historical implications of names in the Australian context, while sharing insights and tools to rectify mispronunciations and work towards a more respectful and inclusive society.

The National Reconciliation Week event, **Tokenist, ally or accomplice?** delved into how to meaningfully support Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Dr Summer Finlay joined Professor Lindon Coombes, Professor Chris Cunneen and Dr Elaine Laforceza, moderated by Professor Robynne Quiggin, to discuss how non-Indigenous Australians can step up, lean into discomfort and do better in their engagement with First Nations people and issues.

**“We can’t rely on the 97% for goodwill for us to progress or for good things to happen to us. It has to be a rights-based approach now and treaty is one of the things that can do that. There is a renewed focus on our rights, implementing those and doing things that are not dependent on democracy or goodwill.”**

**Professor Lindon Coombes**

The film *Behrouz* is a powerful depiction of the enduring resistance and humanity of those who have been forced to endure offshore detention, a system of imprisonment and banishment, and the story and struggles of one man, Behrouz Boochani. Dr Sara Dehm sat down with Behrouz Boochani and Simon V Kurian to discuss the process of creating the film and the power of storytelling for truth-telling and advocacy.

**“We [refugees in offshore detention] experienced violence by a system that was created by Australia and our political perspective and understanding of Australia is unique. We produce the most radical fundamental knowledge to create change because we experience the dark side of liberal democracy.”**

**Behrouz Boochani**

## Human rights and policy

Amidst a national housing crisis, how can we put people at the centre of a conversation too often dominated by numbers and prices?

Kate Colvin, Daney Faddoul, Professor Jessie Hohmann, Tyler, and Raghav Motani joined Amy Persson to discuss the housing crisis and solutions to address it, including an Australian Human Rights Act, in a session co hosted by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion and the Human Rights Law Centre.

**“Homelessness is not just about having a roof over your head or having a home. Having a home means having control over the place you live. It is about having a dwelling that is adequate and meets basic community standards... if you’re living in a situation of violence then your home is not safe, it is not actually a home.”**

Kate Colvin



## Stories to shift the dial

UTS’s Impact Studios is an in-house media production house, specialising in powerful stories for impact, taking new knowledge from various fields to a broad, engaged audience.

With expertise in long-form, in-depth audio and multimedia storytelling, Impact Studios produces bespoke media projects. Their 2024 work included 4 podcasts:

### We are Blacktown

Portraits of Blacktown community leaders and people working for change – meet a doctor sounding the alarm about extreme heat, a basketball coach whose players have made it to the big league, a Dharug traditional owner telling the true history of the area’s first people, and many more Blacktown legends.

### Sink or Swim

Angelica hails from Sydney, where sparkling beaches and aqua blue pools are the backdrop to a swimming-obsessed culture. But for Angelica, it doesn’t match her reality. She never learned to swim as a child, and she lives in a part of town where the cool sea breeze never blows, and there are fewer swimming spots to go around. With rising temperatures, Angelica faces her fear of the water and talks with her community about what it takes to stay cool on a warming planet.

### Hey History!

A podcast all about Australian history where the kids ask the questions. This podcast follows the Stage 2 and 3 Australian curriculum. Teachers can use it in class, with learning materials designed and road-tested by a primary school educator.

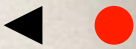
### Impact Talks at UTS

UTS is Australia’s top university for research impact. This series offers a window into the ideas and research from leading thinkers.



Angelica Ojinnaka-Psillakis recording ‘Sink or Swim’ for Impact Studios.





## SXSW at UTS

For the second year, creators, artists and ‘techies’ converged on our campus and surrounds for a week-long celebration of the very best in music, screen, gaming, technology and innovation.

UTS was the proud Official Education Partner and Official Conference Workshop Partner of South by Southwest (SXSW) Sydney 2024. From sessions addressing the future of tech, gaming and VR to shining a light on Australia’s up and coming artists, it was a week packed with innovation, gaming, culture and creativity, acknowledging the university’s long history of inspiring the next generation of innovators and future thinkers.

## ‘What is AI?’ video series

The Human Technology Institute at UTS partnered with CSIRO’s National Artificial Intelligence Centre to produce a series of training videos aimed at people currently using or looking to use AI in their organisation. These videos provide guidance for making responsible, human-focused decisions regarding AI technology.

The videos equip decision makers with the strategic AI skills that they need to consider how new technologies can be designed, implemented and used in ways that embed human values. This work is part of HTI’s Skills Lab, which was established to build Australia’s capability in strategic skills associated with AI and other technology, through procurement, implementation and oversight of AI.



Credit: Oscar Coleman.





## Global Game Changers

In 2024, UTS hosted a series of talks featuring conversations about big global issues. From reimagining the way we live, work and play to addressing social, economic and environmental challenges, this series delved into new ways of thinking and cutting-edge technologies shaping the cities and communities of today and tomorrow.

### The Green Infrastructure Revolution – Cities 4.0

Urban environments are responsible for 75 per cent of global emissions. In this

international discussion, experts explored the transformative power of Green Infrastructure in urban landscapes and examined innovative ways to make cities smarter, greener and more communal.

### The Big Carbon Rethink

Can we repurpose carbon into every day consumable items? This talk looked at the potential for a world where buildings, clothes, homewares, office supplies, playgrounds and electronic equipment – all the products we want and interact with – become ‘carbon sinks’ that actively reduce atmospheric carbon emissions.

### Faking It – Information, integrity, AI and the law

AI generated and propagated misinformation are undermining the reliability of news, challenging democratic processes, and infringing rights globally. As automation rapidly expands, policy and regulation are often held back by a lack of agreed principles and priorities. This discussion explored different dimensions of the problem and how we might go about tackling some of its more insidious effects.

## Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Democracy Forum

The Vice-Chancellor’s Democracy Forum invites significant thinkers to engage in open dialogue on topics crucial to today’s society and its advancement.

The first edition explored AI development, ethics and privacy with Meredith Whittaker, President of the Signal Foundation which developed the encrypted messaging app Signal to ‘protect free expression and enable secure global communication.’

Whittaker laid bare the toxic surveillance business model of big tech monopolies, and how they profit from

enormous amounts of customer data. She was joined by UTS’s Professor Peta Wyeth, Associate Professor Ramona Vijayarasa and Ed Santow to unpack these issues.

In our second talk, one of the world’s most influential columnists and writers, Fintan O’Toole, asked why democratic systems and values are now in such peril. He argued that far-right movements with little interest in remedying injustices are co-opting and distorting the language of resistance, and are a driving force behind the damaging politics of tribalism.

“They’re selling the derivatives of the toxic surveillance business model as the product of scientific innovation.”

Meredith Whittaker, President of the Signal Foundation





## Call It Out initiative launches new app to tackle racism

There is an absence in any online or other community-based national platform for reporting racism against First Nations peoples, making it difficult to fully understand the extent of racism and discrimination in our community.

Since 2019 the Indigenous Law and Justice Hub within the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at UTS have been working in collaboration with the National Justice Project to establish **Call It Out – a First Nations Racism Register**.

Launched in 2022, the Register is a simple and secure way for people to report incidents of racism and discrimination toward First Nations peoples. It provides an independent, Indigenous-controlled platform distinct from traditional complaints and legal processes.

Incidents reported on the Register are collected and analysed by the Indigenous Law and Justice Hub to inform evidence-based research on racism and its impacts, and support anti-racism action to drive systemic change.

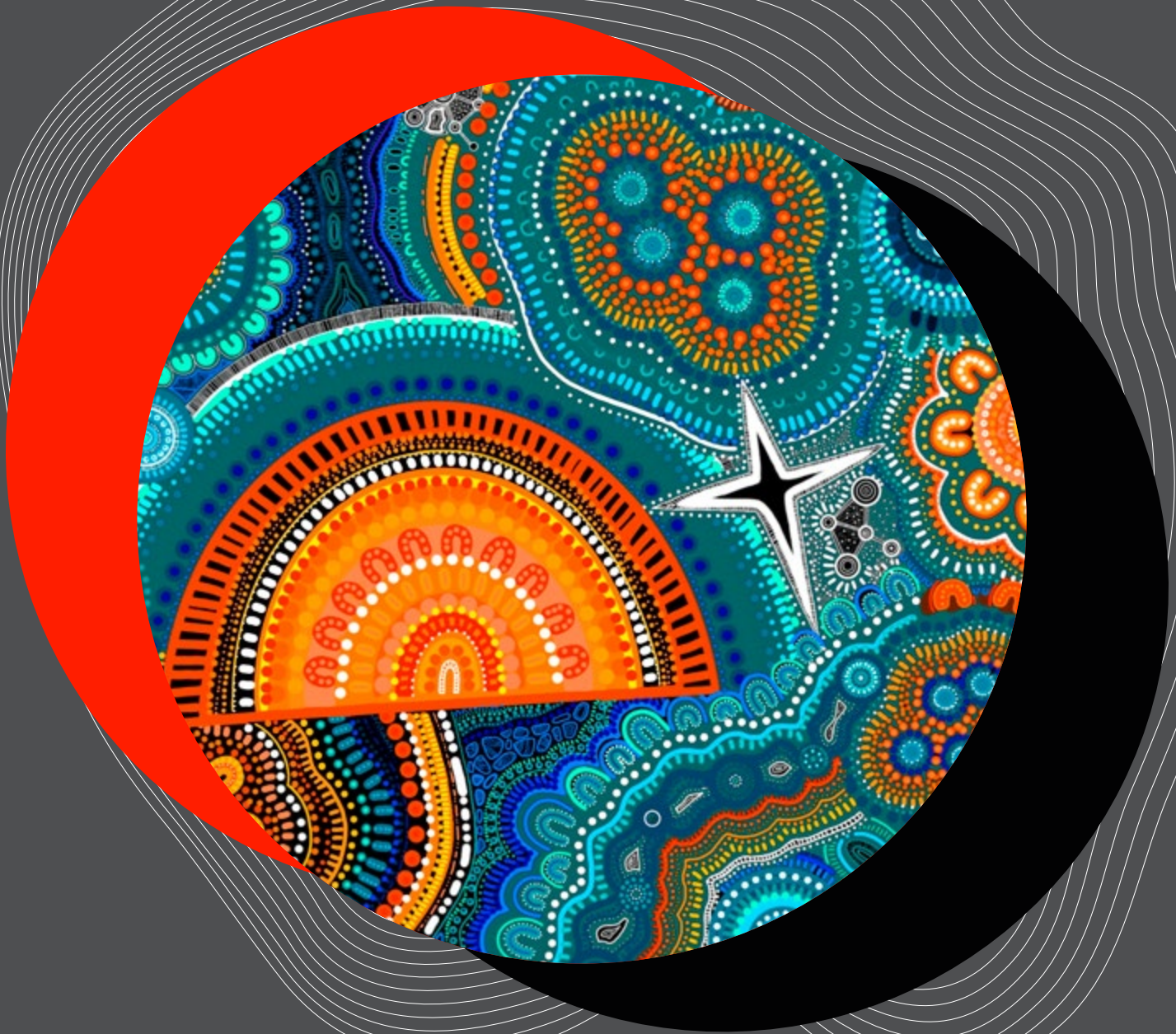
In 2024, a phone app for Android and Apple was released, designed to make reporting racism as accessible as possible.

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**“One of the most powerful ways to create change is the telling of stories ... Call It Out puts the power in the hands of all of us to shape how racism is understood and how it needs to be addressed.”**

**Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO, Laureate Fellow at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research**





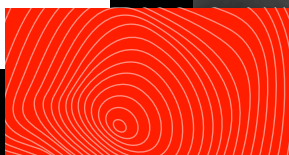
Credit: Kirsten Gray.

# 6 Business operations

## **UTS Social Impact Framework — Domain 6:**

**UTS business operations and strategies reflect a long-term independent commitment to social impact**

For UTS to be truly committed to social justice, this value must be embedded in our business operations, internal ways of working and how we support our students and staff.



## Diversity and inclusion training

The Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion at UTS runs a variety of diversity and inclusion training programs each year. These sessions build capacity, empathy, and help teams reap the benefits diversity brings.

Regular training sessions are open to all staff, and tailored training for specific teams or work areas are also available by request to meet the specific needs of teams. We also offer training to external partners.

In 2024 we ran 39 training sessions, addressing ability awareness, Aboriginal cultural awareness, anti-racism, cultural awareness, LGBTIQ+ allyship, mental health, and unconscious bias.

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“We were able to put the topics of discussion and principles into perspective with real examples ... Thank you for making it a safe space for us to be challenged and self-reflect on our own unconscious bias, and for giving us the tools to switch our conscious brain on during critical/stressful decision-making times.”

Workshop participant

## Respect. Now. Always.

UTS is a proud and active member of the national Respect. Now. Always. campaign, dedicated to the prevention of sexual violence on Australian campuses.

In 2024, the team implemented its first Respect at Uni Week (a Universities Australia initiative), showcasing the university's commitment towards respect, inclusion and diversity, with support from the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion, UTS Library and Activate UTS.

UTS also chaired the newly established NSW Universities Prevention Connection, which united specialists in gender-based violence from tertiary education into a community of practice to exchange resources, ideas, successes and challenges, with secretariat support from Our Watch. UTS has been re-elected as the chairing organisation, and in 2025, the initiative expanded to include universities from the ACT.

# 16,000+

current and prospective students, staff and community members engaged with the program to date

# 130,000+

staff and students completed the Consent Matters module to date

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In 2024:

# 300+

individuals took part in the national Polished Man campaign, collectively raising over \$9000 to directly support survivors of abuse



## Addressing gender inequity in STEMM

In Australia and internationally, women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) – both in industry and academia, and especially in senior leadership positions.

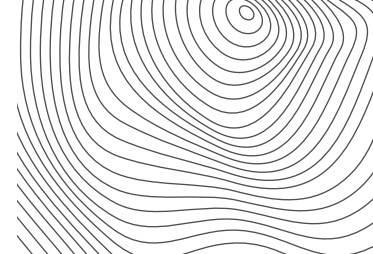
UTS participates in the Athena Swan program, an international initiative to recognise and celebrate good practice to boost gender equity in STEMM. Athena Swan is administered by Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE).

The current phase of the program requires institutions to identify 5 key barriers to gender equity in STEMM and to begin to address those barriers. These are used to focus ongoing plans to address gender equity in STEMM.

### The priority areas at UTS are:

1. Building the pipeline through outreach to attract women to Engineering and IT in early education. Currently, low numbers of women are drawn to Engineering and IT disciplines. This begins in early primary and continues through secondary and undergraduate education.
2. Supporting career progression for Higher Degree Research (HDR) students in the Faculty of Engineering and IT. UTS is losing talent due to lack of career progression pathways that work for women, especially for HDR and Early Career Research women.
3. Targeting recruitment to combat the gender imbalance in applications for STEMM positions. This will address the unequal numbers of women and men that are applying for positions in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering and IT.
4. Making flexible work the norm across STEMM work areas. Flexible work arrangements available at UTS are not well known or taken up in STEMM work areas. Flexible work provisions need to be applied equally across the university.
5. Promotion pathways to increase numbers of women ascending to senior positions in STEMM. This will address the unequal numbers of women applying for promotion in Science and FEIT, resulting in a gender imbalance that increases at every level of seniority.

The SAGE Athena Swan accreditation pathway recognises progress on identified key barriers through 'Cygnets Awards'. In 2024, UTS received 2 SAGE Cygnets Awards, for initiatives 1 and 2. This achievement is part of our ongoing SAGE accreditation process and reflects UTS's commitment to removing barriers for women in STEMM.



## UTS recognised for inspiring women in engineering and IT

The 2 SAGE Cygnet Awards that UTS received in 2024 recognised endeavours to improve career pathways for women and girls in Engineering and IT.

One of the award-winning initiatives is the UTS Women in Engineering and IT (WiEIT) STEM x Outreach program.

This program inspires young women to consider a career in engineering and IT. According to the Australian Government's 'STEM Equity Monitor' girls only make up a quarter of enrolments in year 12 information technology, physics and engineering classes. When it comes to higher education, women make up around 37 per cent of enrolments in university STEM courses.

Stereotypes, bias, a lack of role models and understanding of STEM career options, disengagement from STEM education, and family and cultural expectations, have all been identified as key barriers to participation for girls in primary and secondary education in these areas.

The WiEIT STEM x Outreach program currently runs in 30–35 schools across NSW and is financially supported by Cognizant Australia. It sets out to address all 6 barriers by providing meaningful experiences for girls, teachers and families to engage with engineering and IT.

The 2 key arms of the program – which has been running since 2019 – are STEM x Play, aimed at Year 5 and 6 students, and STEM x Impact, aimed at early high school students.

'The best part of our project is that we're able to engage with families, teachers, career professionals and whole school communities over time, which allows us to address culture change and the messages that are out there in a long-term way,' says WiEIT Program Outreach Coordinator Marco Angelini.

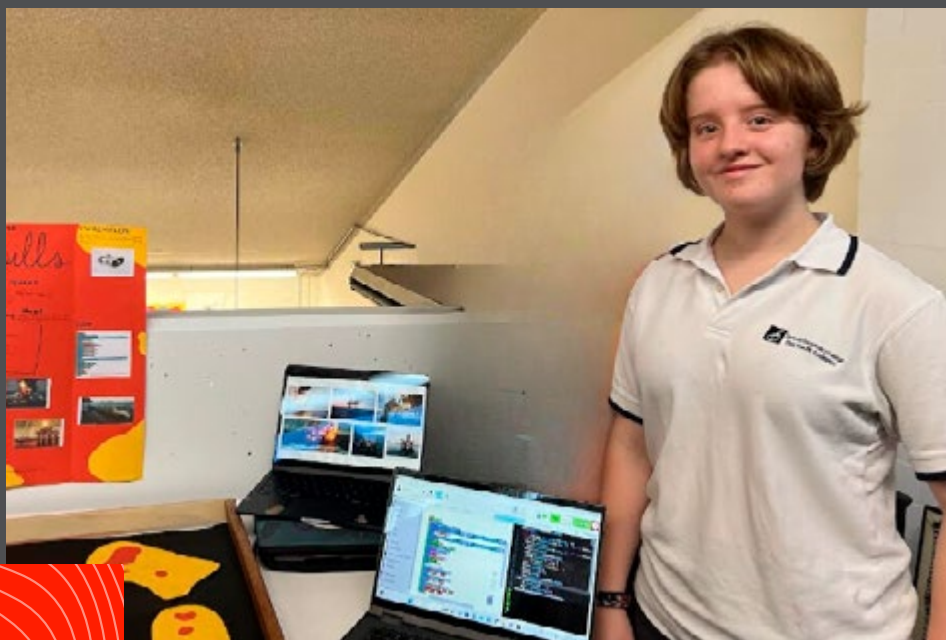
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**“Our outreach programs are increasing interest among girls and young women and providing them with confidence to pursue careers in STEMM. Through greater support for women completing higher research degrees, we can empower them to reach their full potential.”**

**Professor Andrew Parfitt, Vice-Chancellor and President, UTS**

“My favourite parts were learning to code the Micromelons and getting them to move around to do the things we wanted them to do. It allowed us to visualise how the technology could be helpful and practical in a real-world context.”

Maddie Blanch, 14-year-old student at Sydney Secondary College Balmain Campus who participated in the WIEIT program



## Anti-Slavery Australia

For over 20 years Anti-Slavery Australia (ASA), based at the UTS Faculty of Law, has provided free legal services to support survivors of trafficking, while working towards ending modern slavery in Australia. Since beginning in 2003, ASA has expanded to include research, advocacy and training programs.

ASA's clients come from over 40 countries and speak 23 different languages.

ASA conducts research grounded in a combination of practical, firsthand experience with survivors, coupled with academic rigour as part of the UTS Faculty of Law. Research areas include trafficking, forced marriage, dowry abuse, online sexual exploitation of children, asylum seeker exploitation, survivors' perspectives and modern slavery reporting requirements.

ASA is the only specialist legal organisation which works directly with victims of trafficking and modern slavery as well as a range of community, government and industry partners.

In the last 20 years ASA has:

made **60** submissions to the Australian Government on issues relating to trafficking in persons and modern slavery.

Secured over **\$1.6** million in victim compensation.

Secured visa protection for **hundreds** of clients.

## Sharing our facilities

From our iconic UTS Tower on Broadway and expanding into the surrounding precincts, our campus boasts state-of-the-art building design with a wide range of venues and specialist facilities to foster discussion and collaboration. As part of our commitment to public good, we give for-purpose partner organisations free access to these facilities.

In 2024 we opened our doors to: EmpowerHER, the Racial Justice Centre, the Australian Council of Social Services, CareerSeekers, United Nations Youth, United Nations Association of Australia and Primary Ethics. We also hosted the cross-sector Social Impact Summit.

Kylie Readman, Megan Taylor and her guide dog, Liz Penny and Angie Clements in front of UTS's new Assistance Animal Toileting Facility. Credit: Anna Hay.



## Belonging, equity and access on show at UTS Inclusion Festival

Diversity, equity, accessibility and anti-racism were among the themes explored by both staff and students at UTS's first Inclusion Festival, hosted by the Centre for Social Justice & Inclusion.

Workshops, panels, seminars and pop-up clinics were part of a week-long campus activation celebrating and exploring inclusive practice – from tackling structural racism in universities to using artistic media to reveal deeper stories and expose inaccessibility of work and social spaces.

A key takeaway from the event was the need to assume shared responsibility for structural change.

The festival culminated in the opening of UTS's new Assistance Animal Toileting Facility, a purpose-built facility for guide dogs and assistance animals and their handlers to answer a common problem encountered in built spaces.

The facility has been placed directly outside of Building 1 on Broadway in an intentionally prominent location. While this was a practical choice for users, it was also an important statement – putting UTS's ethos of inclusion on full display.

## Ensuring a sustainable campus and sustainable future

In 2024 we released the university's Sustainability Strategy 2023–2027.

Since our first Sustainability Strategy in 2011, we have reached major milestones across research, teaching and learning, and operations, achieving international recognition as a sector leader.

We believe in the importance of research that informs public policy, collaboration with industry that drives technological innovation, and teaching that equips current and future leaders with the knowledge and critical thinking skills to help shape a sustainable future.

Embedding sustainability into our teaching and learning allows our students to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and capabilities they need to become problem solvers in their chosen disciplines and shape a sustainable world.

In our view sustainability is a long-term approach to the transformation of society to ensure that human health, wellbeing and prosperity is in harmony with nature for current and future generations.

This involves preserving and restoring ecosystems and ensuring the long-term availability of natural resources for future generations, promoting resilient economic systems and enhancing social justice, equity and diversity. Achieving this goal requires consistent and ongoing positive changes to our activities, systems and processes, and behaviour.

The Sustainability Strategy is a whole-of-organisation strategy that aligns with the goals and activities of the UTS 2027 Strategy, Model of Learning and Research Strategy. The Strategy will ensure that sustainability is embedded throughout all areas of the university, and that we continually improve our sustainability performance.





A black and white photograph of a modern building with a brick facade and large windows. In the foreground, there is a courtyard with a concrete wall and some landscaping. A large red graphic with a white concentric circle pattern is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

Social justice is  
core to UTS's DNA.

The background features a large, solid black oval on the right side. To its left, there is a red shape composed of concentric, wavy lines that resemble a fingerprint or a topographical map, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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Images: Toby Burrows, Florian Groehn,  
Kwa Nguyen, Andy Roberts, Anna Zhu.